The background of the cover is a close-up photograph of a bee on a bright yellow flower. A large, circular, lens-like graphic is centered over the image, with the title text overlaid on it. The title 'A Great While Before Day' is written in a stylized font, with 'A' in gold, 'Great' in blue script, 'While' in gold, 'Before' in gold, and 'Day' in blue script. The text 'VOLUME XIV' is in gold capital letters to the right of 'Day'.

A Great While Before Day

VOLUME XIV

PART TWO:

July 1–December 31

**A New Devotional from
DON & PEARL ANDERSON**

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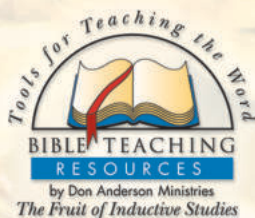
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A GREAT WHILE BEFORE DAY

Volume XIV (July–December)

Daily Devotional

by Don and Pearl Anderson

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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 translation from the original text.

We will continue our journey through the book of Titus, study the book of Galatians, and then begin the book of Colossians.

JULY

We are pursuing growth towards godliness in the three chapters of Titus. In the first chapter of Titus; we considered the process, the picture and the perversion of godliness.

The process begins with faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. When we add food from His Word, this results in fruit. Paul continued by pointing out 15 characteristics of the godly person—traits that paint a picture of godliness.

At the end of chapter 1, the apostle described the perversion of this picture. It can be identified when we are suffering the consequences of the absence of truth. This is evident by a lack of love, honesty, and hard work in our lives.

This brings us to chapter 2. I describe this section as “The Parish and Godliness.” It is a picture of godliness in relationship to brothers and sisters in the congregation. It is the behavior in the body that concerns us in this passage.

July 1—Fitting for Sound Teaching (Titus 2:1)

Titus 2:1: *“But as for you, be speaking the things which are fitting for sound doctrine.”*

Verse 1: Paul spoke of “they” referring to the false teachers in chapter 1:16: “They are confessing to know God, but by their deeds, they are denying Him, being detestable and disobedient, and with reference to every good work disproved.”

Now, in contrast, he says: “But as for you (Titus), be speaking the things which are fitting for sound doctrine.” Stand against the tide. Even though others are turning away from the truth, stand by it.

1 Corinthians 16:13–14: “Be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong. Let all that you do be done in love.”

Paul said in Titus 1:9: “Clinging to the trustworthy message which is in accordance with the teaching, in order that he may be able, both to be exhorting in sound doctrine and to be refuting those who are contradicting.”

Teaching sound doctrine is obviously part of Titus’s responsibility and probably the most important part of his ministry. The church organization is his next highest priority. This focus will put the churches on the island of Crete on good footing.

2 Timothy 2:15: “Make every effort to present yourself to God, approved, as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, guiding the word of truth along a straight path.”

Please join me in worship and praise as we sing verse 1 of that great old hymn, “**The Church’s One Foundation**,”: “*The Church’s one foundation is Jesus Christ her Lord; She is His new creation, By water and the word; From heaven He came and sought her to be His holy bride; With His own blood He bought her, And for her life He died.*”

July 2—Senior Saints (Titus 2:2)

Titus 2:2: “*Older men are to be temperate, dignified, self-controlled, sound in faith, in love, in patience.*”

Verse 2: In this passage, Paul speaks to five different groups within the church on the island of Crete. He addresses individual admonitions which characterize godliness in the various groups represented in the body of Christ.

The apostle begins with the senior citizens, the older men. They should exemplify the following six characteristics: (1) Temperate, (2) Dignified, (3) Self-controlled, (4) Sound in faith, (5) Sound in love, and (6) Sound in patience.

Your greatest witness is what you are! It is *conduct over conversation*.

1. Temperate—not given to overindulgence. When a man has reached years of seniority, he should have learned what are real and true pleasures, and what are not. He should have right values and be able to assess his pleasures at their true worth. The pleasures of self-indulgence cost far more than they are worth.
2. Dignified—grave and serious in the right way. They will soon see Jesus face to face. This is not a gloomy person, but one who knows that he lives in the light of eternity.
3. Self-controlled—prudent. It describes the man whose mind has everything under control. He has learned to govern every instinct and passion until each has its proper place, and no more than its proper place.

-
4. Sound in faith—1 John 2:13a: “I am writing to you, fathers, because you have come to know the One who is from the beginning.”

Philippians 3:10: “That I might come to know Him (experientially, personally), and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship (sharing) of His sufferings, being conformed to His death.” He begins to reflect the quality of Christ-likeness after years of walking with the Lord in close and intimate relationship.

I love that little chorus, “*The longer I serve Him, the sweeter He grows.*”

5. Sound in love—a manifestation of being sound in faith. The Spirit of God produces love as a result of this relationship with the Lord in his life. The Lord Jesus chided the church at Ephesus because they had left their first love.

6. Sound in patience—waiting on God’s timing. Many older folks state that the older they get, the more they want God to hurry up. It is patience with God’s process in our lives that makes us more like His Son.

Bill Gothard says: “Please be patient. God is not finished with me yet.”

1 John 3:2: “Beloved ones, now we are the children of God, and not yet has it been made visible what we shall be. We are knowing that, whenever He is made visible, like ones to Him we shall be, because we shall see Him just as He is.”

The senior man is challenged to be persevering with the process God is using in his life to change him and produce a godly character.

This morning, let’s sing together in worship and praise verse 2 of “**The Church’s One Foundation**”: “*Elect from ev’ry nation, Yet one o’er all the earth, Her charter of salvation, One Lord, one faith, one birth; One holy Name she blesses, Partakes one holy food, And to one hope she presses, With ev’ry grace endued.*”

July 3—Christlike Beauty (Titus 2:3)

Titus 2:3: “*Older women, likewise, are to be worthy of reverence in their behavior, not malicious gossips, nor enslaved to much wine, teachers of that which is good.*”

Verse 3: The empty-headed chatter of a social butterfly may reveal nothing but shallowness. However, the joy of a beautiful woman may well arise from a deep Christian faith.

Paul describes four characteristics in his picture of godly older women:

1. Worthy of reverence in their behavior—a blessing in their actions.

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.” This should be a picture of the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, inward beauty, which is of great worth in God’s sight.

Because this woman is good, gracious, and godly; there is a compelling attraction to her. She is worthy of reverence because of her conduct. Proverbs 31:10: “A wife of noble character, who can find? She is worth far more than rubies.”

2. Not malicious gossips—avoiding this negative characteristic.

V. Raymond Edman in his book, *Great is Thy Faithfulness*, says: “The Bible has supreme contempt and condemnation for gossips.”

“The tongue is hard to be tamed,” according to James 3.

There is nothing more beautiful than a houseful of women engaging in great laughter and continuous conversation, but oh how tragic when the old nature takes over. Those statements often begin with “have you heard...?” or “did you know...?” or “I’m not really supposed to share this, but...” The flesh takes over at that point.

3. Nor enslaved to much wine—nothing is more disheartening or tragic than a female alcoholic. They are hardened by the slavery of alcohol which is shortening their lives and literally destroying them.
4. Teachers of that which is good—by their *lives* and their *lips*, by their *example* and their *exhortations*, and by their *walk* and their *words*.

Ezra 7:10: “For Ezra had devoted himself to the study and observance of the Law of the Lord, and to teaching its decrees and laws in Israel.”

Barclay points out:

The older women must teach and train the younger. There are those who use their experience to discourage others. Sometimes it would seem that the only gift which experience gives to some people is the gift of pouring cold water on the schemes and plans and dreams of others, and that all they have learned from experience is the vast number of things which are impossible. It is a Christian duty ever to use experience to guide and to encourage and not to daunt and to discourage.

Join me in worship and praise this morning as we sing together verse 4 of “**The Church’s One Foundation**”: “*Mid toil and tribulation, And tumult of her war, She waits the consummation Of peace for evermore; Till with the vision glorious her longing eyes are blessed, And the great Church victorious shall be the Church at rest.*”

July 4—Training in Love (Titus 2:4)

Titus 2:4: “In order that they may encourage (train) the young women to be loving their husbands, to love their children.”

Verse 4: There are seven areas of training described in the next few verses:

1. To be loving their husbands—There are numerous places in scripture where the husband is admonished to be loving his wife, but this is the only place where the wife is instructed to be loving the husband in return.

Howard Hendricks in his book, *Don't Fake It, Say It with Love*, said:

We're inclined to think that love should vary according to performance and that people need to change before we can love them more. That isn't God's kind of love, and it isn't the way to change someone. If you're trying to change your partner, stop. Instead, ask God to change you. A lady in our community learned to pray that way and was the instrument to lead her husband to Christ. At Thanksgiving we had a testimony time in our church. This husband got up and said, "As most of you know, I've been an unbeliever all of my life; until this year, when God so worked in the life of my wife, that I capitulated to reality." He sat down and his wife got up and said, "I have to give you the other side of the testimony. When I first went to see Mr. Hendricks, I prayed, 'Lord, you love my husband and I'll change him,' And nothing happened. Then I came to the place where I cried out, 'God, I'll love him and you change him.' And God changed both of us."

2. To love their children—a timely verse for us to consider this morning. Dominating the news recently is child and sexual abuse. I heard a story today of an angry father throwing his 5-year-old daughter off a bridge to her death.

Matthew 18:1–6: “At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, ‘Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?’ And He called a child to Himself and set him before them, and said, ‘Truly I say to you, unless you are converted and become like children, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever then humbles himself as this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoever receives one such child in My name receives Me; but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it is better for

him that a heavy millstone be hung around his neck, and that he be drowned in the depth of the sea.”

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.”

Please join me in worship and praise as we make a commitment to our Lord by singing verse 5 of “**The Church’s One Foundation**”: “*Yet she on earth hath union With God, the Three in one, And mystic sweet communion With those whose rest is won. O happy ones and holy! Lord, give us grace that we Like them, the meek and lowly, On high may dwell with thee.*”

July 5—A Life Honoring the Word (Titus 2:5)

Titus 2:5: “*To be sensible, pure, workers at home, kind, being in subjection to their own husbands, in order that the Word of God may not be dishonored.*”

Verse 5: Yesterday, we looked at the first two areas that describe the godly woman: (1) to be loving her husband, and (2) to love her children. Now, we have the other five characteristics:

3. To be sensible—It is important for this quality to be developed since women can be emotional and irrational under stress. The quality of the godly woman is one who has everything under control. She is at her best when she sees things from God’s perspective. With a sensible mind and heart, she speaks wisdom from the Lord and from His Word.
4. Pure—This is purity in motives, manners, and the message that she speaks.
5. Workers at home—The woman’s first responsibility is to be a worker at home, caring for the needs of her family. Proverbs 31 describes the picture of the godly woman. It is a fantastic tribute.

Proverbs 31:15–19 (*The Message*):

She’s up before dawn, preparing breakfast for her family and organizing her day. She looks over a field and buys it, then, with money she’s put aside, plants a garden. First thing in the morning, she dresses for work, rolls up her sleeves, eager to get started. She senses the worth of her work, is in no hurry to call it quits for the day. She’s skilled in the crafts of home and hearth, diligent in homemaking.

6. Kind—This is a quality of love. It can be seen in one’s actions and attitudes.

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7. Being in subjection to their own husbands—We see the role of the wife is to be in subjection to her own husband in Ephesians 5, 1 Peter 3, and Colossians 4, as well as this chapter 2 of Titus.

The ultimate purpose behind all of the training of the younger women by the older women is seen in the last phrase of this verse: “in order that the Word of God may not be dishonored.”

It is possible to dishonor the Word by what you do! Conduct can corrupt the truth. Deeds can bring dishonor.

Charles Spurgeon in *Exploring the Mind & Heart of the Prince of Preachers: Five-thousand illustrations under one-thousand topical headings from the works of C. H. Spurgeon* says:

A true wife is her husband's better half, his lump of delight, his flower of beauty, his guardian angel. And his heart's treasure. His rib is the best bone in his body.

Women are found fault with for often looking into the glass, but that is not so bad a glass as men drown their senses in.

Oswald Chambers said:

The people who influence us most are not those who buttonhole us and talk to us, but those who live their lives like the stars in heaven and the lilies in the field, perfectly simply and unaffectedly. Those are the lives that mould us. A great mistake is to think that a Spirit-filled man or woman must always be casting sermons at people. Being ‘filled with the spirit’ is merely a refusing of self and a taking by faith of the life of Christ as wrought in us by His Holy Spirit.

Won't you join me this morning in worship and praise as we sing verse 1 of **“He Giveth More Grace”**?: *“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.”*

July 6—Exercising Discipline (Titus 2:6)

Titus 2:6: *“Likewise be urging the young men to be exercising self-control (sensible).”*

Verse 6: Now the responsibility returns to Titus and his work training the young men of Crete. He was probably a young man himself and needed the same admonition Paul gave to Timothy in 1 Timothy 4:12: “Let no one look

down on you (think little of) because you are young; but keep on becoming an example of the believers in word, in behavior, in love, in faith, in purity.”

Just as he urged the older men to be self-controlled and the younger women to be sensible, he uses a derivative of the same word used on those two occasions in speaking to the young men. He directs the same message to them: “The young men are to be exercising self-control.”

When John speaks to the young men in the epistle of 1 John 2:14, he says: “I write to you, young men, because you are strong and the Word of God is abiding in you, and you have conquered the evil one.” These young men were “conquering the evil one” as a result of the indwelling Word of God.

The exercise of self-control is seen in the young man in his (1) study habits, (2) spiritual life, and (3) social activity. The *study*, the *spiritual*, and the *social* reflect the Spirit’s control in his life.

How appropriate that we sing verse 2 of “**He Giveth More Grace**” as we worship and praise the Lord this morning: *“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.”*

July 7—Being a Good Example (Titus 2:7)

Titus 2:7: *“In all things showing yourself to be an example of good deeds, with purity of doctrine, dignified.”*

Verse 7: Paul now turns to an admonition to Titus himself, probably in response to the close relationship between the young men and Titus. This admonition would be for the young men as well. The first admonition was in verse 6: “exercising self-control (sensible).” In this verse, we have the second admonition: “In all things showing yourself to be an example of good deeds.”

There is no distinction between the sacred and the secular. The apostle emphasizes “in all things.”

Barclay points out: “The greatest compliment that can be paid to a teacher is to say of him, ‘First he wrought, and then he taught.’”

The third admonition is that “in all these things showing yourself to be an example of good deeds.” This should be done “with purity of doctrine.” This is emphasized in Paul’s instructions to Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:15: “Make every effort to present yourself to God, approved, as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, guiding the word of truth along a straight path.”

Paul wanted to make sure Titus was not just “an example of good deeds, but also “with purity of doctrine.” The good deeds will follow the purity of doctrine when it is implemented in the life.

Additionally, the apostle emphasizes that Titus should be “dignified” in this “example of good deeds.” This is the fourth admonition. *Discipline, deeds, doctrine, and dignity.*

“Dignified” is the same word used in the statements regarding the older men. It is a person with purpose and intent. It is a serious matter to (1) stand before God, (2) to be a steward, and (3) to speak the truth.

Let’s worship and praise the Lord this morning by singing together verses 1 & 2 of **“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?”*

July 8—Careful with Your Tongues (Titus 2:8)

Titus 2:8: *“Sound in speech which is beyond reproach, in order that the opponent may be put to shame, having nothing bad to say about us.”*

Verse 8: The fifth admonition Paul gives Titus is to be “sound in speech.” Being “sound in speech” means your words are “beyond reproach.” The reason is found in the last phrase: “in order that the opponent may be put to shame, having nothing bad to say about us.”

Gary Thomas in *The Beautiful Fight* says:

So what will draw new disciples in a world that, at best, says “Ho hum” to the historical claims of Jesus’ deity and, at worst, views our evangelism with hostility? Isn’t it true that most evangelism today runs up against the wall of “Well, that’s just your opinion”? In a world busy dropping the truth of absolutes and eager to wear the clothes of intellectual and moral relativism, what will take us beyond opinion to making a compelling case for faith? Beginning to live compelling lives that can be explained only by the truth of what we believe.

Charles Spurgeon wrote about this issue many years ago: “We cannot force truth on men, but we can make our teaching clear and decided, and make our lives consistent with our words. Truth and holiness are the surest antidotes to error and unrighteousness.”

Psalm 19:14 (NLT): “May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing to you, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer.”

This morning, please join me in worship and praise by continuing to sing Isaac Watts’s wonderful hymn. Let’s sing verses 3 & 4 of **“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.”*

July 9—Be a Star Employee (Titus 2:9)

Titus 2:9: “*Be urging bondslaves to be in subjection to their own masters in everything, to be well-pleasing, not argumentative.*”

Verse 9: The fifth and final group the apostle addresses are the bondslaves or servants. He says five things to them in these next two verses. This answers the question: How does godliness look on the job?

1. Submission—to be in subjection to their own masters in everything.

The servant should recognize the chain of authority and willingly submit to his masters or employers in everything. It is said of Naaman in 2 Kings chapter 5: “He was a great man with his master.” This can only be true when a man has learned to be submissive to authority over him.

2. Well-pleasing or sincere.

We read of Joseph in Potiphar’s house in Genesis 39:3-4: “When his master saw that the Lord was with him and that the Lord gave him success in everything he did, Joseph found favor in his eyes and became his attendant. Potiphar put him in charge of his household, and he entrusted to his care everything he owned.”

Colossians 3:22-23: “Servants, be obeying in all things your masters according to the flesh, not with eye service as men pleasers, but with a sincere heart, fearing the Lord. Whatever you are doing, be working from the heart, as to the Lord and not to men.”

3. Not argumentative.

The godly bondservant or slave should not talk back, criticize or argue with his master, but be supportive.

Submissive, supportive, and a servant.

Please join me in worship and praise as we sing verses 1 & 2 of “**Channels Only**”: “*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. Emptied that Thou shouldest fill me, A clean vessel in Thy hand; With no pow’r but as Thou givest Graciously with each command. 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.*”

July 10—Honesty Is the Best Policy (Titus 2:10)

Titus 2:10: “*Not pilfering but showing all good faith in order that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in every respect.*”

Verse 10: We continue our list of Paul’s five directives to the bondslaves:

4. Not pilfering or stealing from his master.

Philemon is a wonderful little book to read and a great example of Paul’s instruction of “not pilfering (or stealing)” from your master.

5. Showing all good faith or loyalty—showing a contrast from the fourth admonition.

A real servant can be trusted.

A star employee is (1) submissive, (2) sincere, (3) supportive, (4) not stealing, and (5) showing good faith.

The ultimate purpose behind Paul's instructions to these five groups and specifically to the bondslaves (employees) is seen in the last phrase: "in order that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in every respect."

In the fifth verse, we saw the purpose: "in order that the Word of God may not be dishonored," and now in this verse, Paul speaks of adorning or beautifying the teachings of the Word.

Gene A. Getz in his book, *The Measure of a Man*, says of "adorn": "It is used by our Lord to describe a well-ordered house, decorated tombstones, and well-trimmed lamps ... the temple that was adorned with beautiful stones." Further, he says: "they are to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in every respect.... No matter what our position or profession, we are to live in such a way that our lives are becoming to the teachings of the Word of God."

William Hendricksen points out we should live "a sanctified life which brings into clear perspective all the fruits of transforming grace, like obedience, cheerfulness, integrity, etc."

As we meditate on this verse, let's ask ourselves these two questions: (1) Am I bringing honor to the Word? and (2) Am I beautifying the teachings of the Word?

This is godliness in relationship.

This morning, please join me as we sing verses 3 & 4 of "**Channels Only**":
*"Witnessing Thy pow'r to save me, Setting free from self and sin; Thou who bought-
est to possess me, In Thy fullness, Lord come in. 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."*

July 11—Amazing Grace (Titus 2:11)

Titus 2:11: *"For the grace of God has appeared bringing salvation to all men."*

Verse 11: In this passage of Titus, we will be considering the platform of godliness—the foundation upon which the godly life is built. What is the basis for the godly life? What is the pathway that leads to that life? Biblically, it is found in one word: *grace*.

How does God's grace provide for godliness? I always thought you had to legislate a godly lifestyle, but grace is not only the basis for salvation, but also for godliness.

Someone said: "Service doesn't make saints!"

Romans 11:6: "But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace."

Your godly life verifies the grace of God. It is always grace. Grace in the past at the cross of Christ. Grace in the present in His sufficiency for us and His strength made perfect in our weaknesses. Grace in the future in our inheritance in heaven reserved for us.

When Jesus came, He brought a gift for everyone.

He is the One who is bringing salvation to all men.

2 Peter 3:9: "The Lord of the promise is not delaying, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not desiring for any to perish, but for all to make room for (come to) repentance."

William Hendricksen says: "God's grace is his active favor bestowing the greatest gift upon those who have deserved the greatest punishment."

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."

How appropriate that we worship and praise the Lord this morning by singing verses 1 & 2 of "**Amazing Grace**": *"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!"*

July 12—Saying "No" to the Flesh & "Yes" to the Spirit (Titus 2:12)

Titus 2:12: *"Instructing (disciplining) us that denying ungodliness and worldly desires we should live sensibly and righteously and godly in the present (now) age."*

Verse 12: The grace of God trains us in specific areas. It trains us negatively about "denying ungodliness and worldly desires," and, positively, how we should "live sensibly and righteously and godly in the present (now) age."

As a result of coming to know Jesus Christ as Saviour and experiencing His salvation, we are taught in several critical areas: two negative and three positive.

One of the keys to Christian growth and maturity is to have a teachable spirit.

First, let's look at the way we are instructed negatively by the grace of God:

1. Denying ungodliness.

We come under conviction of the Spirit and become sensitive to the voice of the Spirit learning to say "no." This means saying "no" to the old nature that wars within our hearts and lives. Living and loving in close relationship to Christ changes our lives.

Galatians 5:16: "But I am saying, walk by means of the Spirit and you will by no means fulfill the desire of the flesh."

Romans 6:13: "Moreover, stop presenting the members of your body to sin as tools of wickedness; but present yourselves to God as those who are alive from the dead, and your members as tools of righteousness to God."

2. Worldly desires.

1 John 2:15-16: "Stop loving the world, neither the things which are in the world. If a man keeps on loving the world, the love of the Father is not in him. Because everything which is in the world, the passionate desire of the flesh, and the passionate desire of the eyes, and the vainglory of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world."

Not only are we to be denying ungodliness in our behavior, but denying worldly desires in our thought life. Out of those desires come the actions of ungodliness.

We have looked at the two negative areas, now we look at the three positive areas. Paul instructs us to live:

1. Sensibly.
2. Righteously.
3. Godly in the present (now) age.

The more the Word is implanted in our thought, the more godly we become.

Please join me in worship and praise this morning as we sing verses 3 & 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."*

July 13—He's Coming Again (Titus 2:13)

Titus 2:13: *"Looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Christ Jesus."*

Verse 13: The future manifestation of grace. He is coming back to take me home.

Where the future is concerned, we should be "looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Christ Jesus."

1 John 3:3: "And everyone who is having this hope on Him is purifying himself, even as that one is pure." One of the great motivational factors to pure clean living is the soon coming of Jesus Christ.

Barclay says: "The dynamic of this new life is the expectation of the coming of Jesus Christ. When a royal visit is expected, everything is cleansed and

decorated and made fit for the royal eye to see. The Christian is the man who is always prepared for the coming of the King of Kings.”

Dr. J. Sidlow Baxter gives this illustration of the second coming of Christ:

A Scotsman and his two sons were returning from a fishing trip. The younger son said, “I can see her now, my precious wife, waiting at home for me. Oh yes, she is indeed a faithful one.” The older son said, “My wife will not only be waiting, but she will be perched on the windowsill watching for me to come home. That is what I call faithfulness.” The father Scotsman said, “Sons, I can show you where your mother, bless her dear heart, excels them both. She will not only be waiting and watching for me to come home, but she will be fixing my dinner as well.” We should be watching, waiting, and working until our Lord comes.

Join me in singing this great old hymn as we worship and praise the Lord this morning. Please sing with me verses 1-3 of **“When the Roll Is Called Up Yonder”**: *“When the trumpet of the Lord shall sound and time shall be no more, And the morning breaks eternal, bright, and fair; When the saved of earth shall gather over on the other shore, And the roll is called up yonder I’ll be there! On that bright and cloudless morning when the dead in Christ shall rise And the glory of His resurrection share; When His chosen ones shall gather to their home beyond the skies, And the roll is called up yonder, I’ll be there! Let us labor for the Master from the dawn till setting sun, Let us talk of all His wondrous love and care; Then when all of life is over, and our work on earth is done, And the roll is called up yonder, I’ll be there! When the roll is called up yonder, When the roll is called up yonder, When the roll is called up yonder, When the roll is called up yonder, I’ll be there.”*

July 14—He Died on the Cross (Titus 2:14)

Titus 2:14: *“Who gave Himself on our behalf in order that He might set us free from every lawless deed and purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds.”*

Verse 14: This verse is a summary of the past, the present and the future. In the past, “Who gave Himself on our behalf,” with the purpose that in the present “He might set us free from every lawless deed and purify for Himself a people,” a people in the future who are going to be “His own possession, zealous for good deeds.”

The “Who” refers to Jesus Christ.

In the past, He gave himself. In the present, He sets us free and purifies our hearts. In the future, we are His possession.

He not only appeared, but acted by giving of Himself on our behalf.

The purpose for Jesus dying on the cross and giving of Himself is stated with a three-fold purpose. It was in order that :

1. He might set us free from every lawless deed.
2. He might purify for Himself a people for His own possession.
3. He might make us zealous for good deeds.

Max Lucado says in *In the Grip of Grace: You Can't Fall Beyond His Love*:

Dear Mrs. Smith,

I'm writing in response to this morning's request for forgiveness. I'm sorry to inform you that you have reached your quota of sins. Our records show that, since employing our services, you have erred seven times in the area of greed, and your prayer life is substandard when compared to others of like age and circumstance.

Further review reveals that your understanding of doctrine is in the lower 20 percentile and you have excessive tendencies to gossip. Because of your sins you are a high-risk candidate for heaven. You understand that grace has its limits. Jesus sends his regrets and kindest regards and hopes that you will find some other form of coverage.

Many fear receiving such a letter. Some worry they already have! If an insurance company can't cover my honest mistakes, can I expect God to cover my intentional rebellion?

Yes! God's wonderful grace covers all of our sins. Please join me in celebration and worship as we sing together verse 1 of "**Grace Greater Than Our Sin**": "*Marvelous grace of our loving Lord, Grace that exceeds our sin and our guilt, Yonder on Calvary's mount outpoured, There where the blood of the Lamb was spilt. Grace, grace, God's grace, Grace that will pardon and cleanse within; Grace, grace, God's grace, Grace that is greater than all our sin.*"

July 15—Persevering & Pressing On (Titus 2:15)

Titus 2:15: "*These things be speaking and exhorting and reproving with all authority. Let no one be looking down on you.*"

Verse 15: "These things" refers to the statements made in verses 11–14. The apostle encourages Titus to do these three things with all authority:

1. Speaking.
2. Exhorting.
3. Reproving.

This authority comes from the Spirit of God who has inspired the Word of God. Titus is also not to let anyone look down on him.

1 Timothy 4:12: “Let no one look down on you (think little of) because you are young; but keep on becoming an example of the believers in word, in behavior, in love, in faith, in purity.”

We have learned in this book of Titus that we are to be: (1) honoring the Word and (2) beautifying the teachings.

This morning, let's join together in worship and praise as we sing verse 4 of **“Grace Greater Than Our Sin”**: *“Marvelous, infinite, matchless grace, Freely bestowed on all who believe; You that are longing to see His face, Will you this moment His grace receive? Grace, grace, God’s grace, Grace that will pardon and cleanse within; Grace, grace, God’s grace, Grace that is greater than all our sin.”*

July 16—Submissive, Obedient & Available (Titus 3:1)

Titus 3:1: *“Be reminding them to put themselves in subjection to rulers, to authorities to be obedient, to be ready for every good deed.”*

Verse 1: Now, Paul turns to some practical areas and directs Titus in what he needs to tell the folks on the island of Crete regarding their responsibilities to those in authority over them.

“Be reminding them.” I believe by the word, “them,” Paul is referring to the five groups he addressed in chapter 2: older men, older women, young women, young men, and bondslaves.

Godliness is the result of learning to live with divine authority. Our vertical relationship with God is lived out in our horizontal relationships with others. Hebrews 5:8: “Although being a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered.”

Paul points out seven directions where they should manifest their godly lifestyle:

1. Put themselves in subject to rulers.

Romans 13:1: “Let every person be putting himself in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which are existing are established by God.”

1 Peter 2:13: “Be subject to every human institution for the Lord’s sake.”

Watchman Nee in his book *Spiritual Authority* said: “God could forbear their murmurings in the wilderness ten times, but He could not allow them to resist His authority.”

2. Be obedient to authorities.

The Christian ought to be the perfect example of the law-abiding citizen who is obedient to the authority over him.

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3. Be ready for every good deed.

It is not only to be submissive and obedient, but positive, available, and “ready for every good deed.”

We can summarize these responsibilities as *submissive, obedient, and available*.

There are tremendous overtones from this verse in our relationship with God, who is the sovereign authority. We learn what godliness is about as we are submissive to His work in our lives, obedient to His Word and available as His vessel. Then He can work to bear fruit toward godliness in our lives and toward salvation in the lives of others who do not know Him.

Please join me in worship and praise as we sing verses 1 & 2 of that wonderful prayer hymn, “**Have Thine Own Way, Lord**”: *“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. 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.”*

July 17—Patient, Supportive & Gentle (Titus 3:2)

Titus 3:2: *“To be speaking evil of no one, to be uncontentious, gentle, showing every consideration for all men.”*

Verse 2: In this verse, Paul continues his list of seven directives for manifesting a godly lifestyle:

4. Be speaking evil of no one.

Titus 2:3: “Older women, likewise, are to be worthy of reverence in their behavior; not malicious gossips, nor enslaved to much wine, teachers of that which is good.”

Paxton Hood said: “When we advance a little into life, we find that the tongue of man creates nearly all of the mischief of the world.”

5. Be uncontentious.

Getz points out: “Contentious people who are always starting arguments and quarrels and fights are frequently selfish and jealous people.”

In contrast, James describes the results of heavenly wisdom in James 3:17: “But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy.”

6. Be gentle.

Getz says: “In other words, says Paul, demonstrate the same gentleness and mercy toward non-Christians that God showered on you

when He saved you. Be as patient with their shortcomings as the Lord was with yours.”

This is the characteristic of one who is willing to yield and submit in a situation without harsh words. It is one who is kind and manifests this kindness with a soft touch and when speaking, speaks of a wisdom which is from above.

7. Showing every consideration for all men.

Philippians 2:3–4 (Phillips): “Never act from motives of rivalry or personal vanity, but in humility think more of each other than you do of yourselves. None of you should think only of his own affairs, but should learn to see things from other people’s point of view.”

Let’s join together in worship and praise singing verses 3 & 4 of **“Have Thine Own Way, Lord”**: *“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! 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!”*

July 18—A Picture of Our Past (Titus 3:3)

Titus 3:3: *“For we were at one time also foolish, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another.”*

Verse 3: Now, Paul gives us the reason we need to demonstrate these seven qualities outlined in the last two verses: we were like the majority of the human race before we became Christians. Before our conversion, we, too, could be described in the following six ways:

1. Foolish.

The psalmist said in Psalm 14:1(KJV): “The fool hath said in his heart, ‘There is no God.’”

1 Corinthians 2:14: “But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.”

2. Disobedient.

The fruit of rebellion and resistance toward God manifests itself in the disobedient heart.

3. Deceived.

We believed we could handle any situation. We were the masters of our fate and the captain of our salvation. We saw no need for salvation.

1 John 1:8: "If we say that we are not having sin, we are leading ourselves astray, and the truth is not in us."

4. Enslaved to various lusts (desires) and pleasures.

According to Ephesians 2, the man who is enslaved to his old nature is dead in trespasses and sins.

5. Spending our lives in malice and envy.

When we lived our lives with ego and pride at the center of everything, we saw everyone else as a competitor to be beaten, a very antisocial perspective. Envy was manifested anytime we saw someone as more successful or more appreciated than ourselves.

6. Hateful or hating one another.

1 John 2:9: "The one who is saying that he is in the light and is hating his brother, he is in the darkness until now."

I find I am eager and passionate about "forgetting that which is behind and pressing toward that which is ahead." Let's sing together verse 1 of "**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."*

July 19—Kindness & Love (Titus 3:4)

Titus 3:4: *"But when the kindness of God our Saviour and His love for mankind appeared."*

Verse 4: "But" forms the contrast from the past. Then, the apostle tells us what and who made the difference.

There are two things describing God in this verse: (1) the kindness of God our Saviour and (2) His love for mankind. These two qualities or attributes of God form the foundation stone for the whole doctrine of salvation.

Kindness = Action and Love = Attitude. Both are unconditional and unchanging.

Romans 5:8: "But God is demonstrating His own love to us, because while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

Dr. David Jeremiah in his book, *God Loves You: He Always Has—He Always Will* said:

Author John Ortberg brings this truth home to our hearts when he writes, "Nothing you will ever do could make God love you more than he does right now: not greater achievement, not greater beauty, not wider recognition, not even greater levels of spirituality and obedience. Nothing you have ever done could

make God love you any less: not any sin, not any failure, not any guilt, not any regret.”

This morning, please join me in worship and praise as we sing together 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.”*

July 20—When Jesus Came Into My Heart (Titus 3:5)

Titus 3:5: *“He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit.”*

Verse 5: In verse 4, we saw His kindness and His love, but in this verse we have His mercy. Because of this kindness, love and mercy; He moved into action to save us.

Negatively, it was “not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness,” but, positively, “according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit.”

Nowhere in the Scriptures do we find a statement that salvation is something which is earned. Godliness is the result of a relationship!

Ephesians 5:26: “That He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the Word.”

Gaebelein in the Annotated Bible points out: “The washing or bathing or regeneration is the new birth.”

Psalms 119:9, 11: “How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to Your Word. I have hidden Your Word in my heart that I might not sin against You.”

Let’s worship and praise the Lord this morning by singing together 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.”*

July 21—Filling of the Spirit (Titus 3:6)

Titus 3:6: *“Whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Saviour.”*

Verse 6: In this verse, the apostle refers to the Holy Spirit from verse 5, the whom: “Whom He poured out.”

At the point of salvation and involved in salvation, the Spirit of God is the great regenerator. He is the giver of life and the One by whom we experience daily renewing. The Holy Spirit is poured out upon us richly at the point of salvation by faith. This salvation is through Jesus Christ our Saviour.

The Spirit is involved in *regenerating, renewing, and restoring*.

Romans 8:14: "For as many as are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God."

Romans 8:16: "The Spirit Himself is bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God."

Ephesians 5:18: "And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the 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."

Please join me in worship and praise as we invite the Lord to fill us up. Let's sing together verse 1 of **"Fill My Cup, Lord"**: *"Like the woman at the well, I was seeking For things that could not satisfy; And then I heard my Savior speaking 'Draw from My well that never shall run dry.' Fill my cup, Lord, I lift it up, Lord! Come and quench this thirsting of my soul; Bread of Heaven, feed me till I want no more, Fill my cup, fill it up and make me whole!"*

July 22—Justified by His Grace (Titus 3:7)

Titus 3:7: *"In order that, having been justified by His grace, we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life."*

Verse 7: In this verse, we have the statement of purpose behind God's kindness, love and mercy in providing salvation: "having been justified by His grace."

Justification is simply the act of God declaring a sinner righteous by forgiving his sin and giving him righteousness. It is an act of God's grace. It is made available to us by the single condition of faith that "we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life."

"The hope of eternal life" is seen in Titus 1:2: "In the hope of life eternal, which God, who cannot lie, promised long ages ago."

The glorious future anticipation of believers is their faith in God's word that although they are absent from the body, they are eternally with the Lord.

1 Peter 1:4-5: "Unto an inheritance imperishable and undefiled and unfading, which has been reserved in heaven for you, you who are being protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time."

This morning, let's worship and praise the Lord together by singing together verse 2 & 3 of **"Fill My Cup, Lord"**: *"There are millions in this world who are craving The pleasure earthly things afford; But none can match the wondrous treasure That I find in Jesus Christ my Lord. So, my brother, if the things this world gave you Leave hungers that won't pass away, My blessed Lord will come and save you, If you kneel to Him and humbly pray; Fill my cup, Lord, I lift it up, Lord! Come and quench this thirsting of my soul; Bread of Heaven, feed me till I want no more, Fill my cup, fill it up and make me whole!"*

July 23—Fatherly Advice (Titus 3:8)

Titus 3:8: *"Trustworthy is the word, and concerning these things I am desiring you to be speaking confidently, in order that those who have believed God may be careful to engage in good works. These things are good and profitable to men."*

Verse 8: Paul begins this verse with the phrase: "Trustworthy is the word." God said it. I believe it. That settles it!

Satan's program is the complete opposite. It creates doubt, denial, disobedience and destruction.

One's attitude toward the Word determines progress toward godliness.

The apostle wants Titus to recognize the trustworthy nature of the message which he speaks so he will speak with confidence. Titus will need this confidence so he will not waiver when he faces opposition.

Why is the Word trustworthy? Why should Titus speak confidently? The purpose is "in order that those who have believed God may be careful to engage in good works."

As the message of the Word of God is faithfully expounded and believers are submitting themselves to this message, there will be believers in God. They have put their faith in Jesus Christ. As a result of receiving the Word of God, they will be sensitized to engage in good works.

Good works are a natural result of receiving the truth. Flowing out of my life will be evidences that I am His child and feeding on His Word.

Paul concludes the verse: "These things are good and profitable to men."

"These things" refers to everything in the epistle thus far, but specifically to the foundation of salvation given in the previous verses.

Let's sing together in worship and praise verse 1 of one of Fanny Crosby's great hymns, **"Blessed Assurance"**: *"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."*

July 24—Don't Get Distracted (Titus 3:9)

Titus 3:9: *“But be avoiding foolish controversies and genealogies and contention and strife about the law (legal battles). For they are unprofitable and worthless.”*

Verse 9: In the previous verse, Paul gave positive instruction. He desired Titus to speak confidently the Word of God to those who have believed. This confidence will challenge them to good works as a result of the godly processes in their lives.

In this verse, the apostle points out four distractions from the goal of godliness to be avoided:

1. Foolish controversies. Titus 1:10 referenced the controversy with the rebellious men, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision. Foolish issues create more heat than light from the conflict.
Ryrie in his book, *Balancing the Christian Life*, said: “That a complaining attitude comes from self not the Spirit who wants to make us thankful always, and disharmony at home or at work is not of the Lord, but of self.”
2. Genealogies. Some folks were claiming Christianity based on ancestry. They believed their tribe or family gave them the right to speak and lead.
3. Contention. As a result of some of these foolish controversies, a real dissension or division was taking place in Crete.
4. Strife about the law or legal battles. The real issue was over legalistic requirements demanded by those of Jewish persuasion. They were pushing the belief that godliness was produced by performance and creating battles within the church.

The function of the Law is to convict and condemn. The Law has nothing to do with godliness.

At the end of these four-fold commands is given a two-fold reason: “for they are (1) unprofitable and (2) worthless.” Phillips translates: “They settle nothing and lead nowhere.”

Don't let the devil use distraction to destroy the potential for your fruitfulness.

This morning, please join me in worship and praise singing verse 2 of **“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.”*

July 25—Stay Away from Divisive Know-It-Alls (Titus 3:10)

Titus 3:10: “*Be rejecting a factious (divisive) man after a first and second warning.*”

Verse 10: In the previous verse, Paul instructed the church to avoid battles with those who are divisive because those battles are unprofitable and worthless. In this verse, he directs them to reject a factious or divisive man.

There is a process. This rejection should be after a first and second warning.

John had a similar situation in 3 John 1:9–10: “I wrote something to the church; but Diotrephes, who loves to be first among them, does not accept what we say. For this reason, if I come, I will call attention to his deeds which he does, unjustly accusing us with wicked words; and not satisfied with this, neither does he himself receive the brethren, and he forbids those who desire to do so, and puts them out of the church.”

Ryrie says: “This is the road of the spiritual life—a dedicated life that is disciplined, dependent and developing.”

Paul warns Timothy in 2 Timothy 4:14–15: “Alexander, the coppersmith, did me a great deal of harm; the Lord will pay him back according to his deeds. And you also be guarding yourself against him for he vigorously opposed our words.”

I also love Paul’s words to Timothy in 2 Timothy 4:1–3: “I am charging you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, the One who is about to be judging the living and the dead and by His appearing and His kingdom. Preach the Word, hold yourself in readiness when it is convenient and when it is inconvenient, reprove, rebuke, exhort with unlimited patience and teaching. For the time will come when they will not listen willingly to wholesome instruction, But after their own desires, they will accumulate to themselves a great many teachers who are tickling their ears.”

Please join me in 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.*”

July 26—Don’t Waste Your Time (Titus 3:11)

Titus 3:11: “*Knowing that such a man is perverted (twisted, turned inside out) and is sinning, being self-condemned.*”

Verse 11: Paul gives two reasons to reject this factious man: (1) he is perverted (twisted, turned inside out) and (2) he is sinning, being self-condemned.

He is perverted or twisted in his stubbornness or willfulness and his unwillingness to listen to reason and wisdom.

Phillips paraphrases: "You can be sure that he has a moral twist and he knows it."

The apostle points out that his rejection of his brothers who are approaching him about this matter shows he is guilty of sinning, being self-condemned. The NIV says: "You may be sure that such a man is warped and sinful, he is self-condemned."

He is like someone who would say: "Don't confuse me with the facts. My mind is already made up!"

This passage reminds us of Titus 1:16: "They are confessing to know God, but by their deeds, they are denying Him, being detestable and disobedient and with reference to every good work disapproved."

The opposite of this man is one who shows godliness. A godly man brings about unity and shows sensitivity to the approaches and criticisms of others. He has good judgment and does not sin. He is sensitive to the need for unity in the body of Christ.

Gary Thomas in *Every Body Matters* said:

The great Puritan Jonathan Edwards was as blunt as a man could be about this: "We are nothing if we are not in earnest about our faith, and if our wills and inclinations are not intensely exercised. The religious life contains things too great for us to be lukewarm." He takes it one step further when he adds, "If there is a fight to be fought, or a race to be won, then it must be done with utmost earnestness. Without this there is no way of traveling the narrow road that leads to life. Sloth is therefore as damning as open rebellion."

I mention this because many will say getting in shape physically, changing the way they eat, making time for exercise, being disciplined to work out even when they don't feel like, is too much effort. It sounds like works-righteousness. It might even lead to legalism. And since laziness and overeating don't seem like scandalous sins, we let them slowly but steadily steal our health away.

Let's join together in worship and praise this morning singing verse 1 of **"Find Us Faithful"**: *"We're pilgrims on the journey of the narrow road. And those who've gone before us line the way. Cheering on the faithful, encouraging the weary. Their lives a stirring testament To God's sustaining grace. O May all who come behind us, find us faithful. May the fire of our devotion light their way. May the footprints that we leave, lead them to believe. And the lives we live inspire them to obey. O May all who come behind us, find us faithful."*

July 27—Supplying Needs (Titus 3:12-13)

Titus 3:12: *“When I shall send Artemas or Tychicus to you, make every effort to come to me at Nicopolis. For there I have decided to spend the winter.”*

Titus 3:13: *“Diligently set forward on their journey Zenas the lawyer and Apollos in order that nothing be lacking for them.”*

Verse 12: The apostle has been instructing Titus and the church on Crete about principles of godliness in this epistle. He has pointed out pretenders or those who profess to know God, but prove they are living by a perversion of godliness in their lives. In this passage, we have the privilege of recognizing the lives of five men that the Lord has raised up to assist the apostle in his ministry.

In this verse, Paul mentions three of those men: (1) Artemas, (2) Tychicus, and (3) Titus (referenced by “you”).

1 Corinthians 1:26: “Notice among yourselves dear brothers that few of us who follow Christ have big names or power or wealth.”

Verse 13: In the phrase, “diligently set forward,” Paul makes reference to caring for their physical and financial needs before these men journey on further in their traveling and teaching ministry. He mentions the other two men: (4) Zenas and (5) Apollos.

Apollos is not only mighty in Scriptures and a man gifted in expressing himself, but his life shows beauty in his humility to receive instruction from fellow laymen who were deeply concerned about increasing his effectiveness.

Paul tells the Philippians in Philippians 4:18: “But I am having all things and I am abounding. I have been filled full when I received from Epaphroditus the things from you, a fragrant aroma (pleasing smell), a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God.”

What is your contribution to the body of Christ and sharing the ministry of the Word?

This morning, please join me in worship and praise as we sing verse 2 of **“Find Us Faithful”**: *“Surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses Let us run the race not only for the prize. But as those who’ve gone before us Let us leave to those behind us A heritage of faithfulness passed on through Godly light. O May all who come behind us, find us faithful. May the fire of our devotion light their way. May the footprints that we leave, lead them to believe. And the lives we live inspire them to obey. O May all who come behind us, find us faithful.”*

July 28—Grace Be With You All (Titus 3:14–15)

Titus 3:14: *“And let those also who are ours learn to be engaging in good works to meet pressing needs, in order that they may not be unfruitful.”*

Titus 3:15: *“All those with me send greetings to you. Greet those who love us in faith. Grace be with you all.”*

Verse 14: “Ours” refers to those on our staff, believers who have stepped forward to support and help. They are those who are in the Heavenly family and have come to know Christ as Saviour through their ministry. Paul admonishes Titus to let those “learn to be engaging in good works to meet pressing needs.”

This has been an epistle of good works. As a believer begins to grow in the truth, he will have a desire to share, to meet pressing needs.

These good works to meet pressing needs are “in order that they may not be unfruitful.”

Verse 15: Paul concludes this letter to Titus by sending a greeting from those who are with him as he writes this letter.

It is challenging to be isolated on an island in ministry in adverse circumstances. Titus has been faithful and endured. He accomplished the task given by the apostle, but I’m sure he appreciated this letter and greetings on this occasion.

Paul ends the letter with “Grace be with you all.” At the beginning of the letter, the apostle greeted Titus with: “Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Saviour.” This was his desire for Titus’ ministry on Crete. Now, it is the desire that this grace be with all those who are on the island of Crete.

Gary Thomas in *Every Body Matters* said:

Isn’t this the kind of life we should all aspire to live, as God provides the ability and strength to do so? Let’s seek to embrace, within a Christian context, the life experience described by a friend of ultramarathoner Dean Karnazes: “Life is not a journey to the grave with the intention of arriving safely in a pretty and well-preserved body, but rather to skid in broadside, thoroughly used up, totally worn out, and loudly proclaiming: ‘Wow!! What a ride!’”

Please join me as we sing in worship and praise verse 3 of “**Find Us Faithful**”: *“After all our hopes and dreams have come and gone. And our children sift through all we’ve left behind. May the clues that they discover And the memories they uncover Become the light that leads them to the road we each must find. O May all who come behind us, find us faithful. May the fire of our devotion light their way. May the footprints that we leave, lead them to believe. And the lives we live inspire them to obey. O May all who come behind us, find us faithful.”*

July 29—It's a God Thing (Galatians 1:1)

Galatians 1:1: “Paul, an apostle, not from men, nor through men, but through Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead.”

In our devotional journey, we will begin this morning with the book of Galatians. Martin Luther said: “The epistle of Galatians is my epistle. To it I am as it were in wedlock. It is my Kathryn.” He put this book to his lips as a trumpet and used it to blow the reveille for the reformation period of the church.

It sets forth salvation by the free grace of God without human works. It draws out attention to the complete sufficiency of Jesus Christ and the adequacy of simple faith as an acceptable and proper response to the gospel.

Radmacher, Allen & House say: “In the whole Bible, there is no more passionate, comprehensive, yet concise statement of the truth of the gospel than Galatians. This letter has transformed the lives of many from Martin Luther to John Wesley.”

Verse 1: The apostle begins using the negative and positive approach. “Paul, an apostle,” negatively, “not from men, nor through men,” but positively, “through Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead.”

His salvation and apostleship are granted by God. According to this verse, all Paul was came through Jesus Christ. His *way* of life, his *words*, and his *works* were all through Jesus Christ.

Let's pray that God will impress upon us that (1) all that we are, (2) all that we have to say, and (3) all that we have to do comes from Jesus Christ.

When we are willing, Christ will take your *nothing* and fill it with Himself, which is *everything*, and then you will have *something*.

Why does Paul mention the resurrection: “who raised Him from the dead.” It is to show us the Lord is alive and He could call Paul to apostleship. It is the resurrection that is the Father's final seal of approval. It was His endorsement upon the completed work of His Son in providing salvation. The resurrection makes Christianity distinctive among the religions of the world.

It seems most appropriate this morning to join together singing in worship and praise verse 1 of “**Wonderful Grace of Jesus**”: “*Wonderful grace of Jesus, Greater than all my sin; How shall my tongue describe it, Where shall its praise begin? Taking away my burden, Setting my spirit free; For the wonderful grace of Jesus reaches me. Wonderful the matchless grace of Jesus, Deeper than the mighty rolling sea; Wonderful grace, all sufficient for me, for even me. Broader than the scope of my transgressions, Greater far than all my sin and shame, O magnify the precious Name of Jesus. Praise His Name!*”

July 30—Grace & Peace (Galatians 1:2–3)

Galatians 1:2: *“And all the brethren who are with me, to the churches of Galatia:”*

Galatians 1:3: *“Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.”*

Verse 2: “All the brethren” refers to Peter, James, John and the other Christian brothers who were part of God’s family and involved in Paul’s ministry. The support of “all the brethren” to Paul lends authority to his words in this letter.

The phrase “to the churches of Galatia” clarifies that this letter was not sent to one church, but was distributed as a circular letter among several of the churches in that area.

In other epistles written by Paul, he usually began with warm personal greetings and expressions of thanksgiving for their faithfulness. Often he spoke of his prayers for them. However, the absence of these customary remarks lends to the tone of tension in this letter.

Verse 3: Whenever Paul speaks of “grace” and “peace,” they are always in that order. When the grace of God has found its way into the human heart, there will be peace. The measure of peace enjoyed equals the grace accepted.

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.”

This morning, let’s worship and praise the Lord by singing together verse 2 of **“Wonderful Grace of Jesus”**: *“Wonderful grace of Jesus, Reaching to all the lost, By it I have been pardoned, Saved to the uttermost, Chains have been torn asunder, Giving me liberty; For the wonderful grace of Jesus reaches me. Wonderful the matchless grace of Jesus, Deeper than the mighty rolling sea; Wonderful grace, all sufficient for me, for even me. Broader than the scope of my transgressions, Greater far than all my sin and shame, O magnify the precious Name of Jesus. Praise His Name!”*

July 31—The Gospel in a Nutshell (Galatians 1:4–5)

Galatians 1:4: *“Who gave Himself on behalf of our sins, so that He might rescue us out of this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father.”*

Galatians 1:5: *“To Whom be the glory for ever and ever. Amen.”*

Verse 4: The true gospel is stated in this verse. There is no need to add the works of the Law to the tremendous work of God in the gift of His Son as a payment for our sins. The reason Christ gave Himself was to pardon our sins. The purpose of this sacrifice was to deliver us from death.

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.”

Take notice: He gave Himself on behalf of our sins. “Our” means the sins of all of us. We are all guilty of sin.

Romans 3:23: “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”

Stephen Brown in *When Being Good Isn't Good Enough* said: “I love the little boy who prayed, ‘Dear Jesus, forgive all the bad things I did today, and forgive all the bad things I thought about, but didn't get around to doing.’”

He was the only One who could give “Himself on behalf of our sins.”

The result of His giving of Himself is seen in the next phrase: “so that He might rescue us out of this present evil age.” The keynote of the whole epistle hangs on this word: “rescue.” The gospel is a rescue from: (1) a state of bondage and (2) being sold under sin.

God the Father, the great Life-Saver of the universe, has thrown the Ring-buoy of His Son into the sea of human sin. You can choose to drown in the waters of sin or allow God to bring about a rescue by taking hold of His Son, Jesus Christ.

Looking down upon the children of Israel in bondage to Egypt, God delivered them through His miraculous intervention under the leadership of Moses and Aaron.

The Father always takes the initiative. Mankind is drowning in the waters of sin, not knowing there is One who can rescue and save. God the Father has thrown the Life-ring of His Son into the sea of sin and death, providing the means of rescue in His Son. Who are we to blame God when we refuse to take hold of His provision of rescue? Man accepts the full responsibility when he rejects the instrument of the Father for the salvation of man.

Why did Jesus Christ give Himself on Calvary's cross? He “gave Himself on behalf of our sins, so that He might rescue us out of this present evil age.”

“According to the will of our God and Father.” God wants us free from bondage. He desires for us to have life in Him.

Wiersbe says: “We must never forget that the Christian life is a living relationship with God through Jesus Christ.”

In this next verse, Paul breaks into praise over the contemplation of the truth of the gospel.

Verse 5: The only appropriate response to such grace is praise, thankful worship and adoration.

Please join me in worship and praise this morning as we sing verse 3 of “**Wonderful Grace of Jesus**”: “*Wonderful grace of Jesus, Reaching the most defiled, By its transforming power, Making him God's dear child, Purchasing peace and heaven, For all eternity; And the wonderful grace of Jesus reaches me. Wonderful*

the matchless grace of Jesus, Deeper than the mighty rolling sea; Wonderful grace, all sufficient for me, for even me. Broader than the scope of my transgressions, Greater far than all my sin and shame, O magnify the precious Name of Jesus. Praise His Name!"

AUGUST

August 1—A Different Gospel (Galatians 1:6)

Galatians 1:6: "I am marveling that so quickly you are transferring yourselves from Him who called you in the sphere of Christ's grace, unto a different gospel."

Verse 6: The apostle Paul is amazed at their response. They are transferring themselves from the "sphere of Christ's grace, unto a different gospel." At first, they were so enthusiastic, but now they have cooled off. They are starting to move in another direction.

There are five references to the word "gospel" in the four verses of this section (verses 6–9).

In this verse, Paul is shocked by the suddenness of change taking place in their attitudes toward the gospel of Christ's grace. The Galatians were "transferring" themselves back into the bondage of the law and legalistic requirements when they had previously chosen to live in the freedom which was theirs through an experience of receiving Christ as their Savior.

I have had the privilege over the years to teach many people the joy of waterskiing at camp. One of the biggest obstacles with the beginning students comes when they pull back on the rope to help the boat get them out of the water. The boat has an abundance of power to get them out of the water, but they insist on helping instead of depending on the boat. We are often like these students, trying to "help" God.

The words "transferring yourselves" relates to a deserter from the ranks. It is a turncoat. These Galatians were AWOL. Instead of pursuing their walk with the Lord, they had fallen into fallacy.

Charity Bancroft wrote this wonderful hymn in 1863. Please join me in worship and praise as we sing together verses 1 & 2 of **"Before the Throne of God Above"**: *"Before the throne of God above I have a strong and perfect plea. A great high Priest whose Name is Love Who ever lives and pleads for me. My name is graven on His hands, My name is written on His heart. I know that while in Heaven He stands No tongue can bid me thence depart. No tongue can bid me thence depart."*

August 2—Perverting the Gospel (Galatians 1:7)

Galatians 1:7: “Which is not another gospel; except there are certain ones who are troubling your minds, and are desiring to change (alter or pervert) the gospel of Christ.”

Verse 7: Paul states this gospel is not another gospel. The gospel is Good News, but the message these Judaizers are bringing is a yoke of bondage to the law and an abolition of grace.

These “gospels” can be compared to two \$1 bills, one which is real and one which is counterfeit:

1. They look similar.
2. One is good and one is not.
3. The counterfeit lacks quality, authority, and usefulness.
4. One is worth 100 cents, but the other is worth nothing.
5. There is similarity without reality.

This is not another gospel. Jesus made it clear in response to Thomas’ question in John 14:6 when He said: “I am the way, the truth and the life. No man comes to the Father but by Me.”

From the present tense of the word “troubling,” these “certain ones” were still in Galatia battling for the minds of the Galatians. When seducers come in, they disturb the peace.

Satan’s attack in this verse was two-fold:

1. He troubles their minds. He wants to change or pervert or twist the gospel of Christ. How does he trouble their minds? He sows seeds of doubt about the validity of the message.
2. He tries to create a desire for change in them. He wants to water down the message of the gospel of Christ.

THE CENTIPEDE WAS QUITE HAPPY
UNTIL A FROG IN FUN, SAID,
“PRAY, WHICH LEG GOES AFTER WHICH?”
THAT WORKED HER MIND TO SUCH A PITCH,
SHE LAY DISTRACTED IN A DITCH,
CONSIDERING HOW TO RUN.

Turning to Christ is the only cure for a troubled mind and a twisted gospel. Trust in His ability to do what He has promised—to provide eternal salvation for all those who would call upon His name.

This morning, please join me in worship and praise as we sing verses 3 & 4 of “**Before the Throne of God Above**”: “When Satan tempts me to despair And tells me of the guilt within, Upward I look and see Him there Who made an end of

all my sin. Because the sinless Savior died My sinful soul is counted free. For God the just is satisfied To look on Him and pardon me. To look on Him and pardon me."

August 3—I Am Saying It Twice (Galatians 1:8–9)

Galatians 1:8: *"But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach a gospel to you contrary to that which we preached to you, let him be accursed (anathema)."*

Galatians 1:9: *"Even as we have said before, and I am saying now again, if anyone is preaching a gospel to you contrary to that which you received, let him be accursed (anathema)."*

Verse 8: Paul clarifies for the Galatians that even if the apostles or disciples should change their minds and preach to them another gospel, or if "an angel from heaven should preach a gospel to you that is contrary to that which we preached to you, let him be accursed (anathema)." Anyone including angels will be set aside for judgment and destruction if they teach a gospel apart from Christ.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says: "let him be accursed or eternally condemned."

In the Old Testament, the word "anathema" was used of a person or thing set apart and devoted to destruction because it is hateful to God.

I love that wonderful hymn, **"The Way of the Cross Leads Home":** *"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. 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. Then I bid farewell to the way of the world, To walk in it never more; For the Lord says, 'Come' and I seek my home, Where He waits at the open door."*

The apostle is stern and dogmatic on this point. He knows he is standing on firm ground with the gospel. There is no other way.

2 Corinthians 11:13-15: "For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for even Satan is disguising himself as an angel of light. 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.

Oswald Chambers says: "The most difficult person to deal with is the one who has the prideful self-satisfaction of a past experience, but is not working that experience out in his everyday life."

Denver Moore in his book, *What Difference Do It Make?*, says: "Listen. If the devil ain't messin' with you, he's already got you!"

Verse 9: If we compare verses 8 and 9, there are a couple of differences:

1. In verse 8, “we, or an angel from heaven,” but verse 9 says: “anyone.”
2. In verse 8, we read “should preach,” but verse 9 says: “is preaching.”

Stephen Brown in *When Being Good Isn't Good Enough* says: “All you have left is Jesus. Of course, you don't realize Jesus is all you need until Jesus is all you've got. When He is all you've got, then you know that He is all you need.”

Won't you please join me in worship and praise as we sing verses 5 & 6 of **“Before the Throne of God Above”**: *“Behold Him there the risen Lamb, My perfect spotless righteousness, The great unchangeable I AM, The King of glory and of grace, One in Himself I cannot die. My soul is purchased by His blood, My life is hid with Christ on high, With Christ my Savior and my God!”*

August 4—I Am Pleasing God (Galatians 1:10)

Galatians 1:10: *“For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I seeking to please men? If I still were pleasing men, a bondslave of Christ I would not be.”*

Verse 10: In this verse, we have Paul's personal motivation. It is expressed in two questions:

1. Am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God?
2. Am I seeking to please men?

The answer is stated in the last part of the verse: “If I still were pleasing men, a bondslave of Christ I would not be.”

Who are you going to please in your life? It is a choice you must make. You cannot please men and be a bondslave of Christ.

The previous verses have made it clear that Paul is not trying to please men. Paul's motivation is two-fold:

1. He wants to finish the race.
2. He wants to hear, “Well done thou good and faithful servant.”

Bill Hybels in *Who You Are When No One's Looking* says: “True personal fulfillment never comes through self-gratification. Instead, it comes through sacrifice.”

Eadie says of this verse: “If still men I were pleasing, Christ servant I should not be.”

Wuest translates this verse: “For am I at this present moment seeking to win the favor of men rather than the approval of God? Or am I making it my business to be constantly pleasing men? If I still were pleasing men, in that case, Christ's bondsslave I would not be.”

This morning, let's worship and praise the Lord together singing that prayer chorus from Revelation chapter 7, **“Thou Art Worthy”**: *“Thou art worthy, Thou art worthy, Thou art worthy O Lord To receive glory, glory and hon-*

or, glory and honor and pow'r For Thou hast created, hast all things created Thou hast created all things. And for Thy pleasure they are created For Thou art worthy O Lord!"

August 5—A Revelation of Jesus Christ (Galatians 1:11–12)

Galatians 1:11: *"For I am making known to you, brethren, the message which was preached by me that it is not according to man."*

Galatians 1:12: *"For neither did I receive it from man, nor was I taught it, but (I received it) through a revelation of Jesus Christ."*

Verse 11: *The NET Bible* translates this verse: "Now I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that the gospel I preached is not of human origin."

Yesterday's verse stated Paul's motivation for his ministry: He is a bondsman of Christ. In this verse, the apostle speaks of the message he preaches. Negatively, "not according to man," meaning it is not a message that has originated with man.

Lewis Sperry Chafer says: "The Bible is a book that man would not write if he could or could not write if he would."

MacArthur's Commentary says: "The gospel Paul preached was not human in origin or it would have been like all other human religion, permeated with works- righteousness born of man's pride and Satan's deception."

Verse 12: *The NET Bible* translates this verse: "For I did not receive it or learn it from any human source; instead I received it by a revelation of Jesus Christ."

In this verse, we have the negative and the positive. Negatively, "for neither did I receive it from man, nor was I taught it," but, positively in contrast, "(received it) through a revelation of Jesus Christ."

Everything Paul was, had to say or did came from Jesus Christ. His *character*, his *conversation*, and his *conduct* were all a result of Christ living in him.

You can argue cause and effect, sovereignty and free will, sin and suffering and inspiration and authority endlessly, but the greatest argument of all for Christianity is the life that has been changed through a relationship with the Lord Jesus.

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."

The evidence of a sovereign work is a changed life through relationship.

Please join me in worship and praise as we sing verse 1 of **"Since Jesus Came Into My Heart"**: *"What a wonderful change in my life has been wrought Since Jesus came into my heart! I have light in my soul for which long I had sought."*

Since Jesus came into my heart! Since Jesus came into my heart, Since Jesus came into my heart, Floods of joy o'er my soul like the sea billows roll, Since Jesus came into my heart."

August 6—What A Change In My Life (Galatians 1:13–14)

Galatians 1:13: *"For you heard of my manner of life formerly in Judaism, that beyond measure I was persecuting the church of God, and I was bringing destruction upon it."*

Galatians 1:14: *"And I was blazing a pioneer path (advancing) in Judaism beyond many of my own age in my race, being far more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers."*

Verse 13: To prove the authenticity of the gospel, the apostle shares his own personal testimony of what the Lord Jesus has done in his life. No one among the Christians would question Saul's zeal in his persecution of the church. Not only did he persecute, but he brought destruction upon the church of God. Paul was consumed with the cause of crushing Christianity in his former days of Judaism.

Erwin McManus in *The Barbarian Way: Soul Cravings* says: "Would anyone actually choose to be a slave to ritual and legalism when he could have relationship and love? The answer, unfortunately, is yes. The reason religion works is that we believe in conditional love and doubt the existence of unconditional love."

Verse 14: Paul uses very strong, descriptive words in these two verses:

1. I was *persecuting* the church of God.
2. I was *bringing destruction* upon it.
3. I was *blazing* a pioneer path (advancing) in Judaism.

The word "blazing" or "advancing" could be translated "*striking forward*." Paul was advancing with intense passion: "beyond many of my own age in my race, being far more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers."

In verse 13, the apostle was focusing on the practical. Paul was consumed with "persecuting and bringing destruction upon the church of God." In this verse, he talks about the personal: "I was blazing a pioneer path (advancing) in Judaism beyond many of my own age in my race."

MacArthur says: "The Greek word for advance means 'to chop ahead much like one would blaze a trail through a forest.' Paul blazed his path in Judaism."

Marcus Luttrell, the Navy Seal who wrote *Lone Survivor*, said: "Remember the philosophy of the U.S. Navy SEALs: 'I will never quit.... My Nation expects me to be physically harder and mentally stronger than my enemies. If knocked down, I will get back up, every time. I will draw on every remaining ounce of strength to protect my teammates.... I am never out of the fight.'"

This morning, let's worship and praise the Lord by singing verse 2 of "**Since Jesus Came Into My Heart**": *"I have ceased from my wand'ring and going astray, Since Jesus came into my heart! And my sins, which were many, are all washed away, Since Jesus came into my heart! Since Jesus came into my heart, Since Jesus came into my heart, Floods of joy o'er my soul like the sea billows roll, Since Jesus came into my heart."*

August 7—Set Apart & Called (Galatians 1:15)

Galatians 1:15: *"But when it was the good pleasure of the One who set me apart from my mother's womb, and called me through His grace."*

Verse 15: There are three key actions that were instrumental in the apostle's conversion. We see the first two in this morning's verse:

1. He was set apart.
2. He was called through His grace.

The word "but" forms a contrast to the previous two verses: "For you heard of my manner of life formerly ..." now he shares his conversion.

Those he previously persecuted, he now cherishes; that which he hated, he now loves; and those things he previously abhorred, he now adores.

Everything is changed with the word "but" in this verse.

"When it was the good pleasure of the One who set me apart from my mother's womb." God's foreknowledge of Paul and his ministry recalls Jeremiah 1:5: "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations."

God the Father set Paul apart from his mother's womb. Jesus Christ redeemed him, made him an apostle and gave him his message and ministry.

Four things about the apostle stand out in verses 15 and 16:

1. He is chosen: "set apart from his mother's womb."
2. He is called through the Damascus road experience.
3. He is changed to reveal Christ in him.
4. He is charged with a ministry to "proclaim Christ among the Gentiles."

This calling was "through His grace." Paul wanted this calling because of his love and desire for a relationship.

Won't you join me in worship and praise as we sing verse 3 of "**Since Jesus Came Into My Heart**": *"There's a light in the valley of death now for me, Since Jesus came into my heart! And the gates of the City beyond I can see, Since Jesus came into my heart! Since Jesus came into my heart, Since Jesus came into my heart, Floods of joy o'er my soul like the sea billows roll, Since Jesus came into my heart."*

August 8—Proclaiming the Good News to the Gentiles (Galatians 1:16–17)

Galatians 1:16: “*To reveal His Son in me, in order that I might proclaim Him among the Gentiles, immediately I did not consult (communicate) with flesh and blood.*”

Galatians 1:17: “*Neither went I up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went away into Arabia, and again returned to Damascus.*”

Verse 16: The phrase “in order that I might proclaim Him among the Gentiles” reveals the purpose behind being set apart, called and revealing His Son. Paul continues his list of key actions in his conversion. The last one is in this verse:

3. He revealed His Son in me.

In verse 15, Paul is *chosen* and *called*. Now, in verse 16, he is *changed* and *charged*.

When we recognize that this is the Father’s purpose for each of us, it enables us to cooperate with His purpose. We are open to the submission and obedience of the work of His Spirit in our lives with the express purpose of revealing His Son in us.

The apostle concludes this verse: “immediately I did not consult (communicate) with flesh and blood.”

Verse 17: Negatively, the apostle “did not consult or communicate with flesh and blood (verse 16)” and neither did he go “up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me (him),” but positively he “went away into Arabia, and again returned to Damascus.”

His message to us prepares us for speaking to men.

A.W. Tozer says: “If you would follow on to know the Lord, come at once to the open Bible expecting it to speak to you. Do not come with the notion that it is a thing which you may push around at your convenience. It is more than a thing. It is a voice, a word, the very word of the living God.”

Let’s celebrate the conversion of the apostle by joining together in praise and adoration, singing verse 4 of “**Since Jesus Came Into My Heart**”: “*I shall go there to dwell in that City, I know, Since Jesus came into my heart! And I’m happy, so happy, as onward I go, Since Jesus came into my heart! Since Jesus came into my heart, Since Jesus came into my heart, Floods of joy o’er my soul like the sea billows roll, Since Jesus came into my heart.*”

August 9—Two-Week Retreat (Galatians 1:18–19)

Galatians 1:18: “*Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to become acquainted with Cephas, and I remained with him fifteen days.*”

Galatians 1:19: “But I did not see any other of the apostles except James, the brother of our Lord.”

Verse 18: After Paul left Arabia, he went back to Damascus. Paul’s escape from Damascus is documented in Acts 9. He was let down through the wall in a basket under the cover of darkness to escape a conspiracy among the Jews to kill him. Then, he began his 130-mile trip southwest to Jerusalem to spend 15 days with Peter, to become better acquainted with him.

The little word “then” helps lead us through Paul’s argument as he recounts his post-conversion activity. It occurs in this verse, in verse 21, and in chapter 2:1.

God foresaw all that would happen to the apostle in the coming days and directed his life, even in the smallest of circumstances.

It must have been an incredible two-week retreat in Jerusalem as these two great apostles—one to the Jews and one to the Gentiles—discussed all that the Lord had been doing in Paul’s life.

Verse 19: Don’t you just love the phrase “our Lord”! This shows the dramatic change that had taken place in Paul’s life since he had come to know Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.

It is interesting to note that these same two individuals are recorded as having private sessions with our Lord in the recorded resurrection appearances.

During Paul’s time in Jerusalem, he spent most of his time with Peter. However, he did spend some time with James, who was a leading figure in the church in Jerusalem. It was this James, the brother of our Lord, who wrote the epistle of James.

There are three men named James who we need to keep separate in our New Testament discussions:

1. James, the son of Zebedee, who was the brother of John the apostle. He was one of Jesus’ 12 disciples and was called one of the “Sons of Thunder.”
2. James, the son of Alphaeus, who was the brother of Matthew. He was also one of Jesus’ 12 disciples.
3. This James, the brother of our Lord, who is assumed by many to be the oldest child of the union of Mary and Joseph.

Let’s worship and praise the Lord this morning by singing verse 1 of “**Sitting at the Feet of Jesus**”: *“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.”*

August 10—I Am Telling the Truth (Galatians 1:20–21)

Galatians 1:20: “*But the things which I am writing to you, behold in the sight of God I am not lying.*”

Galatians 1:21: “*Then I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia.*”

Verse 20: This is the apostle’s oath. It is an oath in the sight of God, calling God to witness his clear conscience in his account of events following his conversion.

He is telling the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth.

“Behold in the sight of God I am not lying.” Acts 24:16: “In view of this, I also do my best to maintain always a blameless conscience both before God and before men.”

What really matters in the end is not what men say we are, but what God knows we are.

Wuest translates this verse: “But the things which I am writing to you, behold before the face of God, I am not lying.”

John Ortberg in his book, *The Me I Want to Be*, said:

True confession: Have you ever spoken about someone, in their absence, with words you would not have used if they were present? Mark Twain was once riding a train home from Maine after three weeks of highly successful fishing—even though the state’s fishing season was closed. He bragged about his huge but illegal catch to the only other passenger in the club car. The passenger grew increasingly glum during Twain’s story. When Twain finally asked him who he was, the stranger explained he was the state game warden.

“Who are you?” the warden asked.

“To tell the truth,” Twain said, “I’m the biggest liar in the whole United States.”

Verse 21: This journey is recorded in Acts 9:28–30: “And he was with them moving about freely in Jerusalem, speaking out boldly in the name of the Lord. And he was talking and arguing with the Hellenistic Jews; but they were attempting to put him to death. But when the brethren learned of it, they brought him down to Caesarea and sent him away to Tarsus. He ministered in the city of Jerusalem for a period of time and then, when the other disciples saved his life, they took him 60 miles northwest to the seaport town of Caesarea where he took the 300-mile trip north by boat to Tarsus, his home-town in Cilicia.”

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.”*

August 11—Glorifying God (Galatians 1:22–24)

Galatians 1:22: *“And I was still unknown by face to the assemblies of Judea which are in Christ;”*

Galatians 1:23: *“But they were only hearing from time to time that, ‘The one who used to persecute us at one time now is proclaiming the faith which at one time he was destroying.’”*

Galatians 1:24: *“And they were glorifying God for that which they found in me.”*

Verse 22: Luke recorded in Acts 9:26–27: “And when he had come to Jerusalem, he was trying to associate with the disciples; and they were all afraid of him, not believing that he was a disciple. But Barnabas took hold of him and brought him to the apostles and described to them how he had seen the Lord on the road, and that He had talked to him, and how at Damascus he had spoken out boldly in the name of Jesus.”

Verse 23: When you look back on verses 13 and 14, you discover four very descriptive words of Paul’s pre-conversion days: (1) persecuting, (2) bringing destruction, (3) blazing a pioneer path, and (4) destroying or ravaging.

Max Lucado in *Fear Not: For I Am With You Always* says: “With perfect knowledge of the past and perfect vision of the future, he loves you perfectly in spite of both.”

Gary Thomas in *The Beautiful Fight* says: “I sensed God saying, ‘I have waited forty-two years for this day.’ I cried at the impact of those words.”

Verse 24: They were “glorifying God,” the One who was responsible for the change “for that which they found in me.” Has anyone glorified God for what they found in you today?

This takes us back to verse 15: “But when it was the good pleasure of the One who set me apart from my mother’s womb, and called me through His grace.”

It is the attractiveness of the Lord Jesus Christ indwelling the apostle Paul that caused these saints to be glorifying God.

A.W. Tozer in *The Best of A.W. Tozer* says: “The true believer owns Christ as his All in All without reservation. He includes all of himself, leaving no part of his being unaffected by the revolutionary transaction.”

Won't you join me in worship and praise this morning singing together 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."*

August 12—The Jerusalem Conference (Galatians 2:1)

Galatians 2:1: *"Then after the space of fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, having taken along also Titus."*

Verse 1: Ascertaining when and where to go is a big part of enduring in Christ.

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."

Isaiah 55:8–9: "'For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,' declares the Lord. 'As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.'"

I love the way Phillips paraphrases Romans 12:1–2: "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."

It was John Bunyan who said: "Getting out of the will of God is far easier than getting back in once we are out."

There are three things that cause us to miss divine direction in our lives: (1) desires, (2) dullness, and (3) disobedience.

Luke's account of this journey is documented in Acts 15:1–2: "And some men came down from Judea and began teaching the brethren, 'Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.' And when Paul and Barnabas had great dissension and debate with them, the brethren determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain others of them should go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and elders concerning this issue."

This verse tells us there are three people on this trip to Jerusalem: Paul, Barnabas, and Titus.

During this 14-year period, Paul and Barnabas had a ministry in Antioch. Later, Paul, Barnabas, and John Mark set out on the first missionary journey. They were not very far in the journey before John Mark deserted them and returned to Jerusalem.

Paul and Barnabas had just completed their first missionary journey and returned to Jerusalem to report to the disciples in Antioch. During this reporting, some men from Judea had great dissention over issues of circumcision as a requirement of salvation. The brethren determined Paul, Barnabas and Titus should go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and elders regarding this issue.

MacArthur says: “Then after an interval of 14 years from the first visit when he met Peter and James, he went up again to Jerusalem.”

This morning, please join me in worship and praise as we sing verse 1 of one of my favorite Fanny Crosby hymns, “**All the Way My Saviour Leads Me**”: *“All the way my Savior leads me; What have I to ask beside? Can I doubt His tender mercy Who through life has been my Guide? Heavenly peace, divinest comfort, Here by faith in Him to dwell! For I know, whate’er befall me, Jesus doeth all things well; For I know, whate’er befall me, Jesus doeth all things well.”*

August 13—I Laid It All on the Table (Galatians 2:2)

Galatians 2:2: “*And I went up in accordance with a revelation; and I laid before them the gospel, the gospel which I am preaching among the Gentiles, but privately to those of recognized eminence, lest by any means I might be running, or had run, in vain.*”

Verse 2: Paul was sensitive to divine direction. He went to the city of Jerusalem in accordance with the revelation and experienced God’s blessing because of his obedience. His human response would have been to stay away from the city because of its intense opposition to the gospel and his previous experience while there.

Acts 9:29–30: “And he was talking and arguing with the Hellenistic Jews; but they were attempting to put him to death. But when the brethren learned of it, they brought him down to Caesarea and sent him away to Tarsus.”

We must be careful to discern divine direction lest we be found running in vain or in directions outside of God’s will. It is possible to be working hard, but doing meaningless activities in our lives outside of His will.

Watchman Nee said: “As we grow in Christ, obedience increases, activity decreases.”

Upon his arrival in Jerusalem, the apostle spent time alone with the three key figures: Peter, James, and John.

As a man directed by God, Paul says: “And I went up in accordance with a revelation; and I laid before them the gospel, the gospel which I am preaching among the Gentiles.” Then he continues: “but privately to those of recognized eminence.” Paul is already aware of the divine affirmation upon this message, but he would like the human approval as well.

He concludes the verse with his reason: “Lest by any means I might be running, or had run, in vain.” The apostle often describes life as a race. It is one of his favorite illustrations.

As an intensely goal-oriented person, Paul was constantly examining his daily life and goals in the light of God’s will.

John Ortberg in *The Me I Want To Be* says: “What distinguishes consistently happier people from less happy people is the presence of rich, deep, joy-producing, life-changing, meaningful relationships.”

Spending meaningful time with people who care about us is indispensable to human flourishing. Social researcher Robert Putnam writes, “The single most common finding from a half-century’s research on life satisfaction, not only from the U.S. but around the world, is that happiness is best predicted by the breadth and depth of one’s social connections.”

Let’s join together in worship and praise as we sing together verse 2 of “**All the Way My Saviour Leads Me**”: *“All the way my Savior leads me; Cheers each winding path I tread, Gives me grace for ev’ry trial, Feeds me with the living bread. Though my weary steps may falter, And my soul athirst may be, Gushing from the Rock before me, Lo! A spring of joy I see; Gushing from the Rock before me, Lo! A spring of joy I see.”*

August 14—Titus Is the Test Case (Galatians 2:3)

Galatians 2:3: “*But not even Titus who was with me, though he was a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised.*”

Verse 3: In verse 2, Paul told us the reason he met with the leaders privately “lest by any means I might be running, or had run in vain.” The response he receives from those in “recognized eminence” is seen in this verse: “but not even Titus who was with me, though he was a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised.”

This verse helps us better understand Galatians 1:7: “which is not another gospel; except there are certain ones who are troubling your minds, and are desiring to change (alter or pervert) the gospel of Christ.”

Satan thrives on troubling our minds and twisting the message.

Titus was the test case before the Jerusalem counsel. They did not require him to be circumcised in order to be recognized as a Christian.

Wuest says: “The context clearly indicates that strong pressure was brought to bear upon the Jerusalem church to impose circumcision upon Gentile converts. Titus being the individual around whom the controversy was waging. The Jerusalem council sustained the decision of the Antioch church to the effect that circumcision was not to be required of Gentile converts.”

What a glorious victory for the pure grace of God!

Please join me in worship and praise as we sing verse 3 of **“All the Way My Saviour Leads Me”**: *“All the way my Savior leads me; Oh the fullness of His love! Perfect rest to me is promised In my Father’s house above. When my spirit, clothed immortal, Wings its flight to realms of day This my song thro’ endless ages; Jesus led me all the way; This my song thro’ endless ages Jesus led me all the way.”*

August 15—Freedom in Christ (Galatians 2:4)

Galatians 2:4: *“But because of the false brethren brought in secretly, who came in secretly (snuck in) to spy out our liberty which we are having in Christ Jesus, in order that they might bring us into bondage.”*

Verse 4: We have Satan’s infiltration tactics in this verse. We can see the subtlety and power of his strategies and plans. He wants to subvert their freedom and belief in Christ.

Notice the phrase: “spy out our liberty which we are having in Christ Jesus.” The purpose was “in order that they might bring us into bondage” by adding legal requirements for salvation.

Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty.

During a Billy Graham crusade in Los Angeles several years ago, some Jehovah’s Witnesses made false counselor badges and met with people who were coming forward to receive Christ. This is a picture of the same tactics seen in Jerusalem. These brethren were spying out the liberty.

What does Paul mean by “liberty”?

John 8:32: “And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”

Any time there are legalistic requirements enforced, there will be bondage. Bringing them into bondage would put them under the legal requirements of circumcision and living under certain parts of the law.

MacArthur says: “Bondage conveys the idea of absolute slavery to an impossible system of works righteousness.”

Won’t you join me in worship and praise as we sing verse 1 of **“Jesus, I Come”**: *“Out of my bondage, sorrow, and night, Jesus, I come, Jesus, I come; Into Thy freedom, gladness, and light, Jesus, I come to Thee; Out of my sickness, into Thy health, Out of my want and into Thy wealth, Out of my sin and into Thyself, Jesus, I come to Thee.”*

August 16—We Took Our Stand (Galatians 2:5)

Galatians 2:5: *“To whom not even for an hour did we yield to the submission demanded, in order that the truth of the gospel might remain (continue) for you.”*

Verse 5: “To whom” refers to the false brethren, those who were secretly brought in and planted in the church. They intended to put the believers into bondage through legalistic requirements.

The apostle said: “not even for an hour did we yield to the submission demanded.” When submission is demanded, it indicates Satan is at work.

They did not yield to the submission demanded. The reason they were unswerving and unyielding in their devotion to the gospel of Christ was: “in order that the truth of the gospel might remain (continue) for you.”

Eugene Peterson in *A Year With Jesus* says: “It is a lot easier for me, Lord Jesus, to be an onlooker than a participant. I get all the pleasures of diversion and excitement, and none of the stress of risk and discipline. But that is not what you want from me, and I know it. Forgive me for looking on, and enable me to enter in, by faith. Amen.”

1 Corinthians 16:13–14 (Phillips): “Be on your guard, stand firm in the faith, live like men, be strong! Let everything that you do be done in love.”

This morning, let’s join together in worship and praise as we sing verse 2 of “**Jesus, I Come**”: “*Out of my shameful failure and loss, Jesus, I come, Jesus, I come; Into the glorious gain of Thy cross, Jesus, I come to Thee. Out of earth’s sorrows into Thy balm, Out of life’s storms and into Thy calm, Out of distress to jubilant psalm, Jesus, I come to Thee.*”

August 17—Degrees & Credentials Are Meaningless (Galatians 2:6)

Galatians 2:6: “*But to be something from those who were of recognized eminence whatever they once were is making no difference to me; God is not accepting man’s person—for those of recognized eminence laid nothing in addition upon me.*”

Verse 6: Paul uses the phrase “recognized eminence” four times in these chapter 2 verses:

1. Verse 2: “but privately to those of recognized eminence.”
2. Verse 6: “those who were of recognized eminence.”
3. Verse 6: “for those of recognized eminence.”
4. Verse 9: “James and Cephas (Peter) and John, those who were of recognized eminence.”

The apostle expressed this with different words in chapter 1:10: “For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I seeking to please men? If I were still pleasing men, a bonds slave of Christ I would not be.”

Our main concern is not the approval or disapproval of men, but of God.

Paul also states that Peter, James and John did not lay anything additionally upon the apostle and the ministry which he was carrying out. It is very inter-

esting to note that the key leaders did not supplement or endeavor to correct anything in Paul's ministry.

This can be summarized as: No Corrections or Additions.

Randy Alcorn in *If God is Good* told this story:

Howard Hendricks tells of visiting a leprosy center in India. The morning he arrived, the residents were gathered for a praise service. One of the women with leprosy hobbled to the platform. Hendricks said that even though she was partially blind and badly disfigured, she was one of the most beautiful women he'd ever seen.

Raising both of her nearly fingerless hands toward Heaven, she said in a clear voice, "I want to praise God that I am a leper because it was through my leprosy that I came to know Jesus Christ as my Savior. And I would rather be a leper who knows Christ than be completely whole and a stranger to His grace."

Please join me in worship and praise as we sing together verse 3 of "**Jesus I Come**": *"Out of unrest and arrogant pride, Jesus, I come, Jesus, I come; Into Thy blessed will to abide, Jesus, I come to Thee. Out of myself to dwell in Thy love, Out of despair into raptures above, Upward for aye on wings like a dove, Jesus, I come to Thee."*

August 18—Two Different Audiences (Galatians 2:7)

Galatians 2:7: *"But on the contrary, when they saw that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, even as Peter had been entrusted with the gospel to the circumcised."*

Verse 7: The word "but" forms the contrast to the apostle's statement in the previous verse. Instead of adding on to the apostle and his ministry, they saw that Paul "had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised" in the same way that "Peter had been entrusted with the gospel to the circumcised." They had one message, but two different mission fields.

One was going to the Jews and the other was going to the Gentiles.

The Lord entrusted the apostle Paul with the gospel message to people who were not Jews. He had entrusted the gospel message for those of Jewish persuasion to Peter. It did not mean they had a different message. The message was the same, but they were ministering to different audiences.

This morning, I am already singing this wonderful old hymn in praise to the Lord Jesus. Please join me as we sing verse 1 of "**Jesus Saves**": *"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!"

August 19—The Same Message: Peter to the Jews & Paul to the Gentiles (Galatians 2:8)

Galatians 2:8: *“For He who energized Peter unto apostleship to the circumcision also energized me unto the Gentiles.”*

Verse 8: The Spirit of God does the energizing for Peter and Paul to two different audiences, but with the same message.

While there is one message to two different mission fields, there is also one Spirit who is energizing both of these apostles to their respective ministries.

“He (the Spirit of God) who energized Peter unto apostleship to the circumcision also (the Spirit of God) energized me unto the Gentiles.”

MacArthur says: “The Holy Spirit who has but one gospel powered both Peter and Paul to their ministries.”

Additionally, MacArthur says: “Some apparently think that God’s will was lost, at least they say they are searching for it. To them, God must appear to be a sort of divine Easter bunny who has stashed His will like eggs somewhere out of sight and sent us running through life to try to find it. And He is up there saying, ‘You are getting warmer.’”

Eugene Peterson in *A Year With Jesus* prays: “Dear Jesus, teach me my place: as a servant, not a master, as the friend of the bridegroom, not the bridegroom; as a witness to the truth, not the truth itself. Amen.”

Please join me in worship and praise as we sing verse 3 of “**Jesus Saves**”: *“Sing above the battle strife, Jesus saves! Jesus saves! By His death and endless life, Jesus saves! Jesus saves! Sing it softly through the gloom, When the heart for mercy craves; Sing in triumph o’er the tomb, Jesus saves! Jesus saves!”*

August 20—The Right Hand of Fellowship (Galatians 2:9)

Galatians 2:9: *“And having perceived the grace which was given to me, James and Cephas and John, those who were of recognized eminence to be pillars, gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, in order that we should go to the Gentiles, and they to the circumcision.”*

Verse 9: James, Cephas and John perceived the grace given to Paul (by the Spirit of God) was his apostleship to the uncircumcision. In return, those referred to as “of recognized eminence to be pillars,” or key leaders, gave “the right hand of fellowship” to the apostle Paul and Barnabas.

What does Paul mean when he states that these three leaders give to them “the right hand of fellowship”? This was a pact for cooperation in their indepen-

dent spheres of ministry. The Judaizers were removed when these men joined hands in agreement and official fellowship.

This verse concludes with the purpose: “in order that we should go to the Gentiles, and they to the circumcision.”

Won't you join me in worship and praise this morning singing verses 1-4 of **“Blest Be the Tie That Binds”**?: *“Blest be the tie that binds Our hearts in Christian love! The fellowship of kindred minds Is like to that above. Before our Father's throne We pour our ardent prayers; Our fears, our hopes, our aims are one, Our comforts and our cares. We share our mutual woes, Our mutual burdens bear; And often for each other flows The sympathizing tear. When we asunder part It gives us inward pain; But we shall still be joined in heart, And hope to meet again.”*

August 21—Remembering the Poor (Galatians 2:10)

Galatians 2:10: *“Only that we should keep on remembering the poor—which this very thing I made haste also to do.”*

Verse 10: This was the only stipulation given to Paul by the three leaders who were pillars in the Jerusalem church. They admonished him to not forget the poor in Judea. The apostle responded hastily to meet their request.

The leaders encouraged Paul to continue his ministry, but asked him to remember the poor.

Paul set up a fund for the relief of the saints of Judea. Throughout his ministry in many of these Gentile congregations, he spoke often to them about the needs of the poor saints in Jerusalem.

1 Corinthians 16:1, 3: “Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I directed the churches of Galatia, so do you also. And when I arrive, whomever you may approve, I shall send them with letter to carry your gift to Jerusalem.

Proverbs 19 contains several verses that speak of the poor. 19:1: “Better a poor man whose walk is blameless than a fool whose lips are perverse.” 19:4: “Wealth brings many friends, but a poor man's friend deserts him.” 19:7: “A poor man is shunned by all his relatives--how much more do his friends avoid him! Though he pursues them with pleading, they are nowhere to be found. 19:17: “He who is kind to the poor lends to the Lord, and he will reward him for what he has done.”

A.W. Tozer in *The Best of A.W. Tozer* said:

Lord, make me childlike. Deliver me from the urge to compete with another for place or prestige or position. I would be simple and artless as a little child. Deliver me from pose and pretense. Forgive me for thinking myself. Help me to forget myself and find my true peace in beholding Thee. That Thou mayest

answer this prayer, I humble myself before Thee. Lay upon me
Thy easy yoke of self-forgetfulness that through it I may find
rest. Amen.

Please join me in worship and praise as we sing verse 1 of **“All That Thrills My Soul”**: *“Who can cheer the heart like Jesus, By His presence all divine? True and tender, pure and precious Oh, how blest to call Him mine! All that thrills my soul is Jesus; He is more than life to me; And the fairest of ten thousand, In my blessed Lord I see.”*

August 22—Peer Pressure Got to Peter (Galatians 2:11–12)

Galatians 2:11: *“But when Cephas came to Antioch, to his face I opposed him, because he stood condemned.”*

Galatians 2:12: *“For before certain from James came, he was eating with the Gentiles (it was his habit to eat); but when they came, he was drawing back and separating himself, fearing those of the circumcision.”*

Verse 11: Perhaps this visit from Peter to Antioch came right after the experience with the Jerusalem council. We just left them in Jerusalem unified, but now in Antioch, there is conflict. When Paul goes to Jerusalem, they are unified in their *creed*, but when Peter goes to Antioch, they are divided in their *conduct*. They were united, but now there is dissension.

Paul’s ministry was going well in Antioch. When Peter received that report, he wanted to visit. He traveled 360 miles to Antioch. This is where the confrontation took place.

The word “but” forms the contrast to the previous verses where Paul has written of their unity and the extension of the “right hand of fellowship” to himself, Barnabas and their ministry.

Paul stood against Peter face to face. He opposed Peter because: “he stood condemned.” Peter knew better, but was not acting in accordance with his personal convictions. Peter was compromising.

Byron J. Langenfeld said: “Rare is the person who can weigh the faults of others without putting his thumbs on the scales.”

Martin Luther showed his courage and character at the Diet of the Worms when he said: “Here I stand. God help me.”

In Matthew 26:69–75, we are reminded of another time when Peter went against his convictions and denied the Lord Jesus three times.

Eric Webster said: “Handling people need not be so difficult—all you need is inexhaustible patience, unfailing insight, unshakeable will, decisive judgment, infrangible physique, irrepressible spirits, plus unfeigned affection for all people- and an awful lot of experience.”

Verse 12: This verse gives us the reason for the confrontation between Peter and Paul at Antioch. His failure is recorded in these three behaviors:

1. Drawing back.
2. Separating himself.
3. Fearing those of the circumcision.

These same actions were involved in the denial of Christ in his earlier experiences. Peter took his eyes off the Lord and it has caused him to sink in the winds and waves of compromise. Peter withdrew himself because he was afraid that James would not approve of what he was doing.

In this verse, the word for “drawing back” is the word used for trimming the sails on a boat. In the imperfect tense, it suggests that Peter is gradually trimming his sails, even as he did at the trial of Christ. This would imply that his behaviors referenced in this verse, like the three denials, were working up to his departure.

When your house of convictions is built on shifting sands, you will fall.

MacArthur says: “The old Peter, weak, fearful and vacillating, has come to the fore again. Here was the same Peter, who under divine inspiration declared Jesus to be the Christ, the Son of the Living God, but then a short while later rebuked his Lord for saying that He must suffer and die.”

Satan uses these same ugly actions in every arena of temptation: (1) to draw back, (2) to separate, and (3) to fear. We see his influence in this situation. He has tried to frustrate and destroy the impact of the early church on the lives of others by going after one of its leaders.

Please join me in worship and praise as we sing verses 2 & 3 of “**All That Thrills My Soul**”: *“Love of Christ so freely given, Grace of God beyond degree, Mercy higher than the heavens Deeper than the deepest sea. All that thrills my soul is Jesus; He is more than life to me; And the fairest of ten thousand, In my blessed Lord I see. What a wonderful redemption! Never can a mortal know How my sin, tho’ red like crimson, Can be whiter than the snow. All that thrills my soul is Jesus; He is more than life to me; And the fairest of ten thousand, In my blessed Lord I see.”*

August 23—Follow the Leader (Galatians 2:13)

Galatians 2:13: “*And the rest of the Jews also played the role with him, so that even Barnabas was carried away with their hypocrisy.*”

Verse 13: When someone begins acting incorrectly, we see the area of influence to others. It affects those who are watching. The rest of the Jews played the role with Peter and the result was “even Barnabas was carried away with their hypocrisy.”

They were saying one thing, but doing another.

Barnabas's behavior during this time might have influenced the interpersonal conflict between Barnabas and Paul before they left on their second missionary journey. They were divided over their feelings about John Mark.

Paul was saddened by watching these Jews and his close friend, Barnabas, follow Peter in his cowardly behavior. The average person is more likely to be influenced by his environment than to change it. Many people are tempted to act in a crowd in ways they would never act if they were alone.

Standing by our faithful commitment to the Lord is challenging when we see how easy it is to play the hypocritical role in certain situations where we are afraid of what people might think of us.

What you are doing speaks so loudly, I cannot hear what you say!

Erwin Raphael McManus in *The Barbarian Way* said: "The problem, of course, is that we are all hypocrites in transition. I am not who I want to be, but I am on the journey there, and thankfully I am not whom I used to be."

A healthy community is not a place of perfect people.

That place just doesn't exist. We all are flawed. If there was a perfect community, it would be ruined the moment I joined it. And it's easier to be patient with people when you realize they're being patient with you. When we don't come clean up front, it creates an unhealthy environment that leads to pretension and hypocrisy.

Let's continue our singing to focus on the Lord Jesus. This morning, please join me as we sing verses 4 & 5 of "**All That Thrills My Soul**": *"Ev'ry need His hand supplying, Ev'ry good in Him I see; On His strength divine relying, He is All in All to me. All that thrills my soul is Jesus; He is more than life to me; And the fairest of ten thousand, In my blessed Lord I see. By the crystal flowing river With the ransomed I will sing, And forever and forever Praise and glorify the King. All that thrills my soul is Jesus; He is more than life to me; And the fairest of ten thousand, In my blessed Lord I see."*

August 24—Crooked or Straight (Galatians 2:14)

Galatians 2:14: *"But when I saw that they were not walking straight in relation to the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas in the presence of everybody, 'If you, being a Jew, are living as the Gentiles and not as the Jews, how are you compelling the Gentiles to live as Jews?'"*

Verse 14: Paul points out that Peter is being inconsistent in his walk, making it hard for others to follow him. "They were not walking straight in relation to the truth of the gospel."

Someone has said: "It is better to go straight than to move in the best of circles."

“I said to Cephas in the presence of everybody, ‘If you, being a Jew, are living as the Gentiles and not as the Jews, how are you compelling the Gentiles to live as Jews?’”

Paul poses the question: If you are a Jew and living as a Gentile, how can you ask the Gentiles to live as Jews when it comes to the law?

Your talk is right, but your walk is inconsistent.

Scripture records that when Peter was confronted about his denial to our Lord, he wept bitterly. I believe his reaction was probably the same in this situation. Peter would have recognized how he had caused dissension between the Jews and Gentiles in Christ after his efforts for unity in Jerusalem.

This morning, let's join together in worship and praise as we sing verses 1 & 2 of **“I Need Thee Every Hour”**: *“I need Thee ev'ry hour, Most Gracious Lord; No tender voice like Thine can peace afford. I need Thee, O, I need Thee; Ev'ry hour I need Thee! O bless me now, my Saviour, I come to Thee. 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.”*

August 25—Only Through Faith in Christ Jesus (Galatians 2:15–16)

Galatians 2:15: *“As for us, we are Jews by nature, and not sinners from among the Gentiles (of Gentile origin).”*

Galatians 2:16: *“And knowing that a man is not being made righteous (justified) by the works of the law, only through faith in Christ Jesus, we also believed in Christ Jesus, in order that we might be made righteous by faith in Christ, and not by the works of the law; because by the works of the law there shall no flesh be made righteous.”*

Verse 15: *The Message* paraphrases this verse: “We Jews know that we have no advantage of birth over ‘non-Jewish sinners.’”

Paul points out that if Peter is going to make a separation, then he must recognize that both of them are of Jewish origin, not Gentile. This will mean neither has a right to be associating with the Gentiles. This will end Paul's ministry.

Verse 16: The apostle states the condition of salvation. A man is not made righteous by the works of the law, only through faith in Christ Jesus.

Peter and Paul had both entered into this new relationship with Christ with the express purpose that they “might be made righteous by faith in Christ, and not by the works of the law; because by the works of the law there shall no flesh be made righteous.”

This verse begins with a negative: “and knowing that a man is not being made righteous by the works of the law,” but, then states positively, “only

through faith in Christ Jesus.” As a result of this great revelation, Paul says to Peter: “we also believed in Christ Jesus.” Our belief is “in order that we might be made righteous by faith in Christ.”

Paul has summarized the gospel in this phrase: “we also believed in Christ Jesus in order that we might be made righteous by faith in Christ.”

Max Lucado in *Life Lessons: Galatians* said:

Trying to get right with God by keeping a bunch of religious rules is a formula for frustration and failure. First problem, whose rules? Such requirements vary from religion to religion, person to person, and generation to generation. What if you're working from the wrong list? Second problem, how do we define what it means to “keep” those rules? Do we have to follow them perfectly? Or are we allowed a reasonable number of mistakes and missteps? And what is considered “reasonable”? The gospel of Christ eliminates all this confusion by stating categorically that no one but Christ is good enough. Only through faith in him, only by relying on his efforts on our behalf, do we qualify for heaven.

Please join me in worship and praise as we sing together verses 3 & 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, O, I need Thee; Ev'ry hour I need Thee! O bless me now, my Saviour, I come to Thee. I need Thee ev'ry hour, Most Holy One; O make me Thine indeed, Thou blessed Son. I need Thee, O, I need Thee; Ev'ry hour I need Thee! O bless me now, my Saviour, I come to Thee.”*

August 26—Is Christ a Minister of Sin? (Galatians 2:17)

Galatians 2:17: “*But if, while seeking to be made righteous in Christ, we ourselves also were found to be sinners, therefore is Christ a minister of sin? May it not happen (perish the thought)!*”

Verse 17: If eating with the Gentiles was sin, then Jesus Christ permitting it makes him the instigator of sin. Paul concludes that if we are not completely made righteous in Jesus Christ, then we are still in our sin. This makes Christ the minister of sin.

The apostle uses a strong negative when he says: “may it not happen (perish the thought)!”

MacArthur says: “If the Judaizers’ doctrine was correct, then Paul, Peter, Barnabas and the other Jewish believers fell back into the category of sinners be-

cause they had been eating and fellowshiping with the Gentiles who according to the Judaizers were unclean. Minister of sin.”

Eugene Peterson in *A Year With Jesus* said: “Lord, you know how I am always coming up with a new scheme for self-improvement, and reducing my role in the spiritual life to that of charwoman, scrubbing and dusting and polishing my moral image. What I need is you, your presence. Come into my heart, Lord Jesus! Amen.”

This morning, please join me in worship and praise singing my favorite Charles Wesley hymn. Let’s sing together verse 1 of “**And Can It Be That I Should Gain**”: *“And can it be that I should gain An int’rest in the Savior’s blood? Died He for me, who caused His pain? For me, who Him to death pursued? Amazing love! How can it be, That Thou, my God, shouldst die for me? Amazing love! How can it be, That Thou, my God, shouldst die for me?”*

August 27—I, Through the Law, Died to the Law (Galatians 2:18–19)

Galatians 2:18: “*For if the things I tore down, these things I am building again, I am showing myself a transgressor.*”

Galatians 2:19: “*For I, through the law, died to the law, in order that I might live unto God.*”

Verse 18: *The NET Bible* translates this verse: “But if I build up again those things I once destroyed, I demonstrate that I am one who breaks God’s law.”

In these verses, Paul states the reasons for asking the question: “Therefore is Christ a minister of sin?”

Peter’s actions were erecting the wall between the Jews and the Gentiles once again. These actions show him as a transgressor. Living as a Gentile, he tore down the law, but living like a Jew, he tears down the grace of God

Peter is caught in a dilemma.

As Christians, we are brought to a point of real blessing when we recognize the futility of trying in ourselves to live a life pleasing to God and allow Jesus Christ to live out His life in us.

Verse 19: *The Message* paraphrases: “What actually took place is this: I tried keeping rules and working my head off to please God, and it didn’t work. So I quit being a ‘law man’ so that I could be God’s man. Christ’s life showed me how, and enabled me to do it. I identified myself completely with him.”

This verse reminds me of Enoch in Genesis 5:24 (NIV): “Enoch walked with God; then he was no more, because God took him away.”

No master can give orders to a dead slave.

“I, through the law, died to the law.” The law tried me, found me guilty and executed me. It cannot go beyond the grave. The law does not anticipate resurrection.

The last phrase expresses the ultimate purpose in Paul's argument stating we are dead to the demands of the law: "in order that I might live unto God." This is the purpose of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

I do this through fellowship, communion, submission and obedience to Him.

Won't you join me in worship and praise as we sing verse 3 of **"And Can It Be That I Should Gain"**: *"He left His Father's throne above So free, so infinite His grace; Emptied Himself of all but love, And bled for Adam's helpless race; 'Tis mercy all, immense and free; For, O my God, it found out me. Amazing love! How can it be, That Thou, my God, shouldst die for me?"*

August 28—Crucified with Christ (Galatians 2:20)

Galatians 2:20: *"With Christ I have been crucified; and I no longer am living, but Christ is living in me; and that life which now I am living in the flesh I am living by faith, which faith is in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself on my behalf."*

Verse 20: In verse 19, Paul stated: "I through the law died to the law." In this verse, he tells us his death, his execution was "with Christ I have been crucified."

"With Christ I have been crucified; and I no longer am living, but Christ is living in me."

Christ dwelt in the Old Testament tabernacle and then in the temple. Then, John tells us "the Word became flesh" and tabernacled among us. Now, Christ resides in our bodies.

Ideal Christian living is the full cooperation of the believer with the in-living Christ.

Begin the sweet discipline of acknowledging Him, moment by moment. Live with Him. Keep a running conversation going with Him. Rejoice in Him.

Paul continues: "and that life which now I am living in the flesh I am living by faith, which faith is in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself on my behalf."

Eugene Peterson in *A Year With Jesus* says it so well: "I want my life, Lord, to be an answer to your love for me: my actions and my words, my thoughts and my dreams—all a response to the great reality of your presence in Jesus, that calls into question my selfishness and my pride. Amen."

Please celebrate, worship and praise the Lord with me by singing verse 4 of **"And Can It Be That I Should Gain"**: *"Long my imprisoned spirit lay Fast bound in sin and nature's night; Thine eye diffused a quick'ning ray, I woke, the dungeon flamed with light; My chains fell off, my heart was free; I rose, went forth and followed Thee. Amazing love! How can it be, That Thou, my God, shouldst die for me?"*

August 29—Nullifying the Grace of God (Galatians 2:21)

Galatians 2:21: “*I am not nullifying the grace of God; for if righteousness is coming through the law, then Christ died to no purpose (uselessly or without a cause).*”

Verse 21: Paul advises Peter that if he wants to live again as a Jew under the law, he is nullifying the grace of God. However, Paul will not. If God thought for a moment that you could live under the law, Jesus death on the cross would not have been necessary.

The reason for this statement is: “for if righteousness is coming through the law, then Christ died to no purpose.” If righteousness can be gained by the keeping of the law, Christ’s death was for nothing. Then, he was just a martyr or political victim.

Separating himself from the Gentiles resulted in two things:

1. It made Christ a minister of sin
2. Christ’s death was without purpose or cause, useless.

Peter put himself in this position because he was afraid of what people might think if he stood for his convictions.

May we not compromise or withdraw because of fear. May we stand true with great courage for Christ.

John Ortberg in *The Me I Want To Be* says:

Life is too short,
joy is too precious.
God is too good,
our soul is too valuable,
we matter too much to throw away a single
moment of our one and only life on anxious
striving.

For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid.

Ruth Myers in her book, *Christ / Life*, said: “Lord Jesus, thank You that I have inner oneness with You in the core of my being.”

This morning, please join me in worship and praise as we sing verse 5 of “**And Can It Be That I Should Gain**”: “*No condemnation now I dread; Jesus, and all in Him, is mine! Alive in Him, my living Head, And clothed in righteousness divine, Bold I approach th’eternal throne, And claim the crown, through Christ my own. Amazing love! How can it be, That Thou, my God, shouldst die for me?*”

August 30—Who Bewitched You? (Galatians 3:1)

Galatians 3:1: *“O! Foolish Galatians, who fascinated (bewitched) you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was portrayed publicly, having been crucified?”*

Verse 1: *The Message* paraphrases this verse: “You crazy Galatians! Did someone put a hex on you? Have you taken leave of your senses? Something crazy has happened, for it’s obvious that you no longer have the crucified Jesus in clear focus in your lives. His sacrifice on the cross was certainly set before you clearly enough.”

There will be six questions Paul asked of the Galatians in these first 5 verses of chapter 3. This first question asks “who”: “who fascinated (bewitched) you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was portrayed publicly, having been crucified?”

In his ministry to the Galatians, Paul was faithful to present to them a crucified Christ. The crucifixion would be meaningless if salvation could be obtained by the law.

The big question is “WHO?”

Think upon the thief upon the cross. What a day for him! In the morning, he was justly crucified on a cross. In the evening, he was justly welcomed into Paradise by Jesus.

If life is justly living by the law, then progress comes by performance. Salvation under the law is as if redemption is 2/3 the work of God and 1/3 the work of man in living. This division of labor is diabolical and destructive of grace. We must understand theologically that salvation, sanctification and glorification are all an act of grace on God’s part. The conception, continuity and consummation of life is indeed of grace. We are victorious not by the works of the law, but by our faith in the adequacy of Jesus Christ to live out His life in us.

Max Lucado summarizes this beautifully in *Life Lessons: Galatians*: “With urgency and intensity, the apostle Paul admonishes the believers in Galatia to remember the fundamental truth of Christianity; Just as we came to Christ by faith alone, so now we also walk with him by faith alone. Religious works, no matter how great, do not merit greater approval from God.”

Won’t you join me in worship and praise this morning as we sing verse 1 of that wonderful hymn, **“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.”*

August 31—How Did You Receive the Spirit? (Galatians 3:2)

Galatians 3:2: *“This only I am desiring to learn from you: did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or as a result of preaching which demanded (only) faith?”*

Verse 2: In this verse, we have the second question of the six questions in this passage. Yesterday, the question was “who?” Today’s question is “HOW?”

The question is multiple-choice: “how did you receive the Spirit?” with two possible answers: “by the works of the law” or “as a result of preaching which demanded (only) faith?”

Paul asked them to clarify how they received the Holy spirit, the evidence of life in Christ.

Romans 8:14: “For as many as are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.”

Did you have to work for the Spirit of God to receive Him or did He come when you put your faith in Christ?

There is no human effort in seeking. We receive the Spirit by the message of faith. When we accepted Christ as our Savior, the Holy Spirit came in to guide us into all truth. When he comes in, he baptizes us into the body of Christ. He takes us out of Adam and places us in Christ.

The apostle is pressing these Galatian Christians. When they are honest, they must admit the Spirit of God was given to them through the message of faith. When by faith they received Christ, the Holy Spirit came to dwell within them. It was not by the works of the law that they received this precious indwelling of the Third Person of the Trinity.

Please join me in worship and praise as we sing that significant verse, verse 2 of **“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.”*

SEPTEMBER

September 1—Are You So Foolish? (Galatians 3:3)

Galatians 3:3: *“Are you so foolish, having begun in the Spirit now are you being brought to maturity in the flesh?”*

Verse 3: The NET Bible translates this verse: “Are you so foolish? Although you began with the Spirit, are you now trying to finish by human effort?”

The third and fourth questions of the six are in this verse. Question one: “who?” was in verse 1, and question two: “how?” was in verse 2.

Paul points out the Source is the same for the beginning as well as the process to spiritual maturity, the Spirit of God. The Galatians had come to believe again that by themselves, in the observance of the law, they could be brought to spiritual maturity.

In 1 Peter 5:10, we see that Peter learned from this experience: “But the God of all grace, who has called you to His eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, shall Himself make you complete, shall establish you, shall make you strong, shall ground you as on a foundation.”

The Galatians have fallen from the Spirit into the flesh. They are guilty of taking everything Christ could give, but then endeavoring to move on to maturity in the flesh.

Anytime we are concerned about what people see and if they appreciate what we are doing, it is usually done in the flesh.

John 6:63: “It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life.”

God expects nothing from our flesh. He has no delusions about what we are apart from what He is.

Christ is waiting for us to come to the end of our frustrated working and futile efforts so that we will let Him in to take over. These Galatians were endeavoring to produce Christian maturity in their own power and strength. Paul’s questions point out the futility in their efforts to mature spiritually on their own: “Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit now are you being brought to maturity in the flesh (by your own human efforts)?”

I am reminded of Frank Sinatra’s song, “**My Way.**” The Galatians were trying to do it on their own.

In the Upper Room, Jesus told the disciples 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.”

This morning, please join me in singing together 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.”*

September 2—Did You Suffer in Vain? (Galatians 3:4-5)

Galatians 3:4: “So many things did you suffer in vain? If indeed it be in vain.”

Galatians 3:5: “Therefore the one supplying the Spirit to you and working miracles among you (Is He doing it) by the works of the law or by the message of faith?”

Verse 4: This verse has the fifth of the six questions Paul asks of the Galatians. This question is crucial in understanding Paul’s concept of suffering.

Spiritual growth and development are often accompanied by suffering and difficulty. Change is the only way a Christian can grow and develop. Asking someone to change from what they are to what they should be involves pain. These Galatian Christians had already suffered. They had suffered from the hands of God in their spiritual growth, but also from persecutions as a result of their stand for Jesus Christ.

“So many things did you suffer in vain? If indeed it be in vain.”

Margaret Clarkson in *Destined for Glory* said: “We may work with God to allow Him to bring His glory out of our suffering, or we may resist Him and frustrate His purposes for us. In either case, we will suffer, for suffering is the common lot of humanity.”

Dietrich Bonhoeffer in *Seize the Day* said: “All suffering must lead the Christian to the strengthening of his faith and not to defection. Suffering only becomes disastrous when we fail to learn its growth-producing lessons.”

Elisabeth Elliot said: “Suffering is having what you don’t want or wanting what you don’t have. It can range in scope and severity from traffic jams to taxes to tumors.”

Warren Wiersbe said: “When you are in the furnace, your Father keeps His eye on the clock and His hand on the thermostat.”

With Paul’s love for the Galatians, it is evident he hopes this is only a temporary set-back for the Galatian church, and he desires for them to get back on track and finish strong.

Verse 5: This is the final question of Paul’s six questions to the Galatians.

“Therefore the one supplying the Spirit to you and working miracles among you (Is He doing it) by the works of the law or by the message of faith?” Paul queries whether this person who fascinated them (verse 1) was the one supplying the Spirit to them and working miracles among them.

Major Ian Thomas said: “... allowing the Holy Spirit to occupy the whole of your personality with the adequacy of Jesus Christ.”

In writing to the Galatians, the apostle wants to make it clear. They had received the Spirit by the message of faith. Through the same Holy Spirit working in their lives, they should go on growing and developing in Christ.

The Spirit-filled life is not a special edition of Christianity. It is included in the total plan of God for His people.

Please join me in worship and praise 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.”*

September 3—Abraham Believes God (Galatians 3:6–7)

Galatians 3:6: *“Even as Abraham believed God and it was reckoned unto Him for righteousness.”*

Galatians 3:7: *“You are knowing therefore that those who are of faith, these are sons of Abraham.”*

Verse 6: *The Message* beautifully paraphrases this verse: “Don’t these things happen among you just as they happened with Abraham? He believed God, and that act of belief was turned into a life that was right with God.”

The words “even as” introduce us to Paul’s illustration of Abraham. Paul quotes from Genesis 15:6: “Abram believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness.”

The apostle uses this same Genesis verse in Romans 4:3: “For what is the scripture saying? ‘And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness.’” Abraham was before the law and God counted his faith for righteousness.

Abraham is mentioned in verses 6–9 and 14.

Romans 4:20–21: “Yet, with respect to the promise of God, he did not vacillate in unbelief, but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully convinced that what He had promised, He was able also to do.”

Max Lucado in *Life Lessons: Galatians* says: “Just like Abraham, we are made right with God by faith alone.”

Verse 7: Those of faith are identified with Abraham as spiritual sons.

Wuest said: “The argument is since faith was the way Abraham was justified, it follows that those who exercise like faith are his true followers.”

Oswald Chambers in *My Utmost for His Highest* said: “God wants you to understand that it is a life of faith, not a life of emotional enjoyment of His blessings.”

This morning, let’s join together in worship and praise as we sing verse 1 of **“Faith Is the Victory”**: *“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 over-*

comes the world. Faith is the victory! Faith is the victory! O, glorious victory, That overcomes the world.”

September 4—By Faith God Is Justifying the Gentiles (Galatians 3:8–9)

Galatians 3:8: “Now the scripture, having foreseen that on faith God is justifying the Gentiles announced beforehand to Abraham all the Gentiles shall be blessed in you.”

Galatians 3:9: “So that those who are believing ones (of faith) are being blessed with believing Abraham.”

Verse 8: *The Message* paraphrases this verse: “It was all laid out beforehand in Scripture that God would set things right with non-Jews by faith. Scripture anticipated this in the promise to Abraham: ‘All nations will be blessed in you.’”

Paul vindicates Gentile salvation as promised to Abraham. The Scriptures foresaw this salvation and they would be made righteous by faith.

Verse 9: “So that” gives us the end or result: “those who are believing ones (of faith) are being blessed with the believing Abraham.”

The apostle’s illustration presents a case for faith as basis for righteousness and Gentile salvation.

In this passage of Galatians we have studied thus far, we have seen:

1. The Spirit was given by faith.
2. Maturity is in the Spirit, not in the flesh.
3. Abraham was accepted before God on the basis of faith.

Let’s join together in worship and praise as we sing verse 2 of “**Faith Is the Victory**”: “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.”

September 5—All or Not At All (Galatians 3:10)

Galatians 3:10: “For as many as are of the works of the law are under a curse. For it is written ‘Cursed is everyone who is not remaining in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.’”

Verse 10: *The Message* paraphrases this verse: “And that means that anyone who tries to live by his own effort, independent of God, is doomed to failure. Scripture backs this up: ‘Utterly cursed is every person who fails to carry out every detail written in the Book of the law.’”

The law locks us into actions!

The difference between faith and the law is:

- Faith focuses on what God does for man.
- The law focuses on what man does for God.

It has all been done.

A curse is the opposite of blessing. The faith life offers blessing, but life under the law brings only a curse.

James 2:10: “For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all.”

Stephen Brown in *Welcome to the Family* gives us this illustration:

At the dog track, dogs are persuaded to do something as dumb as run around the track because they are convinced they will catch a mechanical rabbit which is always kept just so far in front of them as they run. Those dogs think they are scaring the mechanical rabbit. They think they will catch it. They might even think they will beat that rabbit around the track. But it will never happen because the man who runs the mechanical rabbit is always in control. The rabbit will always get to the finish line before the dogs. The Christian's life is like that mechanical rabbit. The world may think it will destroy, hurt and devour it, but it won't because Jesus is in control and the end is already decided.

Listen once again to what Paul says in this section of the verse: “Cursed is everyone who is not remaining in **all things** which are written in the book of the law to do them.”

Turn to Exodus 20 and review the ten Commandments to affirm this statement! Remember: God doesn't grade on the curve. If you break one, you have broken them all.

NOT THE LABORS OF MY HANDS
CAN FULFILL THY LAW'S DEMANDS.
COULD MY ZEAL NO RESPITE KNOW,
COULD MY TEARS FOREVER FLOW.
ALL FOR SIN COULD NOT ATONE,
THOU MUST SAVE AND THOU ALONE.
NOTHING IN MY HAND I BRING,
SIMPLY TO THY CROSS I CLING.
NAKED COME TO THEE FOR DRESS,
HELPLESS LOOK TO THEE FOR GRACE.
FOUL I TO THY FOUNTAIN FLY,
WASH ME SAVIOR OR I DIE.

Please join me in worship and praise as we sing verse 4 of **“Faith Is the Victory”**: *“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.”*

September 6—No One is Made Righteous by the Law (Galatians 3:11–12)

Galatians 3:11: *“But that in the law no one is being made righteous before (in the sight of) God is clear (evident) because ‘the righteous (man) shall live by faith.’”*

Galatians 3:12: *“Now the law is not of faith but the one who has done them shall live in them.”*

Verse 11: *The Message* paraphrases this verse: “The obvious impossibility of carrying out such a moral program should make it plain that no one can sustain a relationship with God that way.”

Luke 16:15: “And He said to them, ‘You are those who justify yourselves in the sight of men, but God knows your hearts; for that which is highly esteemed among men is detestable in the sight of God.’”

Jeremiah 17:9–10: “The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure; Who can understand it? ‘I the Lord search the heart and examine the mind, to reward a man according to his conduct, according to what his deeds deserve.’”

This verse is a quote from Habakkuk the prophet.

Verse 12: *The Message* paraphrases this verse: “Doing things for God is the opposite of entering into what God does for you. Habakkuk had it right: ‘The person who believes God, is set right by God—and that’s the real life. Rule-keeping does not naturally evolve into living by faith, but only perpetuates itself in more and more rule-keeping, a fact observed in Scripture: ‘The one who does these things [rule-keeping] continues to live by them.’”

“The law is not of faith.” Do not mix these two things together. They are opposites like oil and water. Even if a man kept all of the law, the righteousness he had would be inferior. It would be his own. The gospel offers us the righteousness of God by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

For some reason, man believes he should get something for keeping the law, but in reality he should get nothing. If a man were a resident in a city for 30 years and faithfully kept the law, would the authorities give him something for keeping the law? However, if after 30 years he broke one law, the authorities would give him a jail sentence.

The law cannot give life. It can only condemn.

This morning, let's worship and praise the Lord together by singing verses 1 & 2 of **"Rock of Ages"**: *"Rock of Ages, cleft for me, Let me hide myself in Thee; Let the water and the blood, From Thy riven side which flowed, Be of sin the double cure, Cleanse me from its guilt and pow'r. Not the labors of my hands Can fulfill Thy law's demands; Could my zeal no respite know, Could my tears forever flow, All for sin could not atone; Thou must save and Thou alone."*

September 7—The Payment of a Ransom (Galatians 3:13–14)

Galatians 3:13: *"Christ delivered us by the payment of a ransom from the curse of the law. Having become a curse on behalf of us because it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who is suspended upon a tree.'"*

Galatians 3:14: *"In order that to the Gentiles the blessing of Abraham might come in Jesus Christ, in order that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith."*

Verse 13: Christ delivered us, not "will" deliver us. This is not contingent on us keeping some part of the law.

The graphic picture is complete. The curse was hanging over us. Christ came between us and the curse, so the curse fell on Him instead of us.

MacArthur says: "The curse of the law was the punishment demanded because no man could keep from violating its demands. But Christ took that curse upon Himself as a substitute for sinners and became a curse for us."

Rick Warren in his book, *The Purpose of Christmas*, says:

When the Romans nailed Jesus to a cross, they stretched his arms as wide as they could. With his arms wide open, Jesus was physically demonstrating, "I love you this much! I love you so much it hurts! I'd rather die than live without you!" The next time you see a picture or statue of Jesus with outstretched arms on the cross, remember, he is saying, "I love you this much!"

Verse 14: Christ Jesus became a curse for us. Paul concludes this section with two reasons why he became this curse:

1. In order that the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles in Jesus Christ.
2. In order that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

The Spirit did not come by the works of the law, but by faith.

There are four observations we can make:

1. Blessing comes through faith.
2. The curse comes through the law.

3. The blessing of Abraham comes in Jesus Christ.

4. The promise of the Spirit comes through faith.

Let's join together in worship and praise this morning as we sing verses 3 & 4 of **"Rock of Ages"**: *"Nothing in my hand I bring, Simply to Thy cross I cling; Naked, come to Thee for dress, Helpless, look to Thee for grace; Foul, I to the fountain fly, Wash me, Savior or I die! While I draw this fleeting breath, When my eyes shall close in death, When I rise to worlds unknown, See Thee on Thy judgment throne, Rock of Ages, cleft for me, Let me hide myself in Thee."*

September 8—A Done Deal (Galatians 3:15)

Galatians 3:15: *"Brethren, I am speaking after the manner of men. Yet a man's covenant when it has been ratified, no one is nullifying or adding to it (breaking vows)."*

Verse 15: "Brethren, I am speaking after the manner of men." In our previous lesson, Paul used Abraham as an illustration of faith. In this passage, he speaks of the promises God has made to him.

The apostle makes a general statement upon which he will build his argument. He argues that when a man makes a covenant with someone, he does not break this covenant by making it void, nor does he add anything to it after the covenant has been made.

MacArthur says: "The covenant of promise was superior because it was confirmed as irrevocable and unchangeable. "

Radmacher, Allen & House said: "Covenant, here, probably means a last will and testament which is unchangeable after it is confirmed. Most of the uses of the word in the New Testament refer to a Solomon Agreement or contract that God made with his people."

Please join me in worship and praise this morning as we sing together verse 1 of **"Once For All!"**: *"Free from the law, O happy condition, Jesus hath bled, and there is remission; Cursed by the law and bruised by the fall, Grace hath redeemed us once for all. Once for all, O sinner, receive it, Once for all, O brother, believe it, Cling to the cross, the burden will fall, Christ hath redeemed us once for all."*

September 9—Seed Singular (Galatians 3:16)

Galatians 3:16: *"Now to Abraham were spoken the promises and to his seed. He is not saying, 'And to the seeds,' as in respect to many, but as in respect to one, 'And to your seed,' who is Christ."*

Verse 16: *The Bible Knowledge Commentary* says: "The stress on seed, not seeds, was made simply to remind readers that the faithful in Israel had always recognized that blessing would ultimately come through a single individual, the Messiah."

“Now to Abraham were spoken the promises and to his seed.” We begin to follow the line through Isaac, Jacob, Judah, David and then the verse concludes: “‘And to your seed,’ who is Christ.”

The apostle argues using the singular and plural of the word, “seed.” The earth was to be blessed through Abraham’s seed, not through his descendants. If the meaning included the plural, then legitimately, the promise could have come through Ishmael, too. But the word, “seed,” in the singular indicates this promise comes through Isaac. The promise comes through his seed, which is Christ.

Isaiah 43:11: “I, even I, am the Lord, and apart from me there is no Savior.”

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.’”

The God of the universe is very selective and limited in His program for eternal life. It only comes through one source—a relationship through Lord Jesus Christ. No other religions of the world will be accepted.

Therefore, the promises only come through Christ and not the works of the law.

Eugene Peterson captures the whole thought beautifully in this prayer from *A Year With Jesus*: “How faithfully you keep your promises, God! Your presence drives out loneliness, your love banishes emptiness, your commands cure my aimlessness. Thank you for continuing to be with me in Jesus, through the Holy Spirit. Amen.”

Won’t you join me in worship and praise as we sing verse 2 of “**Once For All!**”: “*Now are we free there’s no condemnation, Jesus provides a perfect salvation; Come unto Me, O hear His sweet call, Come, and He saves us once for all. Once for all, O sinner, receive it, Once for all, O brother, believe it; Cling to the cross, the burden will fall, Christ hath redeemed us once for all.*”

September 10—The Law Did Not Revoke the Promise (Galatians 3:17)

Galatians 3:17: “*Now this I am saying, a covenant has been ratified beforehand by God, the law which came after 430 years does not revoke with the result to render inoperative the promise.*”

Verse 17: In Genesis chapter 15, we find the account of God making this covenant with Abraham. This is an unconditional covenant. God alone walked between the animal pieces to seal the covenant. It is the promise of God.

The apostle then says: “The law which came after 430 years does not revoke with the result to render inoperative the promise.” The law given to Moses in the book of Exodus 430 years late does not revoke the promise made to Abraham earlier.

Radmacher, Allen & House said: “430 years was the time Israel was in Egypt before the exodus. The law which was put into force at the end of those centuries could not override or annul the standing covenant with Abraham.”

Please join me in worship and praise as we sing verse 3 of **“Once For All”**: *“Children of God, O glorious calling, Surely His grace will keep us from falling; Passing from death to life at His call, Blessed salvation once for all. Once for all, O sinner, receive it, Once for all, O brother, believe it; Cling to the cross, the burden will fall, Christ hath redeemed us once for all.”*

September 11—The Inheritance Comes Through the Promise (Galatians 3:18)

Galatians 3:18: *“For if the inheritance is from law, it is no longer of promise. But to Abraham through promise God has bestowed it.”*

Verse 18: The word “for” in Paul’s argument indicates he is giving a reason for the previous statement in verse 17. If the inheritance is based on law, it would be the payment of a debt, not the faithful fulfillment of a promise.

What does the apostle mean by “inheritance” in this verse?

Peter references an inheritance in 1 Peter 1:4: “Unto an inheritance imperishable and undefiled and unfading, which has been reserved in heaven for you.”

The down payment of the inheritance is the promised coming of the indwelling Holy Spirit when we receive Christ as our Savior. The full inheritance will come at the time of our physical death when we go to be with the Lord. It is then we will experience the blessing of all the Lord has provided for us.

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.’”

The inheritance comes through the relationship, not from performance.

Therefore, this inheritance has not come from the law, but through the promise that centers on Jesus Christ.

Radmacher, Allen & House said: “The law of Moses and the promise God made to Abraham were at odds with each other. Paul demonstrated that the false teachers’ view that the law was the fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant had no scriptural basis.”

This morning, let’s join together in worship and praise singing verse 1 of **“When We All Get to Heaven”**: *“Sing the wondrous love of Jesus, Sing His mercy and His grace; In the mansions bright and blessed He’ll prepare for us a place. When we all get to Heaven, What a day of rejoicing that will be! When we all see Jesus, We’ll sing and shout the victory.”*

September 12—Why the Law? (Galatians 3:19–20)

Galatians 3:19: *“Why then the law? It was added because of transgressions, until the seed should come, to whom the promise had been made, having been arranged (ordained) through angels, by the hand of a mediator.”*

Galatians 3:20: *“Now the mediator is not of one, but God is one.”*

Verse 19: We have the first of two questions in these remaining verses of chapter 3: (1) Why then the law? The second question is in verse 21.

Many Christians fail in their pursuit of spiritual maturity and development due to a misunderstanding of the part the law plays in relation to their spiritual growth. This creates hypocrisy and those who are endeavoring to be holy by their own personal performance. It causes believers to be frustrated and depressed when they fail to accomplish what they feel will equal spirituality.

“Why then the law?” The apostle follows up this question with a statement of purpose which answers the question: “It was added because of transgressions, until the seed should come, to whom the promise had been made.”

The law was given to *reveal* sin, not *remove* it—to prove men sinners, not make them holy.

It was a temporary thing. The focus is on the word “until.” The “seed” was identified in verse 16 as the Christ. It was to Christ that the promise had been made. The law was given to make us aware of our need for the “seed.”

Dwight L. Moody said: “The law is a good looking glass (mirror) in which to show a child how defiled his face is. But who would think of washing the child’s face with the looking glass.”

The law “having been arranged (ordained) through angels, by the hand of a mediator.”

There is great significance in this verse. Before a Christian can make real progress in growth and run the race towards spiritual maturity, he must have a clear understanding of the law and its function. Otherwise, he will get side-tracked in trying to perform for God the legalistic standards which are used to initially convict him of the sin that will bring him to Christ. Once an understanding of the function of the law is gained, it will prepare the way for further spiritual growth and maturity.

D. De Haan says: “The law can’t justify, it can’t sanctify, and it can’t satisfy.”

There are two key thoughts within verse 19: (1) Added and (2) Until.

Verse 20: “Now the mediator is not of one; but God is one.” There are over 400 interpretations of this verse so don’t be discouraged if you struggle with understanding its meaning.

A mediator is a representative of two. In this case, Moses is the representative of God and the people. However, in giving the promise of Abraham, God did it of Himself. Therefore, it is God’s full responsibility to keep His promise.

GOD TO THE DEPTHS OF GOD'S PROMISES,
AND CLAIM WHATSOEVER YOU WILL.
THE BLESSING OF GOD WILL NOT FAIL THEE;
HIS WORD HE WILL SURELY FULFILL.

How can God say no to something He has promised?

The Word of God is filled with His promises of *His presence, His strength, His grace, His provision, and His love*, but there are many more.

Matthew 11:28–30 (Phillips), Jesus says: “Come to me, all of you who are weary and over-burdened, and I will give you rest! Put on my yoke and learn from me. For I am gentle and humble in heart and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

Please join me in worship and praise as we sing verse 2 of “**When We All Get to Heaven**”: “*When we all get to Heaven, What a day of rejoicing that will be! When we all see Jesus, We’ll sing and shout the victory. When we all get to Heaven, What a day of rejoicing that will be! When we all see Jesus, We’ll sing and shout the victory.*”

September 13—Is the Law Against the Promise of God? (Galatians 3:21)

Galatians 3:21: “*Is therefore the law against the promises of God? God forbid! For if a law had been given which was able to make alive, actually righteousness would have been from the law.*”

Verse 21: Today, we have our second of two questions in this last passage of chapter 3. Yesterday, we had the first question in verse 20: (1) “Why then the law?” Our second question is in this verse: (2) “Is therefore the law against the promises of God?”

Paul answers emphatically “No!” or “God forbid!” The reason given for this negative response is in the last section of this verse: “For if a law had been given which was able to make alive, actually righteousness would have been from the law.”

Life is what is needed, but the law can only bring death.

The apostle explains through this verse that if the law could first make alive, or give new life, and a righteous standing, then righteousness would have come from the law.

We all stand condemned under the law’s verdict. We have all sinned and broken the law. To break the law is to be guilty of it all.

James 4:17: “Therefore, to the one who knows the right thing to do, and does not do it, to him it is sin.”

This morning, let's join together in worship and praise singing verse 3 of **"When We All Get to Heaven"**: *"Let us then be true and faithful, Trusting, serving ev'ry day; Just one glimpse of Him in glory Will the toils of life repay. When we all get to Heaven, What a day of rejoicing that will be! When we all see Jesus, We'll sing and shout the victory."*

September 14—Shut Up Under Sin (Galatians 3:22)

Galatians 3:22: *"But the scripture shut up all under sin in order that the promise on the ground of faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe."*

Verse 22: In this first part of the verse, the apostle illustrates scripture or the law in prison under sin. Paul explains the function of scripture or the law is to "shut up all under sin." It is for the purpose that "the promise on the ground of faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe."

The word for "shut up" describes *"shut together on all sides as a school of fish in a net."* The law has shut us in with no hope of release by ourselves, kept under lock and key.

Because we are all under sin, we are all dead. We are equally dead. It is not the degree, but any sin in itself that makes us dead.

B.B. Sutcliffe illustrates this well:

Let's say there are three men on a very high building. They are warned of their danger of falling off. The first man jumps off and is killed because he thought the warning was false. The second accidentally slips off and is killed, and the third is seized and is thrown off by his enemies—and is killed. Can it be said that the last man is less dead than the others or the first more dead? Can that which killed them give them life?

As there are no degrees of death, there are also no degrees of salvation. No one is more saved than anyone else. In our relationship with the Lord, the situation is very clear—either you are alive in Him or dead without Him.

"In order that the promise on the ground of faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe." If you want to enter into the promises of God, it will be on the basis of faith in Jesus Christ, not by the words of the law.

This is graphically illustrated with the thief on the cross. While dying on the cross, he turned to Christ and asked Him to remember him when He comes into His kingdom. The Savior responded immediately, "Today you will be with Me in Paradise."

I love the way Charles Wesley characterizes it in **“And Can It Be That I Should Gain”**. Verse 4 says: *“Long my imprisoned spirit lay Fast bound in sin and nature’s night; Thine eye diffused a quick’ning ray, I woke, the dungeon flamed with light; My chains fell off, my heart was free; I rose, went forth and followed Thee. Amazing love! How can it be, That Thou, my God, shouldst die for me?”*

McManus says: “Most of us want God to fix every bad choice we make without taking from us our right to choose wrongly. We want to make God into our own personal pooper-scooper, following right behind us, cleaning up our mess. God lets us make our bed and makes us lie in it.”

Won’t you join me in worship and praise this morning as we sing together verse 4 of **“When We All Get to Heaven”**: *“Onward to the prize before us, Soon His beauty we’ll behold; Soon the pearly gates will open, We shall tread the streets of gold. When we all get to Heaven, What a day of rejoicing that will be! When we all see Jesus, We’ll sing and shout the victory.”*

September 15—Before Faith Came (Galatians 3:23)

Galatians 3:23: *“But before faith came, under law we were being guarded, being shut up unto the faith about to be revealed.”*

Verse 23: In verse 22, we were “shut up all under sin.” In this verse, we are “being shut up unto the faith about to be revealed.”

Barker & Kohlenberger said: “While the law was here, however, it did serve a purpose to hold us prisoner, locking us up until Christ should be revealed.”

Paul explains that, like a jailer, the law has kept us locked up and out of trouble until Christ the Liberator should come to set us free.

Looking ahead to Galatians 4:4 in the Phillips translation, we read: “But when the proper time came God sent His Son, born of a human mother and born under the jurisdiction of the law.”

I think God would be pleased if we celebrate an early Christmas this morning by singing together verse 1 of **“Joy to the World”**: *“Joy to the world! The Lord is come; Let earth receive her King. Let ev’ry heart prepare Him room, And heav’n and nature sing, And heav’n and nature sing, And heav’n, and heav’n and nature sing.”*

September 16—No Longer Under the Guardian (Galatians 3:24–25)

Galatians 3:24: *“So the law became our guardian unto Christ, in order that on the grounds of faith we might be made righteous.”*

Galatians 3:25: *“But faith having come, we are no longer under the guardian.”*

Verse 24: At the beginning of this verse, the word “so” states the result of Paul’s argument: “so the law became our guardian unto Christ.”

This Greek word doesn't mean school master, but "guardian." A "guardian" was usually an old and trusted slave who had been in the family a long time, and whose character was high. He was responsible for the child's moral welfare. It was his responsibility to see that the child acquired the qualities essential for manhood. He would take the child to and from school, and deliver him in safety to the teacher.

The purpose for the law becoming our guardian was: "in order that on the grounds of faith, we might be made righteous." We are made righteous by faith alone.

Verse 25: "But faith having come, we are no longer under the guardian." We are not longer "shut up" under the law.

Please join me in worship and praise as we sing verse 1 of "**Lord, I'm Coming Home**": *"I've wandered far away from God, Now I'm coming home; The paths of sin too long I've trod, Lord, I'm coming home. Coming home, coming home, Nevermore to roam; Open wide Thine arms of love, Lord, I'm coming home."*

September 17—Sons of God Through Faith (Galatians 3:26–27)

Galatians 3:26: "*For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.*"

Galatians 3:27: "*For as many as were baptized with Christ, put on (clothed) Christ.*"

Verse 26: In this passage, the apostle offers three reasons to support his statement. The first is in this verse: "but faith having come, we are no longer under the guardian."

Reason #1: You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.

Salvation through faith brings us into a family relationship.

Paul talks more of "sons of God" in the next chapter.

Oswald Chambers in *My Utmost for His Highest* says: "Discouragement is disillusioned self-love, and self-love may be love for my devotion to Jesus—not love for Jesus Himself."

Verse 27: "For as many as were baptized with Christ, put on (clothed) Christ." This is the second reason to support his statement.

Reason #2: You are baptized with Christ.

"Baptized" simply means "*identification*." This is not a reference to water baptism, but a picture of what happens to us when we come to know Jesus Christ as our Savior. We are taken out of Adam and placed into Jesus Christ.

"Put on" or clothed describes "*putting on a badge or uniform of service like a soldier wears*." It was a custom in the Roman family to put on or clothe a child who had come of age with the toga virilus.

Romans 13:14: “But clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and stop making provision for the flesh in regard to its desires.”

Chrysostom says: “If Christ is Son of God and you have put Him on, having the Son in thyself and being made likened to Him, thou hast been brought into one family and one nature.”

Colossians 3:12–14 (*The Message*): “So, chosen by God for this new life of love, dress in the wardrobe God picked out for you: compassion, kindness, humility, quiet strength, discipline. Be even-tempered, content with second place, quick to forgive an offense. Forgive as quickly and completely as the Master forgave you. And regardless of what else you put on, wear love. It’s your basic all-purpose garment. Never be without it.”

Gary Thomas in *The Beautiful Fight* said:

Incarnational spirituality—the living, reigning, and ascended Jesus living through us and transforming us into different people—does not exist to uphold a few rules but rather speaks of a process that creates an entirely new person who sees with new eyes, feels with a new heart, hears with renewed ears, and lives with a new passion. It is, I believe, the only life worth living.

This morning, let’s join together in worship and praise to sing verse 2 of “**Lord, I’m Coming Home**”: *“I’ve wasted many precious years, Now I’m coming home; I now repent with bitter tears, Lord, I’m coming home. Coming home, coming home, Nevermore to roam; Open wide Thine arms of love, Lord, I’m coming home.”*

September 18—All One in Christ Jesus (Galatians 3:28–29)

Galatians 3:28: “*There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus.*”

Galatians 3:29: “*Now if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s seed, heirs according to promise.*”

Verse 28: In verse 25, Paul states: “But faith having come, we are no longer under the guardian.” He follows that statement with three reasons, the third in this verse:

Reason #1: You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. (Verse 26)

Reason #2: You are baptized with Christ. (Verse 27)

Reason #3: You are all one in Christ Jesus. (Verse 28)

This is an answer to the Lord’s prayer in John 17:22: “That they may be one, just as We are one.”

All of the distinctions are obliterated and unnecessary when we come to know Christ. We are born again of the Spirit into one gigantic family. We all become one in Christ where: “there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus.”

Verse 29: This is the conclusion of the apostle’s argument: “if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s seed.” In verse 16, we read: “Now to Abraham were spoken the promises and to his seed.” In verse 18, Paul continued: “For if the inheritance is from law, it is no longer of promise. But to Abraham through promise God has bestowed it.”

Because we belong to Christ as a result of our faith in the Lord Jesus, we have become Abraham’s seed. We are “heirs according to promise” because we belong to Christ.

“Heirs according to promise” is a continuation of the reference in Galatians 3:18: “For if the inheritance is from law, it is no longer of promise. But to Abraham through promise God has bestowed it.”

Won’t you join me in worship and praise this morning singing verse 3 of **“Lord, I’m Coming Home”**?: *“I’ve tired of sin and straying, Lord, Now I’m coming home; I’ll trust Thy love, believe Thy word, Lord, I’m coming home. I’ve tired of sin and straying, Lord, Now I’m coming home; I’ll trust Thy love, believe Thy word, Lord, I’m coming home.”*

September 19—Heir Is a Child (Galatians 4:1–2)

Galatians 4:1: *“Now I am saying as long as the heir is a child, he is no different than a slave though being legally owner of all.”*

Galatians 4:2: *“But is under Guardians and stewards until the previously appointed time of the father.”*

Verse 1: *The Message* paraphrases this verse: “Let me show you the implications of this. As long as the heir is a minor, he has no advantage over the slave. Though legally he owns the entire inheritance.”

Paul continues his argument of contrasting our lives before and after Christ from the previous section. He connects these sections with the word “heir.”

In the previous section, Paul stated that we were under the guardian when we were under the law. We remain there until we come to Christ by faith. Paul uses this illustration in this verse to describe the Galatian situation. They were heirs of God because they came to know Christ, but they were no different than slaves trying to observe the law. They forgot their position as sons and became children again, under bondage to their guardian, the law.

They were staying under the guardian when the inheritance was theirs for the taking.

“As long as the heir is a child, he is no different than a slave though being legally owner of all.”

MacArthur says: “The Greek word refers to a child too young to talk, a minor, spiritually and intellectually immature, and not ready for the privileges and responsibilities of adulthood.”

C.S. Lewis in *The Wisdom of C.S. Lewis* said: “If you read history you will find that the Christians who did most for the present world were precisely those who thought most of the next. It is since Christians have largely ceased to think of the other world that they have become so ineffective in this.”

Verse 2: *The Bible Knowledge Commentary* says: “Under Roman law, age of maturity for a child was set by his father and involved a ceremonial donning of the toga virilis and his formal acknowledgement of son and heir.”

The Greek word for “appointed time” is only used here in the New Testament. It is “*a time appointed before or time pre-arranged of the father.*”

Under Roman law, the tutor had charge of the child until he was 14. At 14, the curator took charge of the child until he was 25.

The law was given for a period of rigid training to prepare us to receive the grace of God.

This morning, please join me in worship and praise as we sing together verse 1 of “**Now I Belong to Jesus**”: *“Jesus my Lord will love me forever, From Him no pow’r of evil can sever, He gave His life to ransom my soul; Now I belong to Him; Now I belong to Jesus, Jesus belongs to me, Not for the years of time alone, But for eternity.”*

September 20—Slaves to Sin (Galatians 4:3)

Galatians 4:3: “*So also we, when we were children, we were in a permanent state of servitude under the rudiments of the world.*”

Verse 3: The apostle moves from illustration to application in the little phrase, “so also we.” We once were children “under the rudiments (or the fundamental things) of the world.”

He uses the little word “we” three times in this verse, identifying with his reader: (1) so also we, (2) when we were children, and (3) we were in a permanent state of servitude.

Paul speaks of the rudimentary character of the law:

1. It was elementary.
2. It was meant to lead to something more mature.
3. It was important and purposeful, but we were never intended to remain with it.

The law was to lead us to Christ.

Galatians 3:23: “But before faith came, under law we were being guarded, being shut up unto the faith about to be revealed.”

Please join me in worship and praise as we sing verse 2 of “**Now I Belong to Jesus**”: “*Once I was lost in sin’s degradation, Jesus came down to bring me salvation, Lifted me up from sorrow and shame, Now I belong to Him; Now I belong to Jesus, Jesus belongs to me, Not for the years of time alone, But for eternity.*”

September 21—On-Time Arrival (Galatians 4:4–5)

Galatians 4:4: “*But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under law.*”

Galatians 4:5: “*In order that He might deliver out by the payment of a ransom those under law, in order that we might receive the adoption.*”

Verse 4: In verse 2, we had the “appointed time.” In this verse, we have “the fullness of the time.” It refers back to chapter 3 with the child under a guardian and his coming of age. This also references chapter 4:2 when Paul talked of the child “under guardians and stewards.”

“But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth his Son.” These two phrases followed: (1) born of a woman and (2) born under law.

“Born of a woman” is a reference to the virgin birth of Jesus Christ.

“Born under the law” signifies He was born in bondage that He might release us from the bondage of the law.

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.”

Verse 5: God sent forth with two purposes: (1) one involved Him and (2) one involved us. These two purpose clauses are seen in this verse:

1. In order that He might deliver out by the payment of a ransom those under law.
2. In order that we might receive the adoption.

We fail to cooperate with the Father’s plan when we stay under the law after we have been released.

We become sons by adoption. This did not mean that we were not already children of the Father by relationship. This reference to adoption is different from how it is meant today. During Roman times, adoption did not take someone who was not in the family and put him in the family as adoption means today. It gave rights and privileges to one who was already a son. The child had no rights in the family until he was officially constituted a son.

When we come to know Christ as our Savior, we become children by birth, but also sons. As sons, we receive the rights and privileges of sonship.

1 John 3:1–2: “Behold how glorious a love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and we are. For this reason the world is not knowing us, because it knew Him not. Beloved ones, now we are the children of God, and not yet has it been made visible what we shall be. We are knowing that, whenever He is made visible, like ones to Him we shall be, because we shall see Him just as He is.”

How appropriate that we should sing together this morning verse 3 of **“Now I Belong to Jesus”**: *“Joy floods my soul for Jesus has saved me, Freed me from sin that long had enslaved me, His precious blood, He came to redeem, Now I belong to Him; Now I belong to Jesus, Jesus belongs to me, Not for the years of time alone, But for eternity.”*

September 22—Abba Father (Galatians 4:6)

Galatians 4:6: *“Now because you are sons, God sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts crying, ‘Abba! Father!’”*

Verse 6: *The Bible Knowledge Commentary* says: “God the Father, not only sent His Son, He also sent the Spirit. Thus, the full Trinity is involved in the work of salvation.”

The Father set forth His Son in verse 4, the Son redeemed us in verse 5, and the Spirit confirms this work in our hearts in verse 6.

This is entirely a work of God, not the law. This verse speaks of our new relationship when we come to know Christ as our Savior and have God as our Father.

Hendrickson says: “The text reads: ‘crying, “Abba! Father!”’ In reality, the outcry of joyful recognition, sweet response, appropriating love, overwhelming gratitude, and last but not least filial trust is ascribed to the Spirit. Nevertheless, this must be understood immediately, meaning that it is the Spirit whereby we cry, ‘Abba! Father!’”

In **“A Mind at Perfect Peace”**, Horatius Bonar’s words say it so well: *“So near, so very near to God, Nearer I cannot be; Yet in the person of His Son I am as near as He. So dear, so very dear to God, More dear I cannot be; The love wherewith He loves the Son—Such is His love to me!”*

Romans 8:14–17: “For as many as are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you have not received a spirit of slavery to cause you to fear, but you received the spirit of adoption by which we are crying out, Abba! Father! The Spirit Himself is bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God. And if children, also heirs; on the one hand heirs of God, on the other fellow-heirs with Christ, if indeed, we are suffering with Him in order that we may also be glorified together.”

This morning, please join me in worship and praise as we sing verse 1 of **“The Love of God”**: *“The love of God is greater far Than tongue or pen can ever tell; It goes beyond the highest star, And reaches to the lowest hell. The guilty pair, bowed down with care, God gave His Son to win; His erring child He reconciled, And pardoned from his sin. O love of God, how rich and pure! How measureless and strong! It shall forevermore endure The saints’ and angels’ song.”*

September 23—You Are a Son (Galatians 4:7)

Galatians 4:7: *“So that no longer are you a slave, but a son, now if (you are) a son, (you are) also an heir through God.”*

Verse 7: In verse 6, there was the evidence of relationship by the cry, “Abba! Father!” In this verse, we have the open declaration: “no longer are you a slave, but a son.”

We are no longer slaves to the law, but sons of God through Jesus Christ. The spiritual experience of coming to know Christ has set us free from the bondage of the law.

From a slave—to a son—by the Savior—through the Spirit.

Martin Luther said of this verse: “Mr. Law, you have lost your throne to Christ.”

When we become His child, we also become adult sons. We have the privilege of inheritance. When we recognize our position in Christ, the glorious freedom makes us realize we are free from the law.

Romans 5:1–2: “Therefore, having been made right by faith, we are having peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have obtained our introduction (entree) by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we are rejoicing (exulting, glorying) in hope of the glory of God.”

Please join me in worship and praise this morning as we sing together verse 3 of **“The Love of God”**: *“Could we with ink the ocean fill, And were the skies of parchment made, Were ev’ry stalk on earth a quill, And ev’ry man a scribe by trade; To write the love of God above Would drain the ocean dry. Nor could the scroll contain the whole, Tho’ stretched from sky to sky. O love of God, how rich and pure! How measureless and strong! It shall forevermore endure The saints’ and angels’ song.”*

September 24—Not Knowing God (Galatians 4:8)

Galatians 4:8: *“But at that time, (in fact) not knowing God, you were enslaved to those which by nature are not being gods.”*

Verse 8: In this verse, Paul reviews the past to magnify the grace of God in the Galatians’ lives. Now, you are free sons, but do not forget there was a time “you were enslaved to those which by nature are not being gods.”

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says: “Prior to conversion, the Galatians in their ignorance to the one true God, were in bondage to false gods such as Zeus and Hermes.”

In the past, they were enslaved to pagan forms of idol worship.

In 1 Thessalonians 1:9–10, Paul says: “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, 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.”

Won't you join me in singing verse 1 of John W. Peterson's wonderful hymn, **“Heaven Came Down and Glory Filled My Soul”**?: *“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 darkness 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)”*

September 25—Why Are You Turning Back? (Galatians 4:9)

Galatians 4:9: “But now having come to know God, indeed rather having become known by God, how are you turning back again to the weak and beggarly rudiments to which you are willing to be enslaved again?”

Verse 9: *The Bible Knowledge Commentary* says: “But a great change took place and they came to know God, salvation from the perspective of man or to be known by man, salvation from God's perspective.”

Paul spoke of the past in verse 8 when he said, “then,” but he speaks of the present in verse 9 when he says, “now.”

Major Ian Thomas said: “Across the rubble of a wrecked society, a lonely cross has cast its shadow. The shadow of a lonely God waiting for men to be made men again.”

“How are you turning back again to the weak and beggarly rudiments to which you are willing to be enslaved again?” This question is crucial. It is the whole issue in the book of Galatians. These fundamental things are weak. They can only diagnose the disease, but cannot affect a cure. They are “beggarly” or poverty-stricken in comparison to the wealth of God's grace.

Now that you are sons, why do you want to revert back to being slaves?

“How are you turning back again?” It is an inspired question from the apostle. I am reminded of Genesis 19:26: “But Lot's wife looked back, and she became a pillar of salt.”

Remember *whose* you are and *who* you represent.

This morning, let's join together in worship and praise as we sing together verse 2 of **"Heaven Came Down and Glory Filled My Soul"**: *"Born of the Spirit with life from above Into God's family 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)"*

September 26—I Am Afraid I Labor in Vain (Galatians 4:10–11)

Galatians 4:10: *"Days you are scrupulously (religiously) observing and months and seasons and years."*

Galatians 4:11: *"I am afraid about you, lest perhaps in vain I have laboured to the point of exhaustion for you."*

Verse 10: Their calendar was revealing the evidence of what they were practicing. They had marked off special seasons, months, days and years. They are scrupulously (religiously) observing these rites and rules. They are once again under the legal observance calendar and committed to keeping the law.

This hurt Paul deeply to see these Gentile Christians drawn back into bondage when they had been set free in Jesus Christ through the grace of God.

Take note of the key word "observing," which indicates performance rather than relationship.

One pastor said: "There are three types of people in my congregation: (1) people who are growing, gifted, and gracious, (2) people who are carnal, childish, and critical, and (3) people who are F.B.O.—for burial only."

Verse 11: *The Message* paraphrases this verse: "I am afraid that all my hard work among you has gone up in a puff of smoke!"

Martin Luther said: "These words were spoken or written in tears because of his love for these Galatian Christians. His heart becomes very tender in this portion of the epistle."

Max Lucado in *Life Lessons: Galatians* says: "Father, what a privilege to be your child through faith in Christ! Help me to remember today that I am a member of the ultimate royal family and give me the wisdom and strength to live up to my pedigree."

Please join me in worship and praise as we sing 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)”

September 27—I’m Begging You (Galatians 4:12)

Galatians 4:12: “*Become as I am, Because I also became as you were brethren. I am begging you, you did me no wrong.*”

Verse 12: Yesterday, Paul told the Galatians: “I am afraid about you, lest perhaps in vain I have laboured to the point of exhaustion for you.” He was afraid his efforts had been wasted. His heart was breaking for these Galatian Christians.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says: “Become free from the law as I am. For after my conversion, I became like the Gentiles, no longer living under the law.”

This verse begins with a command: “Become as I am,” free from the law “because I also became as you were,” saved through Christ, in Him alone.

“Brethren” is a very intimate term meaning literally “*from the same womb*.”

Wuest said of this verse: “Become as I am because I also became as you were, brethren. I am beseeching you. You have done me no wrong.”

The apostle reminds them they have done him no wrong.

Let’s join together in worship and praise this morning as we sing together verse 1 of “**A Child of the King**”: “*My Father is rich in houses and lands, He holdeth the wealth of the world in His hands! Ofrubies and diamonds, of silver and gold, His coffers are full, He has riches untold. I’m a child of the King, A child of the King: With Jesus my Savior, I’m a child of the King.*”

September 28—Physical Affliction (Galatians 4:13–14)

Galatians 4:13: “*But you know that because of an infirmity of the flesh, I preached the gospel to you the former time.*”

Galatians 4:14: “*And your trial in my flesh you did not despise nor loathe, but as a messenger of God you received me, as Christ Jesus.*”

Verse 13: *The Message* paraphrases this verse: “You did not come down on me personally. You were well aware that the reason I ended up preaching to you was that I was physically broken, and so, prevented from continuing my journey, I was forced to stop with you. That is how I came to preach to you.”

Paul mentions an infirmity, an eye disease from other scriptural references, which plagued him during his life and ministry. His eyesight must have never been the same after he met the Lord on the Damascus road.

Joni Eareckson Tada in *A Lifetime of Wisdom* says:

I'm reminded of a little poem from one of my favorite books.

PRAYER IS THE BURDEN OF A SIGH,
THE FALLING OF A TEAR;
THE UPWARD GLANCING OF AN EYE,
WHEN NONE BUT GOD IS NEAR

My friend Margaret Clarkson, now with the Lord, penned those words. And that bit of verse summarizes so much of what I learned from this godly woman

Margaret was a missionary in Canada who wrote many wonderful poems—and virtually each one was born out of her life of severe and chronic physical pain. The last time I was with Margaret was at Ontario Bible College. We spent lunchtime together talking, me in my wheelchair, and she lying on her side on a cot. She was in so much pain she simply could not stand up for any length of time. As a result, Margaret taught me many lessons about praying through pain.

Verse 14: Paul acknowledges the eye trouble he had did not affect the Galatians' response. They did not despise his infirmity, not despise or loathe it. They received him as a messenger of God the same way they would have received Christ Jesus.

The Galatians had shown real love for Paul and responded to the message he preached. They had received Christ as their Savior as a result of his ministry.

Paul uses the negative and positive in this verse. Negatively, "And your trial in my flesh you did not despise nor loathe," but positively in contrast, "as a messenger of God you received me, as Christ Jesus."

Wiersbe says: "To them, he was an angel of God. It is a wonderful thing when people accept God's servants, not because of their outward appearance, but because they represent the Lord and bring his message."

Please join me in worship and praise as we sing verse 2 of "**A Child of the King**": *"My Father's own Son, the Savior of men, Once wandered on earth as the poorest of them; But now He is pleading our pardon on high, That we may be His, when He comes by and by. I'm a child of the King, A child of the King: With Jesus my Savior, I'm a child of the King."*

September 29—Your Declaration of Blessedness (Galatians 4:15)

Galatians 4:15: “Where is therefore your declaration of blessedness? For I am bearing witness to you that if possible, you would have dug out your own eyes and given them to me.”

Verse 15: *The Message* paraphrases this verse: “What has happened to the satisfaction you felt at that time? There were some of you then who, if possible, would have given your very eyes to me—that is how deeply you cared!”

John Ortberg in *Faith & Doubt* says: “When a subject comes before a king, he kneels down. He is acknowledging that he is in the presence of his master. When a believer—in any religion—prays to his god, he kneels down. He is acknowledging that he is in the presence of his master. When a young man asks a woman to marry him, he gets down on one knee. He is acknowledging that he is in the presence of his master.”

Paul asks two questions in this passage. The first question is in this verse regarding “where”. The second question is in verse 16 regarding “what” and “why.”

Question #1: Where is therefore your declaration of blessedness?

What has made you change your mind? What or who has made you forget our love in the relationship we once had together?

Sometimes attitudes toward the Lord’s servants are only a reflection of one’s attitude toward their Lord and His word. Maybe they had become dull of hearing or were guilty of a calloused heart. Maybe it was a carnal mind, stifled affections or lukewarm emotions.

The real reason is obvious. They have found another center of affection, a new love. They are turning away from Christ and His grace to another gospel, one with a legalistic message.

Won’t you join me in worship and praise this morning as we sing together verse 3 of “**A Child of the King**”? “*I once was an outcast stranger on earth, A sinner by choice, an alien by birth, But I’ve been adopted, my name’s written down, An heir to a mansion, a robe and a crown. I’m a child of the King, A child of the King: With Jesus my Savior, I’m a child of the King.*”

September 30—Telling You the Truth (Galatians 4:16)

Galatians 4:16: “So then have I become your enemy by telling you the truth?”

Verse 16: In this verse, Paul asks his second question in this passage. He asked the first question in verse 15 regarding “where”: Where is therefore your declaration of blessedness? This second question regards “what” and “why.”

Question #2: Have I become your enemy by telling you the truth?

What is it that has affected our relationship? All of a sudden, why are you treating me as an enemy?

The apostle begins this verse with the words “so then” and asks a very simple, direct question: “So then have I become your enemy by telling you the truth?”

Speaking the truth is always dangerous. It is very easy to *hit* and *hurt* in the process.

The Galatians had a change of attitude and mind. They could not receive the truth. They reacted differently from the confrontation with Peter in chapter 2. He received the truth and acted accordingly.

With this question, Paul got very close to the truth of their change of heart.

Barker & Kohlenberger say: “Why had Paul become their enemy? The only possible explanation is that he had become an offense to them through telling them the truth. Unfortunately, this is often the case for those who are faithful to Christ’s teaching.”

MacArthur says: “Galatians had become so confused, that in spite of their previous affection for Paul, some had come to regard him as their enemy. The apostle reminds them that he had not harmed them, but merely told them the truth. A truth that had once brought them great joy.”

This morning, let’s worship and praise together as we sing verse 4 of “**A Child of the King**”: *“A tent or a cottage, why should I care? They’re building a palace for me over there; Though exiled from home, yet still may I sing: All glory to God, I’m a child of the King. I’m a child of the King, A child of the King: With Jesus my Savior, I’m a child of the King.”*

OCTOBER

October 1—Shutting You Out (Galatians 4:17)

Galatians 4:17: “*They are eagerly desiring you but not rightly, desiring to shut you out in order that you might be seeking them.*”

Verse 17: *The Message* paraphrases this verse: “Those heretical teachers go to great lengths to flatter you, but their motives are rotten. They want to shut you out of the free world of God’s grace so that you will always depend on them for approval and direction, making them feel important.”

The word “they” points to the false teachers, Judaizers, who were actively involved in the Galatian ministry. “They are eagerly desiring you (or zealously courting your favor), but,” negatively, “not rightly, desiring (have hidden desires) to shut you out in order that you might be seeking them (their purpose).”

These false teachers really want the Galatians, but it is for their own selfish reasons. Their requirements of circumcision and following the law are “in order that you might be seeking them.”

Martin Luther said: "Satan's satellites softsoap the people."

Matthew 7:15: "Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves."

2 Peter 2:1–2: "But there arose also false prophets among the people, just as there will be also false teachers among you, who will bring in destructive opinions, even denying the Master who purchased them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction. And many will follow their inclination to sensuality, and because of them the way of the truth will be maligned."

Wiersbe says: "A true servant of God does not use people to build up himself or his work. He ministers in love to help people know Christ better and glorify Him. Beware of that religious worker who wants your exclusive allegiance because he is the only one who is right. He will use you as long as he can and then drop you for somebody else."

John Ortberg in his book, *The Me I Want To Be*, tells this interesting story:

Recently my wife and I went fly-fishing for the first time. Our guides told us that "to catch a fish you have to think like a fish." They said that to a fish life is about the maximum gratification of appetite at the minimum expenditure of energy. To a fish, life is "see a fly, want to fly, eat a fly." A rainbow trout never really reflects on where his life is headed. A girl carp rarely says to a boy carp, *I don't feel you're as committed to our relationship as I am. I wonder, do you love me for me or just for my body?* The fish are just a collection of appetites. A fish is a stomach, a mouth, and a pair of eyes.

While we were on the water, I was struck by how dumb fish are. *Hey, fish, swallow this. It's not the real thing; it's just a lure. You'll think it will feed you, but it won't. It'll trap you. If you were to look closely, fish, you would see the hook. You'd know once you're hooked that it's just a matter of time before your enemy reels you in.*

You'd think fish would wise up and notice the hook or see the line. You'd think fish would look around at all their fish friends who go for a lure and fly off into space and never return. But they don't. It is ironic. We say fish swim together in a school, but they never learn.

Aren't you glad we are smarter?

Please join me in worship and praise as we sing one of my all-time favorite hymns. Let's join together singing verse 1 of "**Day by Day**": *"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."

October 2—Good To Be Desired (Galatians 4:18)

Galatians 4:18: *"But it is good to be desired eagerly in a good thing always, and not only when I am present with you."*

Verse 18: In verse 17, Paul pointed out these false teachers were desiring the Galatians wrongly, but in this verse, he encourages them that "it is good to be desired eagerly in a good thing always."

"And not only when I am present with you." The apostle wanted these Galatian Christians to know that even when he was absent from them, he desired them to be living the truth in our Lord Jesus Christ.

He wanted them to understand he had their best interest at heart. He desired good things for them, not evil. His interest was for their own benefit and good.

Barker & Kohlenberger say:

Though there are several possible meanings of this verse depending on who is exercising such zeal, it is best to refer the zeal to the Galatians, which Paul wishes was as intense now in pursuit of the right thing as it was when he was with them. This verse then makes a transition that though somewhat abrupt leads on to the thought of Paul's having been with them in the past and his wish to be with them again if possible.

This morning, let's sing together in worship and praise 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."*

October 3—Birth Pains (Galatians 4:19)

Galatians 4:19: *"My little children, of whom again I am experiencing the pains of birth until which time Christ should be formed in you."*

Verse 19: *The Message* paraphrases this verse: "Do you know how I feel right now, and will feel until Christ's life becomes visible in your lives? Like a mother in the pain of childbirth."

Back in verse 12, Paul affectionately called the Galatians "brethren." Now, he calls them "my little children."

A Christian life is virtually a reincarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Galatians 2:20: "With Christ I have been crucified; and I no longer am living, but Christ is living in me; and that life which now I am living in the flesh I am living by faith, which faith is in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself on my behalf."

Major Ian Thomas illustrates this truth in *The Saving Life of Jesus Christ*:

Our lives are like an empty glove and when Christ comes in, He forms Himself within us and activates our total being. The only thing that limits Him is our availability. He wants to give us His strength for our weakness, His wisdom for our folly, His drive for our drift, His love for our lust, His grace for our greed, His joy for our jealousy, His peace for our problems, His courage for our fears.

Stephen F. Olford in *Not I, But Christ* said:

CRUCIFIED WITH CHRIST MY SAVIOR,
I AM DEAD TO SIN AND SHAME,
NOW HIS LIFE RULES MY BEHAVIOR,
TO THE GLORY OF HIS NAME.

Won't you join me in worship and praise 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.*"

October 4—I Am At A Loss (Galatians 4:20)

Galatians 4:20: "*Moreover, I was longing to be present with you at this moment and could change my tone (voice), because I am perplexed (at a loss) about you.*"

Verse 20: *The Message* paraphrases this verse: "Oh, I keep wishing that I was with you. Then I wouldn't be reduced to this blunt, letter-writing language out of sheer frustration."

In verse 11, Paul spoke of his fear for them, now he is perplexed (at a loss) about them.

The words "I," "me," and "mine" occur 16 times in the verses in this passage. The apostle is very personal in his appeal to these Galatian believers. He confesses in this final phrase: "I am perplexed (at a loss) about you."

John Eaves in *Finishing Well* says:

Some of you this morning are still stuck on the “why” question. You have become embittered, angry, and refuse God’s repeated attempts to lead you through the valley of trial to a place of rest and provision. You have created your own hell of self-pity, and you insist on keeping yourself in this self-imposed state of mind. Come out! Come out, now! Simply ask the right question and see what God will do by shifting your focus from yourself to Him.

Joni Eareckson Tada in *Pearls of Great Price* says: “Lord Jesus, you are my confidence! I invite your Spirit to kick the props out from under me if I lean on my appearance, abilities, or achievements. I pray this in your name. Amen!”

Oswald Chambers in *My Utmost for His Highest* said: “If you are going through a time of discouragement, there is a time of great personal growth ahead.”

Max Lucado in *Life Lessons: Galatians* says: “Father, thank you for the astounding promise that we will be changed. I pray that I might cooperate fully with the nudgings and promptings of your Spirit today. Give me eyes that see and a will that yields to your sometimes painful transforming work.”

If there is some bitterness in your heart, feeling of resentment, drift from the truth or feelings of guilt; may God grant that His Spirit convict and speak in a mature manner so these things may be resolved. This is necessary for you to be back in the race again, progressing on the track of life to the ultimate formation of Jesus Christ within you.

Please join me in worship and praise this morning as we sing verse 1 of that great hymn, “**He Is So Precious to 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.*”

October 5—Abraham Had Two Sons (Galatians 4:21–22)

Galatians 4:21: “*Tell me, you who are desiring to be under law, are you not hearing the law?*”

Galatians 4:22: “*For it has been written that Abraham had two sons, one from the maidservant and one from the free woman.*”

Verse 21: *The Bible Knowledge Commentary* says: “In a masterful stroke, the apostle turned to a scriptural illustration to conclude his theological defense of justification by faith.”

Paul begins by issuing a command: “Tell me (give me an answer), you who

are desiring to be under law,” then ends with a question, “are you not hearing the law?”

The apostle will next give an illustration of the consequences of going back into legalism after becoming a Christian.

Barker & Kohlenberger say: “He does not yet consider that the Galatians have actually rejected the gospel, only that they are desiring to reject it for law.”

MacArthur says: “Tell me, he asked, you who want to be under law, do you not listen to the law? Since you insist on living under the law, are you willing to listen to what the law really says?”

Verse 22: Paul turns to the Old Testament record: “For it has been written that Abraham had two sons, one from the maidservant and one from the free woman.” In this passage, note there are two women, two sons, two covenants, two mountains and two cities. There is the law as opposed to the promise, and the flesh as opposed to the Spirit.

The application of this illustration will be bondage under the law as opposed to freedom in Jesus Christ.

The apostle returns to the biography of Abraham and faith to make his point with the Galatians. In Genesis 15, God made a covenant with Abraham and promised his seed would be as the stars in heaven. In Genesis 16, Sarah had no children and they became impatient with God. Sarah offered her maid to Abraham. Sarah believed that after 10 years of delay, God meant for them to help instead of wait.

When we are most eager to act is when we will make the most crucial mistakes. Waiting involves dependence.

Psalms 27:14: “Wait for the Lord, be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord.”

Sarah’s plan involved Hagar as a surrogate to bear the son God had promised. When Abraham slept with Hagar, a rift immediately followed between Sarah and Hagar. Hagar had a son and they named him Ishmael.

Genesis 17:19: “Then God said, ‘Yes, but your wife Sarah will bear you a son, and you will call him Isaac. I will establish my covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him.’”

“Abraham had two sons, one from the maidservant and one from the free woman.”

Wiersbe says: “Paul began with the two sons, Ishmael and Isaac, and explained that they illustrated our two births, the physical birth that makes us sinners and the spiritual birth that makes us the children of God.”

Charles Spurgeon said: “If you wish to know God you must know His word; if you wish to perceive His power you must see how He works by His word; if you wish to know His purpose before it is actually brought to pass you can only discover it by His word.”

This morning, please join me in worship and praise as we sing together 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.”*

October 6—The Flesh or The Promise (Galatians 4:23)

Galatians 4:23: *“On the one hand, the son from the maidservant had been born after the flesh. On the other hand, the son from the free woman had been born through the promise.”*

Verse 23: “On the one hand, the son from the maidservant had been born after the flesh.” The son from Hagar “had been born after the flesh.” The apostle speaks more regarding the flesh in the next chapter.

The fulfillment of God’s promise in giving a son seemed delayed to Sarah and Abraham. They took it upon themselves to help God by providing a son through their own efforts. As a result, Hagar the maid had a son named Ishmael.

The flesh is that natural capacity to do something ourselves which produces self-righteousness.

“On the other hand, the son from the free woman had been born through the promise.” The son from Sarah was born through God’s promise to them. Isaac was born in God’s time and His way. God miraculously provided the promised son, Isaac, to Sarah in an impossible set of circumstances.

It was all God’s doing.

We can learn that the flesh creates the desire to run ahead of God and do things on its own. That manifestation is seen in this verse.

The birth of Isaac was based on God’s unconditional promise. Nothing could change it, not even a premature act of the flesh 15 years earlier in the birth of Ishmael by the Egyptian maid, Hagar.

Isaiah 32:17: “The fruit of righteousness will be peace; the effect of righteousness will be quietness and confidence forever.”

F.B. Myer describes this well:

The flesh loves excitement. It is always ready to jump up and run somewhere. The Holy Spirit does not. Someone has said Satan rushes men, but God leads them. Never act in panic nor allow man to dictate to you. Calm yourself and be still. Force yourself into the quiet of your closet until the pulse beats normally and the scare has ceased to disturb.

When you are most eager to act is the time when you will make the most pitiful mistakes. Do not say in your heart what you will or will not do, but wait upon God until He makes known His way. So long as that way is hidden, it is clear that there is no need for action.

Let's join together 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."*

October 7—The Two Covenants (Galatians 4:24–25)

Galatians 4:24: *"Which class of things is allegorical: for these are two covenants, one from Mount Sinai giving birth to bondage, which is Hagar."*

Galatians 4:25: *"Now this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and is corresponding to the Jerusalem which now is, for she is in slavery with her children."*

Verse 24: *The Bible Knowledge Commentary* says: "In order to emphasize the contrast between law and grace Paul next used the historical events above as an allegory, that is, he treated those two mothers figuratively. He did not in any sense deny the literal meaning of the story of Abraham, but he declared that that story, especially the matters relating to the conception of the two sons, had an additional meaning."

In their study of the law, rabbis have four meanings to the scripture: (1) literal, (2) suggested, (3) that which evolved after investigation, and (4) allegorical. Where they are concerned, the allegorical is the primary meaning.

Paul uses an allegory in this passage. However, it is important to distinguish that this should not be an excuse to lend credibility to those who allegorize all of the facts of scripture. The safest rule for scriptural interpretation should be literal, taking at face value.

Christ accepted the scriptures literally as was seen in His attitude toward prophecy and the historical accuracy of Old Testament accounts.

Paul states these are two covenants:

1. One from Mount Sinai giving birth to bondage, the law of Moses, represented in Hagar.
2. One is the covenant of promise given to Abraham, giving birth to freedom, represented in Sarah.

Everything has been done. We do not need to help.

The first covenant, the Mosaic law, is from Mount Sinai, giving birth to bondage. The second covenant was made effective in the death of Christ on Mount Calvary, giving birth to freedom.

Barker & Kohlenberger say:

The best way to understand the allegory is to carry it through in parallel columns:

Hagar, the slave woman	Sarah, the free woman
Ishmael, a natural birth	Isaac, the supernatural birth
The old covenant	The new covenant
Earthly Jerusalem	Heavenly Jerusalem
Judiasm	Christianity

Verse 25: The law equals *performance, penalty* and *prison*.

The reason is “for she is in slavery with her children,” meaning they are under bondage to the law.

Please join me in worship and praise as we sing together 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.”*

October 8—The Jerusalem Above (Galatians 4:26–27)

Galatians 4:26: “*But the Jerusalem which is above is free which is our mother.*”

Galatians 4:27: “*For it has been written; ‘Rejoice barren woman who is not bringing forth (bearing children). Break forth and cry you who are not experiencing the pains of birth, because more are the children of the desolate than of the one who is having a husband.’”*

Verse 26: Paul speaks of the heavenly Jerusalem. *The Bible Knowledge Commentary* says: “This heavenly city, which one day will come to earth (Rev. 21:2), is now the “city of the living God” (Heb. 12:22), the home of departed believers of all ages.”

Revelation 21:1–4 describes this scene: “And I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, ‘Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men,

and He shall dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be among them, and He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there shall no longer be any death; there shall no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away.”

Verse 27: In this verse, Paul quotes from Isaiah 54:1: “Sing, O barren woman, You who never bore a child; burst into song, shout for joy, you who were never in labor; because more are the children of the desolate woman than of her who has a husband,” says the Lord.”

“Rejoice barren woman” refers to Sarah who was childless.

“Break forth and cry you who are not experiencing the pains of birth,” for the reason: “because more are the children of the desolate than of the one who is having a husband.”

In His miraculous power, God will not only bring Isaac, but a whole host of others—those who are given new life in Jesus Christ by His same power.

What a great number by faith in Jesus Christ have entered into new life by His regenerating power! They have become the fulfilled promise made to Abraham in the Abrahamic covenant.

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.

Gary Thomas in *Pure Pleasure* said:

One husband—a huge sports fan—described to another group of men what his wife had done on the first day of March Madness (the college basketball playoffs). The husband worked an early shift. When he arrived home, his wife greeted him with a plate of his favorite treats. She then led him to his favorite chair, brought him his favorite drink, and said, “You’ve been working hard; you deserve a day of fun. Here’s the remote control, and let me know if you run out of anything.”

Doesn’t this sound a little bit like heaven?

Won’t you join me in worship and praise this morning as we sing together verse 1 of **“There Shall Be Showers of Blessing”**?: *“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.”*

October 9—Children of Promise (Galatians 4:28)

Galatians 4:28: “*Now you, brethren (are) after the manner of Isaac. You are children of promise.*”

Verse 28: *The Message* paraphrases this verse: “Isn’t it clear, friends, that you, like Isaac, are children of promise?”

As Christians we owe our new life to Christ, not to natural sources. We have been born again by the Spirit of God.

McGee says:

Believers today are also children of promise. Our birth is a new birth which comes about by our belief in God’s promise. 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—John 3:16. God has said that if we trust him, we’ll be born again. Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but incorruptible by the Word of God which lives and abides forever—1 Peter 1:23.

Oswald Chambers in *My Utmost for His Highest* says: “It is not that you have gotten God, but that He has gotten you. God is at work bending, breaking, molding, and doing exactly as He chooses. And why is He doing it? He is doing it for only one purpose—that He may be able to say, ‘This is My man, and this is My woman.’”

Please join me in worship and praise as we sing verse 2 of “**There Shall Be Showers of Blessing**”: “*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.*”

October 10—The Flesh Is Persecuting The Spirit (Galatians 4:29)

Galatians 4:29: “*But just as then, he who was born according to the flesh was persecuting him who was born according to the Spirit, so also now.*”

Verse 29: *The Bible Knowledge Commentary* says: “The apostle compared Ishmael’s persecution of Isaac to the false teachers’ opposition to believers.”

As Ishmael mocked Isaac, so the Judaizers were persecuting the children of God.

Paul was an authority on the subject. Previously, he was the chief persecutor of the Judaizers before Christ came into his life. He changed from a *persecutor* to a *propagator* of the gospel.

In verse 23, Paul contrasted the two women: “On the one hand, the son from the maidservant had been born after the flesh. On the other hand, the son from the free woman had been born through the promise.” In this verse, contrasts: “he (one) who was born according to the flesh” and “him (one) who was born according to the Spirit.”

Paul will continue this terminology and contrast in chapter 5 when he speaks of the conflict within each believer between the flesh and the Spirit.

Genesis 21 records the birth of Isaac. In Genesis 21:8–9, we read: “The child grew and was weaned, and on the day Isaac was weaned Abraham held a great feast. But Sarah saw that the son whom Hagar the Egyptian had borne to Abraham was mocking.”

This morning, please join me in worship and praise as we sing verse 3 of **“There Shall Be Showers of Blessing”**: *“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.”*

October 11—Throw Out the Maidservant (Galatians 4:30)

Galatians 4:30: *“But what is the scripture saying? Throw out the maidservant and her son. For the son of the maidservant shall by no means inherit with the son of the free woman.”*

Verse 30: In verse 21, Paul asked his first question: “Are you not hearing the law?” In this verse, he asks his second question: “but what is the scripture saying?”

This is the second time in this passage that Paul turns to scripture. He used the passage from Isaiah 54 in verse 27. This verse references the Genesis account of the relationship between Hagar and her son with Sarah and her son.

“But what is the scripture saying?” It commands us to “throw out the maidservant and her son.” Throw out Hagar and her son, Ishmael. Throw out the law and the Judaizers. The law and the gospel cannot coexist. The law must disappear before the gospel of the grace of God.

Why this strong command? The reason is given in the last part of the verse: “For the son of the maidservant shall by no means inherit with the son of the free woman.”

“The son of the maidservant” refers to Ishmael, the son of Hagar or the law-keepers and Judaizers. They “shall by no means,” absolutely, in no way, “inherit with the son of the free woman,” Isaac, son of Sarah.

Dan Green in his book, *Finish Strong*, said: “I remind myself of my commitment to finish strong and to focus on my true priorities in life. Because as

the quote says: ‘To the world you may be just one person ... but to one person you may be the world.’”

Charles Spurgeon said: “I confess that the words of Scripture thrill my soul as nothing else ever can; they bear me aloft or dash me down, they tear me in pieces or they build me up after an unrivalled fashion. The words of God have more power over me than ever David’s fingers had over his harp strings. Is it not so with you?”

Let’s join together in worship and praise this morning as we sing verse 4 of **“There Shall Be Showers of Blessing”**: *“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.”*

October 12—Children of The Free Woman (Galatians 4:31)

Galatians 4:31: *“Therefore, brethren we are not children of the maid-servant, but of the free woman.”*

Verse 31: The word “therefore” indicates the point of the argument.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says: “In conclusion, Paul affirmed that he and the Galatian believers were not children of the slave woman who was driven away and was denied a share in the inheritance. Rather all believers are children of the free woman, ‘heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ’ (Rom. 8:17).”

Paul addresses them once again as “brethren,” an affectionate term he has used several times through the epistle. Negatively, “therefore, brethren, we are not children of the maidservant,” but positively, (we are children) “of the free woman.” The apostle uses this potent illustration as a conclusion to this teaching section.

In conclusion to this allegory, we are children. We are not identified with Hagar and the law, but with Sarah and Christ. The Judaizers are identified with bondage, but we, Christians, with freedom.

Law and grace are like oil and water. They do not mix!

Thomas Kelly wrote these lyrics: “Grace is the sweetest sound that ever reached our ears. When conscience charged and justice frowned, ‘twas grace removed our fears.”

This morning, please join me in worship and praise singing together verse 1 of **“Lead On, O King Eternal”**: *“Lead on, O King Eternal, The day of march has come; Henceforth in fields of conquest Your tents shall be our home, Through days of preparation Your grace has made us strong, And now, O King Eternal, We lift our battle song.”*

October 13—Christ Set Us Free (Galatians 5:1)

Galatians 5:1: “For this freedom Christ set us free. Keep on standing firm, therefore, and stop becoming entangled again in a yoke of bondage.”

Verse 1: *The Message* titles this section: The Life of Freedom. Peterson paraphrases this verse: “Christ has set us free to live a free life. So take your stand! Never again let anyone put a harness of slavery on you.”

There are two present tense commands in this verse:

1. Keep on standing firm.
2. Stop becoming entangled again in a yoke of bondage.

Paul pleads with the Galatians to stay free since Christ set us free.

2 Corinthians 3:17: “Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.”

1 Corinthians 16:13: “Be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong.”

The apostle begins with the words: “for this freedom.” What freedom? Galatians 1:4: “Who gave Himself on behalf of our sins, so that He might rescue us out of this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father.”

We are not only “rescued out of this present evil age” and saved from our own nature, but we are also redeemed from the curse of the law and the law itself.

This verse is the summary of the whole letter. The Galatians were not “standing firm.” They were “becoming entangled again in a yoke of bondage, but Christ has set us free.

“Keep on standing firm, therefore, and stop becoming entangled again in a yoke of bondage.”

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.”

If we are looking for a yoke, we would do well to accept the invitation of the Lord Jesus in Matthew 11:29–30: “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.”

Max Lucado in *Life Lessons: Galatians* says: “Father, today when I am tormented by the ruthless demands and perfect standards of the law, remind me that I am by virtue of Christ free. I am a true spiritual child of Abraham and Sarah. Give me the wisdom and strength to cast away all such legalistic thoughts. “

Let’s celebrate our freedom in Christ by singing together verse 2 of “**Lead On, O King Eternal**”: “Lead on, O King Eternal, Till sin’s fierce war shall cease.”

And holiness shall whisper The sweet amen of peace; For not with swords' loud clashing, Nor roll of stirring drums, With deeds of love and mercy The heav'nly kingdom comes."

October 14—Christ or Circumcision (Galatians 5:2)

Galatians 5:2: *"Behold, I, Paul am saying to you that if you are receiving circumcision, Christ will benefit you nothing."*

Verse 2: *The Message* paraphrases this verse: "I am emphatic about this. The moment any one of you submits to circumcision or any other rule-keeping system, at that same moment Christ's hard-won gift of freedom is squandered."

Many Christians have this problem. They limit Christ to saving their souls, but think it is their responsibility to keep themselves saved by doing certain things prescribed by the society in which they live.

Major Ian Thomas said: "Godliness is nothing more than God's activity in our lives. It is God Himself behaving in and through you."

Performance is often an excuse for not yielding.

Oswald Chambers in *My Utmost for His Highest* said: "Beware of refusing to go to the funeral of your own independence."

Many believers quench the Spirit by performing.

If you have not yet entered into this rest with the Spirit, then you will submit yourself to these chosen outward regulations you hope will make you acceptable.

Because this is a serious situation, Paul reminds the Galatians who is speaking: "Behold, I, Paul, am saying to you." It is either circumcision or Christ. "If you are receiving circumcision, Christ will benefit you nothing."

Eadie says: "The present subjunctive indicates the continuance of the habit. He says not that they had been circumcised, but 'if ye be getting yourselves circumcised.'"

MacArthur said: "The atoning sacrifice of Christ cannot benefit anyone who trusts in law and ceremony for salvation."

Please join me in worship and praise as we sing verse 3 of **"Lead On, O King Eternal"**: *"Lead on, O King Eternal, We follow, not with fears; For gladness breaks like morning Where'er Your face appears; Your cross is lifted ov'r us; We journey in its light: The crown awaits the conquest; Lead on, O God of might."*

October 15—Whole or Not At All (Galatians 5:3)

Galatians 5:3 *"Now I am witnessing again to every man who is being circumcised that he is under obligation to do the whole law."*

Verse 3: The law is a unit. It does not allow you to only keep certain parts, but disrespect the rest and still gain acceptance before God.

Remember Galatians 3:10: “For as many as are of the works of the law are under a curse. For it is written ‘Cursed is everyone who is not remaining in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.’”

James 2:10: “For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all.”

If a man wants to become a citizen of the United States, he will carefully carry out all of the rules and regulations required for becoming a citizen. However, he cannot stop following all rules after he receives his citizenship. After he becomes a citizen, there are additional laws to be followed as long as he is a citizen—federal, county, city, state, highway, etc. He must continue to abide laws.

Circumcision is just the introductory law, all of the other laws follow. However, the law is like a pane of glass—broken in any place, it is still broken.

Romans 3:20: “Because by the works of the law, there shall not be declared righteous any flesh in His sight; for through the law comes the knowledge of sin.”

Radmacher, Allen & House say: “The legalistic Jewish teachers in Galatia were urging believers to be circumcised. Paul points out that being circumcised changes the entire orientation of salvation from God’s grace to one’s own actions.”

Won’t you join me in worship and praise this morning as we sing verse 1 of **“He Is Able to Deliver Thee”**?: “*‘Tis the grandest theme thro’ the ages rung; ‘Tis the grandest theme for a mortal tongue; ‘Tis the grandest theme that the world e’er sung, ‘Our God is able to deliver thee.’ He is able to deliver thee, He is able to deliver thee; Tho’ by sin oppress, Go to Him for rest: ‘Our God is able to deliver thee.’*”

October 16—You Fell From Grace (Galatians 5:4)

Galatians 5:4: “*You have been rendered inoperative from Christ. You who are trying to be justified in the law, you fell out from grace.*”

Verse 4: *The Bible Knowledge Commentary* says: “The issue here is not the possible loss of salvation, for “grace” is referred to not as salvation itself but as a method of salvation (where “a Law” route is mentioned as an unworkable way to come to Christ).

Dr. Charles Ryrie in his book, *The Grace of God*, points out: “Since grace is God’s way of making a man righteous, to seek any other way is to fall from the right way. The grace way does not need supplementation by the law and particularly by circumcision. Thus, in the Galatian epistle we find that grace is the answer to all the arguments of the Judaizer. All of grace, not of law; and grace for all, even uncircumcised Gentiles.”

Falling from grace simply means we are unwilling to trust God's sufficiency for our salvation. We, in turn, believe we must add some merit by certain actions.

Romans 4:4–5: “Now to the one who is working, his wage is not reckoned as a favor but as what is due. But to the one who is not working, but is believing in Him who is declaring righteous the ungodly, his faith is reckoned as righteousness.”

The Galatians were choosing between a Cadillac and a wheelbarrow. God's way is the Cadillac of grace, not the wheelbarrow of the law.

W. Sanders and Hugh Bourne penned these lyrics to the hymn, **“Hark! The Gospel News is Sounding”**:

GRACE IS FLOWING LIKE A RIVER;
MILLIONS THERE HAVE BEEN SUPPLIED;
STILL IT FLOWS AS FRESH AS EVER
FROM THE SAVIOR'S WOUNDED SIDE:
NONE NEED PERISH, NONE NEED PERISH
ALL MAY LIVE, FOR CHRIST HATH DIED.

“You have been rendered inoperative from Christ. You who are trying to be justified in the law, you fell out from grace.” The emphasis is on the word “trying.” They are laboring, struggling, and working at being righteousness, but they are working in the law. Because they are working from the law and haven't quit trying, they “fell out of grace.”

Wiersbe says: “To fall from grace does not mean to lose one's salvation. It means to move out of the sphere of grace into the sphere of law. It means to substitute regulations for a personal relationship with the Lord.”

Gary Thomas in *Pure Pleasure* says: “Seeking pleasure apart from God, or outside the will of God, is like giving a toddler a blowtorch to light a birthday cake.”

“Trying” also helps us to understand the Galatian Christians have switched over from relationship to performance. Biblically, there are only two choices: (1) try to perform the works of the law or (2) accept God's gracious gift in His Son who declares us righteous and presents us spotless before the throne of grace.

This morning, let's join together in worship and praise as we sing verse 3 of **“He Is Able to Deliver Thee”**: *“'Tis the grandest theme, let the tidings roll, To the guilty heart, to the sinful soul; Look to God in faith, He will make thee whole, 'Our God is able to deliver thee.' He is able to deliver thee, He is able to deliver thee; Tho' by sin opprest, Go to Him for rest: 'Our God is able to deliver thee.'”*

October 17—A Hoped For Righteousness (Galatians 5:5)

Galatians 5:5: “For we through the Spirit, on the ground of faith, are eagerly awaiting a hoped for righteousness.”

Verse 5: Verses 4 and 5 contrast the difference between trying and trusting “For we through the Spirit.” The Spirit replaces the law in the life of the Christian. The function of the Holy Spirit is to:

1. Blow conviction upon the heart.
2. Regenerate or give life.
3. Indwell the believer.
4. Guide the believer into all truth.
5. Protect the believer from things which are not pleasing to the Lord.

“For we through the Spirit, on the ground of faith.” It is on the ground of faith, not on the ground of the law or works.

We are “eagerly awaiting a hoped for righteousness.” Those who observe the law, cannot await a hoped for righteousness. They would be weighed in the balances and might be found wanting in the end. Those who walk in grace as a result of their relationship in Jesus Christ have a righteous standing before God that never changes. Therefore, Paul states those who are on the ground of faith “are eagerly awaiting a hoped for righteousness.”

Romans 1:16–17: “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who is believing, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith unto faith; even as it has been written, ‘But the righteous man shall live by faith.’”

Experience is another word for mistakes.

Verse 4 is a sad picture of those who are “rendered inoperative from Christ” from being circumcised and pursuing the law. They are trying to be justified by the law and have fallen out from grace. However, those in verse 5, “through the Spirit, on the ground of faith, are eagerly awaiting a hoped for righteousness.”

Gary Thomas in *The Beautiful Fight* offers this beautiful prayer:

Lord, let my tongue be a blessing. Empower me so that I will speak redemptively as you guide me. May my tongue bring comfort where people need comfort; may I patiently instruct those trapped in ignorance; may I gently but forcefully challenge the rebellious; may I patiently minister to the downhearted. Use my tongue to keep re-creating your world and to glorify your name. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

Please join me in worship and praise as we sing verse 1 of that wonderful hymn, “**The Solid Rock**”: “*My hope is built on nothing less Than Jesus’ blood and*

righteousness; I dare not trust the sweetest frame, But wholly lean on Jesus' name. On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand; All other ground is sinking sand, All other ground is sinking sand."

October 18—Faith Operating Through Love (Galatians 5:6)

Galatians 5:6 *"For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision is of any power nor uncircumcision, but faith operating through love."*

Verse 6: In the previous verse, "for we through the Spirit, on the ground of faith, are eagerly awaiting a hoped for righteousness." In this verse, it is "faith operating through love."

In our daily lives, people see Christ resident within us when faith is operating through love. When Christ comes into our lives, life takes the place of death and love takes the place of the law.

"Faith operating through love."

From an unknown source:

JESUS, TAKE MY LIFE, TODAY
AND MOLD IT IN THY PRECIOUS WAY;
OH SAVIOR, TAKE MY LIFE, MY ALL
AND MAKE IT SUBJECT TO THY CALL.

MY HEART FROM WORLDLY CARE SET FREE,
MY ONLY THOUGHT IS SERVING THEE,
THAT DAY BY DAY I MAY STRONGER GROW
TO SERVE THE CHRIST WHO LOVES ME SO.

2 Corinthians 5:14–15: "For the love of Christ is controlling us, bringing us to this conclusion, that one died for all, therefore all died; and He died for all in order that those who are living no longer are living for themselves but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf."

Let's join together in worship and praise this morning as we sing verse 2 of **"The Solid Rock"**: *"When darkness veils His lovely face, I rest on His unchanging grace; In every high and stormy gale, My anchor holds within the veil. On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand; All other ground is sinking sand, All other ground is sinking sand."*

October 19—You Were Running Well (Galatians 5:7)

Galatians 5:7: *"You were running well; who cut in on you and thus hindered you from obeying the truth?"*

Verse 7: *The Message* paraphrases this verse: “You were running superbly! Who cut in on you, deflecting you from the true course of obedience?”

What a haunting statement! What implications are involved? Since they were running well in the past, this indicates there was a time when their spiritual lives were better. It reveals that in the past they experienced the joy of sin forgiven and the fellowship of a relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

The apostle raises the question: “who cut in on you and thus hindered you from obeying the truth?”

Paul’s illustration describes a race being run, but someone cuts in and causes the runner to stumble, hesitate or break stride. He was concerned the Galatians were running the wrong way. He hoped his confrontation would convict them before they were fully into bondage under legalism.

He questions: “who cut in on you?” The last phrase of the verse points out it hindered them “from obeying the truth.” The Lord expects our obedience to the truth.

“You were running well” is a sad statement. Many things deter us from running a good race once we have become Christians. It is easy for (1) our desires to get dampened, (2) our first love to be lost and (3) our discipline and determination to deteriorate.

But we hope we never hear the Lord Jesus say in Revelation 3:16: “So then because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of my mouth.”

Harvey Mackay in *Swim With The Sharks* said: “One of my good friends gave me her definition of a goal, and it’s the best one I’ve ever heard. ‘A goal is a dream with a deadline.’ Write yours down—because that’s the only way you’ll give them the substance they need to force you to carry them out.”

Walter Elliott in *The Spiritual Life* said: “Perseverance is not a long race; it is many short races one after another.”

Vince Lombardi said: “Press on. Nothing in the world can take the place of persistence.”

Paul reminds the Galatians that there was a time when they were running well and making progress. However, that has changed. He wants to know “who cut in on you and thus hindered you from obeying the truth?” This person was probably a prominent Judaizer.

It will require some hard work for these Galatians to run well again.

Won’t you join me this morning in singing together in worship and praise verse 3 of **“The Solid Rock”**?: *“His oath, His covenant, His blood Support me in the whelming flood; When all around my soul gives way, He then is all my hope and stay. On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand; All other ground is sinking sand, All other ground is sinking sand.”*

October 20—A Little Leaven (Galatians 5:8-9)

Galatians 5:8: “*This persuasion is not from the one who is calling you.*”

Galatians 5:9: “*A little leaven is leavening the whole lump.*”

Verse 8: *The Message* paraphrases this verse: “This detour doesn’t come from the One who called you into the race in the first place. And please don’t toss this off as insignificant.”

The Galatians position is wrong. The apostle is straightforward in confronting this error.

“This persuasion is not from the one who is calling you.” The voice of legalism they are hearing is not the voice of God who called them in Jesus Christ. The One who called them in the beginning called by grace.

We need to keep two things in mind when we are faced with this challenge:

1. Never lose the teachable spirit.
2. Never lose the obedient heart.

Verse 9: *The NET Bible* translates this verse: “A little yeast makes the whole batch of dough rise!” *The Message* paraphrases this verse: “It only takes a minute amount of yeast, you know, to permeate an entire loaf of bread.” Paul often uses yeast to represent sin in his illustrations.

A little yeast affects the whole lump of dough. A little error affects the whole body of believers.

Wiersbe says:

Jesus used leaven as a picture of sin when He warned against the “leaven of the Pharisees” (Matt. 16:6–12) ... Yeast is really a good illustration of sin: it is small, but if left alone it grows and permeates the whole. The false doctrine of the Judaizers was introduced to the Galatian churches in a small way, but, before long, the “yeast” grew and eventually took over. The spirit of legalism does not suddenly overpower a church. Like leaven, it is introduced secretly, it grows, and before long poisons the whole assembly.

Charles Spurgeon in *Morning and Evening* said:

Oh, how closely did you cling to your Master then! saying, “He shall never charge me with indifference; my feet shall never grow slow in the way of His service; I will not suffer my heart to wander after other loves; in Him is every store of sweetness ineffable. I give all up for my Lord Jesus’ sake.” Has it been so? Alas! if conscience speak, it will say, “He who promised so well

has performed most ill. Prayer has oftentimes been slurred—it has been short, but not sweet; brief, but not fervent. Communion with Christ has been forgotten. Instead of a heavenly mind, there have been carnal cares, worldly vanities and thoughts of evil. Instead of service, there has been disobedience; instead of fervency, lukewarmness; instead of patience, petulance; instead of faith, confidence in an arm of flesh; and as a soldier of the cross there has been cowardice, disobedience, and desertion, to a very shameful degree.”

This morning, let's join together in worship in prayer as we sing verse 4 of **“The Solid Rock”**: *“When He shall come with trumpet sound, Oh, may I then in Him be found; Dressed in His righteousness alone, Faultless to stand before the throne. On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand; All other ground is sinking sand, All other ground is sinking sand.”*

October 21—You Will Do The Right Thing (Galatians 5:10)

Galatians 5:10: *“As for myself, I have come to a settled persuasion in the Lord with respect to you, that you will take no other view than this. But the one who is troubling you shall bear his judgment, whoever he is.”*

Verse 10: In this verse, Paul expresses how he anticipates they will respond to his words. He believes they will see the truth of his words as in verse 6: “For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision is of any power nor uncircumcision, but faith operating through love.”

The apostle is confident the one who is troubling them will bear his judgment. He pronounced a curse on that individual in chapter 1:8-9 when he said: “Let him be accursed (anathema).”

Haman had the desire to eliminate the Jewish race in Esther's day. He had many plans and plots devised for their elimination, but Queen Esther in her courage said in chapter 7:6–10: “The adversary and enemy is this vile Haman. Then Haman was terrified before the king and queen. The king got up in a rage, left his wine and went out into the palace garden. But Haman, realizing that the king had already decided his fate, stayed behind to beg Queen Esther for his life. Just as the king returned from the palace garden to the banquet hall, Haman was falling on the couch where Esther was reclining. The king exclaimed, ‘Will he even molest the queen while she is with me in the house? As soon as the word left the king's mouth, they covered Haman's face. Then Harbona, one of the eunuchs attending the king, said, ‘A gallows seventyfive feet high stands by Haman's house. He had it made for Mordecai, who spoke

up to help the king.' The king said, 'Hang him on it!' So they hanged Haman on the gallows he had prepared for Mordecai. Then the king's fury subsided."

Paul desires for whoever is leading the people astray and diverting their minds from the gospel of the grace of God to bear his judgment for such actions.

2 Corinthians 5:10: "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, in order that each one may receive a recompense for what he has done during his life in the body, whether good or bad."

Please join me in worship and praise this morning as we sing together verse 1 of one of those great old hymns, "**The Way of The Cross Leads Home**": *"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."*

October 22—The Stumbling-Block of The Cross (Galatians 5:11–12)

Galatians 5:11: *"And I brethren, if I am still preaching circumcision, why am I still being persecuted? Then the stumbling-block of the cross has been rendered inoperative."*

Galatians 5:12: *"I would that they who are upsetting you would have themselves mutilated."*

Verse 11: Paul explains that he would not be persecuted if he were preaching circumcision. He is persecuted because his message is a gospel of grace.

Psalm 116:10: "I believed; therefore I said, 'I am greatly afflicted.'"

B.B. Sutcliffe said:

The cross is a stumbling block to man for it is against all that man prides himself in:

- His morality because it tells him that his own works will not make him righteous.
- His philosophy because it appeals to his faith and not to his reason.
- His culture because its truths are revealed to babes.
- His sense of superiority because God chooses the poor and humble.
- His will because it calls for an unconditional surrender.
- His pride because it shows the exceeding sinfulness of the human heart.
- To himself because it declares that he must be born again.

If Paul was preaching circumcision and works of the law, then Christ died in vain. Why preach the cross? The cross of Jesus Christ would be insignificant if one could obtain salvation by his own human effort through keeping the works of the law.

Verse 12: “I would that they who are upsetting you would have themselves mutilated.” Paul expresses his desire for the Judaizing teachers to clear out and leave the Galatians alone. The Judaizers are upsetting the Galatian Christians with their conflicting teaching or error.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says: “Speaking out of deep concern for the gospel of the grace of God, Paul uttered a strong expression. He wished that the Judaizers, who were so enthusiastic about circumcision, would go the whole way and castrate themselves, as did the pagan priests of the cult of Cybele in Asia Minor.”

Let’s focus on this cross this morning as we sing together in worship and praise verse 2 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.”*

October 23—Freedom! (Galatians 5:13)

Galatians 5:13: *“For you, brethren, were called upon the basis of freedom. Only do not turn your liberty into a base of operations for the flesh. But through love keep on serving one another.”*

Verse 13: We are reminded of chapter 5:1: “For this freedom Christ set us free. Keep on standing firm, therefore, and stop becoming entangled again in a yoke of bondage.” We also recall verse 8: “This persuasion is not from the one who is calling you.”

Paul gives a negative warning and a positive admonition in this verse. The negative warning is: “Only do not turn your liberty into a base of operations for the flesh.” Do not think you can do what you want because you are free. It is not a pass to give free run to the desires of your flesh.

Grace doesn’t give Christians the freedom to sin, but from sin. A believer should keep himself clean because of his love for the Father.

Our flesh is the workshop of the devil. Sin is simply Satan’s activity within us through our flesh.

How can we soil and stain a life God paid for with His own precious blood?

The positive admonition concludes this verse: “But through love keep on serving one another.” In verse 6, we are told to let our “faith be operating

through love,” and now we are told to show our love by “serving one another.” Our love becomes Christlike when it flows out in service to others.

Jesus is the perfect example of this principle with His disciples in the Upper Room. On the night before His hanging on Calvary, we read in John 13:4–5: “[He] rose from supper, and laid aside His garments; and taking a towel, He girded Himself about. Then He poured water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples’ feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded.”

Max Lucado in *Life Lessons: Galatians* says: “True humility is not thinking lowly of yourself but thinking accurately of yourself. The humble heart does not say, ‘I can’t do anything.’ But rather, ‘I can’t do everything.’ I know my part and I’m happy to do it.”

Wiersbe asked: “Are you serving others? Freedom brings with it the responsibility to serve. Love motivates us to fulfill the law of God.”

This morning, let’s worship and praise the Lord together 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 nevermore; 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.*”

October 24—Love Your Neighbor (Galatians 5:14–15)

Galatians 5:14: “*For the whole law in one word has been fulfilled (namely) in this: ‘Love your neighbor as (you do) yourself.’*”

Galatians 5:15: “*But if you are biting and devouring one another, take heed lest you be consumed by one another.*”

Verse 14: *The Message* paraphrases this verse: “For everything we know about God’s Word is summed up in a single sentence: Love others as you love yourself. That’s an act of true freedom.”

Romans 13:10 (NASB): “Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.”

Want something to do? Want some kind of responsibility? This is perfect for you: Love your neighbor as you do yourself!

D. De Haan said:

UNFAILING IS GOD’S MATCHLESS LOVE,
SO KIND, SO PURE, SO TRUE,
AND THOSE WHO DRAW UPON THAT LOVE
SHALL LOVE IN ALL THEY DO.

Verse 15: In this verse, Paul compares these behaviors with Christian cannibalism. It is a contrast to verse 14. A wise person has said: “The Christian army is the only army that attacks its own wounded.”

When the flesh is in control, there will be “biting and devouring,” but when the Spirit of God is dominant, there will be love, unity and peace.

Joseph Bayly in his book, *Out of My Mind*, said: “Slings we have aplenty. But we use them to mow down our fellow soldiers, not against opposing giants. The brethren are bruised, the giants unmolested.”

“The strife is o’er, the battle done. Our church has split and our side won.”

Barker & Kohlenberger say: “It is not hard to imagine the kind of strife that may have been present in the Galatian churches, either strife parallel to that of the Corinthians or strife arising directly out of the conflict with the legalizers. Paul does not say precisely what it was, but intense strife was definitely going on among the Galatians.”

MacArthur said: “The imagery is of wild animals, savagely attacking and killing each other, a graphic picture of what happens in the spiritual realm when believers do not love and serve one another.”

Eugene Peterson prays the following prayer in *A Year With Jesus*: “So let our lips and lives express the holy gospel we profess; so let our works and virtues shine, to prove the doctrine all divine. Thus shall we best proclaim abroad the honors of our Savior God, when His salvation reigns within, and grace subdues the power of sin. Amen.”

Please join me in worship in praise as we sing verse 1 of that little prayer chorus, “**Make Me a Servant**”: *“Make me a servant, humble and meek; Lord, let me lift up those who are weak. And may the prayer of my heart always be: Make me a servant, make me a servant, Make me a servant today.”*

October 25—Walk By Means of The Spirit (Galatians 5:16)

Galatians 5:16: “*But I am saying, walk by means of the Spirit, and you will by no means fulfill the desire of the flesh.*”

Verse 16: Walk and keep on walking by the means of the Spirit. The result: “you will by no means fulfill the desire of the flesh.” This present imperative command is also a present tense which means it should be ongoing.

Paul commands the Galatians: “Walk by means of the Spirit.” This is the secret of victorious Christian living. The Christian must cease his struggling and simply trust the Holy Spirit to live out the life of Christ through him. The Holy Spirit will do what the Christian cannot do for himself.

The words “by means of” describe “*dependence upon and submission.*”

The measure of the individual's yieldedness to the Spirit will be the measure of experienced victory over the law of sin and death. It is victory through dependence.

It is the Spirit who energizes the new nature within us.

Channel all of your efforts to be dependent upon the Spirit.

This morning, I want to worship and praise the Lord with one of Fanny Crosby's hymns. Please join me singing verse 1 of "**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."*

October 26—The Flesh & Spirit at War (Galatians 5:17)

Galatians 5:17: *"For the flesh is constantly having a strong desire to suppress the Spirit. And the Spirit is constantly having a strong desire to suppress the flesh. For these are opposed to one another, in order that you may not do the things that you desire to do."*

Verse 17: *The Bible Knowledge Commentary* says: "Paul next explained the need for a life that is controlled and energized by the Spirit. The explanation is found in the fact that each Christian has two natures, a sinful nature received at birth, inherited from fallen Adam, and a new nature received at regeneration when said Christian became a participant in the divine nature (cf. 2 Peter 1:4). Both natures have desires, the one for evil and the other for holiness."

The law stirs up the flesh, but grace is operative through the Spirit. To live for yourself is to walk after the flesh, but to live for God is to walk after the Spirit. Additionally, if you are dominated by the flesh, you are dominated by the devil, but you are controlled by God if you are dominated by the Spirit.

The flesh gets a stronghold in the areas of our lives where we feel capable to function on our own. We fool ourselves thinking that losing Christ in those areas would not affect us. The areas where we are not dependent make us vulnerable.

The Holy Spirit in all of His power is forming the life of Christ within each of us.

John Ortberg in *The Me I Want To Be* says:

Temptation promises that we can be free to gratify our appetites as much as we want. See a fly, want a fly, eat a fly. Temptation promises freedom, but it makes us a slave. There is always a hook. Real freedom is not the external freedom to gratify every appetite; it is the internal freedom not to be enslaved by our

appetites, to have a place to stand so that we are not mastered by them. For we are something more than a stomach, a mouth, and a pair of eyes.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer in *Seize The Day* said: “Great achievement is more likely to occur in the context of great friendship rather than through the drive of self-assertion.”

Won't you join me in worship and praise this morning as we sing verse 2 of “**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.”*

October 27—Led By The Spirit (Galatians 5:18)

Galatians 5:18: *“But if you are being led by the Spirit, you are not under law.”*

Verse 18: *The Message* paraphrases this verse: “Why don't you choose to be led by the Spirit and so escape the erratic compulsions of a law-dominated existence?” Paul began verse 16 with the command: “Walk by means of the Spirit.” In verse 17, the apostle gave two reasons for this command:

1. For the flesh is constantly having a strong desire to suppress the Spirit. And the Spirit is constantly having a strong desire to suppress the flesh.
2. For these are opposed to one another, in order that you may not do the things that you desire to do.

Then, he provides the contrast in this verse: “But if you are being led by the Spirit, you are not under law.”

Romans 8:2: “For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus freed you from the law of sin and death.”

If the Spirit is leading, it is not dependent on your performance. You are not under the law. It is the law which brings the flesh into action. We are living in the flesh when we live on the basis of performance, endeavoring to produce in the flesh that which was intended to be produced by the power of the Spirit.

Martin Luther said: “My flesh seems to be on a warpath against the Spirit again. Go to it flesh and rage all you want to, but you are not going to have your way. I have followed the leadings of the Holy Spirit.”

Please join me in worship and praise as we sing 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.”*

October 28—Works of The Flesh (Galatians 5:19–21)

Galatians 5:19: “Now the works of the flesh are plain to see, which are:”

Galatians 5:20: “Fornication, uncleanness, indecency, idolatry, witchcraft, enmities, strife, jealousies, wraths, factions,”

Galatians 5:21: “divisions, heresies, envyings, drunkenness, carousing and such like (and the things like these); of which I am forewarning you even as I did forewarn you that those who are in the habit of practicing things such as this shall not inherit the kingdom of God.”

Verse 19: *The Message* paraphrases this verse: “It is obvious what kind of life develops out of trying to get your own way all the time:”

Notice the terminology has changed from the works of the law to the works of the flesh. When the law is introduced into your relationship with the Lord, immediately the flesh is involved.

The focus moves from dependence to action. It moves to performing, carrying out the curriculum, and meeting the demands of the law.

In these next verses, Paul lists fifteen works of the flesh. They are divided into three sections: (1) sex, (2) religion, and (3) human relationships.

Verse 20: The first three of these works of the flesh are sexual / moral sins: (1) fornication, (2) uncleanness, and (3) indecency. The second set of works regard worship or religion: (4) idolatry and (5) witchcraft.

Witchcraft is the perversion of the proper use of drugs. The word lapsed from the good use of medications to poisons, then to witchcraft and sorcery. It comes from the Greek word *pharmakeia* from which we get the word “pharmacy.”

The third group of works involve personal relationships: (6) enmities, (7) strife, (8) jealousies, (9) wraths, and (10) factions (outbursts of selfishness).

Verse 21: The third list continues in this verse: (11) divisions, (12) heresies (regarding the party spirit as in 1 Corinthians 11:19), (13) envyings, (14) drunkenness, and (15) carousings. These last two works regard excess in human relationships: drunkenness and carousings.

Paul finishes this verse with a warning: “and such like (and the things like these); of which I am forewarning you even as I did forewarn you that those who are in the habit of practicing things such as this shall not inherit the kingdom of God.”

I love the way J.B. Phillips paraphrases Romans 13:11–14: “Why all this stress on behaviour? Because, as I think you have realised, the present time is of the highest importance—it is time to wake up to reality. Every day brings God’s salvation nearer. The night is nearly over, the day has almost dawned. Let us therefore fling away the things that men do in the dark, let us arm ourselves for the fight of the day! Let us live cleanly, as in the daylight, not in the ‘delights’ of getting drunk or playing with sex, nor yet in quarrelling or jealous-

sies. Let us be Christ's men from head to foot, and give no chances to the flesh to have its fling."

This morning, let's sing the song that Nate Saint, Ed McCully, Jim Elliot, Pete Fleming, and Roger Youderian sang in their devotional the morning of January 8, 1956. Please join me singing verse 1 of "**We Rest On Thee**": *"We rest on Thee, our Shield and our Defender! We go not forth alone against the foe; Strong in Thy strength, safe in Thy keeping tender, We rest on Thee, and in Thy Name we go. Strong in Thy strength, safe in Thy keeping tender, We rest on Thee, and in Thy Name we go."*

October 29—Fruit of The Spirit (Galatians 5:22–23)

Galatians 5:22: *"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,"*

Galatians 5:23: *"meekness, self-control. Against such things as these there is no law."*

Verse 22: In the previous verses, we looked at the works of the flesh which focuses on action. Now, Paul turns the focus to the "fruit of the Spirit." Fruit is born when we obey, submit and depend upon the Spirit of God.

To bear fruit, you must be abiding in the vine. We must do three things to abide in Christ:

1. Depend upon all He can do.
2. Draw upon all that He provides.
3. Develop into His likeness.

The word "fruit" is singular. All of these work together as a manifestation of Christ living in me. The apostle lists nine manifestations of this fruit in these two verses:

1. Love—agape love.
2. Joy—the result of a right relationship with the Father, a product of the Holy Spirit. A lack of joy is one of the first things to depart when we are out of fellowship with Him.
3. Peace—serenity or tranquility, the contentment of the life which is secure.
4. Longsuffering (Patience)—long-tempered or patient, an attitude towards people that is loving no matter how unreasonable they may be.
5. Kindness—treating others the way God treats us.
6. Goodness—generosity that springs from a heart that is kind, love in action for others.
7. Faithfulness—reliability or trustworthiness.

Verse 23: The list of fruits continues.

8. Meekness—strength and gentleness together.
9. Self-Control—self-discipline in the matters of bodily and physical pleasure, someone who prevents desires from being the dictator of his life and action.

Paul concludes this verse: “Against such things as these there is no law.”

The fruit that the Spirit produces within the heart of the child of God does not conflict or counter the law of which we have spoken in this epistle.

Please join me this morning as we worship and praise the Lord by singing verse 2 of **“We Rest On Thee”**: *“Yea, in Thy Name, O Captain of salvation! In Thy dear Name, all other names above; Jesus our Righteousness, our sure Foundation, Our Prince of glory and our King of love. Jesus our Righteousness, our sure Foundation, Our Prince of glory and our King of love.”*

October 30—Crucified The Flesh (Galatians 5:24)

Galatians 5:24: *“Now those (who belong) of Christ Jesus crucified the flesh with its affections (passive emotions) and desires.”*

Verse 24: In the book of Galatians, the cross has completed its work:

1. It crucified *Christ*—chapter 3:1.
2. It crucified the *Christian*—chapter 2:20.
3. It crucified the *flesh*—chapter 5:24.
4. In chapter 6, we will note it crucified the *world unto us*—chapter 6:14.

Isobel Kuhn in her book, *In The Arena*, says: “When we allow the Lord to nail our affections to the cross (to use the Scriptural metaphor), we do not cease to love. We love even more widely, but it is a love stripped of corrupting influences. Love is not killed—only the seed of corruption in natural affection is killed.”

Radmacher, Allen & House say: “Christians are spiritually crucified with Christ (Gal. 2:20). They no longer have to follow the values or desires of the world. However, it remains difficult for Christians to apply the spirituality to the passions (affections) and desires (lusts) of the flesh. Those who have mastered these simple desires are those who have kept their focus on God.”

Let’s join together in worship and praise this morning as we sing verse 3 of **“We Rest On Thee”**: *“We go in faith, our own great weakness feeling, And needing more each day Thy grace to know: Yet from our hearts a song of triumph pealing, ‘We rest on Thee, and in Thy Name we go.’ Yet from our hearts a song of triumph pealing, ‘We rest on Thee, and in Thy Name we go.’”*

October 31—Living By The Spirit (Galatians 5:25–26)

Galatians 5:25: “If we are living by the Spirit, let us also order our steps by the Spirit.”

Galatians 5:26: “Let us stop becoming vain-glorious, provoking one another, envying one another.”

Verse 25: In the last two verses of this passage, Paul gives two final commands:

Command #1: Let us also order our steps by the Spirit.

Command #2: Let us stop becoming vain-glorious, provoking one another, envying one another.

In light of the truth presented in the previous verses, this first command appears an obvious directive. There is a conflict between flesh and the Spirit. We have been made alive by the Spirit. The Spirit of God is the regenerator or giver of life and responsible for our salvation. Based on this foundation, we should “order our steps” or our conduct by the Spirit.

The apostle combines becoming a Christian and living the Christian life together.

“If (when) we are living by the Spirit, let us also order our steps by the Spirit (in our daily walk).”

We order our steps by (1) reading the Word, (2) prayer and (3) fellowship with the Father.

Verse 26: In the previous verse, we had the positive responsibility but we have the negative responsibility in this verse.

Vain-glorious means “*boastful or conceited*.” It is the conceit in our achievement. As a result of this vain-glory, we provoke others by boasting, bringing about a situation where others envy one another.

In this verse, Paul uses a present imperative negative command. He asks these Galatians to stop (1) becoming vain-glorious, (2) provoking one another, and (3) envying one another.

Wiersbe says: “In short, the secret is the Holy Spirit. He alone can give us that ‘fifth freedom’—freedom from sin and self. He enables us to fulfill the law of love, to overcome the flesh, and to bear fruit. Will you yield to Him and let Him work?”

Won’t you join me in worship and praise this morning as we sing together verse 4 of “**We Rest On Thee**”?: “*We rest on Thee, Our Shield and Our Defender! Thine is the battle, Thine shall be the praise; When passing thro’ the gates of pearly splendor, Victors, we rest with Thee, thro’ endless days. When passing thro’ the gates of pearly splendor, Victors, we rest with Thee, thro’ endless days.*”

NOVEMBER

November 1—Restoration (Galatians 6:1)

Galatians 6:1: “Brethren, if however a man be overtaken in a sin, you who are the spiritual ones, restore such a one in a spirit of meekness, keeping an eye on yourself, lest you also should be tempted.”

Verse 1: When we live in the flesh, we become vain-glorious, provoking one another, and envying one another.” Paul provides the contrast in this verse.

“A man be overtaken in a sin.” The apostle addresses a man who has slipped or lapsed, rather than someone who has committed a willful sin. This is contrary to the law. The law has no recourse but to condemn. When we offend in one point, we are guilty of all. However, when a Christian sins, he is not severed from the body of Christ. He is dislocated as a bone in regards to his service and fellowship. His use and blessing are suspended.

When there is sin in our lives, it affects the vertical and horizontal relationships:

1. In the vertical, it breaks fellowship with God.
2. In the horizontal relationships, it creates tension, strife, jealousy, bitterness and ultimately divisions.

Sin creates three obvious problems in our lives:

1. We are out of fellowship with our relationships.
2. We are operating in the flesh rather than the Spirit.
3. We are selfish instead of servants.

The word “restore”: is used for “*mending nets*”, but it is also a surgical word meaning “*to execute a repair, remove a growth or set a broken limb.*” The emphasis is on curing, not punishing.

Paul provides a warning at the end of the verse: “keeping an eye on yourself, lest you also should be tempted.”

Augustine said: “There is no sin which one person has committed that another person may not commit, also.”

1 Corinthians 10:12: “Therefore, let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.”

François de la Mothe Fénelon said: “To realize God’s presence is the one sovereign remedy against temptation.”

Philip Yancey in *Grace Notes* says: “Reading François Mauriac’s words did not end my struggle with lust. But I must say beyond all doubt that I have found his analysis to be true. The love God holds out to us requires that our faculties be cleansed and purified before we can receive a higher love, one attainable in no other way. That is the motive to stay pure. By harboring lust, I limit my own intimacy with God.”

This morning, let's worship and praise the Lord together by singing verse 1 of "**Farther Along**": *"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."*

November 2—Bearing One Another's Burdens (Galatians 6:2)

Galatians 6:2: "*Keep on bearing one another's burdens, and so observe perfectly the law of Christ.*"

Verse 2: *The Bible Knowledge Commentary* says: "A serving Christian lends a helping hand with heavy loads. Though the principle would apply to all burdens the context has special reference to the heavy and oppressive weight of temptation and spiritual failure."

This verse describes many people. They have personal burdens too heavy to bear alone.

The "burden" is a burden of love rather than the law. These burdens come from crisis, emergency, time of sorrow and personal problems that each of us have in the body of Christ.

"Keep on bearing one another's burdens, and so observe perfectly the law of Christ." The law of Christ is to love one another.

David Jeremiah in *Signs of Life* included this story from Charles Allen:

Some years ago, I read a satirical piece that brought this truth home to me:

I was hungry, and you formed a humanities club and discussed my hunger.

I was imprisoned, and you crept off quietly to your chapel in the cellar and prayed for my release.

I was naked, and in your mind you debated the morality of my appearance.

I was sick, and you knelt and thanked God for your health.

I was homeless, and you preached to me the spiritual shelter of the love of God.

I was lonely, and you left me alone to pray for me.

You seem so holy, so close to God, but I'm still very hungry and lonely and cold.

That's not biblical faith.

Please join me for worship and praise this morning 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.”*

November 3—Deceiving Yourself (Galatians 6:3)

Galatians 6:3: *“For if a man is thinking himself to be something when he is nothing, he is deceiving himself.”*

Verse 3: *The Message* paraphrases this verse: “If you think you are too good for that, you are badly deceived.”

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says: “Something must be laid aside if a believer is to be a burden-bearer and that is conceit, an attitude that breeds intolerance of error in others and causes one to think he is above failure.”

In this verse, Paul continues his thoughts from 5:26: “Let us stop becoming vain-glorious, provoking one another, envying one another.”

Someone who thinks they are something special usually becomes quite vain-glorious or boastful. This person is only interested in their self, and has great difficulty being constructively involved in the lives of others. This person will have blind spots in their life. These blind spots will continue simply because this person is unwilling to open up and receive constructive help in a fellowship of believers. Refusing to let someone else minister to their needs will keep them from a path of fruitfulness.

John references this situation in 3 John 9: “I wrote something to the church; but Diotrephes, who loves to be first among them, does not accept what we say.”

Paul also states that this man “is deceiving himself.” He isn’t fooling the other members of the body of Christ or the Lord, but only himself.

Barker & Kohlenberger say: “Two errors might keep believers from fulfilling this role of mutual sympathy. The first is conceit, that is, Christians thinking themselves to be more important than they are. The implication seems to be if Christians neglect or refuse to bear another’s burdens, it is because they think themselves above it. But this is to be self-deceived for measured by God’s standard, no one amounts to anything.”

Later in the commentary, they add the second of those errors is discontent and envy as Paul stated at the end of 5:25.

1 John 1:8: “If we say that we are not having sin, we are leading ourselves astray, and the truth is not in us.”

Through this verse, Paul addresses the issue of pride in ministering and helping others. This is the manifestation of an unbroken will and selfishness. It

is the illustration of performance versus relationship or law versus grace. Psalm 19:12–14 (NKJV): “Who can understand his errors? Cleanse me from secret faults. Keep back Your servant also from presumptuous sins; Let them not have dominion over me. Then I shall be blameless, And I shall be innocent of great transgression. Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart Be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD, my strength and my Redeemer.”

Won't you join me in worship and praise as we sing together verses 1 & 2 of **“Praise the Saviour, Ye Who Know Him”**?: *“Praise the Savior, ye who know Him! Who can tell how much we owe Him? Gladly let us render to Him All we are and have. Jesus is the Name that charms us; He for conflict fits and arms us; Nothing moves and nothing harms us While we trust in Him.”*

November 4—Put To The Test (Galatians 6:4)

Galatians 6:4: *“But his own work let each one put to the test, and then to himself alone he will have a ground for glorying and not to the other one.”*

Verse 4: *The Message* paraphrases this verse: “Make a careful exploration of who you are and the work you have been given, and then sink yourself into that. Don't be impressed with yourself. Don't compare yourself with others.”

“But his own work let each one put to the test.” Put the things you are doing “to the test.” Then, put yourself to the test, but not comparing yourself to others, to have a “ground for glorying.” If you compare with others, you may provoke them to envy you over a triumph in your own life.

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.”

Many of the problems within the body of Christ would be solved if we would (1) learn to be quiet, (2) mind our own business, and (3) faithfully do what the Lord asks us.

The Lord will put our works as believers to the test when we appear before Him at the Judgment Seat of Christ. In anticipation of that time, we should test our own works to see if they are wood, hay and stubble; or gold, silver and precious stones. The apostle is encouraging us to prepare ourselves for the final examination with Christ by taking several pop quizzes along the way.

Philippians 2:3: “Doing nothing from selfish ambition or from empty conceit, but with humility of mind regarding one another as excelling themselves.

Paul tells Christians to give themselves a thorough critique. We are to put ourselves to the test rather than spend our time criticizing others.

Susan Lenzkes in *Life Is Like Licking Honey Off A Thorn* shares the tribute she gave at the memorial service for her husband, Herb:

“Many a man claims to have unfailing love, but a faithful man who can find?” Proverbs 20:6

- My heart found a home outside its own skin.
- I know that faithfulness is a man, not just a word.
- I had a dearly loved friend by my side for thirty-two years.
- I am the mother of three incredibly unique and precious children.
- I know how it feels to share laughter, tears, unspoken thoughts, intimacy, change, struggles, and inside jokes that go way back.
- I’ve experienced the luxury of being cherished and nourished.
- I know that greeting cards are recyclable, and brown paper bags a superior gift wrap.
- I’ve learned to respect, and even delight in the differences.
- I have learned that, given enough time and love, tact can be acquired.
- I learned that salsa is breakfast food.
- I discovered that “engineer” is not a profession, but a personality type.
- I know how many miles a full bladder can still go.
- I’ve come to understand that flowers aren’t as important as faithfulness.
- I’ve learned that God loves a woman very well through a godly man.
- I’ve shared the challenge to grow and become.
- I am a better, stronger person, even separated from him, than I ever would have been without him.
- I am rich with shared memories.
- I will be eternally grateful.
- Because God gave me Herb, and then took him home before me, part of my heart is already in heaven.

“The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away, may the name of the Lord be praised.” Job 1:21

“Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of the saints.” Psalms 116:15

This morning, please join me in worship and praise as we sing verse 3 of **“Praise the Saviour, Ye Who Know Him”**: *“Trust in Him, ye saints, forever; He is faithful, changing never; Neither force nor guile can sever Those He loves from Him.”*

November 5—Bear Your Burden (Galatians 6:5)

Galatians 6:5: *“For each shall bear his own burden.”*

Verse 5: *The Message* paraphrases this verse: “Each of you must take responsibility for doing the creative best you can with your own life.”

This verse is not in conflict with verse 2. It is simply bearing our part of the work and faithfully doing our part of the service. We are to use our spiritual gifts to the edification and exhortation of other believers.

2 Timothy 1:6: “And for this reason I am reminding you to be stirring up the flame of the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hand.”

A scriptural contrast will help clarify. In Mark 2:3, we read: “And they came, bringing Him a paralytic, carried by four men.” These four men were bearing another’s burden. However, in Mark 2:11, we read: “I say to you, rise, take up your pallet and go home.” Now, this man is capable of bearing his own burden.

The word “burden” means *“soldier’s pack”* in this context. Each of us has a responsibility and we are held accountable. We are not to push our responsibilities on to someone else.

Isaiah 40:31: “But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.”

Burdens can become as a tombstone hung around our necks or they can be the weights that keep us down as we dive for precious pearls.

Barker & Kohlenberger say:

In other words, the duty of Christians is to carry his or her own load. There is no contradiction between this verse and verse 2 for different words are used for what one is to bear. The word in verse 2 means “heavy burdens, those that are more than one person should carry.” The word in this verse denotes a person’s pack. Each Christian has his or her own work to do. So let each one take pride in how they do it.

Listen to Jesus in Matthew 11:28–30 (Phillips): “Come to me, all of you who are weary and over-burdened, and I will give you rest! Put on my yoke and

learn from me. For I am gentle and humble in heart and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

There are four “loads” that each of us must carry individually as believers and they cannot be shared: (1) suffering, (2) death, (3) the Judgment Seat of Christ, and (4) sin.

I challenge you to take responsibility for the things that cannot be shared.

Let’s join together in worship and praise this morning as we sing verses 4 & 5 of “**Praise the Saviour, Ye Who Know Him**”: *“Keep us, Lord, O keep us cleaving To Thyself, and still Believing, Till the hour of receiving Promised joys with Thee. Then we shall be where we would be, Then we shall be what we should be, Things that are not now, nor could be, Soon shall be our own.”*

November 6—Take Care of Your Teacher (Galatians 6:6)

Galatians 6:6: *“Moreover, let the one who is being taught the word have a share with the one who is teaching in all good things.”*

Verse 6: *The Bible Knowledge Commentary* says: “One responsibility of each believer is to shoulder the financial support of the pastor-teachers in the church.”

From the context, it is difficult to distinguish whether Paul means we are to share all good things in the realm of spiritual fellowship or whether he was instructing us to share in financial matters. The apostle did not struggle with sharing the needs of the poor saints in Jerusalem or teaching faithful stewardship.

Given the situation in Galatia, it is possible he was addressing financial needs. This church was already upset. Instructing them to share might have disturbed them even more.

“Good things” could mean gratitude, encouraging words, emails, cards and letters.

When the word is being taught, it is the responsibility of those who are being taught spiritual truth to share the burden of financial responsibility and “good things”.

Since Paul had addressed giving with the Corinthian assembly in both of his letters to them (1st and 2nd Corinthians), I believe he was directing the Galatians in financial responsibility.

1 Corinthians 16:1–3: “Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I directed the churches of Galatia, so do you also. On the first day of every week let each one of you put aside and save, as he may prosper, that no collections be made when I come. And when I arrive, whomever you may approve, I shall send them with letters to carry your gift to Jerusalem.”

2 Corinthians 9:6–7: “Now this I am saying; ‘He who is sowing sparingly shall also reap sparingly; and he who is sowing bountifully shall also reap bountifully.’ Let each one do just as he has purposed in his heart; not grudgingly or under compulsion; for God is loving a cheerful giver.”

Paul reminds Timothy in 1 Timothy 6:7–10 about the temptation to make physical wealth a priority: “For we brought nothing into the world, so that (as a result) we can take nothing out of it. And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content. But those who are desiring to be rich fall into temptation and a snare and many useless and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction. For a root of all the evils is the love of money, which certain ones in reaching for it have been led astray from the faith and pierced themselves with many sorrows.”

Please join me in worship and praise this morning as we sing verse 1 of George Beverly Shea’s famous hymn, “**I’d Rather Have Jesus**”: *“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.”*

November 7—What You Sow You Reap (Galatians 6:7)

Galatians 6:7: “*Stop leading yourselves astray, God is not being sneered at: whatever a man is sowing, this also he will reap.*”

Verse 7: This verse begins with a present negative imperative: “Stop leading yourselves astray.”

Are we living in the flesh or in the Spirit?

Daniel Webster said: “The most awful thing I knew was the recognition of my accountability to God.”

Romans 14:12: “So then each one of us shall give account of himself to God.”

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow said:

THOUGH MILLS OF GOD GRIND SLOWLY;
YET THEY GRIND EXCEEDINGLY SMALL;
THOUGH WITH PATIENCE HE STANDS WAITING,
WITH EXACTNESS GRINDS HE ALL.

All of these are yours: money, strength, youth, manhood / womanhood, home, occupation, friends and love ... but only for a little while, then the reaping day will come.

How many sunrises did you see? I believe this may be one of the questions at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

Won't you join me in worship and praise this morning as we sing verse 2 of **"I'd Rather Have Jesus"**: *"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."*

November 8—Sowing To The Spirit (Galatians 6:8)

Galatians 6:8: *"Because the one sowing unto his own flesh, from his flesh shall reap decay; But the one sowing unto the Spirit, from the Spirit shall reap life eternal."*

Verse 8: The words "flesh" and "Spirit" are each mentioned twice in this verse.

Psalm 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."

In Galatians chapter 5, Paul addressed the contrast between the works of the flesh and fruitage of the Spirit. This verse summarizes the end results for each path. We can choose to sow in the flesh and reap decay or sow in the Spirit and reap life eternal.

It is my prayer that you would be challenged to walk daily "by means of the Spirit and not to fulfill the desires of the flesh."

J. Vernon McGee says: "Reaping life everlasting includes the fruit of the Spirit in this life and the glorious prospect of the future."

John Eldredge is quoted in Carol Kent's book, *Between a Rock and a Grace*. He says: "The only way to live in this adventure—with all of its danger and unpredictability and immensely high stakes—is an ongoing, intimate relationship with God."

This morning, let's join together in worship and praise as we sing verse 3 of **"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."*

November 9—Keep On Doing Good (Galatians 6:9)

Galatians 6:9: “Now, Let us not lose heart in doing that which is good, for at its proper season we shall reap if we are not being exhausted.”

Verse 9: 2 Chronicles 15:7: “But as for you, be strong and do not give up, for your work will be rewarded.”

“Let us not lose heart in doing that which is good.” Don’t lose heart! Do not give in to the Judaizers’ demands: “for at its proper season we shall reap if we are not being exhausted.”

2 Thessalonians 3:13: “But as for you, brethren, do not grow weary of doing good.”

Vince Lombardi said: “Fatigue makes cowards of us all.”

The failure to prepare is preparation for failure.

Robert H. Schuller in *Tough Times Never Last, But Tough People Do!* recalls seeing this slogan on a calendar in a bank: “Great people are ordinary people with extraordinary amounts of determination.”

Bud Williams said: “Real champions are not always perfect in all that they do, but they have learned that those who are tough get going when the going gets tough.”

Robert H. Schuller in *Tough Times Never Last, But Tough People Do!* tells this story:

Sir Edmund Hillary, who attempted to scale Mount Everest, lost one of the members of his team in the failed effort. He returned to a hero’s welcome in London, England, where a banquet held in his honor was attended by the lords and ladies and powerful people of the British Empire. Behind the speakers’ platform were huge blown-up photographs of Mount Everest. When Hillary arose to receive the acclaim of the distinguished audience, he turned around and faced the mountain and said, “Mount Everest, you have defeated me. But I will return, And I will defeat you. Because you can’t get any bigger and I can.”

Oswald Chambers said: “Faith is deliberate confidence in the character of God whose ways you may not understand at the time.”

I am passionate and excited about the wonderful hymn this morning. Please join me in singing verse 1 of **“Higher Ground”**: “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.”

November 10—The Household of Faith (Galatians 6:10)

Galatians 6:10: “So then, as we are having opportunity, let us be working that which is good to all, but above all to those of the household of the faith.”

Verse 10: “Let us be working that which is good to all, but above all to those of the household of the faith.” This verse, like verse 2, is an encouragement to believers to love as Christ: “Keep on bearing one another’s burdens, and so observe perfectly the law of Christ.”

Paul challenges us to be constructively involved in working that which is helpful, good and encouraging to others within the body of Christ. This is compassion in action! We show our love for others by taking action and helping them to bear their load or burdens.

John Ortberg raises the question in *The Me I Want To Be*:

Why does God allow difficult people in my life?

What other kind are there?

If God were to get rid of all the difficult people in the world—if he were to remove everybody with quirks, flaws, ugliness, and sin—you would get awfully lonely.

We always wish that God would give us a life without difficult people in it. But how many great characters in the Bible had difficult people in their lives? Moses had Pharaoh, Elijah had Jezebel, Esther had Haman, Jacob had Laban, David had Saul, John the Baptist had Herod. Even Jesus had Judas. If God loves you and wants to shape you, he will send some difficult people your way. But take heart. You are the difficult person he is sending to shape somebody else!

If we can learn to have rivers of living water still flowing through us in these relationships, we will be unstoppable.

Let’s join together in worship and praise this morning as we sing verse 2 of “**Higher Ground**”: *“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.”*

November 11—A Fair Show In The Flesh (Galatians 6:11–12)

Galatians 6:11: *“You see with what large letters I am writing to you with my own hand.”*

Galatians 6:12: *“As many as are desiring to make a fair show in the flesh, these are trying to compel you to receive circumcision only in order that they might not be persecuted for the cross of Christ.”*

Verse 11: *The Bible Knowledge Commentary* says: “At this point Paul took the pen from his scribe and wrote the rest of the letter himself, a practice he often followed.”

Barker & Kohlenberger say: “Why write in large letters? It is generally assumed that Paul increased the size of his letters for emphasis, much as in contemporary printing a paragraph is italicized or set in boldface. Another possibility is that Paul’s large letters were to poor eyesight, perhaps also his thorn in the flesh (2 Corinthians 12:7).”

Verse 12: Paul provides the reason these Judaizers want the Galatians under legal bondage. They are “desiring to make a fair show in the flesh,” for the purpose: “that they might not be persecuted for the cross of Christ.”

It is easier and more convenient to work in the flesh rather than suffering by carrying the cross and following Christ.

Please join me in worship and praise this morning as we sing 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.”*

November 12—Glory In The Flesh (Galatians 6:13)

Galatians 6:13: *“For not even those who are having themselves circumcised are themselves keeping the law, but they are desiring you to be circumcised in order that in your flesh they may glory.”*

Verse 13: Not even the Judaizers are keeping the law. They only desire “to make a fair show in the flesh” to escape persecution. Their motivation is so that “in your flesh they may glory.”

These verses reveal the hidden motives in the hearts of the Judaizers who are behind this turn to legalism:

1. To make a fair show in the flesh—verse 12.
2. To escape persecution—verse 12.
3. To glory in your flesh—verse 13.

Won’t you join me in worship and praise this morning 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."

November 13—Glorying In The Cross (Galatians 6:14)

Galatians 6:14: "*But far be it from me to be glorying except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom to me the world has been crucified and I to the world.*"

Verse 14: The apostle's only glory is in the cross of Christ. It was the focus of his message to the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 2:2: "For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified."

James 4:4: "You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore, whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God."

1 John 2:15: "Stop loving the world, neither the things which are in the world. If a man keeps on loving the world, the love of the Father is not in him."

Philippians 3:7–8: "But whatever things were gain to me, these things I have considered as loss for the sake of Christ. Yes, indeed I am considering all things to be a loss for the sake of the surpassing value of the knowledge (personal acquaintance) of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I forfeited all things, and I am considering them rubbish in order that I might gain Christ."

MacArthur says: "The Greek word for boast is a basic expression of praise, unlike the English word which includes the aspect of pride. Paul glories and rejoices in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ."

Max Lucado in *Fear Not: I Am With You Always* said:

Suppose you could relive your life without any guilt, lust, vengeance, insecurity, or fear. Would you be different?

God changes the man by changing the mind. And how does it happen? As Christ dominates your thoughts, he changes you from one degree of glory to another until—hang on!—you are ready to live with him.

Heaven is the land of sinless minds. Absolute trust. No fear or anger. Shame and second-guessing are practices of a prior life. Heaven will be wonderful, not because the streets are gold, but because our thoughts will be pure.

So what are you waiting on? Give God your best thoughts and see if he doesn't change your mind.

This morning, let's join together in worship and praise as we sing verse 1 of that wonderful hymn, "**Beneath The Cross of Jesus**": "*Beneath the cross of Jesus*

I fain would take my stand, The shadow of a mighty Rock Within a weary land; A home within the wilderness, A rest upon the way, From the burning of the noontide heat, And the burden of the day."

November 14—A New Creation (Galatians 6:15)

Galatians 6:15: *"For neither circumcision is anything or uncircumcision but a new creation."*

Verse 15: *The Message* paraphrases this verse beautifully: "Can't you see the central issue in all this? It is not what you and I do—submit to circumcision, reject circumcision. It is what God is doing, and he is creating something totally new, a free life!"

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says: "In view of the Cross of Christ and a believer's new position with respect to the world, no outward religious symbol or lack of it means anything as a way of salvation. The only thing that matters is to be a part of the new creation by the new birth."

Galatians 5:6: "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision is of any power nor uncircumcision, but faith operating through love."

2 Corinthians 5:17: "Therefore if any man is in Christ, He is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold new things have come."

Les Pye has been a joy to me over the last several years. I have had the privilege to be involved in his spiritual pilgrimage. He tells his own story:

I was a hypocrite. I acted like a Christian, but I was not. I have likened my thoughts to that of a camera that would not focus. Therefore, all my views were fuzzy and unclear. I looked in all the wrong places, such as, Judaism and even Islamic cults.

While listening to Don Anderson preach one day, it all suddenly became clear. I prayed silently for Christ to come into my heart and He did. Right then, my lens was in focus.

I have never had a doubt since that day. My life has changed so much so that I can hardly believe that I could ever have doubted. He changed my life. My wife and associates see the difference in me, and testify to it. I love my Lord. I know He loves me and has forgiven me.

Les says he wants the following message on this tombstone: "It took a long time, but I found Him."

Jonathan Edwards said: "Holiness is a most beautiful, lovely thing. Men are apt to drink in strange notions of holiness from their childhood, as if it were a

melancholy, morose, sour, and unpleasant thing; but there is nothing in it but what is sweet and ravishingly lovely.”

Please join me in worship and praise this morning as we sing together verse 1 of **“Take Time To Be Holy”**: *“Take time to be holy; Speak oft with thy Lord; Abide in Him always, And feed on His Word. Make friends of God’s children; Help those who are weak, Forgetting in nothing His blessing to seek.”*

November 15—Peace & Mercy (Galatians 6:16)

Galatians 6:16: *“And as many as by this rule are ordering their steps, peace be upon them and mercy even upon the Israel of God.”*

Verse 16: *The Bible Knowledge Commentary* says: “Peace and mercy from God are available to those who walk according to this rule, that is, according to the message of salvation by grace through faith alone.”

Paul pronounced peace upon all those who are ordering their steps by this rule (the Spirit). Galatians 5:25: “If we are living by the Spirit, let us also order our steps by the Spirit.” Also, in the previous verse, we read: “For neither circumcision is anything or uncircumcision but a new creation.”

Let us be “by this rule” ordering our steps.

“Peace be upon them and mercy even upon the Israel of God.” The apostle expresses his heavy heart for the condition in Israel.

Romans 9:2–3: “That I am having great sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart. For I was on the point of wishing that I myself were accursed, [separated] from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh.”

Paul has been quite severe with the Judaizers who want to continue under legal bondage. However, in this final passage, he expresses his personal feelings by asking that mercy might be granted “upon the Israel of God.”

MacArthur says: “The Israel of God refers to Jewish believers in Jesus Christ, to those who are spiritual as well as physical descendants of Abraham.”

Let’s join together in worship and praise this morning as we sing verse 2 of **“Take Time To Be Holy”**: *“Take time to be holy; The world rushes on; Spend much time in secret With Jesus alone. By looking to Jesus, Like Him thou shalt be; Thy friends in thy conduct His likeness shall see.”*

November 16—The Marks of Jesus (Galatians 6:17–18)

Galatians 6:17: *“As for the rest, let no man furnish me trouble for I am bearing branded on my body the marks of Jesus.”*

Galatians 6:18: *“The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit brethren. Amen.”*

Verse 17: Paul had suffered much for the cause of Christ, including marks on his body.

The apostle is referencing the names or stamps of their owners that slaves had branded on their bodies when he says: “I am bearing branded on my body the marks of Jesus.

Galatians 1:10: “For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I seeking to please men? If I still were pleasing men, a bondservant of Christ I would not be.”

John 20:21: “Jesus therefore said to them again, ‘Peace be with you; as the Father has sent Me, I also send you.’”

MacArthur said: “The physical results of persecution—scars, wounds, etc.—identify Paul as one who has suffered for the Lord.”

Wiersbe says: “There was a time when Paul was proud of his mark of circumcision (Phil. 3:4–6), but after he became a believer, he became a ‘marked man’ in a different way. He now gloried in the scars he had received and in the suffering he had endured in the service of Jesus Christ.”

Wuest said: “The marks are stigma of the Lord Jesus where the scars that were caused by the scourgings, the Roman rods, and the stoning at Lystra which Paul had received.”

Oswald Chambers in *My Utmost for His Highest* said: “The goal of faithfulness is not that we will do work for God, but that He will be free to do His work through us. God calls us to His service and places tremendous responsibilities on us. He expects no complaining on our part and offers no explanation on His part. God wants to use us as He used His own Son.”

Verse 18: Paul began his letter talking of apostleship and ends by talking of his scars. Grace has been the focus of this entire letter so the apostle completes the epistle reminding them of Christ’s grace.

Wiersbe says:

So, Paul comes to the end of his letter; and he closes just the way he began: GRACE! Not “the law of Moses,” but THE GRACE OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST!

No more need be said, because that says it all.

Won’t you join me in worship and praise this morning as we sing verse 3 of “**Take Time To Be Holy**”? : *“Take time to be holy; Let Him be thy Guide; And run not before Him, Whatever betide. In joy or in sorrow, Still follow thy Lord And, looking to Jesus, Still trust in His Word.”*

November 17—Faithful Brethren (Colossians 1:1–2)

Colossians 1:1: “Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus through the will of God, and Timothy our brother, to the saints in Colosse, even the faithful brethren in Christ.”

Colossians 1:2: “Grace to you and peace from God, our Father.”

This morning, we will start our journey through Colossians. The theme throughout this book is “How Christians Grow.” As soon as Paul completed the books of Ephesians, Philemon and Colossians; Tychius and Onesimus delivered the books to those churches.

Colossae was one of the three cities in the Lycus Valley: (1) Colossae, (2) Hierapolis, and (3) Laodicea.

Peter ended his second epistle with these words in 2 Peter 3:18: “But be constantly growing 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.”

Verse 1: Paul begins his letter by introducing himself as the author of the epistle and “an apostle of Christ Jesus.” The apostle is a graphic illustration of a man whose life was changed. When he met the Savior on the Damascus road, he turned from *persecutor* to *preserver* of the Christian faith. He went from *antagonist* to *apostle*.

Paul uses this title because he will be dealing with some false teaching in this letter to the Colossians. He held this title “through the will of God.”

“And Timothy our brother.” Timothy was Paul’s faithful young companion in the Gospel. They loved each other like father and son.

“To the saints in Colosse, even the faithful brethren in Christ.” The Christian always has two areas of operation:

1. The town where he lives.
2. The Christ whom he serves.

He emphasizes their faithfulness in Christ by the phrase: “even the faithful brethren in Christ.” However, some believers in the Colossian assembly were wavering in their allegiance to Jesus Christ because of false teaching spread throughout the city.

God’s greatest desire for us is *fruit* and *faithfulness* that comes from *fellowship* with Him. God is always faithful!

In *Lone Survivor*, Marcus Luttrell says of the U.S. Navy SEAL:

It’s written right there in black and white in the official philosophy of the U.S. Navy SEAL, the last two paragraphs of which read:

“We train for war and fight to win. I stand ready to bring the full spectrum of combat power to bear in order to achieve my

mission and the goals established by my country. The execution of my duties will be swift and violent when required, yet guided by the very principles I serve to defend.”

Brave men have fought and died building the proud tradition and feared reputation that I am bound to uphold. In the worst of conditions, the legacy of my teammates steadies my resolve and silently guides my every deed. I will not fail.

Verse 2: “Grace to you and peace.” The source is “from God, our Father.”

Peter Marty in *The Anatomy of Grace* said of grace: “It is shorthand for everything that God is willing to do for us in our often tired and tragic, but nevertheless blessed lives.”

Grace and peace are two precious gifts that come from God our Father.

This morning, we will sing one of the great old hymns I grew up hearing in church. Let’s worship and praise the Lord together this morning as we sing verse 1 of **“Great Is Thy Faithfulness”**: *“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!”*

November 18—Giving Thanks & Praying (Colossians 1:3)

Colossians 1:3: *“We are giving thanks to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying for you at all times.”*

Verse 3: In this verse, we have two indications of a changed life: (1) thanks giving and (2) prayer. As a humble, broken man, Paul was thankful.

In Luke 17, Jesus is confronted with ten lepers. He heals all of them, but only one returns to give thanks in Luke 17:17 (NASB): “And Jesus answered and said, ‘Were there not ten cleansed? But the nine—where are they?’”

Learn early the lesson of being thankful in all things. This pleases the heart of God.

1 Thessalonians 5:19 (TLB): “No matter what happens, always be thankful, for this is God’s will for you who belong to Christ Jesus.”

Note that Paul is a prayerful man. He continually prays for the saints. 1 Thessalonians 5:17(TLB): “Always keep on praying.”

Abraham Lincoln said: “I have been driven many times upon my knees by the overwhelming conviction that I had nowhere else to go. My own wisdom, and that of all about me, seemed insufficient for the day.”

Please join me in worship and praise this morning as we sing verse 2 of **“Great Is Thy Faithfulness”**: *“Summer and winter, and springtime and harvest,*

Sun, moon and stars in their courses above, Join with all nature in manifold witness, To Thy great faithfulness, mercy and love. '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!"

November 19—Faith & Love (Colossians 1:4)

Colossians 1:4: *"Having heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and the love which you are having for all the saints."*

Verse 4: "Having heard of your faith in Christ Jesus." This is the single condition of salvation and the abundant life. Before a life can be changed, there must be "faith in Christ Jesus." Life in Christ Jesus begins the moment a sinner lays hold of the promise of God by faith.

"Having heard of your faith in Christ Jesus." This phrase speaks of the past. The apostle expresses his thankfulness that they stepped out of darkness into light, out of death and into life, by their faith in Christ Jesus. This is Paul's first reason for being thankful.

Paul concludes this verse: "And the love which you are having for all the saints." This is his second reason for thankfulness.

Notice he said: "the love ... for all the saints," not just the lovable and attractive saints. The love of Christ is broad enough to encompass the world. It is love *in spite of* rather than love *because of*.

Faith points to the past, but love points to the present. Faith focuses on the vertical relationship while love focuses on the horizontal relationships.

Joni Eareckson Tada in her book, *31 Days Toward Intimacy With God*, reflects on God's love:

How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God!

1 JOHN 3:1

BECAUSE HE HAS POURED HIS LOVE INTO OUR SOULS—

UP TO THE RIM AND BRIMMING OVER!—

LET THAT EXTRAVAGANT LOVE SPLASH ON SOMEONE NEAR YOU TODAY.

GO BEYOND THE EXPECTED—RIGHT OVER THE TOP.

AND DO IT AS UNTO THE GOD WHO HAS EXTRAVAGANTLY LOVED YOU.

Let's join together in worship and praise this morning as we sing verse 3 of **"Great Is Thy Faithfulness"**: *"Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth, Thy own dear presence to cheer and to guide; Strength for today and bright hope for tomor-*

row, Blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside! '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!"

November 20—Hope Laid Up In Heaven (Colossians 1:5)

Colossians 1:5: *"Because of the hope that is laid up for you in heaven, which you heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel, that has come to you."*

Verse 5: *The Message* paraphrases this verse: "The lines of purpose in your lives never grow slack, tightly tied as they are to your future in heaven, kept taut by hope. The Message is as true among you today as when you first heard it."

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

Paul thanked God for their faith and love that spring from hope.

This trilogy of virtue—faith, love, and hope—is a favorite of Paul's and Peter's. Faith is the soul looking upward to God; love looks outward to others; hope looks forward to the future. Faith rests on the past work of Christ; love works in the present; and hope anticipates the future.

In this verse, Paul states his third reason for thankfulness: "Because of the hope that is laid up for you in heaven." It is also a manifestation of a changed life.

Faith looks to the past. Love looks to the present. Hope looks to the future.

1 Peter 1:4 (TLB): "And God has reserved for his children the priceless gift of eternal life; it is kept in heaven for you, pure and undefiled, beyond the reach of change and decay."

Lenski does a wonderful job of summarizing this passage: "We love each other with intelligent and purposeful love that comes from faith because we are headed for the same great hope in heaven, for the same inheritance of glory, for the same blessed goal. Faith is the soil from which the fruit of love springs, and hope is the sunshine which ripens this fruit of love."

Hebrews 6:19 (TLB): "This certain hope of being saved is a strong and trustworthy anchor for our souls, connecting us with God himself behind the sacred curtains of heaven."

"Which you heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel, that has come to you." All three of these wonderful things are a result of "the word of the truth":

1. Faith in Christ.
2. Love for all the saints.
3. Hope laid up for you in heaven.

“The word of the truth” was the Good News preached to them in Colossae.

Won't you join me in enthusiastic worship and praise as we sing together verse 1 of Fanny Crosby's great hymn, **“Saved By Grace”**: *“Someday the silver cord will break, And I no more as now shall sing; But O, the joy when I shall wake Within the palace of the King! And I shall see Him face to face, And tell the story, Saved by grace; And I shall see Him face to face, And tell the story, Saved by grace.”*

November 21—Bearing Fruit & Increasing (Colossians 1:6)

Colossians 1:6: *“Even as it is also in all the world bearing fruit and increasing, just as also in you from the day you heard it and came to know completely the grace of God in truth.”*

Verse 6: The two key words in this verse are (1) bearing (fruit) and (2) increasing. We bear fruit when we come to know Jesus Christ as our Savior. We increase as we cooperate with the Spirit of God, making us more and more like our Savior Jesus Christ.

2 Peter 1:5–9: “Now for this very reason also, having added on your part every intense effort, provide lavishly in your faith the aforementioned virtue, and in the virtue, knowledge, and in your knowledge, selfcontrol, and in your selfcontrol, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness, and in your godliness, brotherly affection, and in your brotherly affection, the divine love; For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they are rendering you neither unemployed nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he who is lacking these qualities is so shortsighted that he is blind, having forgotten his purification from his former sins.”

We have two characteristics of the true gospel in this verse: (1) it is bearing fruit and (2) it grows (increases). It is fruitful and it spreads.

“Just as also in you from the day you heard it.” The gospel not only bears fruit and increases in all the world, but it works in the saints.

“And came to know completely the grace of God in truth.” 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.”

This morning, please join me in worship and praise as we sing together verse 2 of **“Saved By Grace”**: *“Someday my earthly house will fall, I cannot tell how soon 'twill be, But this I know my All in All Has now a place in Heav'n for me. And I shall see Him face to face, And tell the story, Saved by grace; And I shall see Him face to face, And tell the story, Saved by grace.”*

November 22—A Servant of Christ (Colossians 1:7–8)

Colossians 1:7: “Even as you learned from Epaphras, the beloved, our fellow bond-slave, who is faithful on your behalf as a servant of Christ.”

Colossians 1:8: “Who also declared to us your love in the Spirit.”

Verse 7: Paul describes four characteristics of Epaphras in this verse:

1. The beloved—he became part of God’s family through faith in Jesus Christ.
2. Our fellow bond slave—Epaphras had given himself completely over to Jesus Christ to serve in whatever way would please Him.
3. Who is faithful on your behalf.

1 Corinthians 4:2 (KJV): “Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.” Faithfulness pleases the heart of God more than anything else in his children. It is the ability to stay with something and see it through to successful completion. God never plans for us to do something we cannot do, but He does expect us to be faithful in what we can.

4. A servant of Christ—there is no higher or greater calling.

“Well done, thou good and faithful servant” will be His affirmation of our tour of duty on this earth. We long to hear this statement from the lips of our Savior.

Are these four things true of me? If not, why?

Verse 8: Not only was Epaphras faithful in declaring the grace of God to the Colossians, but he told Paul of their love in the Spirit when he visited him in Rome.

Nineteenth-century Anglican priest, Charles Simeon, said the following one evening while entertaining some of his closest friends: “I love to view all my Christian friends as fuel. Having gathered you all together at my hearth, I warm myself at your fire, and find my Christian love burns and glows.”

Please join me in worship and praise this morning as we sing together verse 3 of “**Saved By Grace**”: “Someday, when fades the golden sun Beneath the rosy tinted west, My blessed Lord will say, ‘Well done!’ And I shall enter into rest. And I shall see Him face to face, And tell the story, Saved by grace; And I shall see Him face to face, And tell the story, Saved by grace.”

November 23—Filled With the Knowledge of His Will (Colossians 1:9)

Colossians 1:9: “Because of this, we also from the day we heard are not ceasing in your behalf praying and asking (petitions and definite requests), in order that you might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.”

Verse 9: The words “because of this” reference their love in the Spirit mentioned in verse 8: “Who also declared to us your love in the Spirit.” Hearing of their love, Paul was moved to pray for them as we see in this passage.

As Christians who seek to yield to the Spirit of God and move toward a meaningful relationship with the Father, we must be concerned with (1) God’s *will*, (2) our *walk*, and (3) our *work*.

In verses 9–11, Paul asks the Lord for five petitions or request for these Colossian saints. He requests each of these will be realized in their lives:

1. God’s plan.
2. God’s purpose.
3. God’s pleasure.
4. God’s product.
5. God’s power.

Petition #1: They know the plan of God.

“In order that you might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.”

Romans 12:1–2 (Phillips): “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.”

The apostle prayed they would be “filled with the knowledge of His will.” Therefore, it is possible for us as Christians to be “filled with the knowledge of our will.”

Since our thoughts are not His thoughts by our nature, and our ways are not His ways; it is necessary for the Spirit of God to work in our lives giving us a deeper understanding of His will, ways and thoughts.

The words “in all wisdom” lead us to draw on our past experience of how the Lord has led in our walk. The words “spiritual understanding” enable us to discern right from wrong with regard to His will.

Are we sensitive to the daily expressions of His will?

Ruth Paxson in her book, *Rivers of Living Water*, said: “To master my will He had to melt my heart.”

Please join me in worship and praise as we sing together 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?*”

November 24—Walking Worthy (Colossians 1:10)

Colossians 1:10: “*To live (walk) worthy of the Lord, to please Him in everything, in every good work, bearing fruit and increasing in the knowledge of God.*”

Verse 10: In verse 9, we learned “His will” or God’s plan is expressed in “His word.” This morning, Paul addresses the walk or conduct of the believer—God’s purpose. This is the apostle’s second petition in his prayer for the Colossians believers.

The two key phrases begin this verse:

1. To live (walk) worthy of the Lord.
2. To please Him in everything.

Ephesians 5:10 (NASB): “Trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord.”

What is the purpose behind God’s plan for our lives? What is the *walk* or conduct that comes from His will? God’s *will* or plan cannot be separated from our *walk* or His purpose for us.

Petition #2: To live (walk) worthy of the Lord.

Ephesians 4:1 (TLB): “I beg you—I, a prisoner here in jail for serving the Lord—to live and act in a way worthy of those who have been chosen for such wonderful blessings as these.”

Charles Wesley said in his lyrics to “**O Come and Dwell in Me**”:

I WANT THE WITNESS, LORD,
THAT ALL I DO IS RIGHT,
ACCORDING TO THY MIND AND WORD,
WELL-PLEASING IN THY SIGHT.

I ASK NO HIGHER STATE;
INDULGE ME BUT IN THIS,
AND SOON OR LATER THEN TRANSLATE
TO THINE ETERNAL BLISS.

This verse also has the third petition Paul prayed for the Colossians: God’s pleasure.

Petition #3: To please Him in everything.

“To please him in everything.” The more we know Him, the more we will love Him. The more we love Him, the more we will desire to please Him.

Marriage is a wonderful illustration of this point. The more I know Pearl, the more I love her. The more I love her, the more I want to please her.

The last phrase of the verse says: “in every good work, bearing fruit and increasing in the knowledge of God.”

We have considered the *will* of God and the *walk* of God. In this phrase, we consider the *work* of God. These summarize His plan, purpose and pleasure. Now, we see His products as a result of this relationship.

Why does God have a plan for our lives? Why is His purpose that we walk worthy of Him and please Him in everything? It is because He desires “fruit” might be born through us and in us. This is Paul’s fourth petition of prayer for us—His products:

Petition #4: In every good work, bearing fruit and increasing in the knowledge of God.

“Increasing in the knowledge of God.” This means we continue to grow.

John 15:16: “You did not choose Me, but I chose you, and appointed you, that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask of the Father in My name, He may give to you.”

Am I open to His Will? Am I walking in a manner worthy? Am I performing the works He asks me to do? Am I making the mistake of working for Him when He wants to work in and through me?

Won’t you join me in worship and praise this morning as we sing verses 2 & 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?”*

November 25—Adequate Strength (Colossians 1:11)

Colossians 1:11: “*Equipped with all power, according to His glorious strength, unto every kind of patience and steadfastness with joy.*”

Verse 11: *The Bible Knowledge Commentary* says: “Spiritual strength is a third factor that results from knowing God’s will and pleasing Him. Being strengthened with all power according to His glorious might includes three words for strength: ‘being strengthened,’ ‘power’ and ‘might’ is used only of God in the NT.”

In the previous verses, we have read four of Paul’s five petitions for the Colossian believers:

1. God’s plan.
2. God’s purpose.
3. God’s pleasure.
4. God’s product.

For all of these to be realized, they must come through:

5. God's power.

Petition #5: Equipped with all power, according to His glorious strength, 2 Samuel 22:33 (NIV): "It is God who arms me with strength and makes my way perfect."

The *will*, *walk*, and *work* of God will never be accomplished without Him working in us through His mighty power.

One of the most thrilling aspects of the Christian life is that the task before us is never greater than the power behind us. For every requirement, there is power available.

Philippians 4:13 (Phillips): "I am ready for anything through the strength of the One who lives within me." There is an inexhaustible supply of God's power for the continuous need of the child of God.

Ephesians 1:19: (TLB): "I pray that you will begin to understand how incredibly great his power is to help those who believe him."

The Holy Spirit has all the resources necessary to: (1) say no to the flesh and (2) say yes to the Spirit of God. This is the key to victory over temptation in our lives.

"Unto every kind of patience and steadfastness with joy." Our greatest witness for Christ is letting Him work through us and being faithful. Patience, steadfastness and joy will be evident in our lives when we are strengthened through His power.

The power of God in our lives can do amazing things, producing:

1. Patience instead of pressure when problems arise.
2. Steadfastness and stability in the midst of storms.
3. Joy independent of circumstances, knowing the ultimate outcome of the situation will be victory.

In one issue of *Our Daily Bread*, John Piper said: "In all the setbacks of your life as a believer, God is plotting for your joy."

As we conclude our meditation on this verse, I would like to point out that the word I translated "patience" comes from the Greek word "hupomone" which means "*to remain under*." I prefer to translate the word as "perseverance" for that reason. "Patience" often seems to indicate passivity or letting things happen. "Hupomone" is the struggle. It is active, agonizing and persevering through the process. I think that is a more accurate description of what Paul desires for these believers.

We are anchored to Christ the Rock. We will stay "steadfast" in the midst of the storm and we will do all of this "with joy." It is part of God's developmental plan to make us more like our Savior.

Tim Hansel said: “I’ve survived because I’ve discovered a new and different kind of joy that I never knew existed—a joy that can coexist with uncertainty and doubt, pain, confusion, and ambiguity.”

This morning, let’s join together in worship and praise as we sing verse 4 of **“Have I Done My Best For Jesus?”**: *“No longer will I stay within the valley, I’ll climb to mountain heights above; The world is dying now for want of someone To tell them of the Savior’s matchless love. 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?”*

November 26—Qualified by the Father (Colossians 1:12)

Colossians 1:12: *“Giving thanks to the Father who qualified you for the share of the inheritance of the saints in the light.”*

Verse 12: With the beginning of this verse, the apostle turns from his petitions to his prayer of praise for the Colossians. He prayed that they might realize (1) God’s plan, (2) God’s purpose, (3) God’s pleasure, (4) God’s product, and (5) God’s power in their lives.

In these next verses, Paul lifts up prayers of thanksgiving for the work of the Father, and for the work of the Son.

Please notice three key words in the work the Father has completed in us. He has:

1. Qualified us.
2. Rescued us.
3. Transferred us.

The apostle gives thanks to the Father in answer to God’s gracious acts toward sinful man.

“Who qualified you for the share of the inheritance of the saints in the light.” This is the first item of thanksgiving for the work of the Father. We could not qualify ourselves. For that reason, God the Father in loving grace acted on our behalf so that we can now qualify through the blood of His Son. By the new birth, we are made members of the family of God and we are qualified for the share of the inheritance of the saints in the light.

Please join me in worship and praise this morning as we sing together verse 1 of **“He Lifted Me”**: *“In loving kindness Jesus came, My soul in mercy to reclaim, And from the depths of sin and shame Thro’ grace He lifted me. From sinking sand He lifted me, With tender hand, He lifted me, From shades of night to planes of light, O praise His name, He lifted me!”*

November 27—Rescued By The Son (Colossians 1:13)

Colossians 1:13: *“Who rescued us out of the domain of the darkness, and transferred us into the kingdom of the Son of His love.”*

Verse 13: We are not only “qualified” by the Father, but we have been “rescued” by the Son. 2 Samuel 22:17–18 (NIV): “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.”

James Rowe in the lyrics to **“Love Lifted Me”** wrote:

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.

In verses 12 and 13, Paul lifts up two more areas of thanksgiving for the Colossian believers:

1. The Father qualified us for the share of the inheritance of the saints in the light.
2. He rescued us out of the dominion of the darkness.

We were without hope, condemned to death, but thanks be to God. The strong arm of our Savior reached out and rescued us.

“The road to hell is paved with good intentions.” (source unknown)

Jesus Christ went into the darkness of Calvary’s cross and became sin for us. He cried out: “My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me?” He provided a rescue for us: “out of the domain of darkness.”

“Transferred us into the kingdom of the Son of His love.” The Father qualified us. The Son rescued us. As a result, the Father transferred us into the kingdom of the Son of His love.

As He “transferred” my sin upon Christ at the cross, so He “transferred” me out of the kingdom of darkness and into His righteousness.

Let’s join together in worship and praise as we sing verses 2 & 3 of **“He Lifted Me”**: *“He called me long before I heard, Before my sinful heart was stirred, But when I took Him at His Word, Forgiv’n He lifted me. His brow was pierced with many a thorn, His hands by cruel nails were torn, When from my guilt and grief, forlorn, In love He lifted me. From sinking sand He lifted me, With tender hand, He lifted me, From shades of night to planes of light, O praise His name, He lifted me!”*

November 28—Redemption & Forgiveness (Colossians 1:14)

Colossians 1:14: *“In whom we are having our redemption, the forgiveness of our sins.”*

Verse 14: *The Bible Knowledge Commentary* says: “Through Christ, God’s ‘Loved One,’ Christians have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. The parallel passage (Eph. 1:7) adds ‘through His blood.’ ‘Redemption’ means ‘to rescue by ransom’ and ‘forgiveness’ means ‘remission’ by the Redeemer. This emancipation is enjoyed only because of the tremendous cost Christ paid on the cross.”

The death of His own Son was the only way the Father could qualify us, rescue us and transfer us. We were purchased by the “redemption” payment of the blood of Jesus Christ.

Paul mentions two things about the work of the Son:

1. Our redemption.
2. The forgiveness of our sins.

“Our redemption.” There was only one way for the children of Israel to be free from the domination of Egypt—through the blood of the lamb sprinkled on the doorpost. Likewise for us, there is only one way to freedom and “forgiveness”—by the purchase price of the blood of Jesus Christ.

“The forgiveness of our sins.” Because the Son paid the price of His own blood upon Calvary, God the Father forgives our sins—our sins of the past, present, and future—when we come to faith in Jesus Christ.

God’s justice is fully satisfied by the death of Christ upon the cross.

Are we willing to be submissive and obedient in this area of our lives? Jesus says in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 7:13–14: (Phillips): “Go in by the narrow gate. For the wide gate has a broad road which leads to disaster and there are many people going that way. The narrow gate and the hard road lead out into life and only a few are finding it.”

This morning, let’s celebrate our redemption and forgiveness together by singing verse 4 of “**He Lifted Me**”: *“Now on a higher plane I dwell, And with my soul I know ‘tis well; Yet how or why, I cannot tell, He should have lifted me. From sinking sand He lifted me, With tender hand, He lifted me, From shades of night to planes of light, O praise His name, He lifted me!”*

November 29—God In The Flesh (Colossians 1:15)

Colossians 1:15: *“Who is the image of the invisible God, first-born of all creation.”*

Verse 15: Anders says: “Jesus is the visible manifestation of God and our eternal Creator and Reconciler, who has supremacy in the universe and the church.”

Radmacher, Allen & House say: "Paul interrupts his description of his prayers for the Colossians with a song of praise. These verses are generally recognized as an early Christian hymn celebrating the supremacy of Jesus Christ."

Barclay titles this passage: "The Total Adequacy of Jesus Christ."

The Lord is mentioned fifteen times in these next six verses. This verse begins with the word "Who" which is referring to the Lord Jesus Christ. The apostle describes Him two ways:

1. Image of the invisible God.
2. First-born of all creation.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says: "'Firstborn' denotes two things of Christ: He preceded the whole Creation, and He is Sovereign over all Creation."

Notice this verse states: "Who is the image of the invisible God," not "was" or "shall be."

Hebrews 13:8 (NASB): "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today, yes and forever."

Jesus Christ is the visible image of the unseen God. What a wonderful truth!

In the Upper Room in John 14:9 (NASB), Philip asked the Lord Jesus: "Lord, show us the Father." The Lord responded: "He who has seen Me has seen the Father; how do you say, 'Show us the Father'?"

A.T. Robertson said: "Jesus is the very stamp of God the Father, as he was before the Incarnation."

"The image of the invisible God" tells us of Christ's relationship to the Father. "First-born of all creation" describes His relationship to creation. The Baby born in Bethlehem in Matthew 2 is the same God who created the heavens and the earth in Genesis 1. What does "first-born of all creation" mean? I believe it means He has first place. He has authority over all creation. He was in existence before the creation. Jesus Christ was not just another man, but the visible manifestation of the "invisible God."

Revelation 22:13 (NASB): "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end."

As the first-born, He is Heir and Ruler of All.

What a majestic picture of Jesus Christ? This verse is a witness to the priority and sovereignty of our Savior.

Fyodor Dostoevsky said: "I believe there is no one lovelier, deeper, more sympathetic and more perfect than Jesus. I say to myself, with jealous love, that not only is there no one else like him but there could never be anyone like him."

Won't you join me in a majestic tribute as we sing together this morning verse 1 of **"All Hail The Power of Jesus' Name"**: *'All hail the pow'r of Jesus*

Name! Let angels prostrate fall; Bring forth the royal diadem, And crown Him Lord of all; Bring forth the royal diadem, And crown Him Lord of all!"

November 30—Through Him & For Him (Colossians 1:16)

Colossians 1:16: *"Because in Him were created all things in the heaven and upon the earth. Things visible and things invisible, whether thrones or bearers of the ruling power or rulers or authorities—all things through Him and for Him were created."*

Verse 16: This verse is closely connected with verse 14. Paul explains why the two characteristics of Christ in the previous verse: (1) the image of the invisible God and (2) first-born of all creation are true: "because in Him were created all things."

Deuteronomy 3:24: "O Sovereign Lord, you have begun to show to your servant your greatness and your strong hand. For what god is there in heaven or on earth who can do the deeds and mighty works you do?"

John 1:3 (KJV): "All things were made by Him; and without Him was not any thing made that was made."

Christ is responsible for all of creation. Like the artist's name on a painting or the author's name on the cover of a book, His name appears on all of it.

Jesus Christ, the visible image of the invisible God and who created all things, became a tiny baby who lived in weakness dependent upon a mother for His life.

The same Jesus Christ whose mighty arm threw the worlds into space and spangled the heavens with the sun, moon and stars is the One who hung on the cross of shame in weakness for me. By right of creation, Jesus owns all things. Yet, when He came to earth, He found no room, no place to lay His head, no place to call His own.

The Christ who created the waters of the seas, the rivers and the streams died with the cry, "I thirst" upon His lips. He Who gave life, gave His own life that man might live forever.

Amazing love! How can it be?

No wonder Paul could say in 2 Corinthians 5:17: "Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old things passed away; behold new things have come."

Jesus Christ created the woods, the nails, and the hill on which His blood was spilled. He gave life to those who took His life.

Note the little word "all" in these verses. There are no exceptions. Everything was created by Him. "All" and "all things" occur eight times in these verses.

“Because in Him were created all things in the heaven and upon the earth. All things refers to both heaven and earth—things visible and things invisible. The apostle references the angelic and spiritual realm when he states that Jesus Christ is responsible for bringing all of these into existence as well: “whether thrones or bearers of the ruling power or rulers or authorities.”

“All things through Him and for Him were created.” It was all created “for Him.”

MacArthur said: “As God, Jesus created the material and spiritual universe for His pleasure and glory.”

A.W. Tozer in *The Best of A.W. Tozer* by Warren Wiersbe said: “God’s sovereignty is the attribute by which He rules His entire creation, and to be sovereign, God must be all-knowing, all-powerful and absolutely free.”

Please join me in worship and praise this morning as we sing together verse 2 of “**All Hail The Power of Jesus’ Name**”: “*Ye chosen seed of Israel’s race, Ye ransomed from the fall, Hail Him who saves you by His grace, And crown Him Lord of all; Hail Him who saves you by His grace, And crown Him Lord of all!*”

DECEMBER

December 1—He Holds It All Together (Colossians 1:17)

Colossians 1:17: “*And He Himself is before all things, and all things in Him hold together.*”

Verse 17: Paul includes some very instructive and key words in this verse and the previous:

1. All things through Him and all things for Him—verse 16.
2. He Himself is before all things and all things in Him hold together—verse 17.

Since all things are (1) in Him, (2) through Him, and (3) were created for Him; it naturally follows that He is before all things. This is a statement of eternal existence of the Son. In the acceptance of this statement, Jesus Christ becomes God rather than man.

“All things in Him hold together.”

Lightfoot says: “He is the principle of cohesion in the universe. He impresses upon creation that unity and solidarity which makes it a cosmos instead of a chaos.”

This principle is seen in the law of gravity, the seasons, the tides and the patterns of movement in the universe. He is responsible for the precise incremental shifts of the sun, moon, stars and planets.

Laurin said: “the helm of the universe is held by the hands which were pierced for us.”

Not only did Jesus Christ create all things, but He sustains them in their operations. He is the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End. He is the Creator, Sustainer and Ultimate Goal of the universe.

What a tremendous truth!

Does it not seem foolish that we are unable to trust Jesus Christ who directs the movements of the universe to order our lives in a meaningful, coherent manner?

Won't you join me in worship and praise this morning as we sing verse 4 of **“All Hail The Power of Jesus’ Name”**?: *“O that with yonder sacred throng We at His feet may fall! We'll join the everlasting song, And crown Him Lord of all; We'll join the everlasting song, And crown Him Lord of all!”*

December 2—First Place In All Things (Colossians 1:18)

Colossians 1:18: *“And He Himself is the head of His body, the church. He is the beginning (creator, originator), the first-born out from the dead, in order that He Himself might come to have first place in all things.”*

Verse 18: The key phrase that gives us a purpose is at the end of the verse: “in order that He Himself might come to have first place in all things.”

He has the supreme position of headship in His church and in relationship to His creation. As the head of His church and His creation, He should also be the headship of the Christian himself.

“He is ... the first-born out from the dead.” Jesus Christ is not a dead hero or a past founder, but a living presence. This is the main distinction that makes Christianity unique from the other religions of the world.

Jesus Christ's resurrection is a guarantee of our own resurrection.

He must have first place in all things. Everything is under His sovereignty. What or who has top priority in your life?

Matthew 6:33 (NASB): “But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added to you.”

Max Lucado in *Next Door Savior* says:

Take a look at the vacated tomb. Did you know the opponents of Christ never challenged its vacancy? No Pharisee or Roman soldier ever led a contingent back to the burial site and declared, “The angel was wrong. The body is here. It was all a rumor.”

They would have if they could have. Within weeks disciples occupied every Jerusalem street corner, announcing a risen Christ. What quicker way for the enemies of the church to shut

them up than to produce a cold and lifeless body? Display the cadaver, and Christianity is stillborn. But they had no cadaver to display.

This morning, let's join together in worship and praise as we sing verse 1 of **"He Lives"**: *"I serve a risen Savior; He's in the world today. I know that He is living, whatever men may say. I see His hand of mercy, I hear His voice of cheer; And just the time I need Him, He's always near. He lives, He lives! Christ Jesus lives today! He walks with me and talks with me along life's narrow way. He lives, he lives, salvation to impart! You ask me how I know He lives? He lives within my heart!"*

December 3—All The Fullness Dwells In Him (Colossians 1:19)

Colossians 1:19: *"Because in Him all the fullness willed (was pleased) to dwell."*

Verse 19: Paul makes it quite clear that Jesus Christ is God. He is building on the first phrase of verse 15: "Who is the image of the invisible God." He states this again in Colossians 2:9: "Because in Him there is dwelling all the fullness of the divine nature bodily."

The apostle gathers all of the divine attributes and ascribes them dwelling in Christ. The fullness of God has its residence or home in the Son of God.

This verse explains why the previous statements are true:

1. He is Creator of the world.
2. He is Head of the church.

"Because in Him all the fullness (of the God-head) willed to dwell." It is the Father's desire that we experience the fullness of God in our lives as well.

Ephesians 3:19 (NASB): "And to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fulness of God."

Gromacki points out: "all fulness" (pan to pleroma) refers to the total essence of deity."

Please join me in worship and praise this morning as we sing together verse 2 of **"He Lives"**: *"In all the world around me I see His loving care, And tho' my heart grows weary, I never will despair; I know that He is leading Thro' all the stormy blast, The day of His appearing Will come at last. He lives, He lives! Christ Jesus lives today! He walks with me and talks with me along life's narrow way. He lives, he lives, salvation to impart! You ask me how I know He lives? He lives within my heart!"*

December 4—Peace Through The Blood of His Cross (Colossians 1:20)

Colossians 1:20: “*And through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him whether things upon the earth or things in the heavens.*”

Verse 20: In the previous verse, Paul told us: “in Him all the fullness willed (was pleased) to dwell.” Today, he continues: “through Him to reconcile all things.” Because the Son is the dwelling place for the fullness of God, He is the instrument for reconciliation.

What does reconciliation mean? Man is rebellious and at odds with God. Through the cross, God has provided a way for man to be reconciled to God.

You never find a need for God to be reconciled to man.

The Campus Crusade Manual has this interesting remark regarding reconciliation: “Because God in His eternal knowledge has always known as a divine certainty that Christ would die in man’s place and provide reconciliation, He has always had an attitude of love and acceptance toward men who would come to Him by faith.”

The story of the prodigal son in Luke 15 is a wonderful illustration of reconciliation:

1. The father’s attitude of love and acceptance never changed. He didn’t have to be reconciled when the son returned home.
2. The son deliberately chose to go his own way. For some time his guilt and pride kept him from being reconciled to his father. He chose to eat husks with the hogs. When he did go to his father, he was accepted immediately because there were no barriers against him in his father’s heart.

God has provided a means for sinful man to be reconciled to a holy God, but man in his stubbornness and pride will not be reconciled. Man has a God-Rebellion complex that keeps him from experiencing the peace that would come from this reconciliation.

The *empty cup*, the *empty cross*, and the *empty tomb* bear witness to the heart of man that a loving God has done all that His justice requires for man to be reconciled to Him.

“Having made peace through the blood of His cross.” Romans 5:1: “Therefore, having been made right by faith, we are having peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

The preposition “through” is repeated three times in this verse:

1. *Through* Him to reconcile all things.
2. Made peace *through* the blood of His cross.
3. *Through* Him whether things upon the earth or things in the heavens.

Stuart Townsend penned these lyrics in “**How Deep the Father’s Love for Us**”:

HOW DEEP THE FATHER’S LOVE FOR US,
HOW VAST BEYOND ALL MEASURE
THAT HE SHOULD GIVE HIS ONLY SON
TO MAKE A WRETCH HIS TREASURE.

In *A Year With Jesus*, Eugene Peterson prays: “Too much of my life, Lord, is lived under the fearful aspect of what others think and do; stand with me and dissolve my fears, freeing me to live in your peace. Amen.”

Won’t you join me in worship and praise this morning as we sing verse 3 of “**He Lives**”? “*Rejoice, rejoice, O Christian! lift up your voice and sing Eternal hallelujahs to Jesus Christ, the King! The Hope of all who seek Him the Help of all who find, None other is so loving, so good and kind. He lives, He lives! Christ Jesus lives today! He walks with me and talks with me along life’s narrow way. He lives, he lives, salvation to impart! You ask me how I know He lives? He lives within my heart!*”

December 5—The Miracle of Reconciliation (Colossians 1:21–22)

Colossians 1:21: “*And you who were at one time estranged and hostile in attitude, evil in your deeds,*”

Colossians 1:22: “*But now He reconciled in the body of His flesh through His death, in order that He might present you holy and without blemish and blameless before Him [on the day of Judgment].*”

Verse 21: The apostle turns from the Savior to us. Paul gives these three descriptions of us before we came to know Christ:

1. Who were at one time estranged—God was not estranged from us, but we were estranged from Him. It is the mind of man, not the mind of God, which must undergo a change for a reunion. We are the ones who want to go it alone, who are proud and selfish.
2. Hostile in attitude—we were opposed to God. Our attitude was unfriendly. We carried a chip on our shoulders.
3. Evil in our deeds—a hostile attitude will express itself in evil deeds. What a contrast to Galatians 1:10: “To live (walk) worthy of the Lord, to please Him in everything, in every good work, bearing fruit and increasing in the knowledge of God.”

Who can grasp the marvelous work of grace in a human heart when Christ has first place in that life?

These two verses view life from the perspective of believers—the Colossians as well as ourselves—in the past, present and future. This verse looked at the past, but verse 22 looks at the present and future. *What we were* and *what we are*.

Verse 22: “But now He reconciled in the body of His flesh through His death.” In verses 12 and 13, God the Father qualified us, rescued us and transferred us. In verse 14, God the Son provided for our redemption. In this verse, Christ provided for our reconciliation.

“The body of His flesh” is the medium of reconciliation. The penalty for sin that must be paid is “through His death.” There is a three-fold purpose in His reconciliation that points to the future. “In order that He might present you”:

1. Holy.
2. Without blemish.
3. Blameless before Him.

What we were in verse 21: (1) estranged, (2) hostile in attitude, and (3) evil in our deeds. However, *what we shall be* when we stand in His presence is: (1) holy, (2) without blemish, and (3) blameless.

The work of making us like Jesus Christ begins at the moment of our salvation.

Jude 24–25 (NASB): “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.”

Isobel Kuhn in *By Searching* quotes A.W. Tozer from *The Pursuit of God*:

The only way to be holy is daily to hand over to the Holy Spirit what Dr. Tozer calls “the hyphenated sins of the human spirit...self-righteousness, self-pity, self-confidence, self-admiration, self-love, and a host of others like them...which can be removed only in spiritual experience, never by mere instruction. As well try to instruct leprosy out of our system. There must be a work of God in destruction before we are free. We must invite the Cross to do its deadly work within us. We must bring our self sins to the Cross for judgment.”

Warren Wiersbe in *The Best of A.W. Tozer: Book 2* quotes A.W. Tozer further:

Spiritual life cannot feed on negatives. The man who is constantly reciting the evils of his unconverted days is looking in the wrong direction. He is like a man trying to run a race while looking back over his shoulder.

What the Christian used to be is altogether the least important thing about him. What he is yet to be is all that should concern him. He may occasionally, as Paul sometimes did, remember to his own shame the life he once lived; but that should be only a quick glance; it is never to be a fixed glaze. Our long permanent look is on God and the glory that shall be revealed.

This morning, let's sing a wonderful Fanny Crosby hymn. Please join me in worship and praise as we sing verse 1 of "**Redeemed**": *"Redeemed, how I love to proclaim it! Redeemed by the blood of the Lamb; Redeemed through His infinite mercy, His child and forever I am. Redeemed, redeemed, Redeemed by the blood of the Lamb; Redeemed, redeemed, His child and forever I am."*

December 6—Founded, Steadfast & Sure (Colossians 1:23)

Colossians 1:23: *"If indeed you are continuing in the faith, having been founded and steadfast, and without shifting from the hope of the gospel which you heard, that gospel which was proclaimed in all creation which is under heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister."*

Verse 23: Paul states his concern for the Colossian saints. He is worried they might shift from the gospel of the grace of God into a different gospel. We read this in Paul's letter to the Galatian church in Galatians 1:6-7: "I am marveling that so quickly you are transferring yourselves from Him who called you in the sphere of Christ's grace unto a different gospel. Which is not another gospel except there are certain ones who are troubling your minds and are desiring to change (pervert) the gospel of Christ."

Guy King in *Living The Christ Life* said: "Paul must have observed that some of these Colossian Christians are showing signs of developing into the poor-hearted, small-minded, weak-kneed, flabby-muscled, thin-bodied, lame-limbed believers."

He hopes these three things are true of them:

1. Founded—points to the past.
1 Corinthians 3:11 (NASB): "For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ."
2. Steadfast—points to the present situation.
1 Corinthians 15:58 (NASB): "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."
3. Without shifting from the hope of the gospel which you heard.

Paul hopes these Colossians are staying founded on the Rock—Christ Jesus—and steadfast in the time of the storm, without shifting from the hope which they have in the gospel of the grace of God.

“That gospel which was proclaimed in all creation.” The apostle describes the gospel with these four phrases:

1. The gospel which you heard.
2. That gospel which was proclaimed in all creation.
3. Which is under heaven.
4. Of which I, Paul, became a minister.

This final phrase of identification is personal.

How appropriate for us to worship and praise the Lord this morning by singing verse 2 of “**Redeemed**”: *“Redeemed, and so happy in Jesus, No language my rapture can tell; I know that the light of His presence With me doth continually dwell. Redeemed, redeemed, Redeemed by the blood of the Lamb; Redeemed, redeemed, His child and forever I am.”*

December 7—The Afflictions of Christ (Colossians 1:24)

Colossians 1:24: *“Now I am rejoicing in my sufferings on your behalf, and I am filling up the things lacking of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for the sake of His body, which is the church.”*

Verse 24: It is surprising when you find joy and suffering in the same sentence. Jesus said in John 15:11 the night before Calvary: “These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full.”

In the past, Paul became a minister. In this verse, he speaks of the present: “Now I am rejoicing in my sufferings on your behalf.” The apostle has an attitude of rejoicing even in the difficult places. He was in prison while writing these words.

Paul’s joy was not dependent upon outward circumstances. Outward pressures only crushed him closer to the heart of God. This can only be true if we are abiding in Him.

“I am filling up the things lacking of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh.” Paul shares two things regarding his suffering:

1. He is rejoicing.
2. He is filling up the things lacking of the afflictions of Christ.

Because of their relationship, Christ is enduring the same “sufferings” as Paul.

Maclaren says: “Whatsoever pain or trial is borne in fellowship with him is felt and borne by him.”

On the Damascus Road in Acts 9:4–5, we read: “And he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?’”

And he said, ‘Who art Thou, Lord?’ And He said, ‘I am Jesus whom you are persecuting.’” Paul was persecuting the Christians and Christ was suffering with His saints.

The apostle concludes this verse: “for the sake of His body, which is the church.” Because Christ is “the head of the body, the church,” Christ (the head) suffers with the body (the church).

Vance Havner in the book, *Though I Walk Through The Valley*, said:

Today at lunch a friend of mine told me that Spurgeon said that God is too good to be unkind, too wise to be mistaken, and when you cannot trace His hand, you can always trust His heart. I have been through much that I do not understand. God does not ask me to understand it but to accept it. He is saying, “What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter” (John 13:7).

I cannot trace His hand, but I can trust His heart. God is love. It is the basis of all He does. It sent His Son into the world and reached its climax on Calvary. Joni Eareckson Tada in *A Place of Healing* says:

No ... let me amend that. Bringing honor to the name of my Savior and King is uppermost, whether He chooses to give me relief now or just around the corner in His Father’s house. Either way, He will help me and save me and, yes, crown me with joy.

Just as He always has.

Please join me in worship and praise this morning as we sing together verse 3 of **“Redeemed”**: *“I think of my blessed Redeemer, I think of Him all the day long: I sing, for I cannot be silent; His love is the theme of my song. Redeemed, redeemed, Redeemed by the blood of the Lamb; Redeemed, redeemed, His child and forever I am.”*

December 8—I Became A Servant (Colossians 1:25)

Colossians 1:25: *“Of which I became a servant according to the stewardship of God which was given to me for you to fulfill the word of God.”*

Verse 25: Paul became a minister of the gospel in verse 23. In this verse, he became a servant of the church—which is His body.

In God’s plans for the life of the apostle, He included the stewardship of being a servant. This stewardship was given to Paul for the Colossian Christians’ benefit to fulfill the Word of God.

Paul described his ministry in three ways: (1) suffering, (2) serving, and (3) speaking.

In *Exploring the Mind & Heart of the Prince of Preachers*, Charles Spurgeon said: “You cannot be Christ’s servant if you are not willing to follow him, cross and all. What do you crave? A crown? Then it must be a crown of thorns if you are to be like him. Do you want to be lifted up? So you shall, but it will be upon a cross.”

Try to imagine what it was like for Jesus to be our Servant and Sacrifice? In John 13:3–5: “Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come forth from God, and was going back to God, rose from supper, and laid aside His garments; and taking a towel, He girded Himself about. Then He poured water into the basin, and began to wash the disciples’ feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded.”

This morning, let’s worship and praise the Lord together by singing verse 4 of “**Redeemed**”: *“I know there’s a crown that is waiting, In yonder bright mansion for me, And soon, with the spirits made perfect, At home with the Lord I shall be. Redeemed, redeemed, Redeemed by the blood of the Lamb; Redeemed, redeemed, His child and forever I am.”*

December 9—Christ In You (Colossians 1:26–27)

Colossians 1:26: *“The mystery which has been hidden from the ages and from the generations; but now made known to His saints.”*

Colossians 1:27: *“To whom God desired to make known what is the wealth of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the Hope of glory.”*

Verse 26: *The Message* paraphrases this verse: “This mystery has been kept in the dark for a long time, but now it’s out in the open.”

What does Paul mean by “mystery”? It can be explained as something that was not revealed in the Old Testament, but now has been revealed as a revelation from God. The “mystery” will be defined in the following verse.

As expanded in Ephesians, the mystery is the Lord’s plans to form a body—called His church—which is comprised of anyone who comes to know Jesus Christ as Savior, whether Jew or Gentile. They will be fellow-heirs of the same body and partakers of His promises by the gospel.

Verse 27: The “mystery” is a person. It is our living, glorified Savior Jesus Christ. He is mentioned fourteen times in this passage we are studying.

“To whom” refers to “His saints” in the previous verse.

The “mystery” is the good news of the gospel the Gentiles needed to hear. They will be fellow-heirs in this new body, the church. The mystery is “Christ in you, the Hope of glory.”

Martin Luther said: “Faith connects you so intimately with Christ, that he in you become as it were one person. As such you may boldly say, I am now one with Christ.”

Major Ian Thomas in *The Saving Life of Christ* said: “To be in Christ that is redemption, but for Christ to be in you that is sanctification. To be in Christ that makes you fit for heaven, but for Christ to be in you that makes you fit for earth. To be in Christ that changes your destination, but for Christ to be in you that changes your destiny.”

Won't you join me in worship and praise this morning as we sing verse 1 of that wonderful little prayer chorus, **“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.”*

December 10—Mature In Christ (Colossians 1:28)

Colossians 1:28: *“Whom we are proclaiming, admonishing every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, in order that we may present every man mature in Christ.”*

Verse 28: There are three key words to describe Paul's ministry:

1. Proclaiming.
2. Admonishing.
3. Teaching.

At the conclusion of the verse, the apostle provides the purpose: “in order that we may present every man mature in Christ.”

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.”

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.”

The word “whom” refers to Christ. It is Christ in you:

1. We are proclaiming.
2. As our basis to be admonishing every man.
3. We are teaching every man in all wisdom.

A man becomes spiritual when he receives the Lord Jesus Christ as his Savior. He only becomes mature through the process of time and experience. This is not another dramatic experience. Maturity takes time, submission and obedience.

Ruth Paxson in *Life On The Highest Plane* says: “The process of conformity is going on day by day in the spiritual man's life. It is a transformation from obedience to obedience, from dependence to dependence, from victory

to victory, from holiness to holiness, from righteousness to righteousness and from love to love.”

In *Thirsting for God* by Gary L. Thomas, he quotes François de la Mothe Fénelon: “Fénelon brings this idea to a firm conclusion. ‘Go forward always with confidence, without letting yourself be touched by the grief of a sensitive pride, which cannot bear to see itself imperfect. Your fault will serve, by this inner confusion, to make you die to yourself.’”

Charles R. Swindoll in *Embraced by the Spirit* shares this quote: “Ian Thomas described this well: ‘The life that He lived qualified Him for the death that He died. And the death that He died qualifies us for the life that He lived.’”

Jesus told us that the life He lived is possible to be lived day after day when we draw upon the strength of the Spirit of God who lives within us. Read this as *new news* for yourself: through His Spirit, we can actually live like Christ.

I found a very meaningful card for our 58th wedding anniversary. It said:

IT’S GOTTA BE LOVE TO HAVE LASTED THIS LONG.
WE’VE RACKED UP SOME YEARS, BUT WE’RE STILL GOING STRONG.
YOU’RE EVER MY SWEETIE, MY NUMBER ONE SQUEEZE.
YOUR KISSES CAN STILL MAKE ME WEAK IN THE KNEES.
YOUR SILLINESS STILL PUTS A SMILE ON MY FACE.
I FEEL RIGHT AT HOME IN YOUR LOVING EMBRACE.
I STILL FEEL SO HAPPY, MY HEART’S OVERFLOWING.
IT’S GOTTA BE LOVE, ‘CAUSE IT NEVER STOPS GROWING.

Like a good marriage, we must continue to grow in our love and relationship with Christ.

Please join me in worship and praise as we sing verse 1 of “**Be Still, My Soul**”: “*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.*”

December 11—In His Strength (Colossians 1:29)

Colossians 1:29: “*For which also I am toiling, striving according to (controlled by) His energy, which energy is operating in me in power.*”

Verse 29: This verse reminds us of Colossians 1:11: “Equipped with all power, according to His glorious strength, unto every kind of patience and steadfastness with joy.”

Philippians 4:13: “I am having strength for all things in the One who is making me strong.”

In this verse, Paul describes an athlete in training for a contest who is:

1. Toiling during the hours of workout to train well.
2. Striving in the contest to win.

The apostle spoke of “energy” in verse 27: “which is Christ in you, the Hope of glory.”

Oswald Chambers in *My Utmost for His Highest* said:

Resting in the Lord is not dependent on your external circumstances at all, but on your relationship with God Himself.

All our fretting and worrying is caused by planning without God.

Susan Lenzkes in her book, *Life Is Like Licking Honey Off a Thorn*, says:

Our heavenly Father truly knows all that we could be, should be, and were created to be. He doesn't know this as some vague “hope” but as reality. How it must have hurt Him to give up this reality for the lie we bought! Oh, the high intentions He had, and has, for us! Yet here we are, charting our own course and trying to pretend it doesn't matter that we aren't getting there.

Joni Eareckson Tada in *A Place of Healing* said:

If God chooses to heal me of this two-year wrestling match with continual pain, I will give Him great glory. (Oh boy, you just watch!)

But if for His own good, unfathomable reasons, He chooses to allow the anguish—this sharp, deep, thorn in my flesh—to remain in some form until He finally issues my boarding pass for heaven (I want a window seat), then I will also pour my life into bringing glory to His most precious, saving, healing, holy name.

I will!

This morning, let's join together in worship and praise as we sing verse 2 of **“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.”*

December 12—The Great Struggle (Colossians 2:1)

Colossians 2:1: “For I am desiring you to know how great a struggle I am having in your behalf and those in Laodicea, and as many as have not seen my face in the flesh.”

Verse 1: In this verse, Paul continues presenting his ministry to us: “For I am desiring you to know how great a struggle I am having in your behalf.”

Most of his agony and struggle is probably due to his lack of information. He doesn’t know what is going on in Colossae or the condition of the saints there.

Paul describes the ministry in Colossians 1:29 as “toiling” and “striving.” It is a struggle.

“Those in Laodicea.” This is one of the other three towns in the Lycus Valley. Hierapolis was the third town.

The Lord Jesus spoke quite strongly to this Laodicea church in Revelation 3:15–16: “I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot; I would that you were cold or hot. So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth.”

“And as many as have not seen my face in the flesh.” Even though he hasn’t seen them, the apostle wants these saints to know his concern for them and their spiritual condition.

Eadie says:

The apostle had just spoken of his sufferings for the church, and his conflicts for the realization of the one grand aim of the Christian ministry. That aim filled his spirit and nerved his energies. It made him what he was—a preacher, and at length a martyr. The value of souls and the glory of Christ wrap themselves up in one burning thought, and created and sustained one dominant and living impulse within him. It was his heart’s desire that the gospel should be preserved in its purity and simplicity, free from all admixtures of Judaism and false philosophy.

Won’t you join me in worship and praise as we sing together 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.*”

December 13—Knit Together In Love (Colossians 2:2)

Colossians 2:2: *“In order that their hearts may be encouraged, having been knit together in love, and resulting in all wealth of the full assurance such as understanding brings, resulting in a thorough knowledge of the mystery of God.”*

Verse 2: In this verse, Paul shares the purpose for these Colossians knowing his struggle: “In order that their hearts may be encouraged, having been knit together in love.”

When a member of the body of Christ suffers and struggles, there is an amazing spirit of encouragement that forms and knits hearts together in love.

When “their hearts [are] encouraged, having been knit together in love, there are two results:

1. All wealth of the full assurance—the positive certainty that what they believe is true.
2. A thorough knowledge of the mystery of God—assurance that Christ is in them and the hope of glory (verse 27).

In his commentary, Gromacki outlines four purposes of the Apostle Paul in this verse: (1) to comfort, (2) to unite, (3) to assure, and (4) to inform.

In *Winning with People*, John C. Maxwell quotes Mark Twain:

KEEP AWAY FROM PEOPLE WHO TRY TO BELITTLE YOUR AMBITIONS.
SMALL PEOPLE ALWAYS DO THAT, BUT THE REALLY GREAT
MAKE YOU FEEL THAT YOU, TOO, CAN BECOME GREAT.

John Wooden & Jay Carty in their book, *Coach Wooden's Pyramid of Success*, share this prayer: “Great Giver of confidence and assurance, prepare me with Your Holy Word, fill me with Your Holy Spirit and give me wisdom to confidently turn to You like Stephen did. I know that You will never let me be separated from Your love. Thank You.”

Please join me in worship and praise this morning as we sing together verse 1 of **“Because He Lives”**: *“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.”*

December 14—Treasures of Wisdom & Knowledge (Colossians 2:3)

Colossians 2:3: “Christ, in whom are all the hidden treasures of the wisdom and knowledge.”

Verse 3: *The Bible Knowledge Commentary* says: “For in Him are hidden ... all the treasures of wisdom ... and knowledge. Knowledge is the apprehension of truth; wisdom is its application to life. Knowledge is prudent judgment and wisdom is prudent action. Both are found in Christ.”

The Lord Jesus Christ is the focus of all of God’s dealings with us. In this verse, Paul defines the mystery of Christ again: “Christ, in whom are all the hidden treasures of the wisdom and knowledge.”

Notice the apostle says: “All the hidden treasures.” The sum total of “wisdom and knowledge” are found in Christ. They are not “hidden” beyond our grasp, but they should be (1) discovered by diligent study and (2) illuminated by the Holy Spirit.

On a treasure map, “X” marks the spot for the location of the treasure. X = Christ for “wisdom and knowledge.”

1 Corinthians 1:30 (NASB): “But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption.”

MacArthur said: “Paul declared that all the richness of truth necessary for salvation, sanctification, and glorification is found in Jesus Christ, who Himself is God revealed.”

John MacArthur in *Found: God’s Will* says:

Do you see what the Spirit-filled life is? It is being saturated with the things of Christ with His Word, His Person.

You might say, “Well, you know I’d like that. I’d like to be saturated with Christ. How do I do that?”

The only way is to study the Book that discloses all He is!

Let’s join together in worship and praise this morning as we sing together verse 2 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. 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.”*

December 15—False Arguments (Colossians 2:4)

Colossians 2:4: “This I am saying, in order that no one may be deceiving you by plausible [but false] arguments.”

Verse 4: Paul provides the background for this statement in Colossians 2:1: “For I am desiring you to know how great a struggle I am having in your behalf and those in Laodicea, and as many as have not seen my face in the flesh.” The apostle is passionate about his letters. His heart is deeply concerned over the condition of the Colossian and Laodicean churches.

“This I am saying,” for the purpose: “in order that no one may be deceiving you by plausible [but false] arguments.”

“Deceiving” is in the present tense. It reveals the motivation behind these false teachers. They have “plausible [but false] arguments.”

There is an ad running that states: “Show me the Carfax!” In other words, before you try to sell me a used car, I want to know its history. I want to know if it has been in any accidents. I want to know if these are the real miles on the vehicle. By this knowledge I would be able to make an intelligent decision.

These false teachers don’t want to provide the facts, the truth, to the churches in Colossae and Laodicea. They are trying to deceive them “by plausible [but false] arguments.”

In verse 3, Paul stated that in Christ “are all the hidden treasures of the wisdom and knowledge” for the purpose: “that no one may be deceiving you by plausible [but false] arguments.”

Don’t be fooled by teachers who say wisdom and knowledge are found some place other than in Christ. The Colossians were challenged by this error being taught. These false teachers were very convincing.

As you begin to move toward maturity, the toughest assignments in the Christian life are remaining faithful, continuing to live in Christ and separating truth from error.

Johann Sebastian Bach said: “The aim and final end of all music should be none other than the glory of God and the refreshment of the soul. If heed is not paid to this, it is not true music but a diabolical bawling and twanging.”

This morning, please join me in worship and praise as we sing verse 3 of **“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.”*

December 16—With You In My Spirit (Colossians 2:5)

Colossians 2:5: “For though I am absent in my flesh, yet I am with you in my spirit, rejoicing and beholding your orderly manner and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ.”

Verse 5: Paul wants the Colossians to know that although he cannot be there in person, he is with them in spirit, praying for them. He cares about what is going on. The concern of which he spoke in Colossians 1:23 has gone: “If indeed you are continuing in the faith, having been founded and steadfast, and without shifting from the hope of the gospel.”

This verse speaks positively. The apostle is “rejoicing and beholding.” Love always believes the best. The Spirit encourages the positive and the flesh reacts to the negative.

He rejoices in confidence that they will remain steadfast and not be deceived by the plausible arguments of the false teachers.

“For though I am absent in my flesh, yet I am with you in my spirit.” Paul is (1) rejoicing and (2) beholding. These verbs are both in the present tense of the words. The apostle beholds two things:

1. Their orderly manner.
2. The steadfastness of your [their] faith in Christ.

“Your orderly manner” describes a military line unbroken and intact. A few individuals had accepted the Gnostic heresy, but the rest were not panicked. They were still standing.

They had dug in. They were hanging in there. They were standing in position.

“Beholding ... the steadfastness of your faith in Christ.” The word “steadfastness” also conveys this military formation. They were “*holding their ground, not retreating.*”

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.”

Someone has observed that the armor provided for the Christian to do battle has no coverings for the back. Retreat is not an option for the Christian soldier.

Do you recognize how you affect others by your “orderly manner and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ”? These qualities Paul saw in the Colossians created excitement in his spirit that made him rejoice and behold. It should be our ambition to bring joy to others. We should seek to inspire and encourage others by the way we conduct our lives and the steadfastness of our faith in Jesus Christ.

Won't you join me in worship and praise this morning as we sing verse 1 of **"Does Jesus Care?"**: *"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."*

December 17—Living In Him (Colossians 2:6)

Colossians 2:6: *"In like manner, therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, be living (walking around) in Him."*

Verse 6: This verse is a command from Paul. It is the key to future success in withstanding false teaching which was being presented around them.

"In like manner, therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord." How did I receive Christ Jesus the Lord? John 1:12 (NASB): "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."

I received Him by faith. Therefore, Paul directs us to go on living daily by faith in Christ.

In agreement with the words of John, we are to allow the Spirit of God to guide us into all truth and abide in Jesus Christ.

Richard C. Halverson said: "God give us men, who have learned to walk with Christ a step at a time, a moment at a time and who never faint. Men who cannot be overcome because they walk hand in hand, lock-step with the Lord of glory. This is the answer to the splendid frontier that challenges Christians in the mid-twentieth century."

In the twenty-first century, also!

"[It is] as you received Christ Jesus the Lord." Not only have I allowed Jesus Christ to become my Savior, He has also become the Lord.

May we pray today:

JESUS TAKE MY LIFE TODAY
AND MOLD IT IN THY PRECIOUS WAY.
OH SAVIOUR, TAKE MY LIFE, MY ALL
AND MAKE IT SUBJECT TO THY CALL.

MY HEART FROM WORLDLY CARES SET FREE.
MY ONLY THOUGHT IS SERVING THEE.
THAT DAY BY DAY I MAY STRONGER GROW
TO SERVE THE CHRIST WHO LOVED ME SO.

—UNKNOWN

Paul concludes this verse: “be living (walking around) in Him.” This can only be accomplished by totally committing to Jesus Christ. This means not my will, but Yours be done, Jesus. Not my life, but Your life lived out in me.

Christ is not only active in our *conversion*, but in our *conduct*.

Ironside said: “May we prove our loyalty to Him, not only by confessing a true Christ with our lips but by giving Him the supreme place in our lives!”

MacArthur says: “To walk in Christ is to live a life patterned after His.”

Please join me in worship and praise this morning as we sing verses 1 & 2 of that wonderful hymn, “**O To Be Like Thee**”: *“O to be like Thee! Blessed Redeemer, This is my constant longing and prayer; Gladly I’ll forfeit all of earth’s treasures, Jesus Thy perfect likeness to wear. O to be like Thee! Full of compassion, Loving, forgiving, tender and kind; Helping the helpless, cheering the fainting, Seeking the wand’ring sinner to find. O to be like Thee! O to be like Thee, Blessed Redeemer, pure as Thou art; Come in Thy sweetness, come in Thy fullness; Stamp Thine own image deep on my heart.”*

December 18—Rooted & Built Up (Colossians 2:7)

Colossians 2:7: “*Having been rooted and continually being built up in Him, and being established in the faith, even as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.*”

Verse 7: Four key phrases stand out in this verse:

1. Having been rooted.
2. Continually being built up in Him.
3. Being established in the faith.
4. Abounding in thanksgiving.

Paul changed his illustration of “walking” to the picture of a growing tree.

Let your roots do down deeply into Christ.

Ephesians 3:17 (TLB): “And I pray that Christ will be more and more at home in your hearts, living within you as you trust in him. May your roots go down deep into the soil of God’s marvelous love.”

In Psalm 1, the righteous man is described in 1:3 (NIV): “He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers.”

Jeremiah 17:7–8 (NIV): “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.”

A tree must grow down before it can grow up. The roots must go deep so the tree can withstand the storms.

So much of our modern Christianity is concerned about fruit, but not much is spoken about the root. Our roots must drink of the water of life and experience growth before we can produce much fruit.

We were “rooted” in Jesus Christ when we received Him as our Savior. The process of continual growth happens daily in the normal Christian experience of “being built up in Him.”

Paul doesn’t pray that the Colossians may begin to be thankful, but that the ocean of their gratitude may continually overflow its shores.

In Ephesians 5, one of the manifestations of the Spirit-filled life is thanksgiving.

In verses 6 and 7, five key phrases stand out that provide guidance for living in Christ. As you received Christ Jesus the Lord:

1. Be living (walking around) in Him.
2. Be rooted in Him.
3. Be continually built up in Him.
4. Be established in the faith.
5. Be abounding in thanksgiving.

This morning, let’s worship and praise the Lord together as we sing verses 3 & 5 of “**O To Be Like Thee**”: *“O to be like Thee! Lowly in spirit, Holy and harmless, patient and brave; Meekly enduring cruel reproaches, Willing to suffer others to save. O to be like Thee! While I am pleading, Pour out Thy Spirit, fill with Thy love; Make me a temple meet for Thy dwelling, Fit me for life and heaven above. O to be like Thee! O to be like Thee, Blessed Redeemer, pure as Thou art; Come in Thy sweetness, come in Thy fullness; Stamp Thine own image deep on my heart.”*

December 19—Be On Your Guard (Colossians 2:8)

Colossians 2:8: *“Be on your guard lest there shall be someone who carries you off [from the truth] through his philosophy and empty deceit, which is according to the traditions of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, and not according to Christ.”*

Verse 8: The opening command of this verse is “Be on your guard.” We should see red warning lights. After his command, Paul outlines his understanding of the current situation in Colossae.

In the previous two verses, the apostle gave positive protection through his teaching, but in this verse, he gives a negative warning. If they are living in accordance with the truth he has taught, they will have protection against error.

If Satan cannot deceive us by argument, he will endeavor to divert us from the truth by other means. Paul warns them of “philosophy and empty deceit, which is...not according to Christ.”

The source of the philosophy is “the traditions of men” and the subject matter is “elementary principles of the world.”

This verse includes negative and positive statements. Positively, “according to the traditions of men,” but negatively, “not according to Christ” in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

Oswald Chambers said: “The greatest philosophy ever produced does not come within a thousand leagues of the fathomless profundity of our Lord’s statements, e.g., ‘Learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart.’”

Rick Warren in *The Purpose of Christmas* says: “Whenever I start to feel anxious about a situation, I remind myself that fear is often False Evidence Appearing Real.”

This morning, I would like to end our devotional time with one of my favorite songs from The Florida Boys. Let’s join together in worship and praise singing both verses and the chorus of **“I’m Making Plans To See Jesus”**: *“Each day I hear of someone who Is planning far ahead. A home they’ll build, A child they’ll raise, A job to pay the rent. But I go down life’s rough ole road With one thing on my mind I just want to see the Lord I will when it’s my time. I’ve lived a life all full of plans, Some failed and some worked out. And all my plans I’ve faced the same, With hope, yet fear and doubt. But there’s one plan I know I’ve made That’s gonna be all right. And that’s to see my Jesus, I might go home tonight. I’m making plans to see Jesus And oh, what a day that will be. I’m making plans to see Jesus Cause He’s making plans for me.”*

December 20—All The Fullness (Colossians 2:9–10)

Colossians 2:9: *“Because in Him there is dwelling all the fullness of the divine nature bodily.”*

Colossians 2:10: *“And you are in Him, having been filled full [in Him] who is the head of every ruler and authority.”*

Verse 9: *The Bible Knowledge Commentary* says: “For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives. Hence only in Christ can one have fullness. Apart from Him is emptiness.”

Notice the word “all.” Everything resides “in Him.”

This verse is similar to Colossians 1:9: “Because in Him all the fullness willed (was pleased) to dwell.”

If we find “the fullness of the divine nature” in Jesus Christ, then we also find the “source of all truth.” Therefore, teaching which does not agree with the fullness of the divine nature must be false.

The deity of Christ is seen in the word “fullness.”

The apostle uses the word “bodily,” reminding of us John 1:14 (NASB): “And the Word [that is Christ] 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.”

Barclay said: “There is no one who can add anything to Jesus Christ. In Jesus Christ there came to men the full and final and perfect revelation of God, and we need nothing more.”

Verse 10: I love the way Paul described in the previous verse: “Because in Him there is dwelling all the fullness of the divine nature bodily.” This verse is a beautiful continuation: “And you are in Him, having been filled full [in Him] who is the head of every ruler and authority.”

What more could you ask? Everything we will every want or need is ours in Jesus Christ.

God is in Christ. We are in Christ. Christ is in us.

He’s alive! He’s adequate! He’s available! He’s ready to take over in our lives as Lord!

In *The Best of A.W. Tozer: Book 2* by Warren Wiersbe, he quotes A.W. Tozer: “Whoever would be filled and indwelt by the Spirit should first judge his life for any hidden iniquities; he should courageously expel from his heart everything which is out of accord with the character of God as revealed by the Holy Scriptures.”

Won’t you join me in worship and praise this morning as we sing together verse 1 of “**What a Friend We Have In Jesus**”? “*What a Friend we have in Jesus, All our sins and griefs to bear! What a privilege to carry Ev’rything to God in prayer! O what peace we often forfeit, O what needless pain we bear, All because we do not carry Ev’rything to God in prayer!*”

December 21—The Circumcision of Christ (Colossians 2:11)

Colossians 2:11: “*In whom also you were circumcised, a circumcision made without hands, in the putting off the body of the flesh in the circumcision of Christ.*”

Verse 11: The Jews felt it was necessary for the Gentiles to be circumcised before they could experience the blessings of salvation. They were adding a condition on the part of the Gentiles to gain salvation.

Deuteronomy 10:16 (NIV): “Circumcise your hearts, therefore, and do not be stiff-necked any longer.”

Deuteronomy 30:6 (NIV): “The Lord your God will circumcise your hearts and the hearts of your descendants, so that you may love him with all your heart and with all your soul, and live.”

Paul explains that the “circumcision” he references is “made without hands.” It is the “circumcision of Christ.” He describes our circumcision of Christ as

“the putting off the body of the flesh.” The apostle is pressing the point that we do not have the power to put off our flesh. We have a circumcision of Christ.

If we are experiencing victory over the flesh in our lives, it is due to our dependence upon the indwelling Christ. The power of the Holy Spirit is in control of the situation.

Oswald Chambers said: “The only thing that will enable me to enjoy adversity is the acute sense of eagerness of allowing the life of the Son of God to evidence itself in me.”

Please join me in worship and praise this morning as we sing together verse 2 of **“What a Friend We Have In Jesus”**: *“Have we trials and temptations? Is there trouble anywhere? We should never be discouraged, Take it to the Lord in prayer. Can we find a friend so faithful Who will all our sorrows share? Jesus knows our ev’ry weakness, Take it to the Lord in prayer.”*

December 22—Raised With Him (Colossians 2:12)

Colossians 2:12: *“Having been buried with Him in the baptism, in which you were also raised with Him through your faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.”*

Verse 12: When Paul uses the word “baptism,” he is speaking of the baptizing work of the Holy Spirit when He places us in the body of Christ. He makes our identification with Christ:

1. In His death as our death to sin.
2. His resurrection as our resurrection to new life in Christ.

The Father planned and completed our salvation from the beginning to the end.

1 Corinthians 12:13 (NASB): “For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.”

Radmacher, Allen & House say: “Buried ... in baptism: Baptism is the symbol of the believer’s association with Christ’s death on the Cross. Water baptism itself does not bring forgiveness of sins, but Paul uses the rite to help explain the work of the Spirit.”

This morning, let’s join together in worship and praise singing verses 1 & 2 of Selah’s **“You Raise Me Up”**: *“When I am down and, oh my soul, so weary, When troubles come and my heart burdened be; Then, I am still and wait here in the silence Until you come and sit awhile with me. There is no life—no life without its hunger. Each restless heart beats so imperfectly. But when you come and I am filled with wonder, Sometimes, I think I glimpse eternity. You raise me up, so I can stand on mountains. You raise me up, to walk on stormy seas. I am strong, when I am on your shoulders. You raise me up ... to more than I can be.”*

December 23—Forgiven All (Colossians 2:13)

Colossians 2:13: “*And you being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our trespasses.*”

Verse 13: Ephesians 2:1 (NASB): “And you were dead in your trespasses and sins.”

When we were born into the world, we were “dead” spiritually. Therefore, it is necessary for us to experience the new birth to be “made alive” spiritually.

Two wonderful truths stand out in this verse:

1. He made us alive together with Him.
2. He has forgiven us all our trespasses.

He accepts us just as we are (1) defiled, (2) dirty, and (3) dead in sin, but He (1) gives us light, (2) forgives our sins, and (3) fills us full.

What a gracious God we have!

“Having forgiven us all our trespasses.” His forgiveness is total and complete.

Take a moment to look at the word “all.” Having forgiven us all our trespasses. In verse 9, He is “all the fullness of the divine nature.” In verse 10, He is “the head of every ruler and authority.” In this verse, He has “forgiven us all our trespasses.” What a fabulous declaration!

Isaiah 43:25 (NIV): “I, even I, am he who blots out your transgressions, for my own sake, and remembers your sins no more.”

Ruth Paxson in her book, *Life On The Highest Plane*, says: “All of my sins put the distance of the world’s circumference from me! Out of my sight as well as out of the sight of God! O! The comfort of knowing that the sins which God has forgiven I shall never see again!”

Won’t you join me in worship and praise this morning as we sing verses 1 & 3 of another hymn of Fanny Crosby, “**Rescue The Perishing**”? “*Rescue the perishing, care for the dying, Snatch them in pity from sin and the grave; Weep o’er the erring one, lift up the fallen, Tell them of Jesus, the mighty to save. Down in the human heart, crushed by the tempter, Feelings lie buried that grace can restore; Touched by a loving heart, awakened by kindness, Chords that were broken will vibrate once more. Rescue the perishing, care for the dying, Jesus is merciful, Jesus will save.*”

December 24—Nailed It To The Cross (Colossians 2:14)

Colossians 2:14: “*Having blotted out (cancelled) the bond that stood against us with its legal requirements, which was opposed to us; and He removed it out of the midst, having nailed it to the cross.*”

Verse 14: What a glorious verse for us to meditate on this Christmas Eve! This was the reason for Christ’s earthly mission—to accomplish the redemptive acts in this verse.

Romans 3:19: “Now we are knowing that whatever the Law is saying, it is speaking to those who are under the Law, in order that every mouth may be closed, and all the world may become accountable to God.”

When Christ was crucified, God “nailed” the law to His cross.

1 Peter 2:24 (TLB): “He personally carried the load of our sins in his own body when he died on the cross, so that we can be finished with sin and live a good life from now on. For his wounds have healed ours!”

The significance of the words, “My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me,” upon the cross can be seen in that Christ was being made sin for us.

The Jews were requiring circumcision for anyone who was not a Jew to become a Christian. They also enforced keeping certain parts of the law. Paul addressed the issue of circumcision in verse 11. In this verse, he is addresses the law.

THE PRINT OF THE NAILS

HE NAILED MY SENTENCE TO THE TREE—

THE LAW’S DECREE OF DEATH TO ME:

AND THERE, WHEN HE WAS CRUCIFIED,

THE LAW THAT CLAIMED THE SINNER DIED.

—WILLIAM WILEMAN

The expression in the Greek is simply an I.O.U. The I.O.U. has been wiped or sponged away. If Paul had used another word which meant “*to draw a big X through a cancelled document*,” it would have indicated it was cancelled, but not obliterated. However, the apostle used the word which meant that it was cancelled out and obliterated. God accepts us in His amazing love as if this I.O.U. or indictment had never existed.

Romans 8:1 (TLB): “So there is now no condemnation awaiting those who belong to Christ Jesus.”

“And He removed it out of the midst, having nailed it to the cross.” When criminals were executed by crucifixion, it was the custom to write out the law they had broken and nail it above the victim’s head.

Gary L. Thomas in *Thirsting for God* said: “What do these testimonies mean? Away with the self-serving testimonies that sound as if we do God a favor by repenting of our sin! God does *us* a favor by making us hate the sin that destroys us, by giving us the will to fight it, and by offering His grace to forgive it.”

“Having blotted out (cancelled) the bond that stood against us with its legal requirements, which was opposed to us; and He removed it out of the midst, having nailed it to the cross.”

Let’s worship and celebrate the Christ child on the eve of His birth by singing together verses 1–3 of **“O Come All Ye Faithful”**: *“O come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant. O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem. Come and behold Him—born the King of angels! O come, let us adore Him! O come, let us adore Him! O come, let us adore Him Christ, the Lord! Sing, choirs of angels; sing in exultation. O sing, all ye bright hosts of heav’n above. Glory to God, all glory in the highest! O come, let us adore Him! O come, let us adore Him! O come, let us adore Him Christ, the Lord! Yea, Lord, we greet Thee, born this happy morning. O Jesus, to Thee be all glory giv’n: Word of the Father, now in flesh appearing! O come, let us adore Him! O come, let us adore Him! O come, let us adore Him Christ, the Lord!”*

December 25—Victory Over Satan (Colossians 2:15)

Colossians 2:15: *“Having disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public example of them, triumphing over them in it.”*

Verse 15: 2 Corinthians 2:14: “But thanks be to God who is always leading us in His triumph in Christ and is making known through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place.”

In verse 10, Paul stated He is “the head of every ruler and authority.” This is true because He created them. When the hour seemed like a victory for the forces of evil, Jesus Christ won the victory for us on Calvary’s cross.

On Calvary, Jesus Christ not only wiped out our debts, but gained the victory over Satan and his forces for us. Satan is a defeated foe. Christ’s death on the cross took care of the *debts* and the *devil*.

Paul describes a triumphal procession of victorious Roman Generals with the foes stripped and led captive behind the General’s chariot.

1 Corinthians 15:57 (TLB): “How we thank God for all of this! It is he who makes us victorious through Jesus Christ our Lord!”

MacArthur says: “Having disarmed. In yet another element of the Cross work, Paul tells that the Cross spelled the ultimate doom of Satan and his evil host of fallen angels ... principalities and powers.”

Samuel Rutherford in his book, *The Loveliness Of Christ*, said: “We shall be together one day; we shall not need to borrow light from sun, moon, or candle; there shall be no complaints on either side in heaven; there shall be none there

but he and we, the Bridegroom and the bride; devils, temptations, trials, desertions, losses, sad hearts, pain, and death, shall all be put out of play, and the devil must give up his office of tempting.”

Fanny Crosby wrote these beautiful words in *The Treasures of Fanny Crosby*:

THAT PRECIOUS NAME THEIR GUIDING STAR,
ITS BEAMS WILL O’ER THEM CAST,
AND THROUGH ITS POWER THEIR TRUSTING SOULS
SHALL OVERCOME AT LAST.
THE GLORY CLOUD WILL BRING THEM SAFE
TO YONDER PALACE BRIGHT,
WHERE THEY SHALL SEE HIM EYE TO EYE
AND WALK WITH HIM IN WHITE.

What a wonderful way to celebrate the birthday of the Lord Jesus! Let’s sing together verses 1 & 3 of **“Away In A Manger”**: *“Away in a manger, No crib for a bed, The little Lord Jesus Laid down His sweet head; The stars in the sky Looked down where He lay, The little Lord Jesus, Asleep on the hay. Be near me, Lord Jesus, I ask Thee to stay Close by me forever, And love me, I pray; Bless all the dear children In Thy tender care, And take us for Heaven To live with Thee there.”*

December 26—Sitting In Judgment (Colossians 2:16–17)

Colossians 2:16: *“Stop, therefore, allowing anyone to sit in judgment upon you in eating and in drinking or in the matter of a feast day or new moon or Sabbath.”*

Colossians 2:17: *“Which are a shadow of the things about to come; but the body belongs to Christ.”*

Verse 16: Paul uses a present negative command in this verse: “Stop, therefore, allowing anyone to sit in judgment upon you.”

Barclay says: “The whole New Testament rejoices in the glorious fact that, once a man knows Jesus Christ, there is nothing between him and God, that the door is wide open for every man. As Paul did, we too must regard with the gravest suspicion any teaching that would put any being between us and God.”

“Stop, therefore, allowing anyone to sit in judgment upon you in eating and in drinking or in the matter of a feast day or new moon or Sabbath.”

The Message paraphrases this verse: “So don’t put up with anyone pressuring you in details of diet, worship services, or holy days.”

The apostle instructs these Colossians to not be fooled by false arguments and carried away into error. Do not allow others to sit in judgment and disqualify you for God’s use.

Paul describes several areas of their lives where others should not sit in judgment. Those five areas are (1) eating, (2) drinking, (3) feast days, (4) new moons, and (5) the Sabbath.

Since Christ brought us out from under the law's domination, we are to resist attempts by those teaching error to put us back into bondage of legal requirements.

God's normal, healthy child is concerned with (1) fellowship with the Father and (2) knowing Jesus Christ as his personal Savior. When man concentrates on these two things, his life will be pleasing to the Lord.

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 17: These legalistic regulations from the previous verse are just "a shadow of the things to come." The reality is in Jesus Christ. As the shadow foretells the coming presence, so the law points us to Christ.

Don't chase after the "shadow" when you already have the reality of Christ.

Please join me in worship and praise as we sing together verse 1 of "**Hiding In Thee**": "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."

December 27—Let No One Disqualify You (Colossians 2:18)

Colossians 2:18: "Let no one disqualify you, delighting in a self-imposed humility, and worship of the angels, entering at length upon the tale of what he has seen in a vision, being puffed up by the mind of the flesh and not holding fast the head."

Verse 18: *The Message* paraphrases this verse: "Don't tolerate people who try to run your life, ordering you to bow and scrape, insisting that you join their obsession with angels and that you seek out visions. They're a lot of hot air, that's all they are. They're completely out of touch with the source of life, Christ."

Yesterday, Paul commanded the Colossians to "Stop, therefore, allowing anyone to sit in judgment upon you." In this verse, he commands them: "Let no one disqualify you."

The apostle outlines five steps to disqualification:

1. Delighting in a self-imposed humility—this is a cover for excessive pride, there is no real brokenness.

2. Worship of the angels.

Revelation 22:8–9: “And I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I heard and saw, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who showed me these things. And he said to me, ‘Do not do that; I am a fellow servant of yours and of your brethren the prophets and of those who heed the words of this book; worship God.’”

3. Entering at length upon the tale of what was seen in a vision—do not spend your time talking about a vision seen, but speak of the glories of Christ.

4. Being puffed up by the mind of the flesh.

5. Not holding fast the head—the head is Jesus Christ.

“Let no one disqualify you.” In 1 Corinthians 9:27, he also says: “But I buffet my body and make it my slave, lest possibly, after I have preached to others, I myself should be disqualified.”

This is not disqualification from salvation, but loss of reward at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

There are many ways to be diverted and distracted in your Christian experience. Whatever you do, do not lose your focus on Jesus Christ.

In *Exploring the Mind and Heart of the Prince of Preachers*, Charles Spurgeon said: “How much of external religion is fiction, fluff, form, foam!”

Won’t you join me in worship and praise this morning as we sing 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.*”

December 28—Growing With the Growth of God (Colossians 2:19)

Colossians 2:19: “*From whom all the body, through the joints and ligaments, is being supported and held together, growing with the growth of God.*”

Verse 19: *The Message* paraphrases this verse: “Who puts us together in one piece, whose very breath and blood flow through us. He is the Head and we are the body. We can grow up healthy in God only as He nourishes us.”

It is vital to hold on to the head. It is through the head that all of the body functions properly. Do not look elsewhere to find growth, strength, knowledge and joy. All of these are found in Jesus Christ. He provides for all the needs of the body.

The body grows with the growth of God when we allow the head to perform its proper function.

We can grow in grace, so we won't groan in disgrace.

"From whom" points us to the head which is Christ. All the body, through the joints and ligaments is (1) being supported, (2) held together and (3) growing with the growth of God.

This morning, let's join together in worship and praise as we sing together verses 1 & 2 of "**How Firm A Foundation**": *"How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord, Is laid for your faith in His excellent Word! What more can He say than to you He hath said, To you who for refuge to Jesus have fled? 'Fear not, I am with thee,' O be not dismayed, For I am thy God, and will still give thee aid; I'll strengthen thee, help thee, and cause thee to stand Upheld by my righteous, omnipotent hand."*

December 29—Submitting To Laws (Colossians 2:20–21)

Colossians 2:20: *"If you died with Christ from the elementary things of the world."*

Colossians 2:21: *"Why, as living in the world, are you submitting yourselves to legal requirements, [such as], do not touch, neither to taste, nor to handle."*

Verse 20: I am putting these two verses together in our study this morning. They are key verses to the argument of the passage.

Verse 21: There are three key phrases in this passage:

1. Stop allowing anyone to sit in judgment—verse 16.
2. Let no one disqualify you—verse 18.
3. Why are you submitting yourselves to legal requirements?—verse 21.

This verse follows up this passage with a piercing question: "Why, as living in the world, are you submitting yourselves to legal requirements, [such as], do not touch, neither to taste, nor to handle?"

According to the apostle, worldliness and religious fear show up in the external regulations.

Living in the negative will never make a positive.

Outward regulations do not get to the heart of the matter.

Erwin McManus in *Chasing Daylight* said: "I am convinced that God longs to put His fingerprint in our lives, to act on our behalf and surprise us with His magnificence. I am equally convinced that most of the time we do not give God a context in which to do this."

Ruth Paxson in *Life On The Highest Plane* says: "To many Christians the most difficult thing they have to do is to consent willingly to the Lordship of Jesus Christ over their whole being. They are loath to admit the necessity of the absolute dethronement of 'the old man' and the perfect enthronement of the Lord Jesus."

Please join me in worship and praise this morning as we sing together verse 4 of **“How Firm A Foundation”**: *“When through fiery trials thy pathway shall lie, My grace, all sufficient, shall be thy supply; The flame shall not hurt thee; I only design Thy dross to consume, and thy gold to refine.”*

December 30—Teachings of Men (Colossians 2:22)

Colossians 2:22: *“All of which are meant for destruction by being consumed, which are according to the precepts and teachings of men?”*

Verse 22: This verse is the completion of the question from verse 21. The completed question is: “Why, as living in the world, are you submitting yourselves to legal requirements, [such as], do not touch, neither to taste, nor to handle, all of which are meant for destruction by being consumed, which are according to the precepts and teachings of men?”

“All of which are meant for destruction by being consumed” could be translated “they are for perishing in the using.”

The word “all” refers to the legal requirements.

“Which are according to the precepts and teachings of men.” They are not the precepts and teachings of Christ, but of men.

Oswald Chambers in *My Utmost for His Highest* said: “Never become attached to anything that hurts God. For you to be free of it, God must be allowed to hurt whatever it may be.”

This morning, let’s join together in worship and praise as we sing verse 5 of **“How Firm A Foundation”**: *“The soul that on Jesus has leaned for repose, I will not, I will not desert to its foes; That soul, though all hell should endeavor to shake, I’ll never, no never, no never forsake.”*

December 31—An Appearance of Wisdom (Colossians 2:23)

Colossians 2:23: *“Which things, indeed, are having an appearance of wisdom in self-made religion and self-imposed humility and severe treatment of the body, [which are] not of any value against the indulgence of the flesh.”*

Verse 23: “Which things, indeed, are having an appearance of wisdom.” Luke 16:15: “And He said to them, ‘You are those who justify yourselves in the sight of men, but God knows your hearts; for that which is highly esteemed among men is detestable in the sight of God.’”

The “self-made religion, self-imposed humility and severe treatment of the body” give the appearance of wisdom. However, notice it is self, not Christ, that is magnified.

These things are done for the sake of pride. All of these things are “not of any value against the indulgence (or desires) of the flesh.”

This man-made religion cannot do anything with the flesh. The flesh can only have its needs met by the living Christ.

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."

Once a law is broken, the flesh jumps into action.

Alexander Maclaren said: "There is only one thing that will put the collar on the neck of the animal within us, and that is the power of the indwelling Christ."

Paul concludes with this last phrase: "[which are] not of any value against the indulgence of the flesh."

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."

Romans 13:13–14: "Let us walk around properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual excesses and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy. But clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and stop making provision for the flesh in regard to its desires."

Augustine said: "Deliver me, O Lord, from that evil man—myself."

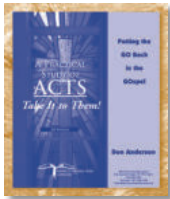
In *Exploring the Mind and Heart of the Prince of Preachers*, Charles Spurgeon said: "The only difference between a very wise man and a very great fool is that the wise man knows that he is a fool, and the other does not."

The power of the indwelling Spirit energizes the new nature. This produces a change in conduct. This is not something I can do on my own, but a work of God in my life producing the fruit of righteousness.

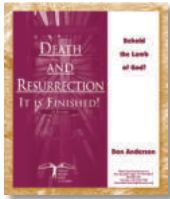
MacArthur said: "Paul's message to the Colossians is also a warning to us. We are not to be intimidated by false human philosophy, legalism, mysticism, or asceticism. Those are but 'broken cisterns that can hold no water' (Jer. 2:13). We must hold fast to Christ, in whom we 'have been made complete' (Col. 2:10)."

As we say good-bye to the old year and we greet the new, I would like to close with this favorite hymn during our meditation this morning. Please join me in worship and praise as we sing verses 1–3 of "**His Eye Is On The Sparrow**": *"Why should I feel discouraged, Why should the shadows come, Why should my heart be lonely And long for Heav'n and home When Jesus is my portion? My constant friend is He: His eye is on the sparrow, And I know He watches me. 'Let not your heart be troubled,' His tender word I hear, And resting on His goodness I lose my doubts and fears; Tho' by the path He leadeth, But one step I may see: His eye is on the sparrow, And I know He watches me. Whenever I am tempted, Whenever clouds arise, When songs give place to sighing, When hope within me dies, I draw the closer to Him, From care He sets me free; His eye is on the sparrow, And I know He cares for me. I sing because I'm happy, I sing because I'm free, For His eye is on the sparrow, And I know He watches me."*

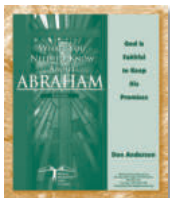
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