

All

Scripture

Advocate

with

Daily Commentary

by Robert E. Clayton

This book is dedicated to my family . . . my mother Phyllis Clayton who taught me to enjoy laughing and to have faith . . . my father Bob Clayton who taught me to ask why and to work diligently with God's gifts . . . my father and mother in laws Bud and Barbara Dekeyrel who saw the Christ in me before anyone else . . . my children Bobby and Heather who continue to give me great joy and make me proud . . . and, most of all, my help meet and completion Debbie who loves, respects and encourages her work-in-progress husband.

My prayer is that *All Scripture Advocate* will become a legacy that Bobby and Heather will embrace and pass onto their children and their children's children.

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The author would also like to
recommend the New Geneva Study Bible
to those who desire to read and study
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“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.”

(2 Timothy 3:15-17)

As its name implies, *All Scripture Advocate* espouses all of Scripture as the standard for all of man’s behavior and thought. Specifically, *All Scripture Advocate* promotes daily, systematic reading of the Bible from Genesis to Revelation.

Reading the Entire Bible in 15 Minutes per Day

By following the Scripture guide in this book, all of Scripture can be read in the course of one year -- in as little as 15 minutes per day.

Daily Devotion

Each word of Scripture is God-breathed. However, it is not always easy to find something from each day’s reading applicable to day-to-day life. This commentary seeks to provide at least one principle or introduce one topic that will be “profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.” The Bible contains many profitable verses not highlighted by this commentary. Hopefully, the verses presented herein will be just the beginning of your study.

You may agree or disagree with what you read in this book. The point of the daily commentary is not its theological “rightness” (although the author has endeavored to be Scripturally consistent and accurate). The point of the commentary is to facilitate and provoke Biblical discussion.

So, if you disagree with *All Scripture Advocate’s* commentary, that’s OK -- so long as you allow Scripture to be the basis of your disagreement, not your upbringing, not your denomination and/or tradition and certainly not your philosophical picture of God over and against Scripture’s depiction of God.

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Searching the Scriptures Daily

Like the Bereans in the book of Acts, those who read all of Scripture each year, can be *“more fair-minded . . . in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so”* (Acts 17:11).

Breadth, Not Depth

Daily, systematic reading of the Bible should not be viewed as a substitute for deeper study of God’s Word. Someone who follows the *All Scripture Advocate* guide for reading through God’s Word will, at the very least, develop a broad foundation for further study and reflection. Consistently reading through all of Scripture will also help safeguard against the human tendency to major in the minors or to interpret verses of Scripture out of the context.

About the Author - Robert E. Clayton

Every year since his conversion, Rob Clayton has been daily reading through all of Scripture. He is an ordained minister, serving as an Elder at Christ’s Covenant Church in Front Royal, Virginia. His ordination has been recognized by the Federation of Reformed Churches. Others could and have written more illuminating and more lucid commentaries of Holy Scripture. The author’s sole hope is that this commentary will encourage and assist others to consistently read through the only infallible and inerrant source of truth available to mankind.

Acknowledgments

The author wishes to thank Ralph Gibson, Jr. for encouraging him to read through all of Scripture in 1984. The author also wishes to acknowledge and thank Matt Chancey for his contributions to this commentary.

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✓	Day	Scripture Reading	Scripture to Discuss
	January 1	Genesis 1-3	<p>“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” (Genesis 1:1)</p>
	January 2	Genesis 4-6	<p>“The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.” (Genesis 6:5)</p>
	January 3	Genesis 7-9	<p>“Then God spoke to Noah and to his sons, saying: ‘and as for Me, behold I establish My covenant with you and with your descendants after you.’” (Genesis 9:8-9)</p>
	January 4	Genesis 10-12	<p>“Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower whose top is in the heavens; let us make a name for ourselves... So, the LORD scattered them abroad from there over the face of all the earth, and they ceased building the city. Therefore its name is called Babel, because there the LORD confused the language of all the earth.” (Genesis 11:3-9)</p>

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Starting Point for Discussion

The very first verse of Scripture establishes the absolute sovereignty of God over the heavens and the earth. He is the Creator of all things seen and unseen. Unless the Spirit of God regenerates the heart, man will always attempt to define God in his image or according to his notion of what, who and how God should be. Only the regenerate man acknowledges that he was created from nothing by the Word of His mouth, in His image.

Here we see a vivid description of the depth and totality of human depravity. The doctrine of “total depravity” explains the implications of Adam’s original sin. No part of man is untouched by sin, and no action of man is as good as it should be. We cannot earn God’s favor, no matter what we do. Unless grace saves us, we are lost. Total depravity includes total inability - that is, man does not have the power to believe in God or His word (John 6:44, Romans 8:7-8). For good news, see John 3:16.

Covenant is one of the over-arching theological themes throughout Scripture. God deals with man by way of covenants - the terms of which are unilaterally and arbitrarily (although not capriciously) set by God. The great flood of Genesis 7 represents God’s negative sanctions on those who violate His covenant. The deliverance of Noah and his household represents God’s covenant blessing bestowed upon those who keep His covenant by His grace (Genesis 6:8-9). God set His rainbow in the clouds as a sign that He would never again destroy the earth by flood. When we see a rainbow in the midst of God’s clouds, we should also be reminded of God’s covenantal dealing with mankind.

This well-known Bible story about the Tower of Babel depicts God’s judgement on one of man’s earliest attempts at reaching heaven on the merits of man’s efforts rather than by God’s grace. Salvation can be accomplished (man can reach heaven) through what Christ did in history and by what He continues to do in believers by the Holy Spirit. The basis of our salvation is Jesus’ death on the cross (Romans 3:25). May the Holy Spirit always keep us mindful of the fact that He chooses man, man does not choose God (Ephesians 1:4).

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	January 5	Genesis 13-15	<p>“And he (Abram) believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness.”</p> <p>(Genesis 15:6)</p>
	January 6	Genesis 16-18	<p>“I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and your descendants after you.”</p> <p>(Genesis 17:7)</p> <p>“And He said, ‘I will not destroy it (Sodom) for the sake of ten.’”</p> <p>(Genesis 17:32)</p>
	January 7	Genesis 19-21	<p>“And the LORD Visited Sarah as He had said, and the LORD did for Sarah as He had spoken. For Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son in his old age, at the set time of which God had spoken to him.”</p> <p>(Genesis 21:1-2)</p>
	January 8	Genesis 22-24	<p>“And Abraham said to his young men, ‘stay here with the donkey; the lad (Isaac, Abraham’s son) and I will go yonder and worship, and we will come back to you.’ ...And Abraham said, ‘my son, God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering.’ So the two of them went together.”</p> <p>(Genesis 22:5 & 8)</p>

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Starting Point for Discussion

This verse provides introductory insight into the key Biblical doctrine of justification by faith, not works (Galatians 3:6-14). Abram believed God’s promise of the birth of an heir from the dead (Romans 4:17-21) and God counted Abram to be righteous. Abram’s justification by faith foreshadows our faith in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, God’s sacrifice for sin, and God’s crediting His righteousness to us by faith (Romans 4:22-25).

The descendants of Abraham participate in the covenant promise of God through the child of promise, Isaac (Romans 4:19, 9:6-9). Gentile believers participate in this covenant promise through the Child of promise, Jesus Christ: “if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise” (Galatians 3:29).

Despite the sins of the many, God often extends mercy to mankind because of the righteousness of the few (His remnant). When God’s judgement does come on mankind for the sin of the many, the righteous few are sometimes spared temporal punishment (always spared eternal punishment).

Consider two points. First, this verse demonstrates the covenantal arrangement between God and Abraham, whereby God keeps His promise to give Abraham a son by Sarah according to a timetable set by God, not man. Second, the birth of Isaac foreshadows the birth of the promised Offspring, Who would be born at the time appointed by God, not man.

This story of God’s testing of Abraham is perhaps one of the most profound illustrations of faith in all of Scripture. Some find this story perplexing and/or offensive. How could a loving God require a father to kill his son?

Consider these points. (1) We must look for understanding in this story based upon the premise that God is holy and altogether wise. (2) Only God knows the end from the beginning. (3) God requires that nothing and no one come before Him in a believer’s life. (4) Our Father in heaven sent His only begotten Son to this earth to die for our sins so that we would not perish but have everlasting life. “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting Life” (John 3:16).

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✓	Day	Scripture Reading	Scripture to Discuss
	January 9	Genesis 25 – 27	<p>“I will be with you and bless you; for to you and your descendants I give all these lands, and I will perform the oath which I spoke to Abraham your father . . . because Abraham obeyed My voice and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes and My laws.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Genesis 26:3-5)</p>
	January 10	Genesis 28 – 30	<p>“Then he dreamed, and behold, a ladder was set up on the earth, and its top reached to heaven; and there the angels of God were ascending and descending on it.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Genesis 28:12)</p>
	January 11	Genesis 31 – 33	<p>“Then Jacob was left alone; and a Man wrestled with him until the breaking of day. . . . Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Genesis 32:24, 28)</p>
	January 12	Genesis 34 - 36	<p>“And Jacob said to his household and to all who were with him, ‘put away the foreign gods that are among you, purify yourselves.’”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Genesis 35:2)</p>

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Starting Point for Discussion

Covenantal obedience yields covenantal blessings. In this passage, Scripture records the obedience of Abraham and the resulting blessings from God. Note that Abraham’s obedience not only brought blessings to himself, but to his descendants.

Abraham is a type of Christ, who by His obedience fulfilled the righteous requirements of the law and obtained covenantal blessings for His seed (Matthew 5:17-18).

The “Jacob’s ladder” dream depicts our need to bridge the gap between God and man, between heaven and earth. Jacob’s dream looks forward to Jesus Christ, who as both God and man, becomes that bridge between God and man. “Most assuredly, I say to you, hereafter you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man” (John 1:51).

Through Jesus Christ, the only Mediator between God and men (1 Timothy 2:5), we have access to the Father (Ephesians 2:18).

Genesis chapter 32 represents a pivotal point in the life of Jacob. God has not only been faithful to His promise to Jacob (protection and blessing), God has been remaking Jacob’s character. Until now, we’ve observed Jacob to be both very strong (Genesis 29:2, 10) and ambitiously deceptive (Genesis 30). In this chapter, Jacob is visited by angels and wrestles with God. From this point on, Jacob walks with a limp -- a constant reminder that he must rely upon God no matter his strength or wit. The change in Jacob is now evident. This formerly self-confident, deceptive man is now a humble man of prayer (Genesis 32:4-5 & 9). God marks the change in Jacob’s character, by changing his name to Israel. We can learn from Jacob. No matter our strength, abilities or intellect, we must humbly and prayerfully rely on God’s covenantal faithfulness and trust in His sovereignty over all affairs of this life.

Repentance requires us to “put away” whatever hinders or defiles our worship of and service to God. The #1 requirement of God’s covenant with us is exclusive allegiance to Him. How have the idols and temptations of the world around us hindered or defiled your worship and service to God?

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	January 13	Genesis 37 - 39	<p>“The brothers pulled Joseph up and lifted him out of the pit, and sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty shekels of silver. And they took Joseph to Egypt.” (Genesis 37:28)</p>
	January 14	Genesis 40 - 42	<p>“Joseph saw his brothers and recognized them, but he acted as a stranger to them and spoke roughly to them.” (Genesis 42:7)</p>
	January 15	Genesis 43 - 45	<p>“Do not therefore be grieved or angry with yourselves because you sold me here; for God sent me before you to preserve life. . . . It was not you who sent me here, but God.” (Genesis 45:5-8)</p>
	January 16	Genesis 46 - 48	<p>“Now when Joseph saw that his father laid his right hand on the head of Ephraim, it displeased him; so he took hold of his father’s hand to remove it from Ephraim’s head to Manasseh’s head. And Joseph said to his father, ‘not so, my father, for this one is the firstborn; put your right hand on his head.’” (Genesis 48:17-18)</p>

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Starting Point for Discussion

Our election and salvation do not ensure us of heaven on earth. Rather, Scripture warns us that we will be persecuted. “Do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ’s sufferings, then when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy” (1 Peter 4:12-13).

Joseph was persecuted unfairly. Yet, by the providence of God, the slavery of Joseph eventually led to the salvation, if you will, of his brethren.

People often need tough love rather than indulgently sympathetic love. As we see in the rest of this story about Joseph’s reunion with his brothers, Joseph first sought to determine the true attitude of his brothers before he sought to help them and restore the relationship with his brothers. A quick pardon or short circuiting the opportunity God presented to the brothers for true repentance would have interfered with God’s will, rather than fulfilled it. In our zeal to help friends and family members cope with sin in their lives, do we sometimes interfere with the accountability and repentance that God requires of those who have sinned?

God’s sovereignty extends to all circumstances and situations we face, even when we suffer or are wronged unfairly. “All things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose” (Romans 8:28). When we find ourselves in places or circumstances not of our choosing, or at least not to our liking, we need to be like Joseph and acknowledge God’s sovereignty in our lives.

Ironically, Joseph has a problem with his father Jacob blessing a younger son rather than Joseph’s firstborn son. Joseph, himself, was not the oldest son of Jacob but had been chosen by God as the son through whom the nation of Israel would be blessed. Yet again, we see the sovereignty of God in evidence in the book of beginnings -- the book of Genesis. God’s choice of Jacob over Esau, Joseph over Reuben and Ephraim over Manasseh overrode the social convention of men. Here we see that God’s will often conflicts with the traditions of men.

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	January 17	Genesis 49 - 50	<p>“Joseph said to them, ‘do not be afraid, for am I in the place of God? But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive.’”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Genesis 50:19-20)</p>
	January 18	Exodus 1 - 3	<p>“So God heard their groaning, and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Exodus 2:24)</p>
	January 19	Exodus 4 - 6	<p>“Then Moses said to the LORD, ‘O my Lord, I am not eloquent’ . . . So the anger of the LORD was kindled against Moses.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Exodus 4:10-14)</p>
	January 20	Exodus 7 - 9	<p>“But indeed for this purpose I have raised you up, that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Exodus 9:16)</p>

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Starting Point for Discussion

Once again Scripture reminds us of God’s sovereignty. God’s rule over mankind includes acts of righteousness and depravity. Joseph’s brothers had only evil intent when they sold him into slavery, yet God used this evil act for the good of His chosen people. With evil intent, men of Israel turned Jesus Christ over to Pilate, yet God used this evil act for the good of His elect. “The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified His Servant Jesus, whom you delivered up and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let Him go. But you denied the Holy One and the Just, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, and killed the Prince of life, whom God raised from the dead” (Acts 3:13-15).

The book of Genesis introduced and reiterated the sovereignty of God throughout its 50 chapters. In one of the great mysteries of all of Scripture, we see evidence in this verse that this absolutely sovereign God responds to the prayers of His people. In particular, God responds to the groanings of His people that appeal to Him on the basis of His covenant promises. Why is it that we pray to a God that is absolutely sovereign and omniscient? Perhaps, C.S. Lewis said it best: “I pray not to change God but that God may change me” (paraphrased).

Scripture records several objections of Moses to the calling of God. Yet, God exhorts Moses to accept the fact if God made the mouth, He can certainly enable Moses to use it. It is vital that men have faith in God -- that whom He calls, He also equips.

In the book of Genesis, Scripture introduced the distinction between God the Creator and man His creation. Man often wrestles with this Creator/creation distinction when he questions God’s absolute sovereignty over mankind. Perhaps the most common occurrence of this wrestling match has to do with God’s sovereignty over salvation (called election). If God chooses whom He wills to redeem, justify, sanctify and glorify in Jesus Christ (Romans 8:28-30, Ephesians 1:2-14, 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14), the converse must also be true -- He abandons whom He wills. This abandonment in Scripture is called “hardening” and is itself a penalty for sins (Romans 9:18, 11:25). The man who rejects God because of the Scriptural doctrine of election and reprobation (“the god I believe in could not possibly be the cause of a hard heart”) is a man who inverts the Creator/creation distinction -- and is the clay who says to the potter, “why have you made me like this?” (Romans 9:20-21).

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✓	Day	Scripture Reading	Scripture to Discuss
	January 21	Exodus 10 - 12	<p>“It is the LORD’s Passover . . . You shall keep it as a feast to the LORD throughout your generations . . . Pick out and take lambs for yourselves according to your families . . . When your children say to you, ‘what do you mean by this service?’ . . . you shall say, ‘it is the Passover sacrifice of the LORD . . . All the congregation of Israel shall keep it.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Exodus 12:11,14, 22,26-27,47)</p>
	January 22	Exodus 13 - 15	<p>“Stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which He will accomplish for you today.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Exodus 14:13)</p>
	January 23	Exodus 16 - 18	<p>“This is the bread which the LORD has given you to eat. . . Then the children of Israel did so and gathered, some more, some less.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Exodus 16:15 & 17)</p>

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Starting Point for Discussion

As we read through the Old Testament, we will read of many things that continue to be true and relevant in the New Testament, but which undergo fundamental change at the foot of the cross, so to speak.

In the context of the New Testament (Romans 4:11, Colossians 2:11-12), the Old Testament sign of the covenant (male infant circumcision in Genesis 17:11-12) has been replaced by covenant baptism of infants (paedobaptism).

Likewise, Old Testament feasts, starting with Passover, provide the parallel and context for the New Testament feast which replaced those feasts after the cross -- the Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 10:16-21, 11:17-34, Matthew 25:26-29, Mark 14:22-25, Luke 22:17-20). This sacrament, when viewed in the context of the Old Testament feasts that always included children, should include children as participants by covenant rather than by confession or profession of faith (paedocommunion).

Opponents of paedocommunion, which was practiced by the early Church until the Roman Church's doctrine of transubstantiation took hold (the communion bread became the physical body of our Lord), argue that children did not actually participate in the Passover meal. Would it make sense that the children were invited to ask questions at this feast, but not permitted to eat? Even if this were so, look for the participation of children in other Old Testament feasts as you read all of Scripture.

At its center, the Christian gospel presents the good news concerning salvation. Just as God saved Israel from Egypt, He saves all who trust Christ from sin and its consequences. Salvation from sin and death is entirely a work of God. Along with today's Scripture verse, consider Jonah 2:9 -- "Salvation is of the LORD." and Ephesians 2:8 -- "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God."

The commentary for January 21 introduced Scriptural proof for paedocommunion. In addition to the references to Passover and other feasts of the LORD, these passages from Exodus 16 provide other Biblical support for paedocommunion -- all members of the covenant community partook of the manna from heaven. Jesus calls Himself the true manna ("bread of life") in John 6:48. Is there any Biblical reason why children should not now partake of this Manna in the Lord's Supper?

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✓	Day	Scripture Reading	Scripture to Discuss
	January 24	Exodus 19 - 21	<p>“If men fight, and hurt a woman with child, so that she gives birth prematurely, yet no harm follows, he shall surely be punished according as the woman’s husband imposes on him . . . but, if any harm follows, then you shall give life for life, eye for eye.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Exodus 21:22-24)</p>
	January 25	Exodus 22 - 24	<p>“If a man steals . . . he should make full restitution.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Exodus 22:1-3)</p>
	January 26	Exodus 25 - 27	<p>“And you shall make two cherubim of gold; of hammered work you shall make them at the two ends of the mercy seat.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Exodus 25:18)</p>
	January 27	Exodus 28 - 30	<p>“The rich shall not give more and the poor shall not give less than half a shekel.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Exodus 30:15)</p>

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Starting Point for Discussion

The 6th of the ten commandments presented in Exodus chapter 20 is “you shalt not murder” (Exodus 20:13). In the very next chapter of Exodus, Scripture makes it clear that the prohibition against murder extends to the murder of the unborn. The “life for life, eye for eye” language of Exodus 21 explains a principle of justice not revenge. That is, the severity of the punishment for a crime should be equivalent to the crime. Breaking the 6th commandment is often a capital offense requiring the death penalty (case law in Exodus and Deuteronomy clarify when death caused by another man warrants the death penalty). In Exodus 21, we not only see that Scripture tells us that the 6th commandment prohibits murder of the unborn, but that this crime is a capital offense. There can be no question, at least so far as Holy Scripture is concerned, that abortion is indeed murder. So, when a “Christian” argues for a woman’s right to choose, that Christian advocates man’s choice over God’s law -- “thou shalt not murder.”

“You shall not steal” is the 8th commandment (Exodus 20:15). Biblical justice requires the thief to make restitution for his larceny. “I’m sorry” or “please forgive me” is not enough. In other words, Biblical repentance for stealing requires restitution. One other thought -- imprisonment is not the Biblical sentence for stealing, restitution is.

The 2nd commandment reads as follows: “you shall not make for yourself a carved image - any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to serve them. For I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God . . .” (Exodus 20:4-5).

Does the 2nd commandment prohibit the depicting of God’s creation in sculpture or art, per se? In a word, the answer is no. As we allow Scripture to interpret Scripture, we see that this verse clarifies the prohibition of the 2nd commandment. God is not opposed to sculpture or art -- but to the worship of anything or anyone but God Almighty Himself.

God’s “policy” towards taxation is far different than man’s. God’s tax is either a modest flat tax or a voluntary tax. God makes no distinction between the rich and the poor (since God’s taxes are so modest, both poor and rich can afford the same level of tax). In God’s economy, He is the provider of the poor and the wealthy have responsibility to care for the poor -- not a state welfare system.

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✓	Day	Scripture Reading	Scripture to Discuss
	January 28	Exodus 31 - 33	<p>“I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Exodus 33:19)</p>
	January 29	Exodus 34 - 36	<p>“And He said: ‘Behold, I make a covenant. Before all your people I will do marvels such as have not been done in all the earth . . . For it is an awesome thing that I will do with you. Observe what I command you this day.’”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Exodus 34:10-11)</p>
	January 30	Exodus 37 - 39	<p>“Thus all the work of the tabernacle of the tent of meeting was finished. And the children of Israel did according to all that the LORD had commanded Moses; so they did.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Exodus 39:32)</p>
	January 31	Exodus 40	<p>“Whenever the cloud was taken up from above the tabernacle, the children of Israel would go onward.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Exodus 40:36)</p>

All Scripture Advocate

With Daily Commentary

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(2 Timothy 3:15-17)

Starting Point for Discussion

The sovereignty of the LORD can be seen throughout all of Scripture and applies to all of His creation. This verse of Scripture along with many others throughout His infallible, inerrant Word describe the doctrine of predestination. The doctrine of predestination offends many men -- non-Christian and Christian alike. When you eliminate all of the static noise in the arguments of opponents of predestination, you have only one reason left for opposition to this Biblical doctrine -- refusal to accept the fact that man is not in charge of his eternal fate (heaven or hell). On the other hand, those who embrace predestination have entrusted their eternal fate to their Creator. It is that simple. Another way to avoid offense at the doctrine of predestination is to understand that it is beyond man's ability to ascertain who among mankind is predestined by God to salvation and who is not. In short, the Great Commission of Matthew 28 does not permit us to discriminate between who we think is predestined to salvation and who is not.

In God's own words, covenant is an awesome thing to behold. He promises to do marvels for His people so incredible that they have not been done or seen in all the earth. But, there is a catch. The God of covenant is not a genie at man's beckon call. The God of covenant is a jealous God who demands exclusive loyalty and obedience (Exodus 34:14). The conditions for awesome covenant blessing are delineated in His 10 commandments and throughout all of Scripture. God's covenant with man can be summarized simply: obey God and His word and, by His word, know that He will bless you in an awesome way. But, keep in mind that God's covenant also provides for incredible cursings for disobedience (Deuteronomy 28 and Leviticus 26).

In these chapters, we read about God's detailed specifications for the construction of the Tabernacle. God seeks men to worship Him -- not as man chooses, but as He specifies. After being delivered from slavery in Egypt and being granted mercy rather than judgment for their idolatry at the base of Mount Sinai, God's people desired to worship God according to His requirements. God's elect have been delivered from slavery to sin and have been granted mercy rather than judgment for our idolatry and sin. Like Israel, shouldn't we, the Israel of God (Galatians 6:16), be equally eager to worship God in spirit and in truth?

During their trek through the wilderness, Israel moved only when God's cloud moved. Do we wait on God before we make decisions or move? Or do we make decisions and hope that God catches up with us?

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✓	Day	Scripture Reading	Scripture to Discuss
	February 1	Leviticus 1 - 3	<p>“And the priest shall burn all on the altar as a burnt sacrifice, an offering made by fire, a sweet aroma to the LORD.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Leviticus 1:9)</p>
	February 2	Leviticus 4 - 6	<p>“If a person sins, and commits any of these things which are forbidden to be done by the commandments of the LORD, though he does not know it, yet he is guilty and shall bear his iniquity.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Leviticus 5:17)</p>
	February 3	Leviticus 7 - 8	<p>“This is the law of the sacrifice of peace offerings which he shall offer to the LORD. If he offers it for a thanksgiving, then he shall offer, with the sacrifice of thanksgiving, unleavened bread”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Leviticus 7:11-12)</p>
	February 4	Leviticus 9 - 11	<p>“Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, . . . offered profane fire before the LORD, which He had not commanded them. So, fire went out from the LORD and devoured them.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Leviticus 10:1-2)</p>

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Starting Point for Discussion

The word “Leviticus” is the Latin form of the Greek title of the book which means “about Levites.” The Levites were the tribe of Israel from which were drawn the priests, who were responsible for maintaining and overseeing Israel’s worship facilities (the Tabernacle) and worship practices. The book of Leviticus also provides instructions to every member of God’s covenant people -- how to offer sacrifices, how to enter the presence of God and reminders of the depth of our sin.

This particular verse of Leviticus can be understood by looking back to Genesis 8:21 and looking forward to Ephesians 5:2 -- “walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.”

The book of Leviticus provides detailed instructions by which the Old Testament Church should offer sacrifices for their sins. In these chapters, we learn that we sin against God and His law both knowingly and unknowingly, intentionally and unintentionally (see Leviticus 4). Meditate on this Biblical fact -- we can and do sin whether we ever become aware of that sin or not. This realization should bring us each to our knees -- in repentance and thanksgiving. Furthermore, we should realize that no man is capable of self-righteousness -- only Christ-righteousness. “If anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous” (1 John 2:1).

Is the glass half empty or half full? This well-known philosophical question (cliche?) is usually answered incorrectly. The correct answer is that the glass is both half-full and half-empty. Answering one or the other denies the validity of the other response. Should sinful man be repentant or thankful? The answer is both. To be entirely focused on our sin and the need for repentance can cause us to become pietistic or legalistic or self-righteous (not to mention deny the Gospel). To recognize our sin and need for repentance while being thankful for the price paid by Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour, promotes the right Biblical balance between sincere anguish for our sins and joy for Christ’s atonement for those sins.

Scripture frequently warns us against approaching God in an unfit state. These warnings are not just found in the Old Testament. For example, “for he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord’s body. For this reason many are weak and sick among you” (1 Corinthians 11:29-30). Also, look at Acts 5:1-10. Through Jesus Christ, we have access to God in worship and prayer. Let us not presume upon God’s mercy as we approach Him.

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✓	Day	Scripture Reading	Scripture to Discuss
	February 5	Leviticus 12 - 14	<p>“The rest of the oil that is in the priest’s hand he shall put on the head of him who is to be cleansed. So the priest shall make atonement for him before the LORD.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Leviticus 14:18)</p>
	February 6	Leviticus 15 - 17	<p>“For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Leviticus 17:11)</p>
	February 7	Leviticus 18 - 20	<p>“The person who turns to mediums and familiar spirits, to prostitute himself with them, I will set My face against that person and cut him off from his people.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Leviticus 20:6)</p>
	February 8	Leviticus 21 - 23	<p>“You shall keep My commandments, and perform them: I am the LORD. You shall not profane My holy name.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Leviticus 22:31-32)</p>

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Starting Point for Discussion

The doctrine of the Trinity is central to Biblical Christianity. Biblical support for this doctrine can be seen directly and indirectly throughout Scripture. A direct reference to the Trinity can be seen in Christ's commission to His apostles: “make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 28:19). An indirect reference to the Trinity can be seen in this verse of Leviticus: the priest is a type of Christ, the oil symbolizes the Holy Spirit and God the Father is addressed here as LORD.

This is one of the most important theological verses in Leviticus, if not the entire Bible. Blood is sacred for two reasons. First, because life comes from and belongs to God, it is sacred. To show respect for life and for the Creator of life, no member of the Old Testament Church could eat meat with blood in it because “the life of the flesh is in the blood.” Second, it was the blood of the Old Testament sacrifices that made atonement for the soul. Blood, therefore, symbolized salvation. Both of these theological ideas are seen and transformed in the New Testament by Jesus Christ. Christ's shed blood cleanses us of sin (1 John 1:7) and he who drinks of the blood has eternal life (John 6:54).

It is not at all unusual to observe professing Christians engaged in all sorts of idolatrous superstition and mysticism. God equates such idolatry with prostitution, a violation of the 7th commandment -- “you shall not commit adultery” (Exodus 20:14). Do you follow your horoscope? Do you consult a Ouiji board for fun? Do you consult with or follow psychics? Do you pray to the spirit of a lost relative? If you answer yes to any of these questions, consider this -- you are prostituting yourself before God and He will set His face against you. If you answer yes to any of these questions, repent of your sin (which is to turn away from your sin) and receive the forgiveness of Christ (1 John 1:9).

Children often grow up promising themselves that they will never be a parent who enforces his or her authority by saying to a child: “because I said so and I am the father (or mother).” In these verses of Scripture, we observe God doing just that -- you shall do (“keep” and “perform”) as I say (“commandments”) because I am the LORD. Another similarity between our attitude as parents and God's attitude as our Father is this. Publicly disobedient/rebellious children embarrass us (profane our name). Disobedient children of God profane His holy name. In other words, sins against God, no matter the type of sin, always break the third commandment: “you shall not take the name your God in vain” (Exodus 20:7).

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✓	Day	Scripture Reading	Scripture to Discuss
	February 9	Leviticus 24-25	<p>“Whoever kills any man shall surely be put to death.” (Leviticus 24:17)</p>
	February 10	Leviticus 26 - 27	<p>“And if by these things you are not reformed by Me, but walk contrary to Me, then I also will walk contrary to you, and I will punish you yet seven times for your sins. And I will bring a sword against you that will execute the vengeance of the covenant.” (Leviticus 26:23-25)</p>
	February 11	Numbers 1 - 2	<p>“Everyone of the children of Israel shall camp by his own standard, beside the emblems of his father’s house; they shall camp some distance from the tabernacle of meeting.” (Numbers 2:2)</p>
	February 12	Number 3 - 4	<p>“Nadab and Abihu had died before the LORD when they offered profane fire before the LORD in the Wilderness of Sinai; and they had no children.” (Numbers 3:4)</p>

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Starting Point for Discussion

The Biblical system of justice looks far different and is far superior to humanistic, civil systems of justice. The American justice system sends convicts to universities of criminal behavior (prisons), who graduate with “degrees” in all sorts of criminal activity -- which, of course, only perpetrates and aggravates the “problem” of crime. Biblical justice metes out punishment equal to the crime and restitution for crimes that are not capital offenses: “eye for eye, tooth for tooth” (Leviticus 24:20). Secular justice protects and favors the criminal. Biblical justice protects victims. Civil justice offers parole. Biblical justice offers redemption.

God’s covenant with man provides blessings for obedience and cursings for disobedience (Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28). Covenant blessings of God are spectacularly awesome! Covenant cursings are incredibly frightening! But, in these passages of Scripture we see God’s primary goal for punishment -- to reform the covenant breaker (sinner). When God’s punishment produces repentance and reformation, He will provide reconciliation and restoration. When man hardens his heart to God’s punishment, God will eventually execute “the vengeance of the covenant.” When we sin, may we never lose sight of God’s desire to reform us on one hand, and His covenant vengeance on the other. “Therefore, consider the goodness and severity of God: on those who fell, severity; but toward you, goodness, if you continue in His goodness” (Romans 11:22).

The tabernacle of meeting consisted of an outer court, an inner court and the holy of holies. Among other things, the Tabernacle foreshadows the Trinity -- God the Holy Spirit, God the Son and God the Father. The tribes encamped around the Tabernacle each had their place in the Israel of God. Despite diversity and various callings/giftings, the Tabernacle was the center of the Old Testament Church. From this picture, it would seem Biblical for there to be diversity and a variety of gifts in the Church of Christ today. Consider this question. To what extent has the Church put man at the center of the Israel of God, rather than the Trinity?

“For the wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23). Not only did Nadab and Abihu die for their sin, “they had no children.” Consider the consequences of two of the more detestable sins of society today: abortion and homosexuality. Not only will unrepentant sodomites and homosexuals suffer the wages of sin, that is death, the very nature of their sin brings negative sanctions upon themselves -- no children.

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✓	Day	Scripture Reading	Scripture to Discuss
	February 13	Numbers 5 - 6	<p>“The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make His face shine upon you, and be gracious to you; the LORD lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Numbers 6:24-26)</p>
	February 14	Numbers 7	<p>“They brought their offering before the LORD, six covered carts and twelve oxen, a cart for every two of the leaders, and for each one an ox; and they presented them before the tabernacle.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Numbers 7:3)</p>
	February 15	Numbers 8 - 9	<p>“And if a stranger dwells among you, and would keep the LORD’s Passover, he must do so according to the rite of the Passover and according to its ceremony; you shall have one ordinance, both for the stranger and the native of the land.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Numbers 9:14)</p>
	February 16	Numbers 10 - 11	<p>“So it was, whenever the ark set out, that Moses said: ‘rise up O LORD! Let Your enemies be scattered, and let those who hate You flee before You.’”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Numbers 10:35)</p>

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Starting Point for Discussion

This invocation of God’s favor and presence is not only a pronouncement of divine blessing upon the children of the covenant, it places the covenant name of God (Yahweh) upon the people. For His name’s sake, God blesses His people. God is a God of justice and mercy, love and hate, blessing and cursing. Reverence of God keeps all of God’s attributes in view. The God who calls us will keep us, bless us and give us peace. Thanks be to God!

The balance of chapter 7 of the book of Numbers presents a detailed description of the gifts and offerings brought by each of the twelve tribes of Israel. On each of the next twelve days, a tribe of Israel brought their gifts and offerings to the tabernacle. Despite the fact that the description of each day’s offering was identical, God’s Word repeats the description each and every day. What are we to learn about or from God’s Word, when God presents this kind of detail and repetition to us? The detail tells us the degree to which God’s sovereignty extends. The repetition is a way of emphasizing the detail. A saying in American culture is “the devil is in the details.” Well, this saying is not Biblical. God is in the details!

Circumcision, the seal of the Covenant in the Old Testament, foreshadows Baptism, the seal of the Covenant in the New Testament (Colossians 2:11-13). Passover, along with other Old Testament feasts, foreshadow the sacrament given by Christ to His Church -- the Lord’s Supper (Matthew 26:17-30). To participate in the Lord’s Supper (Holy Communion), therefore, one must first receive the covenant sacrament of Baptism. It should be noted that circumcision and Passover guaranteed no one of “salvation” (reaching the promised land). Neither Baptism nor Holy Communion guarantee a person’s salvation. The assurance of salvation comes only from the Savior -- His gift of faith by grace.

Moses recognizes Israel’s complete reliance and dependence upon the LORD for victory and security. Without divine protection, there is no real assurance of safety. Do we rely and depend upon God for His protection -- as individuals, families, as a Church as a nation? Or, do we have confidence in the flesh -- our strength, our self-discipline, our ingenuity and intellect, our wealth? Often, the trials and tribulations we face in this life are designed by God to instruct and convict us of self-reliance and turn us from our ways to God-reliance.

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✓	Day	Scripture Reading	Scripture to Discuss
	February 17	Numbers 12 - 13	<p>“Now the man Moses was very humble, more than all men who were on the face of the earth.” (Numbers 12:3)</p>
	February 18	Numbers 14 - 15	<p>“The LORD is longsuffering and abundant in mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression; but He by no means clears the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generation.” (Numbers 14:18)</p>
	February 19	Numbers 16 - 17	<p>“All the congregation of the children of Israel complained against Moses and Aaron.” (Numbers 16:41)</p>

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Starting Point for Discussion

Consider Moses the man. Rather than die at the hand of Pharaoh as a baby, Moses was raised by Pharaoh as a son. This man Moses was God’s primary instrument in the deliverance of the Israel of God from Egypt. God spoke to Moses face to face (verse 8). Moses had millions of people looking to him for leadership, counsel and inspiration. Yet, despite all of this, Moses was more humble than all men who were on the earth. Men of great accomplishment are ordinary. Humble men of great accomplishment are extraordinary. God will equip and enable humble servants of the Triune God to do great things -- for the glory of His name and His kingdom -- as He did with Moses, according to His good pleasure and will. Consider the humility of Jesus Christ, the King of all kings, who humbly died for the sins of others. Where would the people of Israel have been without the humility of Moses? Where would we be without the humility of Jesus the Christ?

Does the principle of Godly justice expressed in this Numbers 14:18 contradict the Biblical principle of individual moral responsibility? In Ezekiel 18:20 we see that: “the son shall not bear the guilt of the father, nor the father bear the guilt of the son.” This verse of Scripture seems to contradict Numbers 14:18. Or does it? Two Biblical truths must be kept in view when looking at our guilt for sin.

First, we must recognize that we share in the consequences of the acts of our federal heads -- both the first Adam and the second Adam (Christ): “for as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man’s obedience many will be made righteous” (Romans 5:19).

Second, guilt must be distinguished from consequences. A son does not bear the guilt of a father’s sin (or vice versa), but he may share in the consequences. The Gospel promises forgiveness for repentant sin, not freedom from the consequences of sin (see 1 John 1:9). For example, a son may not bear the guilt of an adulterous father, but he may very well suffer the consequences of a broken home caused by his father’s sin.

“Thou shalt not whine” is a common parental refrain. Complaining or whining about authority is a sin against God, who ordains all authority over us. “There is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God” (Romans 13:1). Keep the balance of all of Scripture in mind here. We are not obligated to obey authority when that authority requires us to do what God forbids or forbids what God requires.

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✓	Day	Scripture Reading	Scripture to Discuss
	February 20	Numbers 18 - 19	<p>“When you take from the children of Israel the tithes . . . , then you shall offer up a heave offering of it to the LORD, a tenth of the tithe.” (Numbers 18:26)</p>
	February 21	Numbers 20 - 21	<p>“Moses made a bronze serpent, and put it on a pole; and so it was, if a serpent had bitten anyone, when he looked at the bronze serpent he lived.” (Numbers 21:9)</p>
	February 22	Numbers 22 - 23	<p>“God is not a man, that He should lie, nor a son of man, that He should repent.” (Numbers 23:19)</p>
	February 23	Numbers 24 - 25	<p>“They (the Moabites) invited the people to the sacrifices of their gods, and the people ate and bowed down to their gods.” (Numbers 25:2)</p>

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Starting Point for Discussion

The tithe predates God’s Law as given to His Church in the wilderness (the tithe given to Melchizedek by Abraham in Genesis 14) and survives the Old Covenant (Matthew 23:23). The tithe was and is God’s way of demonstrating His ownership of all things and reminding His people of His sovereignty over wealth -- “for it is He who gives you the power to get wealth, that He may establish His covenant” (Deuteronomy 8:18). The tithing requirement extends even to those who live off the tithe (the Levitical priesthood). The Christian Church should likewise tithe on its income from tithes and offerings. If all Christians tithed and the Church acted as Godly stewards over her income (at a minimum, this would mean tithing), would there be a need for intrusive government taxation and welfare programs?

The snake on a stake provides us with some instruction and application concerning the 2nd commandment: “you shall not make for yourself a carved image . . . you shall not bow down to them nor serve them” (Exodus 20:4--5). On one hand, it seems clear that the use of a bronze serpent on a pole indicates that the 2nd commandment is not a broad prohibition of carved images, per se. On the other hand, even God-inspired carved images can become sinful idols when men shift their worship from God to the image -- as eventually occurred with the bronze serpent (2 Kings 18:4). We should, therefore, exercise great caution with anything that could become the focus of idolatry.

This declaration by Balaam is a profoundly and perfectly stated expression of Biblical truth. Balaam was very right. Yet, we know from all of Scripture that Balaam was not righteous. We know from 2 Peter 2:15-16 that Balaam was a false teacher and led many astray. In other words, rightness does not make one righteous. Yet, we observe professing Christians today who seem to major in the minors, going to excruciatingly extreme exegetical lengths to prove their “pet” doctrine(s) . . . as if their rightness proves or is necessary for righteousness. We obtain righteousness in one and only one way -- when the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ is imputed to us when we are justified by faith through grace (Romans 3:24, 5:9 & 19, 8:1, 10:4, 1 Corinthians 1:30 & 6:11, 2 Corinthians 5:21, Philippians 3:9).

The Moabites failed to turn Israel away by way of the front door -- attempting to use Balaam to curse and deter Israel’s dominion. So, they turned to the back door -- tempting and subverting Israel with idolatry and immorality. The enemies of God use the same approach today. When God-haters cannot thwart the Gospel by way of a frontal assault, they will sneak up behind the Church by attempting to neutralize the elect’s testimony by way of worldly philosophies and lusts.

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✓	Day	Scripture Reading	Scripture to Discuss
	February 24	Numbers 26 - 27	“Now the LORD said to Moses: ‘go up into this Mount Abarim, and see the land which I have given to the children of Israel.’ (Numbers 27:12)
	February 25	Numbers 28 - 29	“These you shall present to the LORD at your appointed feasts (besides your vowed offerings and your freewill offerings) as your burnt offering and your grain offerings, as your drink offerings and your peace offerings.” (Numbers 29:39)
	February 26	Numbers 30 - 31	“If a man makes a vow to the LORD, or swears an oath to bind himself by some agreement, he shall not break his word; he shall do according to all that proceeds out of his mouth.” (Numbers 30:2)
	February 27	Numbers 32 - 33	“If you do not do so, then take note, you have sinned against the LORD, and be sure your sin will find you out.” (Numbers 32:23)
	February 28	Numbers 34 - 36	“If you do not drive out the inhabitants of the land from before you . . . they shall harass you in the land where you dwell.” (Numbers 33:55)

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Starting Point for Discussion

Without a doubt, Moses stands out as one of the most noteworthy figures in all of Scripture. The last half of chapter 27 of the book of Numbers records the humble submission of Moses to God’s punishment for his sin at Meribah (Numbers 20:9-13). Had Moses rebelled against the “unfair” judgment of God (after all, his many acts of obedience far outweighed his one act of disobedience), how would the legacy of Moses been affected? Moses the epitome of a Godly leader, ends his life as the epitome of a submitted follower of the King of Kings. May God’s Holy Spirit enable us all to follow the example of Moses -- for His glory and name’s sake.

Chapter 28 and 29 of Numbers present a summary of the laws of sacrifices and celebrations that involved a whole host of offerings: daily, Sabbath, monthly, Passover, Feast of Weeks, Feast of Trumpets, Day of Atonement, and the Feast of Tabernacles. The lives of God’s elect in the Old Testament revolved around the worship and service of the LORD. Should this not still be the case in the lives of God’s elect today?

Chapter 30 of Numbers provides instructions concerning vows. Through Moses, God warns His people from making rash vows and provides guidance for the head of a household to void the rash vow of a subordinate member of that household. The bottom line here is that the LORD not only expects us to keep our “vows” but to keep our word: “let your ‘yes’ be ‘yes,’ and your ‘no,’ ‘no’” (Matthew 5:37). How much better would this world be if we could simply take people at their word?

This country recently had a President who exemplified the modern notion that our private life has no bearing on our public life. This is not a Biblical or Godly attitude. What we think in our heart will ultimately manifest itself in our words and deeds -- “out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks” (Matthew 12:34). Not only can we not hide sin from God, but we can be sure that our “private sins” will eventually have public repercussions.

As the Holy Spirit sanctifies us, we will grow in spiritual maturity and holiness. As we are sanctified, God instructs as to how to evict the “inhabitants” of our flesh (the depraved nature we inherit from the first Adam). If we attempt to ignore the instructions of the second Adam (Christ), the inhabitants of our old nature will continue to harass us -- until we submit to God in humble obedience.

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✓	Day	Scripture Reading	Scripture to Discuss
	March 1	Deuteronomy 1 - 2	<p>“Go in and possess the land which the LORD swore to your fathers - to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob - to give to them and their descendants after them.” (Deuteronomy 1:8)</p>
	March 2	Deuteronomy 3 - 4	<p>“You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you.” (Deuteronomy 4:2)</p>
	March 3	Deuteronomy 5-7	<p>“And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down and when you rise up.” (Deuteronomy 6:6-7)</p>
	March 4	Deuteronomy 8 - 10	<p>“What does the LORD require of you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in His ways and to love Him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the commandments of the LORD and His statutes which I command you today for your good?” (Deuteronomy 10:12-13)</p>

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(2 Timothy 3:15-17)

Starting Point for Discussion

Here we see one of the key characteristics of God’s covenantal dealings with man -- His faithfulness. Over and over again in the first 5 books of the Bible (particularly Deuteronomy and Genesis), God states and reaffirms his solemn oath that the descendants of Abraham will conquer Canaan. God is indeed faithful and He will accomplish what He promises: “the LORD your God, who goes before you, He will fight for you, according to all He did for you in Egypt” (Deuteronomy 1:30). God’s faithfulness extends to His elect and to their conquest of the old man: “now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely . . . He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it” (1 Thessalonians 5:22-23). See also Deuteronomy 7:9.

In Chapter 4, Moses commands obedience to God’s law -- nothing more and nothing less. Man must not only obey God’s law, he must guard against the tendency to add to or take away from God’s law. “If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life” (Revelation 22:18-19).

For words to be in our hearts, we must read, study and meditate on those words -- all the time. We know from 1 John 2:3 that obedience of God’s commandment proves that we know God. We know from 1 John 5:3 that obedience of God’s commandments proves our love of God. To obey God, His word must be hidden in our hearts: “Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You” (Psalm 119:11). Furthermore, it is the responsibility of parents to pass on this love for God’s law to their children. Can a parent accomplish this objective by sending their children to schools who deny God and actively promote religious beliefs contrary to the law of God?

God requires us to love and obey Him with our entire being. In fact, Jesus describes this as the first and greatest commandment of all (Matthew 12:29-30). A man who obeys God’s law, loves Him and will be loved by God. “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and my Father will love him . . . he who does not love Me, does not keep My words” (John 14:23-24). God, by His Holy Spirit, enables man to do what He requires: “the Helper, the Holy Spirit . . . will teach you all things, and bring it to your remembrance all things that I said to you” (John 14:26). Like children who should obey their parents for their own good, we see at the end of these verses an exhortation to obey our Father in heaven for our good. We should read God’s word, love God’s word, pray God’s word and do God’s word -- for our own good.

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✓	Day	Scripture Reading	Scripture to Discuss
	March 5	Deuteronomy 11 - 13	“Behold I set before you today a blessing and a curse: the blessing, if you obey the commandments of the LORD your God . . . and the curse, if you do not obey the commandments of the LORD your God.” (Deuteronomy 11:26-28)
	March 6	Deuteronomy 14 - 16	“The poor will never cease from the land; therefore, I command you, saying: ‘you shall open your hand wide to your brother, to your poor and your needy, in your land.’ (Deuteronomy 15:11)
	March 7	Deuteronomy 17 - 19	“The man who acts presumptuously and will not heed the priest who stands to minister there before the LORD you God, or the judge, that man shall die.” (Deuteronomy 17:12)
	March 8	Deuteronomy 20 - 22	“If a man has committed a sin deserving of death, and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree, his body shall not remain overnight on the tree.” (Deuteronomy 21:22-23)
	March 9	Deuteronomy 23 - 26	“You shall not have in your bag differing weights, a heavy and a light. You shall not have in your house differing measures, a large and a small.” (Deuteronomy 25:13-14)

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Starting Point for Discussion

God promises blessings for obedience to the terms of His covenant and cursings for disobedience. When God honors his covenant promise by sanctioning those who transgress His law, is God responsible for the calamity that sovereignly befalls the sinner (both temporally and spiritually)? Or is man individually accountable for his sin? Reprobate sinners blame God for the curses that befall them. Elect sinners acknowledge their responsibility for sin, repent before a holy and just God and receive the forgiveness obtained by Jesus Christ for repentant sin (1 John 1:9).

The messianic welfare state promises to eradicate poverty by raising taxes to unconscionable levels. This Robin Hood welfare system (government rob from the rich and give to the poor) is doomed to fail. God’s Word tells us that the poor will never cease from the land. God’s answer is generosity and compassion for those less fortunate, not excessive taxation and a system that pays someone not to work. “If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat” (2 Thessalonians 3:10).

Church discipline is much neglected in today’s church and, when exercised, even less respected. The ecclesiastical equivalent of the death penalty takes place when a church member is excommunicated. In today’s society, however, these decisions are too often judged as irrelevant or inappropriate. The power of binding and loosing (Matthew 18:18, John 20:23) is given to the church not to punish for the sake of punishment, but to recover straying sheep. When we ignore God’s command to impose the death penalty (excommunicate), we remove one of the means God has ordained to recover the lost and protect His bride, the Church.

Criminals who suffered the death penalty were publicly exposed by being hung from a tree. This public spectacle was to remind God’s people of the curse for committing a capital crime. Though entirely innocent of sin or wrongdoing, Christ died a criminal’s death, taking the curse that we deserved (Galatians 3:13 and Acts 5:30). We are redeemed from the curse of the law by the ultimate act of love -- Christ’s death on the cross for our sins.

Whether in business or in the home, God abhors dishonest dealing with other people. God’s Law does not promote some form of egalitarianism (all men have equal rights). God’s Law requires integrity of us in our dealings with other men, that we deal justly and honestly with each other. “Diverse weights are an abomination to the LORD and dishonest scales are not good” (Proverbs 20:23)

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✓	Day	Scripture Reading	Scripture to Discuss
	March 10	Deuteronomy 27 - 28	<p>“Cursed is the one who does not confirm all the words of this law. And all the people shall say, ‘Amen!’”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Deuteronomy 27:26)</p>
	March 11	Deuteronomy 29 - 31	<p>“The LORD will again rejoice over you for good as He rejoiced over your fathers, if you obey the voice of the LORD your God, to keep His commandments and His statutes which are written in this Book of the Law, and if you turn to the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Deuteronomy 30:9-10)</p>
	March 12	Deuteronomy 32 - 34	<p>“Set your hearts on all the words which I testify among you today, which you shall command your children to be careful to observe -- all the words of this law. For it is not a futile thing for you, because it is your life, and by this word you shall prolong your days.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Deuteronomy 32:46-47)</p>
	March 13	Joshua 1 - 3	<p>“This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Joshua 1:8)</p>

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Starting Point for Discussion

Paul refers to this verse of Scripture to emphasize the impossibility of earning salvation by our works (Galatians 3:10). When we evaluate ourselves by the standard of God’s holy law, all men fall short: “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith” (Romans 3:23-24). This realization should drive us towards Christ, our Redeemer. We are capable only of earning the curses enumerated in Deuteronomy 28. By grace through faith in Christ, we receive the blessings of Deuteronomy 28. These blessings require covenantal obedience, an obedience possible only through the “Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Colossians 1:27).

God’s covenant dealings with man do indeed promise blessings for obedience and cursings for disobedience. However, we should avoid the erroneous view that God’s blessings can be determined by formula or method. If we do X, God does not “owe” us “Y.” The only meritorious obedience worthy of the blessings of God was and is the obedience of Jesus Christ. It was the obedience of Jesus Christ that enables us to be victorious over sin. It was the obedience of Jesus Christ that enables us to keep His law. It was the obedience of Jesus Christ that satisfied God’s holy wrath. Blessings do indeed follow covenant obedience. Our obedience is entirely the work of grace in our lives obtained or earned, if you will, by the obedience of Christ.

Not only does God emphasize the importance of personal obedience of His law throughout Deuteronomy, He also stresses the importance of teaching our children to obey God’s command -- “all the words of the this law.” God commands this of us, He does not suggest it.

Obedience of God’s law is not merely a matter of wisdom, it is a matter of life . . . and death. How could we not emphasize this in the training of our children?

How much should we think about God and His word? Here, God answers that question. We should meditate on His Word day and night. Athletes practice and practice and practice, so that their reactions in the heat of a competition will be “instinctive.” We should meditate and meditate and meditate on God’s word, so that our reactions in the heat of a life’s challenges will be “instinctive” and God-honoring. Read the rest of verse 8 and verse 9 to see the result of this constant meditation.

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✓	Day	Scripture Reading	Scripture to Discuss
	March 14	Joshua 4 - 6	<p>“And the LORD said to Joshua: See! I have given Jericho into your hand, its king, and the mighty men of valor.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Joshua 6:2)</p>
	March 15	Joshua 7 - 8	<p>“Israel has sinned, and they have also transgressed My covenant which I commanded them. For they have even taken some of the accursed things, and have both stolen and deceived.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Joshua 7:11)</p>
	March 16	Joshua 9 -10	<p>“They did not ask counsel of the LORD.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Joshua 9:14)</p>
	March 17	Joshua 11 - 13	<p>“And the LORD said to him (Joshua): ‘you are old, advanced in years, and there remains very much land yet to be possessed.’”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Joshua 13:1)</p>

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Starting Point for Discussion

The conquest of the land promised by God to His chosen people begins at Jericho. What did Israel see when they approached the fortified city of Jericho? What these people saw some years earlier when their spies returned from Canaan caused them to cry bitterly before God all night (Numbers 14:1) -- God's stiff-necked people did not have faith in God's assurance of victory. At Jericho, we see a people tried, tested and sanctified by their wilderness experience with the faith described in the book of Hebrews: "faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1). We can trust God to do what He promises in His word.

These 2 chapters of Joshua provide an excellent example of God's covenant dealings with His people. God's people just finished experiencing the blessings of God in the conquest of Jericho. Immediately after this victory, God's people transgress the terms of His covenant and they suffer a defeat at Ai (God's cursing for disobedience). But, even God's cursings of His people are intended for good. Achan, the primary culprit in the sin that violated God's covenant, repents of his sin (Joshua 7:20). God then brings victory over Ai in chapter 8. When we go through situations like this in our own lives, it would be helpful to do as Joshua did at the conclusion of the battle at Ai: "he read all the words of the law, the blessings and the cursings." We can easily be distracted and/or forget that which God expects of us. We need to meditate on God's law day and night (Joshua 1:8) -- for our own good and for the glory of His name.

In chapter 19 of Joshua, we see God's people duped by deceitful men. Presumption is the cause of Israel's failing here. Do we presume upon God by making decisions without consulting Him in prayer and in His word? The need to consult with God is not a requirement that should paralyze us -- make us leery of making decisions or indecisive. On one hand, if we meditate on God's law day and night (i.e. walk in the Spirit), then most of our decisions can be "instinctively" Godly. "If we live in the Spirit, let us walk in the Spirit" (Galatians 5:25). On the other hand, we also face decisions that require purposeful communication with God through prayer and His word.

God faithfully kept His promises to His people. Here we see that there is much more yet to conquer. We see this in the New Testament as well. God's elect have been blessed by God (Ephesians 1:3) and God guarantees our future conquests (sanctification) through the Holy Spirit of promise until the "redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory" (Ephesians 1:14).

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✓	Day	Scripture Reading	Scripture to Discuss
	March 18	Joshua 14 - 16	<p>“So this was the lot of the tribe of the children of Judah.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Joshua 15:1)</p>
	March 19	Joshua 17 - 19	<p>“How long will you neglect to go and possess the land which the LORD God of your fathers has given you.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Joshua 18:3)</p>
	March 20	Joshua 20 - 21	<p>“Speak to the children of Israel, saying ‘appoint for yourselves cities of refuge.’”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Joshua 20:2)</p>
	March 21	Joshua 22 - 24	<p>“Now, therefore, fear the LORD, serve Him in sincerity and in truth, and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Joshua 24:14)</p>

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Starting Point for Discussion

After 40 years in the wilderness and the war of conquest, God’s people receive their allotment of land. Scripture does not specifically describe the method of casting lots. The point is that the allotment was determined by the providence of God, not the will of man. “The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the LORD” (Proverbs 16:33). Can you imagine the acrimony that would have arisen had this decision been left to the Israelites? “Casting lots causes contentions to cease, and keeps the mighty apart” (Proverbs 18:18).

God expects His people to do more than merely conquer the “land which the LORD God” of our fathers has given to us. He expects us to “possess” the land. The dominion mandate of Genesis 1:26-28 requires God’s people to maintain what they obtain by the grace of God. Victory over sin or God-enabled success in any area of life requires us to not only “conquer” but to “possess” (rule over by God’s word to His glory).

Cities of refuge were designated places for certain offenders of God’s law to escape unjust vengeance while seeking a fair trial. Cities of refuge were not predecessors of today’s prisons. Generally, God’s justice deals with lawbreakers with “eye for eye” judgement (the degree punishment is commensurate with the crime) and/or “eye for eye” restitution (for example, thieves pay their victims back with prescribed penalties). The modern day approach to justice (providing food and shelter for law breakers) is an un-Biblical judicial consequence of crime.

The God of the Bible inspires obedience to His Law/Word by way of promises and threats (covenant blessings and cursings). When Scripture refers to the “fear of the LORD,” we should understand that this “fear” is much more than “respect” of God. We can indeed be motivated to obey God by His promise of blessings and His merciful, gracious love towards us. However, a heavenly Father also exhorts us with the consequences of disobedience (just as fathers exhort their children to obedience). When we “fear” the covenant consequences of sin, we apprehend Godly wisdom (Job 28:28 and Proverbs 1:7).

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✓	Day	Scripture Reading	Scripture to Discuss
	March 22	Judges 1 - 2	<p>“Yet they would not listen to their judges, but they played the harlot with other gods.” (Judges 2:17)</p>
	March 23	Judges 3 - 5	<p>“Thus the children of Israel dwelt among the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites . . . and took their daughters to be their wives . . . and they served their gods.” (Judges 3:5-6)</p>
	March 24	Judges 6 - 7	<p>“Gideon said to Him, ‘O my lord, if the LORD is with us, why then has all this happened to us?’ (Judges 6:13)</p>
	March 25	Judges 8 - 9	<p>“Gideon made it into an ephod and set it up in his city, Ophrah. And all Israel played the harlot with it there. It became a snare to Gideon and to his house.” (Judges 8:27)</p>
	March 26	Judges 10 - 11	<p>“I have given my word to the Lord, and I cannot go back on it.” (Judges 11:35)</p>

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Starting Point for Discussion

God is a jealous God (Exodus 20:5). Scripture often describes His relationship with His people as similar to the relationship of a husband to a wife. Idolatry (worshiping other gods or extending reverence to creatures appropriate only for the Creator) is tantamount to marital infidelity or adultery (see Jeremiah 3:8).

Although the Old Testament Church of God conquers the promised land, God’s chosen people immediately disobey His commandments concerning the inhabitants of that land. He specifically forbade the marriage of an Israelite with an unconverted foreigner and warned of the consequences for disobedience (Deuteronomy 7:3-4). The same principle remains true today in the friends and spouses we choose. “Evil company corrupts good habits” (1 Corinthians 15:33). “Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?” (2 Corinthians 6:14).

Gideon asks “why”?! This question of Gideon is answered 3 verses earlier: “I said to you, ‘I am the LORD your God; do not fear the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell.’ But you have not obeyed My voice” (Judges 6:10). How often do we ask the question “why” in reference to what we see happening in our country, in the Church and in our lives, when the question has already been answered by God in the words of His covenant?

Here, we observe Gideon falling into the same sin as his father (Judges 6:25). Wealth can lead to idolatry which ultimately leads to ruin. God’s wisdom puts wealth into perspective. “Give me neither poverty nor riches” (Proverbs 30:8). We are also warned by Scripture not to love wealth. “For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil” (1 Timothy 6:10). Finally, God’s purpose for wealth differs from that of carnal man: “He . . . gives you the power to get wealth, that He may establish His covenant” (Deuteronomy 8:18) not to support a hedonistic lifestyle.

We know that God considers vows to be sacred. “When you make a vow to the LORD your God, you shall not delay to pay it; for the LORD your God will surely require it of you, and it would be sin to you” (Deuteronomy 23:21). The old saying “two wrongs do not make one right” applies to evil vows. Unlawful vows should never be made in the first place. However, we should not compound one wrong (an evil vow) with another (keeping the evil vow). John the Baptist was beheaded by a king who kept an evil vow (Matthew 14:9), a poor excuse indeed for murder.

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✓	Day	Scripture Reading	Scripture to Discuss
	March 27	Judges 12 -14	<p>“Samson said to his father, ‘Get her for me, for she pleases me well.’ But his father and mother did not know that it was of the Lord.”</p> <p>(Judges 14:3-4)</p>
	March 28	Judges 15 - 17	<p>“If I am shaven, then my strength will leave me, and I shall become weak, and be like any other man.”</p> <p>(Judges 16:17)</p>
	March 29	Judges 18 - 19	<p>“In those days there was no king in Israel.”</p> <p>(Judges 18:1)</p>
	March 30	Judges 20 - 21	<p>“In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes.”</p> <p>(Judges 21:25)</p>
	March 31	Ruth 1 - 4	<p>“There is a son born to Naomi. And they called his name Obed. He is the father of Jesse, the father of David.”</p> <p>(Ruth 4:17)</p>

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Starting Point for Discussion

God’s sovereignty extends to the actions of sinful man. God used Samson’s sinful desire for a daughter of the Philistines to bring judgment against the Philistines. When we are subjected to sinful actions and words of those who despise the Christ in us, we should trust that our sovereign LORD will use those actions to fulfill his will. “And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose” (Romans 8:28).

Throughout Scripture, God’s patience and mercy with covenant breakers is remarkable. In Samson’s case, God remained patient until the last sign of his vow had been removed. God judged Samson and punished him for violating the terms of His covenant. Although we should be most grateful for God’s patience and mercy, we should never presume upon God’s forbearance. On one hand, we thank God that “if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). On the other hand, “do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap” (Galatians 6:7).

Not only do God’s people not have a king, they insist upon doing their will, not God’s: “in those days there was no king in Israel, everyone did what was right in his own eyes” (Judges 17:6). Granted, the nation did not have an earthly king to lead them. But, Israel was the chosen people of the King of heaven and earth, Who had given them His law to follow. The same unfortunate observation can be made about today’s Israel of God. Professing Christians do what is right in their own eyes, forsaking the Law/Word of the King of Kings. “But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness” (1 Timothy 6:11).

This refrain sets the stage for another national sin. Rather than renew her allegiance to the King of heaven, Israel yearns for a king on earth -- like the people around her. Today’s Church often looks to humanistic “solutions” for societal ills that are legislated and preached by the kings of this world rather than fearing and obeying the King of all kings, the only source of wisdom and truth.

The selfless, faithful service of a foreigner (the widow Ruth in reference to Naomi, her mother-in-law) depicts the universal scope of the gospel. The son born to Boaz and Ruth is a fulfillment of God’s promise that all nations shall be blessed through and by descendants of Abraham. The book of Ruth culminates with the birth of a son in the line of King David, making this foreigner an ancestor of Jesus the Christ.

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✓	Day	Scripture Reading	Scripture to Discuss
	April 1	1 Samuel 1 - 3	<p>“I have told him that I will judge his house forever for the iniquity he knows, because his sons made themselves vile, and he did not restrain them.”</p> <p>(1 Samuel 3:13)</p>
	April 2	1 Samuel 4 - 6	<p>“Then it happened, when he made mention of the ark of God, that Eli fell off the seat backward . . . and his neck was broken and he died.”</p> <p>(1 Samuel 4:18)</p>
	April 3	1 Samuel 7 - 9	<p>“The thing displeased Samuel when they said: ‘give us a king to judge us.’ So Samuel prayed to the LORD. And the LORD said to Samuel, ‘Heed the voice of the people in all they say to you; for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them.’”</p> <p>(1 Samuel 8:6-7)</p>
	April 4	1 Samuel 10 - 12	<p>“And all the people said to Samuel, ‘Pray for your servants to the LORD your God, that we may not die; for we have added to all our sins the evil of asking a king for ourselves.’”</p> <p>(1 Samuel 12:19)</p>

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Starting Point for Discussion

In Ezekiel 18:20 we see that: “the son shall not bear the guilt of the father, nor the father bear the guilt of the son.” As we noted in the February 18th commentary, this principle of Scripture does not mean that parents are immune from the consequences of their children’s sin or vice versa. Here we see this principle further clarified. Eli’s sons were indeed guilty of sin for which God would hold them individually accountable. Eli was not guilty of his son’s sins, per se, but guilty for failing to restrain them. In the permissive, promiscuous and avoid-harming-their-self-esteem society we live in today, parents should take heed of the consequences of failing to restrain the vile behavior of their children.

Eli hears news of severe casualties suffered by the Israelites. Eli hears news about the death of his 2 sons. But, the news about capture of the ark of the covenant is more than he can bear. At Eli’s death, we observe that his concern for the ark of God exceeds his concern for the welfare of his children. Had he recognized and acted upon this Biblically proper priority (obedience of God should take precedent even over our affection for family - or at least frame our affection for family), Eli’s life would have had a different conclusion.

The sin of God’s people is not the desire for a human king, per se. Rather, the sin of God’s people is their desire of a monarch like the heathen nations around them -- a king that would not represent the delegated authority of the King of kings but would replace God as the ultimate sovereign.

We see the same phenomenon today. God’s sovereignty extends to all creation. “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth” (Matthew 28:18). When the present-day Israel of God rejects this absolute and total sovereignty of God in all areas of life and dominion, we should expect the same results as those encountered by the Israel of God in the days of Saul.

When we sin or when sinners seek our counsel, our response should be like the response of Samuel in the verses which follow verse 19. We should direct people to repent for their sin(s) and to renew their commitment of covenant faithfulness to God, the King of all kings. Godly response to God’s judgment will bring comfort and peace -- according to God’s good sovereign timetable. “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us of our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9).

All Scripture Advocate

With Daily Commentary

“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.”

(2 Timothy 3:15-17)

✓	Day	Scripture Reading	Scripture to Discuss
	April 5	1 Samuel 13 - 15	<p>“Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(1 Samuel 15: 22)</p>
	April 6	1 Samuel 16 - 18	<p>“Then David said to the Philistine (Goliath), ‘you come to me with a sword, with a spear, and with a javelin. But I come to you in the name of the LORD of hosts.’”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(1 Samuel 17:45)</p>
	April 7	1 Samuel 19 - 21	<p>“For as long as the son of Jesse lives on the earth, you (Jonathan) shall not be established, nor your kingdom.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(1 Samuel 20:31)</p>
	April 8	1 Samuel 22 - 24	<p>“And he (David) said to his men, ‘the LORD forbid that I should do this thing to my master, the LORD’s anointed, to stretch out my hand against him, seeing he is the anointed of the Lord.’”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(1 Samuel 24:6)</p>

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Starting Point for Discussion

God desires obedience that springs from the heart of man that only God can see, not feigned piety and ritual performance that man can observe. If we rebel against the leading of God’s Spirit, no sacrifice and no attempt to cover that disobedience with self-righteous good works will compensate for that disobedience. The sovereign Lord blesses covenant obedience and curses covenant disobedience. This God of covenant should be feared. Do not fret, however, if your obedience is not perfect. Repent, obtain God’s forgiveness (1 John 1:9) and move on -- by His grace and faithfulness (1 Thessalonians 5:23-24).

A considerable portion of Old Testament involves King David -- either Scripture about him or Scripture authored by him (by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit). We see in this text first evidence of one of the primary characteristics of King David -- he was a man after God’s own heart (1 Samuel 13:14). In this verse, David expresses the conviction of his heart that he came to fight Goliath by the authority and power of God -- not by his might or ability. When we face “giants” in our lives, we should follow the example of this man after God’s heart -- fight those giants by the authority and power of God. Then, and only then, will we be able to live victoriously.

Here we witness King Saul trying to recruit his firstborn son’s assistance in killing David. Both Saul and Jonathan recognize God’s anointing on David. Saul reacts with envy and rebels against the sovereignty of the King of kings. Jonathan responds in faith, accepting God’s selection of David as the next king of Israel. The loyalty of Jonathan to David is quite remarkable in view of the fact that Jonathan was first born and in line to succeed his father to the throne. Why did Jonathan respond in faith and not his father? Faith is a gift of God, given to and withheld according to God’s sovereign God will. “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God” (Ephesians 2:8).

David recognizes and respects God’s anointing upon King Saul and continues to exhibit faith in God, by leaving the judgment of Saul to God. “Do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, vengeance is Mine, I will repay says the Lord” (Romans 12:19). David also trusts God as to the timing of his ascension to the throne of Israel “To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven” (Ecclesiastes 3:1). Do we leave our desire for vengeance with God? Do we trust God for His timing?

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✓	Day	Scripture Reading	Scripture to Discuss
	April 9	1 Samuel 25 - 27	<p>“But David said to Abishai, ‘do not destroy him; for who can stretch out his hand against the LORD’s anointed, and be guiltless!’”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(1 Samuel 26:9)</p>
	April 10	1 Samuel 28 - 31	<p>“Saul took a sword and fell on it.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(1 Samuel 31:4)</p>
	April 11	2 Samuel 1 - 3	<p>“Sons were born to David in Hebron . . . by Ahinoam . . . by Abigail . . . Maacah . . . Haggith . . . Abital . . . and the sixth, Ithream, by David’s wife Eglah.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(2 Samuel 3:2-5)</p>
	April 12	2 Samuel 4 - 6	<p>“And I will be even more undignified than this, and will be humble in my own sight.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(2 Samuel 6:22)</p>

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Starting Point for Discussion

One of the most striking characteristics of the greatest human king in Israel’s history was David’s respect for authority. He trusted and waited upon God’s timing for his ascension to the throne -- recognizing and submitting to the authority of his predecessor. David’s submission to authority foreshadows the submission of Jesus Christ, the King of kings, to His Father in heaven: “Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless, not My will, but Yours, be done” (Luke 22:42). Submission to the authority of God and God’s delegated authority should be an essential characteristic in the lives of all disciples of King Jesus -- so much so, that Christ’s model prayer includes this petition: “Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven” (Matthew 6:10).

In times of testing and distress, God expects his people to look to Him for strength and comfort. Saul’s own son, Jonathan, is a good example of a man who yielded fully to God’s will -- in good times and bad. King Saul, the handsome man of great “natural” strength, lost all hope when he reached the end of himself -- and killed himself. No matter the talent, intelligence, physical attributes and position bestowed upon us by God’s providence, we should rely only upon God for strength and comfort. “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God” (2 Corinthians 1:3-4).

Holy Scripture does not romanticize or attempt to hide the sin of the men featured in His story. The goal of *All Scripture Advocate* is to encourage disciples of Christ to look to all of Scripture for doctrine, reproof, correction, instruction in righteousness. Sometimes, God’s word provides us with the negative to provide us with positive edification. Although Scripture does not evaluate David’s multiple wives at this point, we should recognize that this accounting of David’s sons by multiple wives violates a clear command of God: “neither shall he multiply wives for himself, lest his heart turn away” (Deuteronomy 17:17). Throughout David’s life, he pays dearly for disobeying this commandment of God.

Once again, David demonstrates his reverence for God by willingly abasing himself in the sight of man as he worships the God of Israel. When we worship God, are we willing to humble ourselves and focus our worship on God alone -- despite what others may think of us?

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✓	Day	Scripture Reading	Scripture to Discuss
	April 13	2 Samuel 7 - 9	“Then King David went in and sat before the LORD; and he said: ‘Who am I, O LORD God? And what is my house, that You have brought me this far?’” (2 Samuel 7:18)
	April 14	2 Samuel 10 - 12	“So David said to Nathan, ‘I have sinned against the LORD.’ And Nathan said to David, ‘the LORD also has put away your sin; you shall not die. However, because by this deed you have given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme, the child also who is born to you shall surely die.’” (2 Samuel 12:13-14)
	April 15	2 Samuel 13 - 14	“But when King David heard of all these things, he was very angry.” (2 Samuel 13:21)
	April 16	2 Samuel 15 - 16	“Let Him do to me as seems good to Him.” (2 Samuel 15:26)
	April 17	2 Samuel 17 - 18	“The LORD had purposed to defeat the good advice of Ahithophel, to the intent that the LORD might bring disaster on Absalom.” (2 Samuel 17:14)

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Starting Point for Discussion

In God’s providence, King David has been given position, power and wealth. Additionally, God declares to David that his house and kingdom will be established forever. The humility in David’s response (“who am I, O LORD God?”) evidences David’s understanding of the sovereignty of God -- throughout his life. Can we humbly trust in God’s sovereignty like David?

The blessings and cursings of God in response to obedience and disobedience of His Law is an essential element of God’s covenant with man. We know from Scripture that God forgives repentant sinners: “if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). However, 1 John 1:9 does not give us the ability or right to sin with impunity -- sin without fear of consequences. In this passage of Scripture, we see that God puts away the sin that David confesses (his sin with Bathsheba and his part in the murder of Bathsheba’s husband). But we also see that there are consequences for his sin. God will indeed forgive us of repentant sin, but He remains sovereign over the consequences of sin. When we turn to Christ for forgiveness, we should turn to Him in faith -- not in presumption.

King David’s son Amnon violated his sister Tamar. David was extremely angry but took no disciplinary action against Amnon. We can learn much from David, both positively and negatively. In this case, we can learn from David’s negative example. His refusal to adequately discipline his sons would prove to not only adversely affect his sons, but would be a source of much heart ache and trouble for David.

When David sins, he humbly repents for his sin and submits himself to the mercy of God. David’s submission to God does not prevent him from taking steps within his control to ensure his survival, knowing that God will do as He wills. When we sin against God, we should follow David’s example.

God does not passively witness history unfold. God actively directs the course of history to suit His good pleasure and will. However, Christians should not be fatalistic. God expects our obedience and responds to our prayers. Although God purposed to bring about the defeat of Ahithophel’s advice to Absalom, this turn of events was a response to David’s prayer in 2 Samuel 15:31. David did not resign himself fatalistically to the whim of God, but pleaded with God in prayer.

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✓	Day	Scripture Reading	Scripture to Discuss
	April 18	2 Samuel 19 - 20	<p>“Shall not Shimei be put to death for this, because he cursed the LORD’s anointed?” (2 Samuel 19:21)</p>
	April 19	2 Samuel 21 - 22	<p>“The LORD rewarded me according to my righteousness.” (2 Samuel 22:21)</p>
	April 20	2 Samuel 23 - 24	<p>“He who rules over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God.” (2 Samuel 23:3)</p>
	April 21	1 Kings 1 - 2	<p>“Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet anoint him king of Israel.” (1 Kings 1:34)</p>
	April 22	1 Kings 3 - 4	<p>“Give to Your servant an understanding heart to judge Your people, that I may discern between good and evil. For who is able to judge this great people of Yours?” (1 Kings 3:9)</p>
	April 23	1 Kings 5 - 7	<p>“Now the house which King Solomon built for the LORD, its length was sixty cubits, its width twenty and its height thirty cubits.” (1 Kings 6:2)</p>

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Starting Point for Discussion

Shimei’s action is a serious offense. “Do not touch My anointed ones, and do My prophets no harm” (1 Chronicles 16:22). God expects His people to submit to His anointed, to those given spiritual authority over us. “Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you” (Hebrews 13:17).

David has acknowledged and repented of sins. How then, can he claim to be righteous? First, the Lord rewards those who seek to be faithful to Him (1 Samuel 26:23). Second, David prophetically looked forward to the righteousness that would be imputed to him by Jesus Christ. Likewise, we should embrace and accept by faith the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ. “By one Man’s obedience many will be made righteous” (Romans 5:19).

A Godly leader is a just ruler, not a demanding tyrant. A Godly leader serves his constituency as he leads. Our best example of Biblical rulership is Jesus Christ, the only Potentate and King of kings (1 Timothy 6:15). Despite Christ’s supreme sovereignty, He came to serve His people: “the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve” (Matthew 20:28). Christ-like leaders are servant-leaders.

“There is no authority except from God” (Romans 13:1). In 1 Kings 1:5 Adonijah attempted to exalt himself, to promote himself as the successor to King David. But, God alone establishes those in authority according to His good pleasure and will.

Solomon’s prayer is a prototypical prayer for those placed in positions of authority by God. Solomon did not pray for riches, for power or for destruction of his enemies. Instead, Solomon prayed for wisdom -- so that he could rule over God’s people. This prayer is in God’s word as an example to us. “All these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition” (1 Corinthians 10:11).

Unlike pagan temples, Solomon’s temple contained no idols. At the center of the temple constructed by Solomon (as well as the tabernacle constructed in the wilderness) was the ark of the covenant containing the ten commandments of God. God’s law should be at the center of our worship of God even today. “For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments” (1 John 5:3).

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✓	Day	Scripture Reading	Scripture to Discuss
	April 24	1 Kings 8	<p>“There is no one who does not sin.” (1 Kings 8:46)</p>
	April 25	1 Kings 9 - 11	<p>“Why has the LORD done thus to this land and to this house? Then they will answer, because they forsook the LORD their God . . . and have embraced other gods, and worshiped them and served them.” (1 Kings 9:8-9)</p>
	April 26	1 Kings 12 - 13	<p>“If you will be a servant to these people today, and serve them, and answer them, and speak good words to them, then they will be your servants forever.” (1 Kings 12:7)</p>
	April 27	1 Kings 14 - 15	<p>“Asa did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, as did his father David.” (1 Kings 15:11)</p>

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Starting Point for Discussion

According to God’s Word, we all sin. In fact, we are conceived in sin -- original sin (see Psalm 51:5). “If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us” (1 John 1:8). To deny that we do not sin is the worst possible kind of self-deception. If we deny that we sin, we will deny our need for a Savior. “If anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world” (1 John 2:1-2). This is good news indeed!!

This nation was founded as a haven for the Christian religion. It wasn’t that long ago that many state constitutions in this country required political office holders to confess their faith in the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Today, the God of the Bible has been barred from our public school classrooms. Today, homosexuals can promote their lifestyles in those classrooms, Christians may not. Why is this country suffering from deep moral decay? Why has this nation been attacked by terrorists? Although God has not provided us with a “connect the dot” correlation between particular sins of this country and the tragedies that America has encountered, the Lord will judge a land that forsakes Him and embraces and worships other gods. May God’s Spirit lead this nation to repent for her sins.

The message from April 20th is worth repeating. Biblical leadership is servant leadership. Christ is our ultimate example. “The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve” (Matthew 20:27-28). How much better off would our families be if men were servant-husbands and servant-fathers? How much better off would our churches be if its pulpits were filled by servant-pastors? How much better off would our nation be if it had servant-politicians and judges?

A controversial paradigm in Christian theology is termed “Theonomy.” Theonomy means God’s law or the law of God. “Theonomy refers to the view that God’s law is the standard for Christian ethics” (Ethics & God’s Law, An Introduction to Theonomy by William O. Eberhard). Some reject Theonomy because they reject the notion that the Bible should be a guide to all areas of life. By rejecting Theonomy for this reason is to adopt the antithesis of the verse quoted at left and describes the man who insists on doing “what is right in his own eyes” (Judges 21:25). While Christians can legitimately debate and even disagree as to how God’s Law/Word should be applied to all areas of life, our goal should be to emulate Asa and do what is right in the eyes of the Lord. “For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments” (1 John 5:3).

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✓	Day	Scripture Reading	Scripture to Discuss
	April 28	1 Kings 16 - 18	<p>“Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the LORD, more than all who were before him.” (1 Kings 16:30)</p>
	April 29	1 Kings 19 - 20	<p>“I have reserved seven thousand in Israel, all whose knees have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him.” (1 Kings 19:18)</p>
	April 30	1 Kings 21 - 22	<p>“And he (Jehosaphat) walked in all the ways of his father Asa. He did not turn aside from them, doing what was right in the eyes of the LORD. Nevertheless the high places were not taken away, for the people offered sacrifices and burned incense on the high places.” (1 Kings 22:43)</p>
	May 1	2 Kings 1 - 3	<p>“Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.” (1 Kings 2:11)</p>

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Starting Point for Discussion

After marrying Jezebel, Ahab began worshipping his wife’s god (Baal) and provided official support for the worship of this false god by the people of God. The great King Solomon also turned his heart to other gods because of the influence of wives who worshipped other gods. Both men and women can learn from the negative example of Ahab and Solomon. “Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?” (2 Corinthians 6:14)

The King of kings and the Lord of lords requires complete submission. In Psalm 2:12 we find this command: “kiss the Son, lest He be angry.” Sinful man insists on defining God according to his sensibility or philosophy. God the Creator of all things expects us to kiss His Son. He will be angry with any person or any nation that refuses to obey this commandment.

God had commanded His people to destroy all of the hilltop Canaanite shrines. God expects complete obedience from His people. Complete obedience comes with time (called “sanctification”). We all have “high places” that God desires us to destroy - greed, anger, idolatry, humanistic philosophies, worry, etc.. It’s important to keep in mind that sanctification is a work of grace as is salvation. “Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely . . . He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it” (1 Thessalonians 5:23-24). We should all take great joy in the knowledge that the Spirit of God is at work, removing high places from our hearts and minds. “Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to God our Saviour, Who alone is wise, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever. Amen” (Jude 24-25).

Like Enoch (Genesis 5:24), Elijah does not die but is taken by God directly into heaven. In the context of all of Scripture, we know that Elijah’s ascension to heaven is an exceptional and extraordinary expression of God’s omnipotence. He is sovereign over everything, even natural laws that He established. Few Bible readers have attempted to take this extraordinary event and declare it to be normative. Yet, man often creates heretical doctrine from extraordinary Biblical events or passages by using those extraordinary passages from Scripture as precedent for a particular heresy. That’s why we look to “all Scripture” for doctrine. Let us endeavor to allow our understanding of God’s Word to formulate our doctrine, rather than insist that our doctrine formulate our understanding of God’s Word.

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✓	Day	Scripture Reading	Scripture to Discuss
	May 2	2 Kings 4 - 5	“And he (Naaman) said, ‘indeed, now I know that there is no God in all the earth, except in Israel.’ (2 Kings 5:15)
	May 3	2 Kings 6 - 8	“But Elisha was sitting in the house, and the elders were sitting with him.” (2 Kings 6:32)
	May 4	2 Kings 9 - 10	“Is it peace, Jehu? So he answered, ‘ what peace as long as the harlotries of your mother Jezebel and her witchcraft are so many?’” (2 Kings 9:22)
	May 5	2 Kings 11 - 13	“Then Jehoida made a covenant between the LORD, the king, and the people, that they should be the LORD’s people.” (2 Kings 11:17)
	May 6	2 Kings 14 - 15	“He did what was right in the sight of the LORD . . . except that the high places were not removed.” (2 Kings 15:3)

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Starting Point for Discussion

Pursuant to the instructions of a prophet of God (Elisha), the washing of the water of the Jordan river cleanses Naaman of his leprosy. As Naaman was cleansed by the washing of water according to the Word of God, we are sanctified and cleansed “with the washing of water by the word” (Ephesians 5:26).

Here, we see the king’s elders conferring with God’s prophet, Elisha. Throughout God’s Word, we see separate and distinct delegation of authority to each of three institutions: family (fathers), Church (priests and prophets) and civil government (the king and his elders). Throughout God’s Word, we see that the Church is the one institution designed by God to directly influence and guide all institutions. The Church is the one institution whose existence will transcend life on earth. Today, the Church and God’s Word have all but been banned from discourse in families and government. It is no mystery, therefore, that families and government have become more and more ungodly.

Witchcraft is a very serious sin in the eyes of God (see 1 Samuel 15:22). Yet in today’s American culture, witchcraft and the occult are viewed as harmless diversions -- even among churchgoing Christians. God is a jealous God. He not only requires us to worship Him but to worship Him only (Exodus 20:3-6).

Jehoida the priest leads God’s people and Joash the king of those people, in renewing their allegiance to the covenant made by God with the descendants of Abraham through Moses (the Mosaic covenant). With the infiltration of idol worship, it was entirely appropriate for God’s people to start afresh and rededicate themselves to God -- according to the terms of the covenant He established. When we find ourselves pursuing idols (money, fame, ways of the world, etc.), we too should renew our allegiance to God and to His covenant with us through Jesus Christ.

Several kings in the 2 chapters of today’s Scripture reading were commended for doing what was right in the sight of the Lord, yet each commendation was qualified. These kings did what was right in the eyes of God, but failed to destroy the high places. Whenever we encounter repetition in God’s Word, we should take note. What is God saying? Why does He deem it necessary to repeat something? Look back at the commentary of April 30th and prayerfully consider that exhortation again.

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✓	Day	Scripture Reading	Scripture to Discuss
	May 7	2 Kings 16 - 17	“They feared the LORD, yet served their own gods.” (2 Kings 17:33)
	May 8	2 Kings 18 - 20	“He removed the high places and broke down the sacred pillars, cut down the wooden image and broke in pieces the bronze serpent.” (2 Kings 18:4)
	May 9	2 Kings 21 - 22	“I have found the Book of the Law in the house of the LORD.” (2 Kings 22:8)
	May 10	2 Kings 23 - 25	“Surely at the commandment of the LORD this came upon Judah, to remove them from His sight because of the sins of Manasseh, according to all that he had done, and also because of the innocent blood that he had shed . . . which the LORD would not pardon.” (2 Kings 24:3-4)

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Starting Point for Discussion

The word “syncretism” refers to the attempt to combine or reconcile differing beliefs in religion or philosophy. Here, we read about God’s chosen people pursuing a syncretistic religion - combining the worship of God, creator of man, with the worship of gods, created by man. Syncretism is commonplace today. Christians of all stripes practice syncretism today when they attempt to compromise the tenets of Holy Scripture with the beliefs of humanism, paganism, radical environmentalism, etc.. Pray that the Holy Spirit reveal to you any syncretistic belief that you may hold -- confess that sin, repent and worship God only (Exodus 20:3).

Unlike his predecessors, Hezekiah not only “did what was right in the sight of the LORD” (verse 3), he reformed Judah’s worship by tearing down the shrines used in the worship of false gods. Although the bronze serpent initially was a symbol that pointed to Christ (John 3:14-15), it became an idol. Hezekiah destroyed the bronze serpent made by the Israelites pursuant to God’s instructions (Numbers 21:8-9). Anything that becomes the object of worship violates God’s law (Exodus 20:3) -- even if that object originated or was authored by God. Faith in “faith” or faith in a “method” or faith in a dead saint of God are examples of idolatrous worship that we should avoid.

In II Kings 22:8, we learn that Hilkiah the high priest “*found the Book of the Law in the house of the LORD*” (God’s Law had disappeared from society). Asa didn’t have to invent the laws that would bring about reform, he merely had to go to God’s holy law to see what it was that God required of His people. The prophetic words of Azariah confirmed that King Asa’s reforms would be successful: “*The LORD is with you while you are with Him. If you seek Him, He will be found by you; but if you forsake Him, He will forsake you*” (2 Chronicles 15:2). Would not society benefit today if we were to “find” the Book of the Law and reform society according to God’s wisdom and law?

Unlike his father Hezekiah, Manasseh “did much evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke Him to anger” (2 Kings 21:6). And, unlike the people under King Josiah (Manasseh’s successor), who “took a stand for the covenant” (2 Kings 23:3), the people under King Manasseh shed innocent blood. God found the actions of the civil ruler and the people so reprehensible, that not even the reforms of King Josiah could avert God’s judgment. Since God does not change (Malachi 3:6 and Hebrews 13:8), should America expect God’s judgment because of the evil of her rulers and the innocent blood shed by her people (millions of abortions)?

All Scripture Advocate

With Daily Commentary

“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.”

(2 Timothy 3:15-17)

✓	Day	Scripture Reading	Scripture to Discuss
	May 11	1 Chronicles 1 - 2	<p>“Shem, Arphaxad, Shelah, Eber, Peleg, Reu, Serug, Nahor, Terah, and Abram, who is Abraham. The sons of Abraham were Isaac and Ishmael.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(1 Chronicles 1:24-28)</p>
	May 12	1 Chronicles 3 - 5	<p>“He (God) heeded their prayer, because they put their trust in Him.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(1 Chronicles 5:20)</p>
	May 13	1 Chronicles 6 - 7	<p>“The sons of Levi were Gershon, Kohath, and Merari. The sons of Kohath were . . .”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(1 Chronicles 6:1)</p>
	May 14	1 Chronicles 8 - 10	<p>“So Saul died for his unfaithfulness to the LORD, because he did not keep the word of the LORD, and also because he consulted with a medium for guidance. But he did not inquire of the LORD; therefore He killed him., and turned the kingdom over to David the son of Jesse.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(1 Chronicles 10:13-14)</p>

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Starting Point for Discussion

The genealogies of 1 Chronicles establish and depict God’s election and the continuity of God’s covenant with mankind through men whom God chose. God chooses Shem from among Noah’s sons as the son through whom His special, covenant people would come. Likewise, God chooses (in fact He predestines) Isaac rather than Ishmael as the heir of the covenant of grace God made with Abraham (Genesis 17:18-21). We should be thankful for Christ through whom we are also heirs of the covenant of grace: “if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise” (Galatians 3:29).

When we pray, we should trust God to answer our prayers according to His will for us. To trust God means that we do not doubt God. When we ask God for wisdom, we are instructed to pray without doubting (James 1:5-6). Because we trust in Christ our High Priest, we have an advocate and mediator at the right-hand of God the Father. Not only can we put our trust in God, but we can “come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need” (Hebrews 4:16). Thanks be to God!

In chapter 6 of 1st Chronicles, we find a lengthy account of the tribe of Levi. Since we know that all of Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable, what are we to deduce from lengthy accounts such as this and other genealogies? We should at the very least recognize what God views as important and observe the extent of His detailed oversight of His creation. In this account of the tribe of Levi, we see the importance that God places on worship and His priesthood. The Israel of God now looks to Christ, our High Priest after the order of Melchizedek rather than the order of Levi (Hebrews 6:10).

From the beginning, God made it clear to man that death was the consequence of sin. “Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat, but of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die” (Genesis 2:16-17). God’s infallible Word tells us that God killed Saul because of his sin. God still punishes the sin of man with death. However, because of the death of His only begotten Son, God gives the ultimate gift to mankind. “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our LORD” (Romans 6:23). Man can be saved from the eternal consequence of sin one way and only one way: “if you confess with your mouth the LORD Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved” (Romans 10:9).

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✓	Day	Scripture Reading	Scripture to Discuss
	May 15	1 Chronicles 11 - 13	<p>“The sons of Issachar . . . had understanding of the times.” (1 Chronicles 12:32)</p>
	May 16	1 Chronicles 14 - 16	<p>“Remember His covenant forever, the word which He commanded, for a thousand generations.” (1 Chronicles 16:15)</p>
	May 17	1 Chronicles 17 - 20	<p>“I will be his (David) Father, and he shall be My son . . . and his throne shall be established forever.” (1 Chronicles 17:13-14)</p>

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Starting Point for Discussion

All Scripture Advocate promotes the reading of all of God’s Word. Reading God’s Word helps us develop a vocabulary for prayer -- for talking with God. This is one of the primary benefits of daily reading His Word. We know that God was quite pleased when Solomon prayerfully requested wisdom (1 Kings 3:9). We know that God encourages us to pray for wisdom (James 1:5). In this verse of Scripture, buried in the midst of genealogies, we learn that the sons of Issachar were able to discern the times. From God’s Word, therefore, we know that an appropriate prayer request would include something along these lines: ‘ . . . LORD, thank you for your Word and the wisdom contained therein. Help me to fear You and keep Your commandments. Grant me wisdom and the ability to understand the times in which I live, like the sons of Issachar, I pray . . . in Jesus Holy name. Amen.’

Can you recite the 10 commandments - or at least paraphrase the 10 commandments? The vast majority of God’s covenant people would answer this question negatively. How do we “remember His covenant forever” if we cannot even remember the basic outline of the requirements of His covenant? If you are unable to memorize God’s 10 commandments (not suggestions) from either Exodus 20 or Deuteronomy 5, try memorizing this abridged listing of God’s 10 Words:

- 1) Thou shalt not have any other gods before me.
- 2) Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image.
- 3) Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain.
- 4) Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.
- 5) Honor thy father and thy mother.
- 6) Thou shalt not murder.
- 7) Thou shalt not commit adultery.
- 8) Thou shalt not steal.
- 9) Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.
- 10) Thou shalt not covet.

King Jesus, the only begotten Son of God, kept the conditions of His Father’s covenant perfectly. Christ also fulfills this prophetic promise. He has come and He will come. “Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory” (Matthew 25:30). We should recognize what Christ has fulfilled historically and, by faith, look forward to what Christ will fulfill prophetically.

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✓	Day	Scripture Reading	Scripture to Discuss
	May 18	1 Chronicles 21 - 23	<p>“Now Satan stood up against Israel, and moved David to number Israel.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(1 Chronicles 21:1)</p>
	May 19	1 Chronicles 24 - 26	<p>“Ammiel the sixth, Issachar the seventh, Peulthai the eighth; for God blessed him.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(1 Chronicles 26:5)</p>
	May 20	1 Chronicles 27 - 29	<p>“The LORD searches all hearts and understands all the intent of the thoughts. If you seek Him, He will be found by you; but if you forsake Him, He will cast you off forever.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(1 Chronicles 28:9)</p>
	May 21	2 Chronicles 1 - 3	<p>“Wisdom and knowledge are granted to you; and I will give you riches and wealth and honor.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(2 Chronicles 1:12)</p>
	May 22	2 Chronicles 4 - 6	<p>“There is no one who does not sin.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(2 Chronicles 6:36)</p>

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Starting Point for Discussion

According to 2 Samuel 24:1, God moved David to take the census. In the book of James we read: “Let no one say when he is tempted, ‘I am tempted by God’; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed” (James 1:13-14). Taking all of these Scriptures together, we conclude that God employs people and beings under His sovereign control to do His bidding. These passages together tell us that God is sovereign over all events, including temptation and sin. Yet, He Himself tempts no one.

According to the accepted “success paradigm” of today’s culture, parents need to limit the number of children in order to achieve success. God views children much differently. Children are a sign of God’s blessing. As the heathen limit the number of children (or much worse - abort them) according to their autonomous reasoning, the people of faith in the God of the Bible are blessed by Him with children numbered according to His providence. As bleak as the condition of the Church and society may seem at times, the long-term view remains positive -- God’s people will be increasing in numbers as the heathen decrease.

God deals with mankind by way of covenant. If we seek Him, we will find Him. If we obey Him, we receive His blessings (Deuteronomy 28:1-14). If we disobey Him, we receive His cursings (Deuteronomy 28:15 - 68). The new covenant is a better covenant than the old one for two key reasons: 1) God’s laws are no longer written on tablets of stone but on our hearts and minds (Hebrews 8:10) and 2) “Jesus has become a surety of (that) better covenant” (Hebrews 7:22).

Solomon’s wisdom was and is well known. The source of Solomon’s wisdom was and is also well known. Solomon’s divinely bestowed wisdom foreshadows the Wisdom of God incarnate in Jesus Christ “in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Colossians 2:3). The wisdom of Christ is available to all students of all of Scripture: “in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God . . . and the Word became flesh and dwelt among us” (John 1:1, 14).

“If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves” (1 John 1:8). Not only do we need to admit our sinfulness, we must recognize that we cannot pay the price for that sin. But, thanks be to God, Christ is the “propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world” (1 John 2:2).

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✓	Day	Scripture Reading	Scripture to Discuss
	May 23	2 Chronicles 7 - 9	<p>“If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.” (2 Chronicles 7:4)</p>
	May 24	2 Chronicles 10 - 13	<p>“King Rehoboam rejected the advice of the elders, and he spoke to them according to the advice of the young men.” (2 Chronicles 10:13)</p>
	May 25	2 Chronicles 14 - 17	<p>“They entered into a covenant to seek the LORD God of their fathers with all their heart and with all their soul . . . and the LORD gave them rest all around.” (2 Chronicles 15:12 & 15)</p>
	May 26	2 Chronicles 18 - 20	<p>“The LORD said . . . ‘I will go out and be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets’.” (2 Chronicles 18:21)</p>

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Starting Point for Discussion

Once again, we see that God deals with His people through covenant. God’s covenant dealings with man can often be seen as divine “if - then” propositions. If you do XYZ, then God will do ABC. This formulation of covenant theology should not be construed to mean that God is beholden to man -- that if we do XYZ that God must do ABC, according to our good pleasure and will. Absolutely not! But, God does honor His covenant -- both negatively and positively. **IF** we who are called by His name humble ourselves, and pray and seek His face, **THEN** He will hear from heaven and forgive our sins and heal our land!!!

“In the multitude of counselors there is safety” (Proverbs 11:14). This pearl of Godly wisdom does not mean that we seek counsel until we hear what we want to hear. Furthermore, wise counsel generally comes from older, wiser and more experienced men -- not from the “wisdom” of our peers (also known as “pooled ignorance”).

One of the most remarkable benefits of God’s covenant dealings with man is how God manifests His mercy through covenant renewal. That is, when we violate the terms of God’s covenant, God will honor our renewal of our covenant with God -- if that renewal is pursued with all of our hearts and all of our souls. If all chaos has broken out around us, then we may need to renew our covenant with God -- to once again love God with all our heart, with all our soul and with all of our mind (Matthew 22:37).

Compare this verse of Scripture with this: “God is not a man, that He should lie” (Numbers 23:19). How should we view apparent contradictions of Scripture like this? Should we try to determine which verse is true and which is false? Obviously, God **either** does not lie **or** He can lie. This type of thinking will confuse and deceive the reader of God’s Word. The key to understanding apparent contradictions is not in “either - or” thinking, but in “both-and” thinking. That is, **both** 2 Chronicles 18:21 **and** Numbers 23:19 are true -- it’s not a matter of either 2 Chronicles 18:21 or Numbers 23:19 being true. Today’s verse of Scripture demonstrates to us that God’s sovereignty extends to all events that happen in heaven and on earth. God does not tempt man (James 4:13), but the tempter is subject to the sovereignty of God (Job 1:13-22). Why God permits lying spirits, temptation and evil is simply beyond our ability to understand the secret things of God (Deuteronomy 29:29). We simply need to trust our sovereign and omniscient God.

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✓	Day	Scripture Reading	Scripture to Discuss
	May 27	2 Chronicles 21 - 24	<p>“The LORD would not destroy the house of David, because of the covenant He had made with David, and since He had promised to give a lamp to him and to his sons forever.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(2 Chronicles 21:7)</p>
	May 28	2 Chronicles 25 - 27	<p>“God has power to help and to overthrow.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(2 Chronicles 25:8)</p>
	May 29	2 Chronicles 28 - 30	<p>“And Hezekiah sent to all Israel and Judah . . . that they should come to the house of the LORD at Jerusalem, to keep the Passover to the LORD God of Israel.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(2 Chronicles 30:1)</p>
	May 30	2 Chronicles 31 - 33	<p>“Then Manasseh knew that the LORD was God.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(2 Chronicles 33:13)</p>
	May 31	2 Chronicles 34 - 36	<p>“Josiah . . . did what was right in the sight of the LORD, and walked in the ways of his father David; he did not turn aside to the right hand or to the left.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(2 Chronicles 34:1-2)</p>

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Starting Point for Discussion

God’s covenant faithfulness extends beyond man’s faithfulness. Only God’s great mercy explains why we do not immediately suffer the negative sanctions of covenant unfaithfulness. The ultimate expression of our heavenly Father’s covenant mercy is Jesus Christ. “But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ” (Ephesians 2:4). Those that fear God will always be thankful for His mercy, but never presume upon that mercy. May the Spirit of God enable us to walk this fine line.

Selah! (Meditate on this.) Men and nations often lose sight of this. No matter our might or ability or intellect, God alone can guarantee our “success” or “failure.” As long as we seek the LORD, God will cause us to prosper. (See 2 Chronicles 26:5).

In Hezekiah, we see a king who not only recognized the importance of obeying God (“he did what was right in the sight of the LORD”), we observe a king who recognized the importance of worshipping God. We express our love of God through our obedience (1 John 5:3) and our worship. “Worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him” (John 4:23).

Manasseh was a king who “did evil in the sight of the LORD” (2 Chronicles 33:2) but who eventually repented and restored his relationship with God. “He implored the LORD his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers” (2 Chronicles 33:12). While acknowledging that the hearts of civil rulers are in the hand of the LORD (Proverbs 21:1), the turn of Manasseh’s heart from evil should encourage us as we intercede and pray for those in authority over us (see 1 Timothy 2:1-2).

Like Hezekiah before him, Josiah’s reforms centered on 2 things: 1) obedience to God’s law and 2) worship of God. Obedience and worship of God go hand in hand. We cannot worship God in spirit and truth if we do not obey God’s Spirit and Word. “. . . those who keep the words of this book. Worship God.” (Revelation 22:9).

Obedience and worship of God should be the joyful response of those who once were dead in trespasses and sins but were made alive by the God through Christ Jesus our LORD. (See Ephesians 2:1)

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✓	Day	Scripture Reading	Scripture to Discuss
	June 1	Ezra 1 - 2	<p>“Now these are the people of the province who came back from the captivity, of those who had been carried away.” (Ezra 2:1)</p>
	June 2	Ezra 3 - 5	<p>“There have also been mighty kings over Jerusalem, who have ruled over all the region beyond the River; and tax, tribute, and custom were paid to them.” (Ezra 4:20)</p>
	June 3	Ezra 6 - 7	<p>“For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the Law of the LORD, and to do it.” (Ezra 7:10)</p>
	June 4	Ezra 8 - 9	<p>“Should we again break Your commandments . . .? Would You not be angry with us until You had consumed us, so that there would be no remnant or survivor?” (Ezra 9:14)</p>
	June 5	Ezra 10	<p>“We have trespassed against our God, and have taken pagan wives from the peoples of the land.” (Ezra 10:2)</p>

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Starting Point for Discussion

The 70 verses of chapter 2 of Ezra demonstrate that God Almighty is a personal God, knowing each of His people by name. All people are part of God’s plan of redemption, small and great. All people have a gift from God to use for His glory and kingdom’s sake. “Each one has his own gift from God, one in this manner and another in that.” (1 Corinthians 7:7)

The consequences for covenant unfaithfulness linger. Unlike the time when nations paid tribute to Israel as under the rule of David and Solomon, God’s chosen people must now submit to ungodly rulers -- paying taxes and tribute. God’s people returned to the promised land and worked to rebuild the temple. The rebuilding of the temple is resisted by enemies of God’s people. Christians who work to rebuild and reform society according to God’s Law/Word should likewise expect opposition (and ultimate, long-term success).

God desires us to do what we read (hear) in His Word. “Be doers of the word, and not hearers only” (James 1:22). In order to be doers, we need to prepare our hearts to act upon the Word we read (hear). We prepare our hearts with prayer (1 Thessalonians 5:17 and, on occasion, with fasting (Psalm 35:13).

Ezra does not presume upon God’s mercy. In fact, Ezra expresses concern that Israel’s unfaithfulness to the terms of God’s covenant could cause God to completely forsake the Old Testament Church of God. God’s judgment upon sin is both good and severe (Romans 11:22-23) and would be so upon the nation of Israel. Nevertheless, a remnant of grace did receive God’s mercy despite His judgment upon Israel (Romans 11:5-6). Let us not presume upon God’s mercy, but be ever thankful for His grace to love and obey God and His Law/Word.

Disobedience of God’s law has consequences. God forbids a member of the Old Testament Church from marrying outside of the Israel of God (Deuteronomy 7:3-4). We witness the adverse consequences experienced by Israel’s kings for violating this law. Old Testament laws continue in full force and effect unless rescinded by the New Testament (Matthew 5:17). We should pay special attention to Old Testament laws that are reiterated in the New Testament -- like the law concerning marriage. “Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?” (2 Corinthians 6:14)

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✓	Day	Scripture Reading	Scripture to Discuss
	June 6	Nehemiah 1 - 3	<p>“O great and awesome God, You who keep Your covenant and mercy with those who love You and observe Your commandments, please let Your ear be attentive and Your eyes open, that You may hear the prayer of Your servant.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Nehemiah 1:5-6)</p>
	June 7	Nehemiah 4 - 6	<p>“Hear, O our God, for we are despised; turn their reproach on their own heads, and give them as plunder to a land of captivity.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Nehemiah 4:4)</p>
	June 8	Nehemiah 7 - 8	<p>“Then all the people answered, “Amen. Amen!” while lifting up their hands . . . and worshiped the LORD.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Nehemiah 8:6)</p>
	June 9	Nehemiah 9 - 10	<p>“Now therefore, our God, the great, the mighty, and awesome God, Who keeps covenant and mercy.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Nehemiah 9:32)</p>
	June 10	Nehemiah 11 - 12	<p>“All Israel gave the portions for the singers and the gatekeepers, a portion for each day.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Nehemiah 12:47)</p>

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Starting Point for Discussion

God is both transcendent and near. He is both the sovereign God over all creation and the personal God who hears the prayers of His covenant people. What an incredible privilege to be able to pray to this great and awesome God. Do we pray as Nehemiah did? God encourages us to pray with confidence: “let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace in time of need.” (Hebrews 4:16) No wonder Scripture encourages us to rejoice always and to pray without ceasing (1 Thessalonians 5:16-17).

God’s Word provides us with much instruction about prayer -- how, what and why. Here, Nehemiah demonstrates that Biblical prayer can involve both blessing and cursing. That is, we can ask God to curse His/our enemies. In the book of Psalms we find both prayers to vindicate the elect of God and to punish the wicked (see Psalm 69:22-28 for an example).

You may characterize raising of hands in prayer and worship as something Charismatic Christians do. And, you would be right. But, raising of hands in prayer and worship is something that Biblical Christians should also be willing to do. Here, we see God’s people raising their hands to God in response to Ezra’s reading of God’s Law. Lest you think raising hands is an “Old Testament tradition,” consider this verse from the New Testament. “I desire therefore that the men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting” (1 Timothy 2:8).

What does Scripture mean when it states that God keeps covenant and mercy. Anyone who has ever prayed to God for forgiveness or help in time of trouble knows that God is “rich in mercy” (Ephesians 2:4). A God Who keeps covenant is a God that is also just -- blessing faithfulness and cursing disobedience. In fact, in response to the reading of God’s law, the people acknowledge God’s just dealing with them for their wickedness: “You are just in all that has befallen us; for You have dealt faithfully, but we have done wickedly” (Nehemiah 9:33).

At the end of chapter 12 of Nehemiah, we see all of Israel honoring their pledge to not neglect the house of God made in Nehemiah 10:39. Shouldn’t the Israel of God likewise keep this pledge today? “And let us consider one another . . . not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some” (Hebrews 10:24-25).

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✓	Day	Scripture Reading	Scripture to Discuss
	June 11	Nehemiah 13	<p>“So it was, when they had heard the Law, that they separated all the mixed multitude from Israel.”</p> <p>(Nehemiah 13:3)</p>
	June 12	Esther 1 - 3	<p>“Esther had not revealed her people or family.”</p> <p>(Esther 2:10)</p>
	June 13	Esther 4 - 7	<p>“Who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?”</p> <p>(Esther 4:14)</p>
	June 14	Esther 8 - 10	<p>“Many of the people of the land became Jews, because fear of the Jews fell upon them.”</p> <p>(Esther 8:17)</p>
	June 15	Job 1 - 4	<p>“The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; Blessed be the name of the LORD.”</p> <p>(Job 1:21)</p>

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Starting Point for Discussion

Ezra was no longer on the scene, but his labor (reading and teaching God’s law) continues to bear fruit. So, as parents obey God’s Word to teach His law to their children, those children will bear fruit long after the parents are no longer on the scene. “And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you sit down, and when you rise up” (Deuteronomy 6:6-7).

By God’s providence, Esther was God’s “secret agent” (i.e. King Ahasuerus did not know that Esther was a Jew) until God’s chosen people needed a deliverer. As we pray for “all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence” (1 Timothy 2:2), our intercession should include prayers for God’s “secret agents” that have positions of influence with those in authority.

The events of Esther’s life have been providentially ordered. Mordecai seems to recognize this, going so far as to suggest that Esther’s lot in life was for such a time as this. God is sovereign. His providence determines the “fate” of men and women. As we live our lives by faith through grace, we can trust our sovereign God to direct us towards those time(s) when we will be used of God “for such a time as this.”

Through Esther, God saved the Jews from Haman’s conspiracy against them. The deliverance of the Jews also caused “the people of the land” to fear the Jews and be converted to Judaism. We should not view God as just a God of love. For He is also a God that should be feared. “And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell” (Matthew 10:28).

The book of Job is primarily a book about faith. The faith of Job described in today’s verse of Scripture soon turns to despair. But, in the end, Job’s endures all of the tests of his faith, not because Job is some superman of faith, but because of the very nature of true faith in God.

1) Faith is a gift from God. *“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.”* (Ephesians 2:8)

2) God’s faithfulness. Job endures to the end because of God’s faithfulness: *“Let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith.”* (Hebrews 12:1)

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“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.”

(2 Timothy 3:15-17)

✓	Day	Scripture Reading	Scripture to Discuss
	June 16	Job 5 - 8	<p>“Behold, happy is the man whom God corrects; therefore, do not despise the chastening of the Almighty.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Job 5:17)</p>
	June 17	Job 9 - 12	<p>“Nor is there any mediator between us.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Job 9:33)</p>
	June 18	Job 13 - 16	<p>“Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him. Even so, I will defend my own ways before Him.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Job 13:35)</p>
	June 19	Job 17 - 20	<p>“I know that my Redeemer lives, and He shall stand at last on the earth.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Job 19:25)</p>
	June 20	Job 21 - 24	<p>“He knows the way that I take; when He has tested me, I shall come forth as gold.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Job 23:10)</p>

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Starting Point for Discussion

This statement by Job’s “friend” Eliphaz is an accurate statement of Biblical truth. “My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD. Nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; For whom the LORD loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives.” (Hebrews 12:5-6) But this Biblical truth in incorrectly applied to Job’s case. Job’s friends believe that man suffers only as a consequence of sin. While it is true that sin can be a cause of suffering, a sovereign God employs trials and tribulation according to His good pleasure and will. “My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience.” (James 1:2)

In his despair, Job yearns for a mediator. Sinful man needs someone to arbitrate between himself and God. That mediator, of course, is Jesus Christ. “For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all” (1 Timothy 2:5).

In this one verse we see the conflict between the old man and the new man. The old man tries to justify and defend himself before God as the first Adam did in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:12). The first part of the verse at left contains perhaps the greatest utterance of faith recorded in Scripture -- an expression of the new man in Christ. God exhorts us to put on the new man we see in this verse. “Put off the old man with his deeds, and . . . put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him” (Colossians 3:9-10).

Despite what Job’s friends believe, God will vindicate Job, not accuse or curse him. In Galatians 4:4-5 we see the fulfillment of Job’s prophetic utterance of faith. “When the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.”

Job has not lost faith. He recognizes the sovereignty of God in his testing and understands, by faith, that the outcome of his testing by God will be glorious. “Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the LORD has promised to those who love Him” (James 1:12).

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✓	Day	Scripture Reading	Scripture to Discuss
	June 21	Job 25 - 29	<p>“Behold, the fear of the LORD, that is wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding.” (Job 28:28)</p>
	June 22	Job 30 - 33	<p>“I have made a covenant with my eyes.” (Job 31:1)</p>
	June 23	Job 34 - 37	<p>“Teach me what I do not see.” (Job 34:32)</p>
	June 24	Job 38 - 40	<p>“Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth?” (Job 38:4)</p>

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Starting Point for Discussion

As we read through all of Scripture, we recognize that God’s Word is replete with wisdom, knowledge and understanding. How do we acquire that wisdom, knowledge and understanding? The answer is simple and clear. “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom” (Proverbs 1:7). What does it mean to fear God? The answer to that question is also clear. “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; a good understanding have all those who do His commandments” (Psalm 111:10). To fear God, means to obey His commandments. The by-product of Godly obedience is wisdom, knowledge and understanding.

We find this wisdom in the book of Proverbs. “Let your eyes look straight ahead, and your eyelids look right before you. Ponder the path of your feet, and let all your ways be established.” (Proverbs 4:25-26) The world and culture around us contain much to tempt us. Often, we encounter these temptations by what we see with our eyes. “Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world -- the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life -- is not of the Father but is of the world.” (1 John 2:15-16) We should do as Job did and make a covenant with our eyes, looking straight ahead and not allowing the lust of our eyes to cause us to sin by veering to either side of God’s pathway.

God desires that we profit from whatever trials He providentially brings across our path. Our struggles during times of testing often revolve around our inability to see what God desires to teach us through the trial. A well-known and often-quoted verse of Scripture reassures us that wisdom is available from God for the asking: “if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach.” (James 1:5) But, this assurance is given in the context of God’s exhortation to us concerning trials. “My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience . . . that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.” (James 1:2-4) So, when we are tested, in addition to praying for deliverance, we should ask God to “teach me what I do not see.”

In God’s reply to Job, He does not mention Job’s suffering nor explain why Job suffers. God’s bottom-line is that He is the Creator and He alone is sovereign. “Therefore, let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to Him in doing good, as to a faithful Creator.” (1 Peter 4:19)

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✓	Day	Scripture Reading	Scripture to Discuss
	June 25	Job 41 - 42	<p>“And the LORD restored Job’s losses when he prayed for his friends.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Job 42:10)</p>
	June 26	Psalms 1 - 9	<p>“Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful; but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night. He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water . . . and whatever he does shall prosper.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Psalm 1:1-3)</p>
	June 27	Psalms 10 - 17	<p>“The LORD tests the righteous, but the wicked and the one who loves violence His soul hates.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Psalm 11:5)</p>
	June 28	Psalms 18 - 22	<p>“Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD, my strength and my Redeemer.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Psalm 19:14)</p>

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Starting Point for Discussion

In the final chapter of the book of Job, we observe Job’s repentance and restoration. But, we also observe a principle that would be profoundly profitable to us spiritually and practically if we were to daily apply that principle. Job’s prayer for his detractors, complies with our LORD’s commandment: “love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you” (Matthew 5:44). Prayer for our adversaries is perhaps the most potent antidote to the poison of bitterness (Acts 8:23).

Webster’s New World Dictionary defines a fanatic as someone who is excessively and unreasonably enthusiastic or zealous. Christian disciples are often described as fanatics. Why? Because disciples of Christ avoid walking in the counsel of those who label us as fanatics (which irritates them) and because we delight in the law of the LORD (which makes them feel guilty) and because we meditate on God’s Law/Word day and night (which intimidates them). The bad news -- we will be called fanatics by those who hate God. The good news -- whatever we do shall prosper. As always, the good news of God’s Word trumps the bad news of man’s world.

“God hates the sin, but loves the sinner.” How often have we heard this characterization of God? Perhaps, you’ve even heard this uttered from the pulpit. Here, we find Scripture describing God as hating the wicked. Man too often attempts to define God in his image, rather than allowing his image of God to be defined by His Word. God hates the wicked. Wicked man should be that much more thankful that “mercy triumphs over judgment” (James 2:13).

Memorize these words. Pray these words to your Redeemer. If the meditations of our heart are acceptable to God, then the words that flow from the heart and the actions that are born in the mind will be acceptable to God. Read God’s Word, pray His Word, do His Word . . . and whatever we do shall prosper (Psalm 1:3).

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✓	Day	Scripture Reading	Scripture to Discuss
	June 29	Psalms 23 - 30	“The LORD is my shepherd.” (Psalm 23:1)
	June 30	Psalms 31 - 35	“The righteous cry out, and the LORD hears, and delivers them out of their troubles.” (Psalm 34:17)
	July 1	Psalms 36 - 39	“Delight yourself also in the LORD, and He shall give you the desires of your heart.” (Psalm 37:4)
	July 2	Psalms 40 - 45	“I delight to do Your will, O my God, and Your law is within my heart.” (Psalm 40:8)
	July 3	Psalms 46 - 51	“Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.” (Psalm 51:10)

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Starting Point for Discussion

From perhaps the best known psalm is one of the richest Biblical images of God -- that of a shepherd. Sheep are totally dependant upon their shepherd for all of their needs. Jesus Christ is revealed as the good shepherd in John 10:11 -- “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep.” As the metaphor of Psalm 23 instructs us, we can confidently trust in our Good Shepherd and know that “surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever” (Psalm 23:6).

The book of Psalms provides us with many examples of prayer and many reasons that we can be confident that God will hear those prayers. In this verse, we see that God hears the prayers of the righteous and “delivers them out of their troubles.” But, our confidence is not a by-product of our righteousness, but the righteousness of Jesus Christ. “He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Corinthians 5:21).

A shallow and self-centered view of this verse of Scripture would “claim” this promise of God “in faith” and prayerfully petition God to provide whatever desire our heart conceives. But, if we delight ourselves in the LORD, we should pray that the very desires of our heart will be put there by God, enabling us to ask God for only those things that please Him. “Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him.” (1 John 5:14-15)

By meditating on God’s law day and night (Psalm 1:2), we take God’s law which He wrote on tablets of stone and write them on tablets of flesh, that is the heart. “You are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of flesh, that is, of the heart.” (2 Corinthians 3:3) Having been written on heart by the Holy Spirit, God gives us a new desire and ability to obey Him. Praise be to our God!!

The elect of God can humbly pray Psalm 51 to God, repenting of sin, knowing that “if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (1 John 1:9) As we repent of our sins, we also recognize that our desires and thoughts can only be sanctified by the intervention of God, Who alone can keep us from stumbling again in sin. (Jude 24-25)

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✓	Day	Scripture Reading	Scripture to Discuss
	July 4	Psalms 52 - 59	<p>“The fool has said in his heart, ‘there is no God.’” (Psalm 53:1)</p>
	July 5	Psalms 60 - 66	<p>“For You, O God, have tested us; You have refined us as silver is refined.” (Psalm 66:10)</p>
	July 6	Psalms 67 - 71	<p>“Blessed be the LORD, Who daily loads us with benefits, the God of our salvation.” (Psalm 68:19)</p>
	July 7	Psalms 72 - 77	<p>“God is the Judge: He puts down one, and exalts another.” (Psalm 75:7)</p>
	July 8	Psalms 78 - 80	<p>“That they may set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments.” (Psalm 78:7)</p>

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Starting Point for Discussion

Jesus Christ gave both of the following commands. (1) “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 28:18-19). (2) “Do not give what is holy to the dogs; nor cast your pearls before swine” (Matthew 7:6). On one hand, Christ commands us to evangelize. On the other hand, Christ recognizes that some who hear His good news will respond as fools. Rather than despair in the reaction of fools, we should trust the sovereignty of God with regard to the salvation of His elect. See Romans 8:28-30.

The book of Psalms is filled with prayers to God for mercy, for deliverance and even prayers of cursing against enemies. But, the sovereign cause of all testing is God Himself -- Who refines us as silver. We know that it is “God who tests our hearts” (1 Thessalonians 2:4) and that God exhorts us to “count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience” (James 1:2).

To every saint who is in Christ Jesus, Scripture tells us that “God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:19). Elsewhere in Scripture, God promises that the blessings of God will overtake us, if we “diligently obey the voice of the LORD” (Deuteronomy 28:1). So, when we read that the LORD “daily loads us with benefits,” we should recognize that this tremendous blessing is consistent with all of Scripture.

God not only created the world, He rules it. He alone determines what shall stand and who shall rule. “The LORD is our Judge. The LORD is our Lawgiver. The LORD is our King.” (Isaiah 33:22). “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.” (Matthew 28:18) How foolish is the man that thinks that he can isolate the God of Scripture from the affairs of state or any part of His world. The United States is one nation under God, not because our currency declares it, but because God the Creator has declared it in His Word.

The Bible does not present a record of the works of God to satisfy intellectual curiosity about God’s history. The Bible presents a record of the works of God to present His story of redemption. “Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law” (Galatians 3:13). [Once again, this does not mean that we’re free to disobey God’s law. See 1 John 5:3.]

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✓	Day	Scripture Reading	Scripture to Discuss
	July 9	Psalms 81 - 87	<p>“Teach me Your way, O LORD; I will walk in Your truth; unite my heart to fear Your name.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Psalm 86:11)</p>
	July 10	Psalms 88 - 91	<p>“A thousand years in Your sight are like yesterday when it is past.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Psalm 90:4)</p>
	July 11	Psalms 92 - 100	<p>“You were to them God-Who-Forgives, though You took vengeance on their deeds.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Psalm 99:8)</p>
	July 12	Psalms 101 - 105	<p>“He has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor punished us according to our iniquities.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Psalm 103:10)</p>

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Starting Point for Discussion

As we meditate upon the excellencies of the LORD, “Who daily loads us with benefits” (Psalm 68:18), a disciple of Jesus Christ desires to walk perfectly in His ways and the truth revealed in His Word. We cannot possibly achieve this goal with a divided heart. When we give Christ all of our hearts (our hearts are united to fear His name), we have this confidence: (a) “Christ in (us), the hope of glory” (Colossians 1:27) and (b) “He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it” (1 Thessalonians 5:24).

The prophet Isaiah declares: “for as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts” (Isaiah 55:9). One of the reasons man’s thoughts cannot possibly ascend to the level of God’s thoughts is that man is constrained by time, God is not. For example, whether a man dies at age 10 or 100 has great significance from man’s perspective of time -- but has no time-significance from God’s eternal perspective. How has or does your limited perspective of time interfere with your ability to believe, trust and obey God? “Beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the LORD one day is a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day” (2 Peter 3:8).

On one hand, we know that God is “faithful to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). On the other hand, we know that “whom the LORD loves He chastens” (Hebrews 12:6). A loving father proves his love for a child by forgiving and forgetting the sin of a child while correcting/punishing the sin - - to train the child and for the child’s long-term good. We should never presume upon God-Who-Forgives and conclude that we can sin with impunity -- because this God-Who-Forgives will love us as only our Father in heaven can, by forgiving AND chastening us.

In yesterday’s commentary, we observed that God both forgives and chastens. Today, we see that God does not punish us as our sins deserve. Again, we should never presume upon God’s mercy as a license to sin. Instead, we should always “enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise” (Psalm 100:4). What an awesome thing it is to be among God’s elect, knowing that God has promised not to punish us according to our iniquities.

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✓	Day	Scripture Reading	Scripture to Discuss
	July 13	Psalms 106 - 107	<p>“Oh, give thanks to the LORD for He is good! For His mercy endures forever. Let the redeemed of the LORD say so.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Psalm 107:1-2)</p>
	July 14	Psalms 108 - 118	<p>“Blessed is the man who fears the LORD, who delights in His commandments.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Psalm 112:1)</p>
	July 15	Psalm 119	<p>“I will meditate on Your precepts, and contemplate Your ways. I will delight myself in Your statutes; I will not forget Your word.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Psalm 119:15-16)</p>
	July 16	Psalms 120 - 131	<p>“In my distress I cried to the LORD, and He heard me.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Psalm 120:1)</p>

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Starting Point for Discussion

In each of the last two days, *All Scripture Advocate's* commentary has centered on the God-Who-forgives. Both chapters of today's Scripture reading focus on what our response should be to that forgiveness: (1) joy and (2) thanksgiving. God's elect can be joyfully and thankfully confident of the forgiveness and mercies of God and "say so." Our confidence should be rooted in God's covenant faithfulness: "for their sake He remembered His covenant, and relented according to the multitude of His mercies" (Psalm 106:44). "Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name" (Hebrews 13:15).

The requirements of God's law are not burdensome to the man who reveres God and regards with great awe the Creator of all things seen and unseen. There are both positive and negative sanctions associated with the obedience or disobedience of God's commandments. In Psalm 112, we see that a man who fears God and delights in His commandments by obeying God's law will be: 1) wealthy, 2) gracious, 3) discrete, 4) steadfast, 5) unafraid and 6) generous. The God-Who-forgives gives His people the opportunity to repent and be forgiven for disobedience and promises blessing to those who, by the enabling grace of the Holy Spirit, obey Him. Let us give all the glory to God! (Jude 24-25)

As we read all of Scripture, we should never settle for a superficial reading of God's Word or mere rote memorization. We should delight ourselves in His word and meditate in it day and night. Only Christians whose hearts have been regenerated can comprehend Scripture. "The natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Corinthians 2:14). As we read God's Word, we should pray that God would remove any veil that would hinder our understanding. "When one turns to the LORD, the veil is taken away" (2 Corinthians 3:16).

God hears and answers our prayers. The book of Psalms contains numerous examples of appropriate and relevant prayers to our High Priest, Jesus Christ -- Who "always lives to make intercession" for us (Hebrews 7:25). As we read the various prayers in the book of Psalms, we should be confident that our prayers will be heard. "Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need." (Hebrews 4:16)

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✓	Day	Scripture Reading	Scripture to Discuss
	July 17	Psalms 132 - 138	“The LORD will judge His people, and He will have compassion on His servants.” (Psalm 135:14)
	July 18	Psalms 139 - 143	“Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my anxieties; and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.” (Psalm 139:23-24)
	July 19	Psalms 144 - 150	“The LORD is near to all who call upon Him, to all who call upon Him in truth.” (Psalm 145:18)
	July 20	Proverbs 1 - 3	“Trust in the LORD with all your heart. And lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him. And He shall direct your paths.” (Proverbs 3:5-6)
	July 21	Proverbs 4 - 7	“Go to the ant, you sluggard! Consider her ways and be wise.” (Proverbs 6:6)

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Starting Point for Discussion

“God is love” (1 John 4:8). The God of love judges and shows compassion. The ultimate expression of God’s love for us is Jesus Christ. “In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” (1 John 4:9) We should always be thankful to God “for His mercy endures forever” (Psalm 136).

All of Scripture contain exhortations to obey God’s commandments and to heed His counsel. “For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome.” (1 John 4:3) We also know that sin starts in the heart. “For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. (Matthew 15:19) So, to obey God’s commandments and avoid sin, these verses direct us to trust God and invite Him to examine our thoughts and allow God to direct us and correct us where necessary.

The LORD is not accessible to all who call upon Him according to their conception of God. He is accessible to all who call upon Him in truth. The God of the Bible does not respond to prayers to Allah or to Buddha. God also does not answer prayers that are inconsistent with His will. “If we ask anything according to His will, He hears us” (1 John 5:14). So, how do we “call upon Him in truth?” We know God by reading all of Scripture. We know how to pray to God from what we learn in all of Scripture. We know the truth by what we find in all of Scripture. “You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32). Make no mistake, Jesus Christ is the truth: “I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me” (John 14:6).

God exhorts us to rely entirely upon His word. If we rely upon our “wisdom” and our ability to reason apart from Scripture, we may be “right” like the broken clock that is right two times each day. But if we acknowledge that all Scripture is given by inspiration of God (2 Timothy 3:15-17), then His word will be a lamp to our feet and a light to our paths (Psalm 119:105). Man’s wisdom is foolishness to God. “Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?” (1 Corinthians 1:20).

God’s Word uses the least significant of God’s creation to teach the most significant of God’s creation by way of analogy. The citizens of today’s welfare state would do well to learn from this Biblical metaphor. “If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat.” (2 Thessalonians 3:10)

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✓	Day	Scripture Reading	Scripture to Discuss
	July 22	Proverbs 8 - 11	<p>“Dishonest scales are an abomination to the LORD. But a just weight is His delight.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Proverbs 11:1)</p>
	July 23	Proverbs 12 - 15	<p>“The righteous choose his friends carefully, for the way of the wicked leads them astray.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Proverbs 12:26)</p>
	July 24	Proverbs 16 - 19	<p>“Even a fool is counted wise when he holds his peace; when he shuts his lips, he is considered perceptive.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Proverbs 17:28)</p>
	July 25	Proverbs 20 - 22	<p>“Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; the rod of correction will drive it far from him.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Proverbs 22:15)</p>

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(2 Timothy 3:15-17)

Starting Point for Discussion

God’s Word is a guide for all areas of life. Here, we read that God requires fairness in all business dealings. Honesty and fairness are essential characteristics of covenant ethics. Contrast this with the prevalent approach to business dealings in the world, where you see a “winner” and a “loser.”

On one hand, Christ informs us that we are “the salt of the earth” (Matthew 5:13) and commands us to “let (our) light so shine before men, that they may see (our) good works and glorify (our) father in heaven” (Matthew 5:16). On the other hand, we should choose our friends carefully. This holds true for: (a) adult converts who need to leave behind intimate relationships with “wicked” friends before conversion; (b) Christian children and teenagers who should accept the wisdom of choosing friends carefully; (c) parents who think that they can send forth their young, impressionable children into the world (as salt and light) with impunity. We should not deceive ourselves into thinking that we or our children can pursue friendships with those who reject God and His ways in the hope that those “friends” will be changed by our example. In fact, the exact opposite often is the case. “Do not be deceived: evil company corrupts good habits” (1 Corinthians 15:34).

There is much good advice in the book of Proverbs about the use of our tongues. Here, we read that we will be considered wise and perceptive -- not by what we say, but by keeping our mouths shut! The world often heaps praise on those that are “outspoken.” The Bible considers such folks as fools: “a fool has no delight in understanding, but in expressing his own heart” (Proverbs 18:1). Before you apply proverbs of this ilk to others, look in the mirror. “No man can tame the tongue” (James 3:8). Since we all face this challenge, how do we discipline our tongues? First, we need to recognize that what proceeds out of the mouth comes from the heart (Matthew 15:18). Second, we should hide God’s word in our hearts (Psalm 119:18) so that we need not be concerned with what will proceed out of our mouth.

Parents are responsible for disciplining their children. There is much instruction in God’s infallible Word as to how to train up a child. When we are faithful to train up a child in the way he should go, then we can be assured that the child when he is old will not depart from it (Proverbs 22:6). The world hates the idea of corporal punishment. Examine the fruit of the world’s way of “training” children. Does the world have credibility in attacking God’s way of disciplining children? For balance, see Ephesians 6:4 -- “fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath.”

All Scripture Advocate

With Daily Commentary

“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.”

(2 Timothy 3:15-17)

✓	Day	Scripture Reading	Scripture to Discuss
	July 26	Proverbs 23 - 26	<p>“Do not answer a fool according to his folly, lest you also be like him. Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own eyes”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Proverbs 26:4-5)</p>
	July 27	Proverbs 27 - 31	<p>“Do not add to His words, lest He rebuke you, and you be found a liar.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Proverbs 30:6)</p>
	July 28	Ecclesiastes 1 - 4	<p>“To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Ecclesiastes 3:1)</p>

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Starting Point for Discussion

Verse 24 appears to conflict with verse 25. Like Proverbs 23:9, the first verse of today’s “Scripture to discuss” advises against attempts to rebut a fool’s folly. We also have been instructed by Christ not to “cast your pearls before swine” (Matthew 7:6). However, in Proverbs 26:5 we’re instructed to counter a fool’s argument to expose the fool’s position “lest he be wise in his own eyes.” In the Gospels, we observe Christ addressing the foolishness of the Pharisees and Sadducees. So, which is it -- do we not answer a fool according to his folly lest we become like him . . . or do we answer a fool so that he does not perceive himself as wise? Scripture should never be pitted against Scripture. The resolution of this apparent conundrum is not that one verse should be picked over the other. Instead, we should recognize that both verses of Scripture are true and allow the Holy Spirit to show us when each verse should be appropriately applied.

Today’s reading from the book of Proverbs is rich in wisdom. Selecting one passage of Scripture to discuss means that many, many more valuable verses of Scripture are “overlooked” for this purpose. Hopefully, Scripture is read prayerfully so that you can meditate and study those verse(s) that God’s Holy Spirit impresses upon you as relevant for your particular situation or season in life. The selected passage of Scripture for today (Proverbs 30:6) was chosen for its importance to all of Scripture -- or, more precisely, to how we handle all of Scripture. As students of God’s Word, we are responsible to steward over His Word with care and with reverence. “Do not add to His words.” If you’re asked a question about God’s Word and don’t know the answer, you should not make up an answer that seems plausible. Furthermore, you should not “add to God’s Word” to prove a particular view of God or Scripture that you cling to despite your out-of-context “Scripture proof.” See also Revelation 22:18.

God views time from an eternal perspective, man from a finite perspective. As the first 8 verses of chapter 3 of Ecclesiastes attests, God’s perspective of time also recognizes seasons. In response to prayers, impatient man often mistakes God’s answer “not now” as “not ever.” We often get ourselves in trouble by not waiting on God’s timing. What mindset do we need in order to wait on God’s timing? In a word, the answer to that question is contentment. “I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content” (Philippians 4:11). If you are content in whatever state or season you now find yourselves, you will find it much easier to wait on God’s timing, to accept God’s Word that declares “to everything there is a season.”

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(2 Timothy 3:15-17)

✓	Day	Scripture Reading	Scripture to Discuss
	July 29	Ecclesiastes 5 - 8	<p>“There is not a just man on earth who does good and does not sin.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Ecclesiastes 7:20)</p>
	July 30	Ecclesiastes 9 - 12	<p>“Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man’s all. For God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Ecclesiastes 12:13-14)</p>
	July 31	Song of Solomon 1 - 8	<p>“Love is as strong as death.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Song of Solomon 8:6)</p>

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Starting Point for Discussion

Apart from Christ, man cannot possibly do good -- by God's definition of "good." What other definition of "good" matters in the eternal scheme of things? The sentiment expressed in this verse of Scripture is not an isolated sentiment. "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (1 John 1:8). "But the Scripture has confined all under sin" (Galatians 3:22). "There is no one who does not sin" (2 Chronicles 6:36). That's the bad news. The good news is this: God's chosen ones have been "justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, Whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood" (Romans 3:24). It is vitally important to recognize that we obtain our redemption from sin freely and the Jesus Christ paid the price of our sin (which is what is meant by "propitiation"). On our worst day, this good news should bring us great joy.

Verse 13 succinctly summarizes the central theme of the various wisdom books of the Bible (Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes). The whole duty of man can be summarized in one brief, yet profound statement of truth: "fear God and keep His commandments." Verse 14 succinctly summarizes a dominant theme in the book of Ecclesiastes: God judges our thoughts, works and words. "I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned" (Matthew 12:36-37).

Whether an allegory about God's love for Israel or an affirmation of the beauty and value of sexual love between a man and a woman, the Song of Solomon presents perhaps the most picturesque description of human relationship in the Bible. In this verse, God describes the most positive of human emotions to be as powerful as the most negative. "Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil, does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails" (1 Corinthians 13:4-8).

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✓	Day	Scripture Reading	Scripture to Discuss
	August 1	Isaiah 1 - 4	<p>“Come now, and ‘let us reason together’ says the LORD. ‘Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Isaiah 1:18)</p>
	August 2	Isaiah 5 - 9	<p>“For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace, there will be no end.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Isaiah 9:6-7)</p>
	August 3	Isaiah 10 - 14	<p>“How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! . . . For you have said in your heart: ‘I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God.’”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Isaiah 14:12-13)</p>
	August 4	Isaiah 15 - 21	<p>“In mercy the throne will be established; and One will sit on it in truth, in the tabernacle of David, judging and seeking justice and hastening righteousness.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Isaiah 16:5)</p>

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Starting Point for Discussion

God invites the creature to reason with the Creator. However, man must recognize that the only means by which he can reason with God almighty is that the stain of his sin has been removed by Jesus Christ (Isaiah 53:4-6 and Romans 3:21-26). Only when sinful man becomes the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus can we “reason together” with a holy and righteous God. “He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Corinthians 2:21).

Approximately 700 years before the birth of Christ, Isaiah’s prophecies of the coming Messiah are more in number and greater in specificity than perhaps any other Old Testament book. In this passage of Scripture, Isaiah not only prophecies the coming of Christ in history, he prophecies the impact of the Messiah on history after His coming. “Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end.” Isaiah’s view of the future is optimistic indeed. While Christian bookstores may contain bestselling works of pessimistic fiction, Christians should recognize these books as unbiblical works of fiction. In His great commission, Christ declares to us that “all authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.” Christ does not share his authority with Satan or man (which would be good reason for pessimism). All authority belongs to the Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father and Prince of Peace.

Lucifer (a/k/a Satan) was kicked out of heaven for attempting to exalt himself above God. Man commits the sin of Lucifer any time he attempts to exalt himself above God. Man commits the sin of Lucifer when he exalts his wisdom and his code of ethics above God’s Word and God’s Law. When God says “thou shall not . . .,” can man say that God’s Law/Word does not apply in today’s culture or that Jesus Christ has nullified the Law? “Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill” (Matthew 5:17). Read God’s Word, pray God’s Word and do God’s Word.

Isaiah prophetically describes the active rule of Christ the King. In Christ, the Son of David, nations will find shelter (“in the tabernacle of David”). While Christ does indeed sit on His throne at the right hand of God, Christ the King’s reign is an active one. He upholds all things by the word of His power (Hebrews 1:3). He judges and seeks justice. He hastens righteousness: “He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it” (1 Thessalonians 5:24).

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✓	Day	Scripture Reading	Scripture to Discuss
	August 5	Isaiah 22 - 26	<p>“You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed upon You, because he trusts in You. Trust in the LORD forever, for in Yah, the LORD is everlasting strength.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Isaiah 26:3-4)</p>
	August 6	Isaiah 27 - 31	<p>“Thus says the LORD God: ‘behold, I lay in Zion a stone for a foundation, a tried stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation; whoever believes will not act hastily.’”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Isaiah 28:16)</p>
	August 7	Isaiah 32 - 37	<p>“The LORD is our Judge. The LORD is our Lawgiver. The LORD is our King. He will save us.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Isaiah 33:22)</p>

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Starting Point for Discussion

How many people today live lives of tumult and anxiety? Despite new age gurus and the psycho-babble of positive thinking charlatans, “perfect peace” comes only to those whose mind stays in Christ and trusts in the LORD forever. “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God, and the peace of God which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4: 6-7). The elect of God should be the showcase of a peace which surpasses all understanding. If peace is lacking in the Christian’s life, the answer is not positively confessing away life’s trial and tribulations (i.e. pretending the troubles do not exist), but allowing the “peace of God to rule in our hearts” (Colossians 3:15).

Here, we read Isaiah’s prophetic description of Jesus Christ as “a stone for a foundation, a tried stone, a precious cornerstone.” Indeed, Christ refers to Himself as the “Chief Cornerstone” (Matthew 21:42). Earlier, Isaiah prophesied Christ as “a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense” (Isaiah 8:14). So, is Jesus Christ a precious cornerstone, the foundation of our salvation, or a stumbling stone, the reason for the reprobate taking a detour from the only route to heaven? Despite how man may want to picture Christ, Isaiah and all of Scripture picture Christ as both the chief cornerstone and stumbling stone -- salvation to those God has called and condemnation to those God has rejected. We trust this decision (salvation versus condemnation) to the Holy One of Israel, the “Highway of Holiness” (Isaiah 35:8).

“Separation of church and state” has become the mantra of liberal, politically-correct haters of God and nominal Christians who believe that God has no place in civil governance. Yet, at the foundation of the American Republic is the Biblical notion of 3 roles of civil government: (1) the executive branch (King), (2) the legislature (Lawgiver) and (3) the judiciary (Judge). Our founding fathers recognized that Christ the King alone could fulfill all 3 roles righteously and justly. The depravity of man required these roles to be delegated to separate and distinct branches of government, so that no one man or collection of men would wield all of the government’s power without restraint and mutual accountability. Yet, in today’s culture, “separation of church and state” has become “separation of God from state;” “freedom of religion” has become “freedom from religion.” God’s Word contradicts these modern concepts of government. “For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God” (Romans 13:1).

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✓	Day	Scripture Reading	Scripture to Discuss
	August 8	Isaiah 38 - 42	<p>“Behold! My Servant whom I uphold, My Elect One in whom My soul delights! I have put My Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the Gentiles.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Isaiah 42:1)</p>
	August 9	Isaiah 43 - 46	<p>“Look to Me, and be saved, all you ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Isaiah 45:22)</p>
	August 10	Isaiah 47 - 51	<p>“Oh, that you had heeded My commandments! Then your peace would have been like a river, and your righteousness like the waves of the sea.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Isaiah 48:14)</p>
	August 11	Isaiah 52 - 57	<p>“The righteous perishes, and no man takes it to heart. Merciful men are taken away, while no one considers that the righteous is taken away from evil. He shall enter into peace; they shall rest in their beds, each one walking in his uprightness.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Isaiah 57:1-2)</p>

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Starting Point for Discussion

This is one of Isaiah’s many prophetic references to the Messiah, the Holy One of Israel -- who would come to the earth 700 years or so after Isaiah’s death. Here, we see Isaiah refer to the coming King of kings as a “Servant.” Christ, the Servant-King, is the ideal that all leaders should model. “The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:28). Husbands, do you love your wife and lead your families as Christ loved the Church -- as a servant, willing to give your life for your wife and family? Leaders (employers, elected officials, managers), do you lead by serving those under you?

In a day when religious egalitarianism promotes the equality of the gods of the world’s various religions, all of Scripture stands opposed to this heresy. Isaiah, and all of Scripture declare: “I am God, and there is no other.” The notion that clerics from different religions can pray together to their god, should appall disciples of the Holy One of Israel, the one and only true God -- for there is no other. “For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all” (1 Timothy 2:5). “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me” (John 14:6).

Scripture often paints vivid word pictures for us. In this picture, obedience of God’s Law/Word produces peace like that of a river and waves of the sea -- that is, constant and perpetual. In the world, “peace” is the emotional by-product of favorable circumstances -- that is, fleeting and temporary. But, as we read several days ago, “the peace of God which surpasses all understanding” (Philippians 4:7) is there for whose mind is focused on Christ. For those who heed Christ’s commandments, that peace which surpasses all understanding is constant and perpetual.

The death of a loved one or the untimely death of a “good man” or “good woman” saddens and perplexes us. Yet, we see things only from our perspective -- which is limited in time and knowledge. God’s purpose for death should be viewed in the context of eternity and unerring foreknowledge. From this passage of Scripture, we find that God uses death to: (a) remove the righteous and merciful man from evil and (b) provide perfect peace and rest for those who are righteous in Christ Jesus. The peace and rest which follows death for Christ’s disciples is described this way in the book of Revelation: “God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there will be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There will be no more pain” (Revelation 21:4).

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✓	Day	Scripture Reading	Scripture to Discuss
	August 12	Isaiah 58 - 63	<p>“O LORD, why have You made us stray from Your ways, and hardened our heart from Your fear?”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Isaiah 63:17)</p>
	August 13	Isaiah 64 - 66	<p>“We need to be saved. . . . But we are all like an unclean thing, and all our righteousness are like filthy rags.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Isaiah 64:5-6)</p>
	August 14	Jeremiah 1 - 3	<p>“Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; before you were born I sanctified you.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Jeremiah 1:5)</p>
	August 15	Jeremiah 4 - 6	<p>“Nevertheless in those days,’ says the LORD, ‘I will not make a complete end of you.’”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Jeremiah 5:18)</p>

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Starting Point for Discussion

At the risk of being redundant, *All Scripture Advocate* advocates that Christians should read and embrace all of God’s infallible, unerring Word. Sometimes, we encounter Scripture that does not seem to line up with our view of God or preconceived understanding of Scripture. But, rather than reject or ignore such passages of Scripture, we should accept and embrace them -- seeking illumination of the Holy Spirit about troubling passages. In today’s selection of Scripture, we find that God causes those who reject Him to stray and hardens the heart of sinners. “And with all unrighteous deceptions among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this reason, God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie” (2 Thessalonians 2:10-11).

All men need to be saved from their sins: “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). Man cannot save himself: “we were dead (not asleep) in trespasses” (Ephesians 2:5). We are saved only by the good pleasure of Christ’s will (Ephesians 1:5). God saves those whom He chooses and chooses the men that He saves according to the good pleasure of His will. To view salvation otherwise opposes Scripture and, in effect, means that man’s will trumps God’s will. When we make God subservient to our will in the matter of our salvation, what prevents us from making our will superior to that of God’s will in the matter of ethics (right versus wrong)?

This verse of Scripture specifically refers to God’s call upon the life of Jeremiah the prophet. But this verse of Scripture also has general application: (1) we are known by God before conception and (2) spiritual life begins before birth. An angel of the LORD told the father of John the Baptist that John would be “filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother’s womb” (Luke 1:15). In this context, consider the 6th commandment: “you shall not murder” (Exodus 20:13). In other words, in the context of all of Scripture, “you shall not murder” means “you shall not abort.”

We should “consider the goodness and severity of God” (Romans 11:22). God’s judgments are dreadful and always amply deserved. The wickedness of God’s people at the time of Jeremiah justified their complete destruction. But, God restrained His judgment. Restraint characterizes God’s judgment throughout all of Scripture. Why does God spare sinful man? Because, God is both just and merciful. He always leaves a remnant among His people to complete His plan in His story. “Even so then, at this present time there is a remnant according to the election of grace. And if by grace, then it is no longer of works” (Romans 11:5-6).

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✓	Day	Scripture Reading	Scripture to Discuss
	August 16	Jeremiah 7 - 10	<p>“Obey My voice, and I will be your God, and you shall be My people. And walk in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well with you. Yet they did not obey or incline their ear, but followed the counsels and the dictates of their evil hearts.”</p> <p>(Jeremiah 7:23-24)</p>
	August 17	Jeremiah 11 - 14	<p>“Cursed is the man who does not obey the words of this covenant which I commanded your fathers in the day I brought them out of Egypt . . . saying, ‘obey My voice and do according to all that I command you; so shall you be My people, and I will be your God.’”</p> <p>(Jeremiah 11:3-4)</p>
	August 18	Jeremiah 15 - 18	<p>“Thus says the LORD: ‘cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength, whose heart departs from the LORD. . . . Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, and whose hope is the LORD.’” (Jeremiah 17:5 & 7)</p>
	August 19	Jeremiah 19 - 22	<p>“Everyone will say to his neighbor, ‘why has the LORD done so to this great city?’ Then they will answer, ‘because they have forsaken the covenant of the LORD their God.’”</p> <p>(Jeremiah 22:8-9)</p>

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Starting Point for Discussion

In these verses, we see Theonomy and autonomy contrasted (man governed by God's law versus self-governing man). Theonomic man hears and heeds the voice of God. Autonomous man turns a deaf ear to God and listens only to “the dictates of their evil hearts.” The distinction between Theonomic man and autonomous man is found inside and outside of the Church. Yet, we should recognize that professing Christians who are autonomous do not know God. “Now by this we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He who says, ‘I know Him,’ and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him” (1 John 2:3-4).

To repeat an observation made back on January 3rd, covenant is one of the overarching theological themes throughout Scripture. God deals with man by way of covenants - the terms of which are unilaterally and arbitrarily (although not capriciously) set by God. There are positive sanctions for those who obey the terms of God's covenant -- “so shall you be My people and I will be your God.” There are negative sanctions for violating the terms of God's covenant -- “cursed is the man who does not obey the words of this covenant.” Theonomic men are covenant keepers. Autonomous men are covenant breakers. Since Adam, man has always had to choose between obeying the terms of God's covenant or the dictates of his own evil heart. What choice will you make? “We ought to obey God rather than men” (Acts 6:29).

These verses bring together the commentary of the past 2 days which dealt with 2 theological concepts: (1) Theonomy versus autonomy and (2) covenant. Obedience to the terms of God's covenant brings blessings. Disobedience to those terms bring cursings. Autonomy (man trusts himself or other men) violates God's covenant and brings cursings. Theonomy (man trusts in the LORD's Law/Word) brings blessings. Unlike the Old Testament Israel of God, the New Testament Church has a Covenant Mediator in Jesus Christ (Hebrews 12:24).

Once again, Scripture reveals that God deals with mankind by way of His covenant with man. This passage of Scripture affirms two facts that elude the mind of most men today: (1) so-called natural disasters or havoc wrought by terrorists or enemies are not beyond the sovereignty of the King of kings (“why has the LORD done so”) and (2) we cannot presume upon God's mercy -- covenant breakers are judged by God both temporally and eternally. God's covenant with man was “confirmed by God in Christ” (Galatians 3:17).

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✓	Day	Scripture Reading	Scripture to Discuss
	August 20	Jeremiah 23 - 25	<p>“‘Am I a God near at hand,’ says the LORD, ‘and not a God afar off? Can anyone hide himself in secret places, so I shall see him?’ says the LORD, ‘do I not fill heaven and earth?’ says the LORD.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Jeremiah 23:23-24)</p>
	August 21	Jeremiah 26 - 28	<p>“When the word of the prophet comes to pass, the prophet will be known as one whom the LORD has truly sent.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Jeremiah 28:9)</p>
	August 22	Jeremiah 29 - 31	<p>“Behold, the days are coming says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah -- not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers . . . I will put my law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.” (Jeremiah 31:31-33)</p>

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With Daily Commentary

“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.”

(2 Timothy 3:15-17)

Starting Point for Discussion

As the watchful eye of a parent both comforts and constrains the young child, so too should the watchful eye of our Heavenly Father both comfort and constrain us. Unlike a parent, God is omnipresent. As spirit, God is everywhere, both near at hand and afar off. His omnipresence should both comfort and constrain us. On one hand, His presence comforts us: “He is not far from each of us; for in Him we live and move and have our being” (Acts 17:27-28). On the other hand, His omnipresence should constrain us -- none of our words, actions or even the “secret” thoughts of the heart can be hidden from His view. “The eyes of the LORD are in every place, keeping watch on the evil and the good” (Proverbs 15:3). “God knows your hearts” (Luke 16:15).

As part of the priesthood of believers, we are prophets of God -- in that we proclaim the Word of God. “You are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light” (1 Peter 2:9).

A disturbing aberration in the Church today is the misplaced credibility and confidence given to self-proclaimed prophets, who come declaring “thus says the LORD.” If these self-proclaimed prophets were held accountable to the Word of God that they feign, there would be far fewer (if any) of these sorts of prophets: (1) “when the word of the prophet comes to pass, the prophet will be known as one whom the LORD has truly sent” and (2) “the prophet who presumes to speak a word in My name, which I have not commanded him to speak . . . that prophet shall die.” . . . How shall we know the word which the LORD has not spoken? -- when a prophet speaks in the name of the LORD, if the thing does not happen or come to pass, that is the thing which the LORD has not spoken; the prophet has spoken presumptuously.” (Deuteronomy 18:21-22)

The new covenant prophesied here is not new in the sense that God has gone back to the drawing board, erased the old covenant and started over -- with a new/different covenant. Instead, what’s new about this covenant include the following: (1) “I will put my law (i.e. rules of the so-called old covenant) in their minds, and write it on their hearts” and (2) Christ is the Mediator of the new covenant (Hebrews 9:15 and 1 Timothy 2:5). Men could not keep the old covenant. Through Christ, and by the enabling grace of the Holy Spirit, man can keep the new covenant. “For until this day the same veil remains unlifted in the reading of the Old Testament, because the veil is taken away in Christ” (2 Corinthians 3:14).

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✓	Day	Scripture Reading	Scripture to Discuss
	August 23	Jeremiah 32 - 33	<p>“Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh. Is there anything too hard for Me?”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Jeremiah 32:27)</p>
	August 24	Jeremiah 34 - 36	<p>“Baruch read from the book of the words of Jeremiah in the house of the LORD. . . . Now it happened, when they had heard all the words, that they looked in fear from one to another, and said to Baruch, ‘we will surely tell the king of all these words.’”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Jeremiah 36 10 & 16)</p>
	August 25	Jeremiah 37 - 40	<p>“A captain of the guard . . . seized Jeremiah the prophet . . . The princes were angry with Jeremiah, and they struck him and put him in prison.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Jeremiah 37:13-15)</p>
	August 26	Jeremiah 41 - 44	<p>“The LORD has said concerning you, O remnant of Judah, ‘do not go to Egypt!’”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Jeremiah 42:19)</p>

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Starting Point for Discussion

One of the blessed mysteries of the Christian faith is mystery of prayer. On one hand, we know that God is sovereign over all things, both great and small. On the other hand, we know that “the effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much” (James 5:16). The prayers of those righteous in Christ are effective and avail much, not because of the lucidity of our prayers, but because there is nothing too hard for God Almighty.

Before the laptop computer, preachers of God’s Word used scribes to record their words. Baruch, served as Jeremiah’s scribe. In these passages of Scripture, we see the Word of the LORD first read in the temple (the Church, the Israel of God) and then declared to the civil magistrate. The politically correct axiom of the day is that there must be a separation of church and state (by the way - this is a misstatement the intent of the Founding Fathers, who wanted separation of state from church affairs, not separation of church from state affairs). In fact, the civil magistrate is “God’s minister to you for good” (Romans 13:4). To reform society and/or society’s government, all of Scripture must first be declared in the Church. Once equipped for the work of ministry, the priesthood of believers can take God’s Word into all spheres of life -- including the government.

God’s Word of warning and judgment delivered by His prophet Jeremiah was an unpopular message. The fact that all of Scripture reveals that God loves and hates is an unpopular message today. “As it is written, ‘Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated’” (Romans 9:13). To sugarcoat God’s view of sin and the sinner with “God hates the sin, but loves the sinner” not only contradicts God’s Word, it coddles the sinner in need of repentance. It is indeed true that “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). But, it is equally true that “the LORD tests the righteous, but the wicked and the one who loves violence His soul hates. Upon the wicked He will rain coals” (Psalm 11:5).

Having delivered His chosen people from Egypt, God commands His people not to seek refuge in Egypt. It is folly and delusional to disobey God’s Word in favor of the false hope of the world, thinking that human power and ingenuity can provide safety and that disobedience will not be judged by God. God’s response to Judah’s disobedience was: “behold, I will set My face against you for catastrophe” (Jeremiah 44:11). Rather than the mind of the world, we should put on the mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:13-16).

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✓	Day	Scripture Reading	Scripture to Discuss
	August 27	Jeremiah 45 - 48	<p>““Do not fear, O Jacob My servant,’ says the LORD. ‘For I am with you; for I will make a complete end of all the nations to which I have driven you, but I will not make a complete end of you. I will rightly correct you, for I will not leave you wholly unpunished.’”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Jeremiah 46:28)</p>
	August 28	Jeremiah 49 - 50	<p>“Their Redeemer is strong; the LORD of hosts is His name. He will thoroughly plead their case, that He may give rest to the land, and disquiet the inhabitants of Babylon.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Jeremiah 50:34)</p>
	August 29	Jeremiah 51 - 52	<p>“The LORD of hosts has sworn by Himself.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Jeremiah 51:14)</p>
	August 30	Lamentations 1 - 2	<p>“The LORD is righteous, for I rebelled against His commandments.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Lamentations 1:18)</p>

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Starting Point for Discussion

The Son of God’s instruction to His disciples about prayer begins this way: “In this manner, therefore, pray: our Father in heaven” (Matthew 6:9). Not only are we to approach God as “our Father,” but God regards us as a father regards his children. How would a father react to a child who has been hurt while doing something forbidden by the father? First, the father would tend to the child’s health. Second, the father would correct the child, to hopefully help the child learn from the consequences of disobedience. Likewise, our heavenly Father first protects, then corrects His children. “Whom the LORD loves He chastens” (Proverbs 3:19). “If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons” (Hebrews 12:7). “Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it” (Hebrews 12:11).

Our LORD Jesus Christ is our Redeemer and advocate. As our Redeemer, He has paid the ransom price required for the redemption of sinners. “For there is one God and Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all” (1 Timothy 2:5-6). As our Advocate, Christ pleads our case with His Father and ours: “if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world” (2 Timothy 2:1-2). What an awesome blessing it is to know that even when we sin, we remain a child of God, Who is our Redeemer and Advocate. Praise God from Whom all blessings flow!!

When sinful men take an oath, they swear by an authority greater than themselves. When a holy (without sin) God takes an oath, there is no one with greater authority than Himself. Consequently, He swears by Himself. “When God made a promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself, saying, ‘surely blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply you’” (Hebrews 6:13-14). When we read God’s word, we should have confidence in that word, because “God . . . cannot lie” (Titus 1:2). All of Scripture is God’s Word -- sworn to us by Himself. His word is truth (John 17:17).

Despite their lamentations about their adversity, God’s people acknowledge that the LORD is justified in punishing them for rebelling against God’s commandments. This is the attitude God desires when we confess our sins: “the sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart -- these O God, You will not despise” (Psalm 51:17).

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✓	Day	Scripture Reading	Scripture to Discuss
	August 31	Lamentations 3 - 5	<p>“Through the LORD’s mercies we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning; great is Thy faithfulness. ‘The LORD is my portion,’ says my soul, ‘therefore I hope in Him!’ The LORD is good to those who wait for Him, to the soul who seeks Him. It is good that one should hope and wait quietly for the salvation of the LORD.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Lamentations 3:22-26)</p>

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Starting Point for Discussion

“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Hebrews 11:1). Faith, per se, is not the source of our hope nor the object of our trust. By faith, we: (a) rely upon the faithfulness of God, (b) we accept and embrace God’s verdict of righteousness and (c) do not faint or draw back in the face of suffering, trials and tribulation. This describes Scriptural faith, not the faith in faith pabulum peddled by so-called “word of faith” proponents. This is the sort of faith in view when we read in God’s Word: “the just shall live by faith” (Habakkuk 2:4 and Romans 1:17). Finally, let us not forget that this faith is a gift of God and not something we earn or work up (Ephesians 2:8).

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✓	Day	Scripture Reading	Scripture to Discuss
	September 1	Ezekiel 1 - 4	<p>“When I say to the wicked, ‘you shall surely die,’ and you give him no warning, nor speak to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life, that same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at your hand.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Ezekiel 3:18)</p>
	September 2	Ezekiel 5 - 9	<p>“I will leave a remnant.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Ezekiel 6:8)</p>
	September 3	Ezekiel 10 - 13	<p>“I will put a new spirit within them, and take the stony heart out of their flesh, and give them a heart of flesh, that they may walk in My statutes and keep My judgments and do them, and they shall be My people, and I will be their God.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Ezekiel 11:19-20)</p>
	September 4	Ezekiel 14 - 16	<p>“Nevertheless I will remember My covenant with you in the days of your youth, and I will establish an everlasting covenant with you.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Ezekiel 16:60)</p>

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Starting Point for Discussion

Although God chooses who will be saved and who will be condemned (Romans 9:18), He holds us responsible for failing to warn others of the consequences of their unbelief. “Then Jesus said to them again, ‘I am going away, and you will seek Me, and will die in your sin. Where I go you cannot come’ (John 8:21). “If you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins” (John 8:24). The gospel of Jesus Christ is indeed good news to those who believe. On the other hand, there’s nothing but bad news for those who die in their sins. May God give us the courage and the wisdom to “make disciples of all the nations” (Matthew 28:19).

The remnant is a prominent theme in the book of Ezekiel. A “remnant” is a group or individual who experiences and survives calamity. A remnant in Scripture refers to the group (always relatively small in number) who experiences and survives God’s judgment of sin. More important than merely surviving God’s judgment, God’s chosen remnant becomes the nucleus for restoration and continuation of God’s plan in history. This nucleus always emerges from God’s judgment refined and purged. Despite the lawlessness and unbelief that we see around us in the world today, the faithful/believing Church has been chosen by God to be His remnant of grace. “Even so then, at this present time is a remnant according to the election of grace” (Romans 11:5). A remnant survived God’s judgment in Noah’s ark. A remnant will survive God’s judgment of today’s sin and apostasy in Christ’s ark, the Church.

What an awesome promise and blessing of God!! Before conversion, our hearts were stony and we were dead in our trespasses. “You He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins” (Ephesians 2:1). When we are saved by grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8), God replaces our stony hearts with hearts of flesh -- receptive to the things of God, capable of walking in His statutes and doing His will. With the new heart of a born-again disciple of Jesus Christ, we can indeed “love the LORD God with all (our) heart” (Mark 12:30).

When God enters into covenant with His elect, He swears an oath to us and we become His (Ezekiel 16:8). When He enters into covenant with man, He does not give them a list of rules and say, “you’re on your own, good luck.” Quite the contrary: “He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it” (1 Thessalonians 5:24). [Author’s note - if you’ve noticed that this passage from Thessalonians has been repeated throughout this commentary, you’re absolutely right! We’re both saved and sanctified by God’s grace. Thanks be to God.]

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✓	Day	Scripture Reading	Scripture to Discuss
	September 5	Ezekiel 17 - 19	<p>“Yet you say, ‘the way of the LORD is not fair.’ Hear now, O house of Israel, is it not My way which is fair, and your ways which are not fair? When a righteous man turns away from his righteousness, commits iniquity, and dies in it, it is because of the iniquity which he has done that he dies. Again, when a wicked man turns away from the wickedness which he committed, and does what is lawful and right, he preserves himself alive.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Ezekiel 18:25-27)</p>
	September 6	Ezekiel 20 - 21	<p>“Do not walk in the statutes of your fathers, nor observe their judgments, nor defile yourselves with their idols. I am the LORD your God; walk in My statutes, keep My judgments, and do them; hallow My Sabbaths, and they will be a sign between Me and you, that you may know that I am the LORD your God.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Ezekiel 20:18-20)</p>
	September 7	Ezekiel 22 - 24	<p>“Because you have forgotten Me and cast Me behind your back, therefore you shall bear the penalty of your lewdness and your harlotry.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Ezekiel 23:35)</p>

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Starting Point for Discussion

How do we determine what is fair and what is not fair? Do we frame fairness by our sense of right and wrong or our sense of justice and mercy? When men exclaim “that’s not fair,” they are often expressing their displeasure with God’s law and the consequences of disobedience. If we tell a child not to touch a hot stove, there are positive consequences for obedience and negative consequences for disobedience. If a child touches the hot stove, despite the warning, and gets burned, does the consequence of the child’s action indicate that the parent is not fair? Of course not. Our heavenly father deals with us in this fashion. A basic characteristic of God’s covenant dealings with mankind is that He not only defines what is right and wrong, He stipulates sanctions for obedience (blessings) and disobedience (cursings). Despite God’s solemn warnings about the consequences for sin, we have this assurance -- God does not take pleasure in the death of the wicked (Ezekiel 18:32) and “the LORD is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9).

The law of the Sabbath (verses 13, 16, 21 and 24 of Ezekiel 20) was unique to Israel, distinguishing it from other nations. The law of the Sabbath often stands for the whole law (e.g. Jeremiah 17:19-27). An indication of how far this nation has departed from its Christian roots and God’s Law/Word as its ethical standard is society’s disregard for the Sabbath. One way for Christians today to be light and salt (Matthew 5:13-14) is to observe the Sabbath (Deuteronomy 5:12). As with all God’s laws, all of Scripture provides the balance we need in rightly observing the Sabbath law. On one hand, we should resist legalistic observance of the Sabbath. “The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. Therefore the Son of Man is also LORD of the Sabbath” (Mark 2:27-28). On the other hand, if we avoid doing our pleasure on the Sabbath, honor Him by not doing our own way and delight ourselves in the LORD, we will “ride on the high hills of the earth” (Isaiah 58:13-14).

Scripture uses marriage and wedding imagery to describe the intimacy between Christ and His people: “the marriage of the Lamb has come and His wife has made herself ready” (Revelation 19:7). By attempting to assimilate the beliefs of other religions, Christians commit spiritual adultery. Idolatry is spiritual adultery. “The spirit of harlotry has caused them to stray, and they have played the harlot against their God” (Hosea 4:12). Literal and spiritual adultery can both end in divorce. “You shall bear the penalty of your lewdness and your harlotry.” The bridegroom requires fidelity of His bride. “I, the LORD Your God, am a jealous God” (Deuteronomy 5:9).

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✓	Day	Scripture Reading	Scripture to Discuss
	September 8	Ezekiel 25 - 28	<p>“What city is like Tyre, destroyed in the midst of the sea?”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Ezekiel 27:32)</p>
	September 9	Ezekiel 29 - 32	<p>“For thus says the LORD God: ‘the sword of the king of Babylon shall come upon you.’”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Ezekiel 32:11)</p>
	September 10	Ezekiel 33 - 36	<p>“I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments, and do them.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Ezekiel 36:27)</p>
	September 11	Ezekiel 37 - 39	<p>“The hand of the LORD came upon me and brought me out in the Spirit of the LORD.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Ezekiel 37:1)</p>
	September 12	Ezekiel 40 - 42	<p>“Cherubim and palm trees were carved on the doors of the temple just as they were carved on the walls.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Ezekiel 41:25)</p>

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Starting Point for Discussion

At the peak of its wealth, power and prestige, Tyre appeared invincible. But, Tyre's strength and wealth were no match for the seas which obeyed the command of God. Tyre's sudden destruction stands as a warning for all nations who arrogantly lift themselves up as gods. Conversely, “blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD” (Psalm 33:12).

These chapters of Ezekiel contain prophecies of God against Egypt. God rules all nations. All nations serve His purpose in history. Not even the greatest kingdom of the ancient world can withstand His judgment. No kingdom is eternal, except the kingdom of Christ the King. History (and His story) will culminate when “the kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our LORD and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever” (Revelation 11:15).

All of Scripture resounds with the mandate of God succinctly summarized in the gospel of John: “if you love Me, keep My commandments” (John 14:15). By the enabling power of the Holy Spirit, we can walk in His statutes, keep His judgments and do what He mandates. “Now he who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. And by this we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us” (1 John 3:24).

The full manifestation of the Holy Spirit did not occur until after the resurrection of the Son of Man (see outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2). Be that as it may, the Holy Spirit has been evident and active from the beginning (Genesis 1:2). The Helper (John 16:7) transforms those in whom He dwells. “When He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth” (John 16:13).

Sometimes, sinful man ignores God's law. Sometimes, sinful man takes God's law too far (a/k/a legalism). All of Scripture provides the balance necessary to rightly divide the word of truth (2 Timothy 2:15). For example, the 2nd commandment of God declares “you shall not make for yourself a carved image - any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath” (Deuteronomy 5:8). Many simply ignore the 2nd commandment, praying to and/or worshipping idolatrous carvings or pictures that portray Christ or dead saints. Some take the 2nd commandment too far and forbid carvings or paintings of “any likeness of anything.” Yet, in Ezekiel 41:25 we see that God's instructions for the temple included the likeness of Cherubim and palm trees. The balance provided by all of Scripture would suggest that God forbids the worship of “any likeness of anything” -- “you shall not bow down to them nor serve them” (Deuteronomy 5:9).

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✓	Day	Scripture Reading	Scripture to Discuss
	September 13	Ezekiel 43 - 45	“The priest shall take some of the blood of the sin offering . . . for everyone who has sinned unintentionally or in ignorance.” (Ezekiel 45:20)
	September 14	Ezekiel 46 - 48	“The LORD is there.” (Ezekiel 48:35)
	September 15	Daniel 1 - 3	“Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, for wisdom and might are His.” (Daniel 2:20)
	September 16	Daniel 4 - 6	“But you his son, Belshazzar, have not humbled your heart, although you knew all this. And you lifted yourself up against the LORD of heaven.” (Daniel 5:21-22)

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Starting Point for Discussion

For man to know that he needs a savior, he must first recognize that he is a sinner. Man is blind to many of his sins, transgressing the commandments of God both intentionally and unintentionally. To be saved from sin, we must first acknowledge that we sin (whether intentionally or unintentionally, knowingly or in ignorance). Christ provides a 2-step program for His people: (1) acknowledge our sin and (2) repent of our sins. “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:8-9).

From the beginning, God has demonstrated His desire to be with His people. He walked with Adam in the Garden of Eden. His presence filled the tabernacle in the wilderness and the temple in Jerusalem. Isaiah calls the coming Messiah Immanuel (Isaiah 7:14), which means “God with us.” At the 2nd coming of Christ, God will live among human beings: “behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people” (Revelation 21:3). As we prayerfully meditate on the holiness of God’s name (“hallowed by Thy name”), that meditation should include our acknowledgment of Jehovah Shammah (the LORD is there).

“Wisdom is the principal thing, therefore get wisdom” (Proverbs 4:7). Men tend to look in all the wrong places for wisdom. A worldly proverb would suggest, “when all else fails, pray.” God’s Word instructs us that wisdom belongs to God. The antithetical proverb to this worldly proverb is found in Scripture: “if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally . . . but let him ask in faith, with no doubting” (James 1:5-6).

The amazing grace of God extends even to prideful, arrogant sinners. The apostle Paul is a prime example. He describes himself as a violently arrogant (insolent) man, who nevertheless received the mercy of God. “Although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man . . . I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our LORD was exceedingly abundant, with faith and love which are in Christ Jesus” (1 Timothy 2:13-14). If you’re praying for a family member or friend that strikes you as arrogantly opposed to God, do not despair. Trust the sovereignty of God and continue to pray. As Paul said, “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief” (1 Timothy 2:15).

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✓	Day	Scripture Reading	Scripture to Discuss
	September 17	Daniel 7 - 9	<p>“Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Daniel 7:14)</p>
	September 18	Daniel 10 - 12	<p>“And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Daniel 12:2)</p>
	September 19	Hosea 1 - 6	<p>“My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Hosea 4:6)</p>
	September 20	Hosea 7 - 14	<p>“For the ways of the LORD are right; the righteous walk in them, but transgressors stumble in them.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Hosea 14:9)</p>

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Starting Point for Discussion

Some critics of Christianity claim that Jesus Christ never explicitly claimed to be the prophesied Messiah or the Son of God. When Jesus Christ claimed that this prophecy of Daniel referred to Him, the religious leaders of His day accused Him of blasphemy (Matthew 25:64-65 and Mark 14:62-64). Make no mistake, Jesus Christ knew Who He was and those around Him knew Who He claimed to be. Make no mistake, Christ has been given all authority in heaven on and earth (Matthew 28:18).

Despite post-modern theological mumbo jumbo, there is a heaven and a hell awaiting the resurrected bodies of all men. “These will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life” (Matthew 25:46). “Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth - those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation” (John 5:28-29). Born again believers need not fear their resurrection. “But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive” (1 Corinthians 15:20-22).

Knowledge of all of Scripture can make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus (2 Timothy 3:15). The single-minded purpose of *All Scripture Advocate* is to encourage you and assist you in acquiring this saving knowledge. Saving knowledge of Scripture is not an exercise of scholarship, but an exercise of submission. “You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life, and these are they which testify of Me. But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life” (John 5:39-40).

The Christian disciple regards God’s Law/Word as a “lamp to my feet and a light to my path” (Psalm 119:105). The unbeliever regards God’s Law/Word as foolishness. “The natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Corinthians 2:14). Like His Word, Jesus Christ is one thing to believers and another to unbelievers. To the believer, Christ is the “chief cornerstone” of his faith (1 Peter 2:6). To the unbeliever, Christ is the stone of stumbling, giving rise to his unbelief (1 Peter 2:8).

All Scripture Advocate

With Daily Commentary

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(2 Timothy 3:15-17)

✓	Day	Scripture Reading	Scripture to Discuss
	September 21	Joel 1 - 3	<p>“And it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the name of the LORD, shall be saved . . . among the remnant whom the LORD calls.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Joel 2:32)</p>
	September 22	Amos 1 - 5	<p>“Can two walk together, unless they are agreed?”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Amos 3:3)</p>
	September 23	Amos 6 - Obadiah 1	<p>“O Lord God, forgive, I pray! . . . So the LORD relented concerning this. ‘It shall not be,’ said the LORD.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Amos 7:3)</p>
	September 24	Jonah 1 - 4	<p>“Salvation is of the LORD.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Jonah 2:9)</p>

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Starting Point for Discussion

Many professing Christians reject the so-called Calvinistic doctrine of election. Some despise it. The doctrine of election, simply put, acknowledges salvation as the result of God’s sovereign choice, not man’s free will. This doctrine is a thoroughly Biblical doctrine. Except for the phrase “among the remnant whom the LORD calls,” this passage from Joel is repeated nearly word-for-word in Acts chapter 2:17-21. When Peter quoted this passage from Joel in his sermon, the hearers were quite familiar with the Old Testament doctrine of election, even if this phrase was omitted from the Joel passage -- after all, they were God’s chosen people. “He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of His will” (Ephesians 1:4-5).

If two people do not share a common destination, how can they walk together? This wisdom principle can guide us in many practical ways. In particular, this principle should help us make decisions regarding relationships we choose (friends, church membership, marriage). In particular, believers cannot intimately walk together with unbelievers. “Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?” (2 Corinthians 6:14)

This passage of Scripture would seem to imply that the mind of God can be changed by prayer. But, such is not the case. “For I am the LORD, I do not change” (Malachi 3:6). “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever” (Hebrews 13:8). C.S. Lewis explained this apparent conundrum this way -- “I pray not to change God, but that God change me” (paraphrase). In other words, man’s prayer cannot change “the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God” (Acts 2:23), but man’s prayer can enable man to be “conformed to the image of His Son” (Romans 8:29). Nevertheless, we pray in faith, trusting the sovereignty of God and accepting the blessed mystery that “the effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much” (James 5:16).

Salvation is a gift of God, plain and simple. Most Christians accept the fact that not all men are saved. If this be so, then either man’s will trumps God’s will (man is greater than God) or God is impotent (God cannot save all that He desires to save). The commentary for September 21st above addresses the doctrine of election. It should also be noted that when the gift of salvation is offered, man cannot resist. “If therefore God gave them the same gift as He gave us when we believed on the LORD Jesus Christ, who was I that I could withstand God?” (Acts 11:17)

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✓	Day	Scripture Reading	Scripture to Discuss
	September 25	Micah 1 - 7	<p>“What does the LORD require of you, but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Micah 6:8)</p>
	September 26	Nahum 1 - Habakkuk 3	<p>“The just shall live by faith.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Habakkuk 2:4)</p>
	September 27	Zephaniah 1 - Haggai 2	<p>“The glory of the former temple shall be greater than the former.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Haggai 2:9)</p>
	September 28	Zechariah 1 - 7	<p>“This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: ‘not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit’ says the LORD of hosts.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Zechariah 4:6)</p>

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Starting Point for Discussion

This verse of Scripture describe three prominent characteristics of the Son of Man: justice, mercy and humility. These character traits are difficult to emulate when we view ourselves better, or more intelligent, or “holier” than those around us. Scripture instructs us otherwise: “let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself” (Philippians 2:3). These characteristics are more typically exhibited by those who desire to serve rather than be served. Once again, Christ is our perfect example: “the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve” (Matthew 20:28).

Steadfast reliance and trust in the faithfulness of God is in view here, not some mystical power akin to the “force” in Star Wars movies. God, through the death of His Son, justifies or declares righteous, those sinners who come to true faith in Jesus Christ (Romans 3:21-26). “We were reconciled to God through the death of His Son” (Romans 5:10). This faith is a gift of God, not something we earn or is initiated by man. “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast” (Ephesians 2:8-9).

The prophesied greater glory is realized in Jesus Christ. “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14). This glory Christ gives to us, individually and corporately as His church. This new temple of God is “built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, to whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the LORD, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit” (Ephesians 2:20-22).

How often do we rely on our might or our power when confronted by any of life’s obstacles or spiritual challenges? In Christ, we have the Spirit of the living God at work in us and for us. “If the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you” (Romans 8:11). With regard to our sanctification, we should recognize the futility of whatever might or power we possess in the flesh and rely by faith in the Spirit of God who dwells within us. “If you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live” (Romans 8:12).

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✓	Day	Scripture Reading	Scripture to Discuss
	September 29	Zechariah 8 - 14	<p>“The burden of the word of the LORD.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Zechariah 9:1)</p>
	September 30	Malachi 1 - 4	<p>“Remember the Law of Moses, My servant, which I commanded him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments. Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet, before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD. And he will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the earth with a curse.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Malachi 4:4-6)</p>

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Starting Point for Discussion

This interesting phrase is used three times in the Old Testament: here, Zechariah 12:1 and Malachi 1:1. “Burden” suggests that the prophet felt strongly compelled to deliver the word of God. We should all feel the same sense of urgency to share the Word of the LORD with a lost and dying world. However, the weight of this “burden” should be light, if it is carried properly. “No one knows the Son except the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him. Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.” (Matthew 11:27-30)

The book of Malachi begins with an expression of God’s love for His people: “I have loved you, says the LORD” (Malachi 1:2). The last word of Malachi, which is the last word of the Old Testament, is “curse.” Throughout the commentary of the Old Testament readings, from January 1st through today, we have observed God dealing with His people by way of covenant. Obedience to the terms of His covenant bring a blessing -- disobedience to the terms of His covenant bring a curse (see Deuteronomy 28 and Leviticus 26). By reading all of Scripture, we avoid a distorted and, potentially, dangerous view of God. God loves and God hates. “Jacob I have loved; but Esau I have hated” (Malachi 1:2-3). As we transition from the Old Testament to the New, we should never lose sight of the good news we find there. God sent His only begotten Son to this earth, that whoever believes unto righteousness and confesses faith in the LORD Jesus Christ with his mouth (see Romans 10:9-10) shall be eternally blessed and not cursed. “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

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As you prepare to transition from reading the Old Testament, keep in mind that disciples of Christ were exhorted to search the Scriptures to see that the doctrine of the apostles were consistent with God’s written Word. “They received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so” (Acts 17:11).

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The only Scripture available to these early Christians was the Old Testament. Let us avoid interpreting the Bible backwards. The foundation of the New Testament is the Old Testament. God revealed His truth to mankind by starting with the Old Testament. We should attempt to understand and apply His truth in the same way.

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✓	Day	Scripture Reading	Scripture to Discuss
	October 1	Matthew 1-4	<p>“But He answered and said, ‘It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.’”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Matthew 4:4)</p>
	October 2	Matthew 5-6	<p>“Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Matthew 5:17-18)</p>
	October 3	Matthew 7-9	<p>“Judge not, that you be not judged. For with what judgement you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Matthew 7:1-2)</p>
	October 4	Matthew 10-11	<p>“He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Matthew 10:39)</p>

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Starting Point for Discussion

The battle cry of the Christian is “It is written!” All that we are and all that we believe hinges on the written Word of God. All of Scripture provides us with the only standard of our faith and practice. If we trust in our own understanding (our own “bread,” as it were) we’re doomed. In this passage, Satan tried to tempt our Savior by twisting the truth. Jesus certainly had the power to turn stones into bread. Weakened by many weeks of fasting, it would have been easy for any of us to rationalize a compromise to satisfy our immediate desires. When we are faced with overwhelming pressure, that’s when we are most tempted to twist the truth to avoid what we know to be the right course of action. Jesus was faced with this same temptation. But instead of compromising, He went back to the foundation of truth quoting from Deuteronomy 8:3 and declaring: “It is written.”

In this passage, Jesus makes the point that His coming did not mark the creation of a new faith or law order, but simply culminated and fulfilled all that came before. The Apostles were constantly accused of spreading heresy or a new religion. But time after time, when they gave their defense, they pointed back to their spiritual heritage in the Old Testament. The God of Abraham is also the God of Peter and the Apostles. Christ did not come to nullify the Old Testament, but to make good on the Old Testament promises. The Old Testament is referred to in Scripture as a “shadow” of the New. The only way a man can destroy his own shadow is to destroy himself. When the cornerstone passage of Scripture for *All Scripture Advocate* was recorded, the only Scripture available to the Church was the Old Testament (2 Timothy 3:16).

Many Christians incorrectly interpret this verse as a total prohibition against judging others. We all render judgments in many issues in life. For instance, if we hear about a violent murder, we judge the murderer to be guilty and deserving of punishment. What this passage warns against is hypocrisy in judgment: “you shall show no partiality in judgment” (Deuteronomy 1:17). No one has the right to judge someone for committing a sin that the accuser is himself guilty of committing. Judgment should not be rendered quickly or recklessly, because by what standard we judge, we ourselves will be judged.

Throughout Scripture, we encounter apparent paradoxes. How can someone find his life by losing it? How can the last be first? How can the living be dead already? How can men be “born again?” The answer is found by defining such terms according to all of Scripture. What “life” really counts? The one here on earth or the one in heaven? What birth is more important? Our carnal birth or our spiritual birth? Jesus reminds his listeners that the definitions we use must, like everything else in our lives, conform to His perfect Word, which is forever settled in heaven (Psalm 119:89).

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✓	Day	Scripture Reading	Scripture to Discuss
	October 5	Matthew 12	<p>“And when the Pharisees saw it, they said to Him, ‘Look, Your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath!’ But He said to them, ‘Have you not read what David did when he was hungry, he and those who were with him....’” (Matthew 12:2-3)</p>
	October 6	Matthew 13-14	<p>“Another parable He put forth to them, saying: ‘The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field, which indeed is the least of all the seeds; but when it is grown it is greater than the herbs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches.’” (Matthew 13:31-32)</p>
	October 7	Matthew 15-17	<p>“‘Why do Your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat bread.’ He answered and said to them, ‘Why do you also transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition?’” (Matthew 15:2-3)</p>
	October 8	Matthew 18-20	<p>“But Jesus said, ‘Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven.’” (Matthew 19:14)</p>

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Starting Point for Discussion

The Pharisees accused Jesus and His disciples of breaking the Sabbath by picking grain from a field when they were hungry. Our LORD refers to an Old Testament verse in refuting the Pharisees (1 Samuel 21:6). Christ again demonstrates how He did not come to abolish the Law by defending Himself from the Scripture (i.e. the Old Testament). He shows the Pharisees that their understanding of the Sabbath was based upon tradition and not the infallible standard of God’s Word. God’s perfect Law never prohibited works of necessity, such as eating, on the Sabbath. Jesus showed the Pharisees that it was they who violated the Sabbath by adding to what God had commanded in His Word.

The Church, in Jesus’ parable, is equated to a mustard seed, one of the smallest seeds in existence. However, while this seed starts out small, it will soon take over the entire garden if left alone. Isaiah prophetically instructs us as to the importance of small remnants (Isaiah 1:9 & 10:21). The Church of Jesus Christ began with a dozen men from various stations in life: fishermen, bureaucrats, lawyers, doctors, carpenters, etc. Today, it is the single largest religion in the world. The scope of Christianity’s penetration to all corners of the world is unprecedented. Most other world religions are regional in their influence. The Middle-East has a large Muslim population. The Far East has Buddhism as the dominant religion. But Christianity was exported from the very beginning. Christ’s command to “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations” is the charter of the New Testament Church.

In this instance, the Pharisees accuse the disciples of violating one of their traditions. Jesus turns the accusation around and accuses the Pharisees of using mere tradition to violate the commands of God. In verses 4-5, Jesus shows that the Pharisees had a tradition which allowed children to rob their parents as long as the temple profited from the theft. Jesus accuses the Pharisees of breaking the 5th commandment (Exodus 20:12 and Deuteronomy 5:16) to honor one’s parents by elevating their traditions above God’s written Word.

The apostles may have assumed that, since they were having trouble understanding the teachings of Jesus, little children would never understand. Consequently, they sought to keep children away from Jesus. Jesus, however, rebuked His disciples and told them not to forbid little children. We see children participating and even asking questions in celebration of the Passover (Exodus 12:27). Let us not only welcome children as Christ welcomes them, let us come to Christ as little children.

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✓	Day	Scripture Reading	Scripture to Discuss
	October 9	Matthew 21-22	<p>“Then Jesus went into the temple of God and drove out all those who bought and sold in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Matthew 21:12)</p>
	October 10	Matthew 23-24	<p>“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithes of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Matthew 23:23)</p>
	October 11	Matthew 25-26	<p>“[A] woman came to Him having an alabaster flask of very costly fragrant oil, and she poured it on His head as He sat at the table. But when His disciples saw it, they were indignant, saying, ‘Why this waste? For this fragrant oil might have been sold for much and given to the poor.’”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Matthew 26:7-8)</p>
	October 12	Matthew 27-28	<p>““He saved others; Himself He cannot save. If He is the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe Him.””</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Matthew 27:42)</p>

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Starting Point for Discussion

During Jesus' earthly ministry, He condemned the scribes and Pharisees for their hypocrisy. They were concerned with the Apostles not washing their hands before eating bread. Yet in this passage, we see the very temple of God being turned into a flea market with the chief priests' approval. After Jesus suddenly comes to the temple (Malachi 3:1) and drives out the money changers, He begins healing the blind and the lame. Instead of being angry at the money changers, the scribes and priests are angry at Jesus for trespassing on "their" ministerial territory. All too often, men defend their false notions when confronted with truth.

There are many churches in our day that resemble theme parks more than houses of worship. There is an overemphasis on fancy programs, worship disguised as entertainment, building committees and youth camps, etc. The scribes and Pharisees had this problem as well. They majored in the minors and totally rejected the majors. For instance, Jesus states that the Pharisees would scrupulously pay their tithes (consistent with Malachi 3) but "devour widows' houses" at the same time. Jesus reminds us that, in our zeal to do His work, we should not overlook the weightier matters of the law: justice, mercy and faith (see Micah 6:8).

There is an old saying, "there's no limit to the good that do-gooders can do with other people's money." Jesus' disciples thought that giving expensive perfume to the King of the universe was extravagant and wasteful! Jesus, however, praised the woman. Covetous and envious men, view those possessing wealth as if they had robbed someone to get it. We hear a lot about "wealth redistribution," as if wealth starts out equally distributed among all men. This has sadly been the case from the earliest history of the Church. It is God who "distributes" wealth as He sees fit: "remember the LORD your God, for it is He who gives you the power to get wealth, that He may establish His covenant" (Deuteronomy 8:18). In this instance, the false piety of the apostles is checked as always by clear instruction from their Teacher.

This was what the chief priests and the scribes said as Jesus hung dying on the cross. What had Jesus already done to prove His Lordship? He had healed the sick, given sight to the blind, made the lame walk, cast out demons and even raised the dead! Many of these miracles had been performed in the sight of the very men now challenging Jesus to come down from the cross. This is further proof that Faith is a free gift from God. The chief priests had all the worldly proof in the world, but their blind eyes could not see. "The just shall live by faith" (Habakkuk 2:4), not proof.

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✓	Day	Scripture Reading	Scripture to Discuss
	October 13	Mark 1-3	<p>“No one can enter a strong man’s house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man. And then he will plunder his house.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Mark 3:27)</p>
	October 14	Mark 4-5	<p>“And He said to them, “To you it has been given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God; but to those who are outside, all things come in parables...”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Mark 4:11)</p>
	October 15	Mark 6-7	<p>“There is nothing that enters a man from the outside which can defile him; but the things which come out of him, those are the things that defile a man.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Mark 7:15)</p>
	October 16	Mark 8-9	<p>“But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were thrown into the sea.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Mark 9:42)</p>

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Starting Point for Discussion

In this passage, Jesus is answering the scribes who have accused him of being possessed by the Devil. Jesus asks his accusers how He could be demon possessed while He is casting out demons from those who are truly afflicted? He then says that His purpose in coming to earth was to plunder Satan’s house. Praise God that His death, burial and resurrection accomplished the binding of the strong man! Our job as Christians is to now rob the strong man of all his goods, for the LORD “will contend with him who contends with you” (Isaiah 49:25).

Why do some people respond to the Gospel message while others do not? Are Christians just smarter than everyone else? Is it a matter of I.Q.? The answer is found in Scripture. For example, see Isaiah 6:9-10. Those who respond to the call to repentance do so because they have been given the gift of understanding by God Himself. No man can, in his own strength, choose to follow Christ, because belief itself is part of God’s gift to His people. To those outside of God’s covenant, the truth of the Gospel is nothing more than elusive parables. For the Christian, pride and arrogance should have no home. “All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.” As Believers, we should thank our LORD every day for revealing Himself to us, and earnestly pray that He will do so to our unsaved family, friends and neighbors.

Some have interpreted this verse to suggest the Jesus does not care about what we eat and drink. However, read in its proper context, this verse simply teaches that what a man does with what he has is what ends up defiling him. A cheese pizza cannot defile a man unless he is a glutton. Gluttony is a sinful condition of the heart - not the stomach. If a man can control the desires of his heart, then he can truly enjoy the good things that God gives -- like cheese pizzas. However, if a man struggles with gluttony, then the food he eats can defile him because it becomes a stumbling block. The problem of the Scribes and Pharisees is that they forgot the purpose of the law. They made obeying certain rules an end in itself. However, God gives us rules for the purpose of pleasing Him. Like the tithe, God desires that we be “cheerful givers” in all that we do.

Jesus again shows His disciples that the meek will inherit the earth. Isaiah foretells a God Who will “decide with equity for the meek of the earth” (Isaiah 11:4). Despite this admonition of Scripture, the disciples were arguing among themselves about which of them would be the greatest. Jesus, however, takes a little child and tells the men that to receive Him, they must receive the children. Jesus takes the weak and makes them strong. He puts down the proud and elevates the humble. Our Savior came into the world to save sinners, not the self-righteous.

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(2 Timothy 3:15-17)

✓	Day	Scripture Reading	Scripture to Discuss
	October 17	Mark 10-11	“And His disciples were astonished at His words. But Jesus answered again and said to them, ‘Children, how hard it is for those who trust in riches to enter the kingdom of God.’” (Mark 10:24)
	October 18	Mark 12-13	“‘And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ This is the first commandment. And the second, like it, is this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.” (Mark 12:30-31)
	October 19	Mark 14-16	“So Pilate, wanting to gratify the crowd, released Barabbas to them; and he delivered Jesus, after he had scourged Him, to be crucified.” (Mark 15:15)
	October 20	Luke 1	“He has helped His servant Israel, in remembrance of His mercy, as He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his seed forever.” (Luke 1:54-55)

All Scripture Advocate

With Daily Commentary

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(2 Timothy 3:15-17)

Starting Point for Discussion

Many Christians misinterpret this verse to mean that riches separate man from God. The key phrase in this passage is “those who *trust* in riches.” As believers, we are to put our trust only in the LORD God. Job learned how quickly riches can vanish, and we are asked in an earlier passage what profit it would be to us to gain the whole world, yet lose our souls? Riches are one of the gifts God gives at His pleasure. But we are to never trust in the gift-- only in the Giver. Job understood this well: “the LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away, blessed be the name of the LORD” (Job 1:21).

The scribes and Pharisees continue to accuse Jesus of promoting a new religion. Jesus time and time again shows that it was the scribes and Pharisees who were promoting a different religion by elevating their tradition above the laws of God. Jesus’ answer to the scribe concerning the two greatest commandments was not new revelation. Jesus was referencing Deuteronomy 10:12, 30:6 and Leviticus 19:18, all of which told the Israelites to love God with all their hearts and their neighbor as themselves. The New Covenant did not usher in a new law-order or religion. Blessed be our God Who never changes!

Pontius Pilate could find nothing for which he could condemn Jesus. He openly admitted this. But rather than see justice done, he wanted to please the mob, releasing a murderer from prison and condemning Jesus to die instead. Is that not what Christ has done for all of us? We deserved death, yet he died in our place. We have been set free from the prison of sin-- but our pardon came at a terrible price. When we are faced with having to choose between doing what is right or doing what will please men, we must choose the former, always reminding ourselves of the price that Christ paid so we would be able to choose the right path.

The song of Mary is one of the most beautiful hymns in Scripture. Imagine the excitement of this young girl who was to become the mother of our LORD. In her joy, she praises the God of her fathers. She thanks Him for remembering His covenant promises to Abraham and Israel (Isaiah 41:8, Psalm 98:3). She knows that the child growing in her womb is the promised One, the Messiah, who will make all paths straight. With His birth, a New Covenant was born as well. This Covenant is the culmination of all the promises given to our spiritual fathers before the Law of God was written on stone. With the coming of Christ, the Law has been written upon our hearts.

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✓	Day	Scripture Reading	Scripture to Discuss
	October 21	Luke 2-3	<p>“Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace, according to Your word; for my eyes have seen Your salvation which you have prepared before the face of all peoples, a light to bring revelation to the Gentiles and the glory of Your people Israel.” (Luke 2:29-32)</p>
	October 22	Luke 4-5	<p>“And no one, having drunk old wine, immediately desires new; for he says, ‘The old is better than the new.’” (Luke 5:39)</p>
	October 23	Luke 6-7	<p>“A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good: and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil. For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.” (Luke 6:45)</p>
	October 24	Luke 8-9	<p>“But Jesus said to him, ‘No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.’” (Luke 9:62)</p>

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Starting Point for Discussion

The birth of Jesus was the beginning of the end of Satan’s reign on the earth (first prophesied in Genesis 3:15). The Gentiles, who as a group had never been partakers of the Covenant promises were now being grafted into the covenantal olive tree. This enraged the existing Levitical order because the Jewish leadership was seemingly left out of the process and could not take credit for this new revelation to the Gentiles. Therefore, they denied that such a revelation was taking place. They discredited and mocked Jesus and His disciples-- even in the face of all the miracles, even in the face of that which was prophesied by a Jewish prophet: “all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God” (Isaiah 52:10).

Although Jesus is the King of Kings, He still submitted to the ceremonial system of the Old Testament that would technically not apply to him. For instance, He received a baptism of repentance from John the Baptist, although He had never sinned. Jesus says that this was done so that all righteousness would be fulfilled (Matthew 3:15). After His people had spent a couple thousand years living under the Old Covenant system, God knew that the Gospel message would be a tough pill for some to swallow. The Church of that day was in a mess. There was rampant hypocrisy, conflicting practices and general apostasy. Consequently, God allowed almost two generations of time to lapse during this period of transition (from the birth of Christ until the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD). He was getting His people accustomed to the new wine they would be drinking from then on.

The Scriptures teach that the heart of man devises evil all the time. “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, who can know it?” (Jeremiah 17:9) From a heart such as this, how can man speak any goodness apart from the grace of God? Simple: he can’t. Man, through his slavery to sin, is utterly incapable of saying anything that would please God. His heart must first be changed by the power of the Holy Spirit. Otherwise, the evil treasure in his heart will only produce evil speech.

When plowing through rocky fields during our lives, how often have we looked over our shoulder to that distant “swimming hole” and wanted to take a break? How many times have we been distracted and ended up with crooked rows? Our Savior challenges us to keep moving forward, straight and steady, once we put our hand to the plow. God’s Word illuminates our path, allowing us to move forward, straight and steady. “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path” (Psalm 119:105)

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✓	Day	Scripture Reading	Scripture to Discuss
	October 25	Luke 10-11	<p>“Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you. Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Luke 10:19-20)</p>
	October 26	Luke 12-13	<p>“And do not seek what you should eat or what you should drink, nor have an anxious mind. For all these things the nations of the world seek after, and your Father knows that you need these things. But seek the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added to you. Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Luke 12:29-31)</p>
	October 27	Luke 14-16	<p>“No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Luke 16:13)</p>
	October 28	Luke 17-18	<p>“Then Jesus said to him, ‘Receive your sight; your faith has made you well.’ And immediately he received his sight...”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Luke 18:42-43a)</p>

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Starting Point for Discussion

As Christians, we have been given authority over the powers of Satan. Our job is to trample the serpents and scorpions we encounter in life. But our Lord reminds us that we should not rejoice because of the “superpowers” we have been given, but in the fact that we have been saved and will spend eternity with our Master. Our God is wonderful indeed. He not only gives us what we need to live eternally, but also the things that we need to live triumphantly on earth! All those who are “found written in the book” (Daniel 12:1) cannot lose their salvation and are destined by God to triumph over Satan.

How often do we fall into the trap of working harder than we pray? Jesus comforts His flock by assuring them that their Heavenly Father knows all their needs and will provide them. We should cease being anxious and concentrate on seeking the kingdom of God. But even in this, our yoke is easy, because Jesus tells us that it is His Father’s good pleasure to give us His kingdom. With assurance of this caliber, is there any cause for anxiety? We can have the confidence of the Psalmist who declares: “the LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want” (Psalm 23:1).

Neutrality for the Christian is impossible. There is no middle ground in matters of faith. We either serve the Master or mammon. To the world at large, this is a very “intolerant” position. Our God will not tolerate competition - He is a jealous God (Deuteronomy 5:9). His love was given to us while we were sinners. He had no obligation to love us. We certainly gave Him no incentives. Now that we are set free by His amazing grace, He requires true obedience and loyalty. Given the state from which we were saved, serving God alone is the least we can do.

There are many passages in God’s Word that may seem difficult to understand. However, none of the Scriptures would make sense to us if the Holy Spirit had not first opened our eyes. A life enslaved to sin produces spiritual blindness, a condition that only the Great Physician can heal. Thankfully, as this passage illustrates, we have a God who looks with compassion upon the weak and takes joy in restoring sight to the blind.

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✓	Day	Scripture Reading	Scripture to Discuss
	October 29	Luke 19-20	<p>“And when Jesus came to the place, He looked up and saw him and to him, ‘Zacchaeus, make haste and come down, for today I must stay at your house.’”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Luke 19:5)</p>
	October 30	Luke 21-22	<p>“But Peter said, ‘Man I do not know what you are saying!’ Immediately, while he was still speaking, the rooster crowed.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Luke 22:60)</p>
	October 31	Luke 23-24	<p>“Then He said to them, ‘Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.’”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Luke 24:46-47)</p>
	November 1	John 1-3	<p>“The Father loves the Son, and has given all things into His hand. He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(John 3:35-36)</p>

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Starting Point for Discussion

How would you react if Jesus invited Himself to your home? Imagine Zacchaeus' surprise that someone of Jesus' reputation desired to dine with him. Tax collectors two thousand years ago had the same reputation that IRS agents have today. Zacchaeus' profession made him and his family the perfect candidates for grace. We also learn from this passage that Jesus is in our homes every day: "Inasmuch as you did it to one of the least My brethren, you did it to me." (Matthew 25:40b)

It is easy for us to condemn Peter. His cowardice was quite stark given his earlier statements to Christ that he would suffer imprisonment and death rather than deny his Lord. But before casting stones at Peter, we should come to terms with our own denial of Christ. Aren't there times when we deny Christ by our actions? When we lose our tempers, become anxious, lie, covet, or commit greater sins, we deny our birthright as Christians. But God stands ready to forgive us for our sin and restore us to true fellowship with Him. See 1 John 1:9.

When Christ died, was buried and rose from the dead, He "destroyed" the old temple in Jerusalem and built a new one in three days, just as He had promised. Jerusalem, the city which had rejected the Savior and condemned Him to die a bloody death on a tree, would now be the new capital of Christendom. Soon after Christ uttered these last few words to His disciples, He ascended into heaven and sat at the right hand of God, the Father, to wait until all His enemies were made a footstool for His feet. Those enemies were back on earth and occupied every nation of the world. Jesus told His disciples that their task was to preach repentance and remission of sins to all nations. After two thousand years, the commission is still in effect, and Christianity is still being spread throughout the earth. Let us pray that the Gospel will continue to advance as Christianity maintains and extends its status as the dominant religion of the world.

We are told more than once in the Gospels that God the Father has put all things in subjection under His Son, or "given all things into His hand," as it is phrased in this passage. This has many implications for Christian living. It means that Satan is bound and no longer the "Prince of the Powers of the Air." There is a new King, the Son of God - and we should kiss the Son (Psalm 2:12). Unlike Satan, Christ came into the world to save and to serve. After His resurrection, He ascended into heaven so the Holy Spirit could descend and inhabit our hearts. Rather than inhabit an earthly throne, Christ reigns in our hearts through the Holy Spirit. The Christian heart is the seat of Christ's new government.

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✓	Day	Scripture Reading	Scripture to Discuss
	November 2	John 4-5	<p>“You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me. But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life...But I know you, that you do not have the love of God in you.”</p> <p>(John 5:39-40, 42)</p>
	November 3	John 6-8	<p>“All that the Father gives to Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out...No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day.”</p> <p>(John 6:37,44)</p>
	November 4	John 9-10	<p>“Then they reviled him and said, ‘You are His disciple, but we are Moses’ disciples. We know that God spoke to Moses; as for this fellow, we do not know where He is from.’”</p> <p>(John 9:28-29)</p> <p>“My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me... and no one is able to snatch them out of my Father’s hand.”</p> <p>(John 10:27,29)</p>
	November 5	John 11-12	<p>“I have come as a light into the world, that whoever believes in Me should not abide in darkness.”</p> <p>(John 12:46)</p>

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Starting Point for Discussion

It is true that God’s Word can be a lamp to our feet and a light to our path (Psalm 119:105). But, if we search the Scriptures to find support for our lifestyle or philosophy, we turn off the light of God’s Word. In fact, there is no light in those who misuse Scripture to justify their actions and beliefs, rather than conform themselves to *All of Scripture*. “To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them!” (Isaiah 8:20)

These words of Christ were hard for some of His disciples, and we are told later that some left Him at this point. Jesus referred to Himself as the bread from heaven (see Exodus 16). Some of His disciples could not understand the symbolism of our Lord’s teaching. Jesus makes the point that they did not understand Him because they were not being drawn by the Father. Jesus then asked Peter if he intended to leave as well. Peter responded, “We believe You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Peter and the other disciples had been given to Christ by the Father. God had revealed His truth to them, and they could understand Jesus’ figurative language and parables. We should be grateful that our Heavenly Father drew us to Himself in the same manner. Our souls were His gift to His Son.

Here, Jesus heals a man blind from birth. The man is taken to the Pharisees and questioned. Witnesses are called forth, and all testify that the man was blind and was healed by Jesus. The Pharisees do not care about the miracle; they are concerned about what the blind man thinks about Jesus. They say they are disciples of Moses and claim no knowledge of Christ. Yet, they witnessed an undeniable miracle! Jesus later says that He came to give sight to the blind and blindness to those who have sight (vs. 39). From the very beginning, the Gospel has been a stumbling block for some and foolishness to others.

No one is saved by accident. Those whose eyes are opened are marked by God as one of His sheep. He is the Good Shepherd and will not allow wolves to disperse or destroy his flock. What beautiful words of comfort and blessed assurance!

“The just shall live by faith” (Habakkuk 2:4). By faith in Christ, the just will be removed from darkness. A person with 20-20 eyesight is completely blind in a pitch black room. A person with a genius IQ is completely incapable of understanding God’s Word without the light which is Christ.

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✓	Day	Scripture Reading	Scripture to Discuss
	November 6	John 13-16	<p>“This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you...you are My friends if you do whatever I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I call you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you.” (John 15:12, 14-15)</p>
	November 7	John 17-18	<p>“I do not pray for the world but for those whom You have given Me, for they are Yours.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(John 17:9)</p>
	November 8	John 19-21	<p>“And there are also many other things that Jesus did, which if they were written one by one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that would be written.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(John 21:25)</p>
	November 9	Acts 1-3	<p>“Then Peter said to them, ‘Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.’”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Acts 2:38)</p>

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Starting Point for Discussion

Christianity is the only religion where the followers are called friends by their Deity. Our God calls us His friends. Jesus gave a new commandment that had not been given by Moses. God commanded the Old Testament Church to love one another. But Christ commanded that we love one another *as He loved us*. Christ was willing to die for us-- and die for us while we were sinners. Christians are commanded to exercise this same love towards one another. If the God of the Universe humbles Himself and calls us His “friends,” should we not do likewise. “A friend loves at all times” (Proverbs 17:17). “A man who has friends must himself be friendly; but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother” (Proverbs 18:24).

Jesus does not pray for “all” people, but those whom His Father has chosen from among all people of the world. The doctrine of election can be seen in all of Scripture. For example, in Joel 2:32 we read that “whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved . . . among the remnant whom the Lord calls.” Unless we embrace and trust the sovereignty of God with regard to salvation, election, like Jesus Christ Himself, can be “a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense” (Isaiah 8:14). Those God elects cannot lose their salvation: “of those whom You gave Me, I have lost none” (John 18:9).

The Bible needs to be interpreted as it is written. “Poetry is to be treated as poetry. Historical accounts are to be treated as history. Parables as parables, hyperbole as hyperbole, and so on” (Essential Truths of the Christian Faith by R. C. Sproul). The exaggeration contained in this verse makes a point that few would interpret literally. We can develop extrabiblical beliefs by violating this principle of interpretation. For example, when Christ says that “whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life” (John 6:54), we should recognize from the context of all of Scripture that Christ was speaking metaphorically. Otherwise, we end up with the heretical doctrine of transubstantiation (the bread and wine of Holy Communion become the physical body and blood of Jesus Christ).

Salvation is, in and of itself, a gift of God. With salvation, we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. This is the Spirit prophesied by Ezekiel. “I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them” (Ezekiel 36:27). God’s Holy Spirit transforms us and enables us to obey the laws of God. Additionally, the gift of the Holy Spirit manifests itself in believers in diverse ways -- also as God chooses. “There are diversities of gifts, but the same Holy Spirit. . . and the same Spirit works all things, distributing to each one individually as He wills” (1 Corinthians 12:4-11).

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✓	Day	Scripture Reading	Scripture to Discuss
	November 10	Acts 4-6	<p>“But Peter and the other apostles answered and said: ‘We ought to obey God rather than men.’”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Acts 5:29)</p>
	November 11	Acts 7-8	<p>“You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you...who have received the law by the direction of angels and have not kept it.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Acts 7:51, 53)</p>
	November 12	Acts 9-10	<p>“But the Lord said to him: ‘Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name’s sake.’”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Acts 9:15-16)</p>
	November 13	Acts 11-13	<p>“Now when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and glorified the word of the Lord. And as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed. And the word of the Lord was being spread throughout all the region.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Acts 13:48-49)</p>

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Starting Point for Discussion

Contrary to what might appear on the surface, this passage does not give Christians the right to rebel against those put in authority over them--unless those authorities command them to break a command of God. In Romans 13, we are told that all authorities are appointed by God. We must submit to all lawful commands of those in authority over us. But whenever civil or church authority commands the Christian to violate the express command of God (in this case, personal evangelism), God's Word instructs us to obey God rather than men.

When Stephen is brought before the high priest, falsely accused of blasphemy, the high priest asks if he is preaching against the law of Moses. Stephen then answers with one of the most eloquent speeches in the Bible. He begins by summarizing the history of the Jewish people from the time of Abraham. By doing this, he shows his accusers that the accused is more in line with the teachings of Moses than they. He says that the Pharisees had *always* rejected the Holy Spirit. They had *never* circumcised their *hearts*, which had been emphasized from the beginning (Jeremiah 9:26). Stephen showed that Christians who keep the law of Moses are the true children of Abraham. These words were too much for the Pharisees, and Stephen's defense was not answered by argument but with violence, making him the Church's first martyr.

The conversion of Saul (Paul) marks a turning point in the early growth of the Church. The people of God had been hunted down mercilessly by the likes of Saul. But God shows His sovereignty by selecting one of the greatest of persecutors to become the *persecuted*. Paul would now suffer for Christ as he had caused suffering to his fellow brothers. Paul was the most prolific writer of all the Apostles. By inspiration of God's Holy Spirit, Paul's ministry of suffering provided the Church with much of the New Testament.

The prophet Isaiah said Christ would be the "light to the Gentiles" (Isaiah 42:6). Salvation would no longer be available only to ethnic Israel, but would now be accessible to people from all over the world. In the past, Gentiles would have to come into Israel to be "cleansed." Now, the new spiritual Israel was *going to them*, to the very "ends of the earth," bringing the light of the Gospel. Instead of being "unclean," converted Gentiles were true sons of Abraham.

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✓	Day	Scripture Reading	Scripture to Discuss
	November 14	Acts 14-16	<p>And when she and her household were baptized, she begged us, saying, ‘If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay.’ So she persuaded us.” (Acts 16:15)</p> <p>“So they said, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household.” (Acts 16:31)</p>
	November 15	Acts 17-19	<p>“These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so.” (Acts 17:11)</p>
	November 16	Acts 20-22	<p>“Then He said to me, ‘Depart, for I will send you far from here to the Gentiles.’ And they listened to him until this word, and then they raised their voices and said, ‘Away with such a fellow from the earth, for he is not fit to live!’” (Acts 22:21-22)</p>
	November 17	Acts 23-25	<p>“And those who stood by said, ‘Do you revile God’s high priest?’ Then Paul said, I did not know, brethren, that he was the high priest; for it is written, ‘You shall not speak evil of a ruler of your people.’” (Acts 23:4-5)</p>

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Starting Point for Discussion

God is a God of individuals and families. When He chooses a man or a woman, He not only wants that person, but their family as well. Their children, their servants -- everyone under the jurisdiction of the one chosen. When God saved His people from Egypt, He delivered families (Exodus 12). This part of the Gospel message was probably one of the most attractive features to the converted Jews. Under the Old Covenant, the entire Jewish household was included -- even though the Covenant was admittedly imperfect. Under the New, more perfect Covenant, the family is still included. But now, not only Jewish families come, but Gentiles are included as well. Praise be to our Father, who loves individuals and families!

The Scriptures that the Bereans searched were the books of the Old Testament. We sometimes forget that the Old Testament was all the early Church possessed. The New Testament was not compiled and canonized until centuries later. In the meantime, the early Church relied upon the teachings of the Old Testament. These teachings were evidently sufficient, for the Church's power spread throughout the Roman Empire, and countless thousands were converted by searching the Old Testament to verify what they were being taught by the apostles. In this sense, the Old Testament contains just as much "Gospel" as the New.

We are taught in Scripture that "pride goes before destruction" (Proverbs 16:18). The Jews listened quietly to Paul until he attacked their pride. Paul confronted the Jews by explaining that they had killed the very Messiah they had awaited. As a result, He had His greatest apostle to the Gentiles, because the Jews rejected "the Way." How often are we tempted to shoot the messenger when the message attacks our sacred egos? When our egos are threatened, we should "humble (ourselves) in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift (us) up" (James 4:10).

"You shall not revile God, nor curse a ruler of your people" (Exodus 22:28). Since all authority is ordained by God, it is sinful for Christians to disrespect those who are in authority-- even if those authorities reject the One who put them in office. Paul shows great respect for the office of high priest, even though he boldly protested the false accusations against him. He was confrontational, yet civil. Consequently, he gained great respect from the Romans, who found no fault with his conduct. Christian political activists can learn from Paul's example.

All Scripture Advocate

With Daily Commentary

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(2 Timothy 3:15-17)

✓	Day	Scripture Reading	Scripture to Discuss
	November 18	Acts 26-28	<p>“Therefore, having obtained help from God, to this day I stand, witnessing both to small and great, saying no other things than those which the prophets and Moses said would come....”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Acts 26:22)</p>
	November 19	Romans 1-3	<p>“As it is written: ‘There is none righteous, no, not one; there is none who understands; there is none who seeks after God. They have all turned aside; they have together become unprofitable; there is none who does good, no, not one.’”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Romans 3:10-12)</p>
	November 20	Romans 4-7	<p>“And he [Abraham] received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while still uncircumcised, that he might be the father of all those who believe, though they are uncircumcised, that righteousness might be imputed to them also....”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Romans 4:11)</p>
	November 21	Romans 8-10	<p>“For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Romans 8:38-39)</p>

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Starting Point for Discussion

There are many hundreds of different evangelism curricula and methods on how to convince people of the validity of the Gospel. There are tips on what to say, what not to say, and when to say it. Yet Paul cuts through this salesman-style evangelism. He preaches the gospel message, never veering from the plain text of the Scripture, except to explain how his life was affected by the teachings of Moses and the prophets. There is no way we can improve upon the plain text of all of Scripture.

These verses of Scripture reference several Old Testament verses (Psalm 14:1-13, 53:1-3 and Ecclesiastes 7:20). Preachers often paint a picture of mankind as being desperately ill and in need of a Great Physician. However, men are not merely sick; they're spiritually dead and in need of a resurrection. Salvation is a spiritual resurrection. The significance of baptism is that it symbolizes being buried with Christ and then being raised from the dead. We are “dead in our trespasses and sins” (Ephesians 2:1), but Christ makes us alive through the work of the Holy Spirit. As we will read later, there is no opportunity for man to boast in his own salvation. Faith is a gift from God to dead men who are resurrected by the power of the Holy Spirit.

From the beginning, God had more in mind than the physical nation of Israel. “And in you (Abraham) all the families of the earth shall be blessed” (Genesis 12:3). When He promised to make Abraham's descendants as numerous as the sand on the seashore, He meant more than the Jewish people. He meant all the peoples of the world. When God told Abraham He would give him all the land he stepped upon, it covenantally meant that He would give all nations as his inheritance. This promise, from the beginning, is what makes the Gospel message such “good news.” God so loved the world-- from the beginning.

One of the most moving and beautiful statements made by Paul is this one that speaks of the unrelenting grip of our Savior upon our souls. The love of our Father for His elect was founded before the creation of the world or time itself. With such credentials, what is there in this world that can separate us from God? “If God is for us, who can be against us?” (Romans 8:31)

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✓	Day	Scripture Reading	Scripture to Discuss
	November 22	Romans 11-13	<p>“For he [the civil ruler] is God’s minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God’s minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Romans 13:4)</p>
	November 23	Romans 14-16	<p>“He who observes the day, observes it to the Lord; and he who does not observe the day, to the Lord he does not observe it. He who eats, eats to the Lord, for he gives God thanks; and he who does not eat, to the Lord he does not eat, and gives God thanks.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Romans 14:6)</p>
	November 24	1 Corinthians 1-4	<p>“For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, ‘He catches the wise in their own craftiness.’”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(1 Corinthians 3:19)</p>
	November 25	1 Corinthians 5-9	<p>“Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(1 Corinthians 5:7)</p>

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Starting Point for Discussion

The civil government is a ministry of God, not an invention of men. As marriage and the Church are institutions ordained and established by God, so is civil government. Many Christians mistakenly assume that since civil government has been plagued by corruption and tyranny since the days of Noah that there is somehow a wall between God and the State. Yet Paul clearly shows the fallacy of this argument by calling politicians “ministers” of God--and Paul was not living in an ideal political state. The Roman Empire was a pagan government, violently opposed to all competition. The relentless persecution that the early Church endured at the hands of the caesars is well known in history. Yet, Paul still calls them God’s ministers. Clearly then, the civil government can be abused in the same manner as the Church and the family. The answer is not to abandon any of these ministries to the world, but to take dominion over them (Genesis 1:28) and reform them to God’s holy standards. As the Church has had to endure many reformations in its history, so has the family and the state.

Contrary to how this verse might be read on the surface, Paul is not telling Christians that they can do whatever they want as long as it is done to the glory of God. All of Scripture -- not our own fancy -- is the standard by which we determine what constitutes the glory of God. We must balance the liberty we are given as Christians with the responsibility of submitting our lives to the Word of God. What Paul is stressing is that everything we do should be to the glory of God. The observance of dietary laws became a matter of choice with the fulfillment of the Old Covenant. As the Gentiles, who had been considered “unclean,” became a part of the New Covenant, food that had been considered “unclean” now became clean and acceptable through the work of Christ.

Our God sits in the heavens and laughs at the foolishness of the age that passes for wisdom (Psalm 2:4). We live in an age of “experts” who convince us that our guilt is nothing but a chemical reaction resulting from childhood experiences or nutritional deficiencies. We seek to run away from the obvious: that a man feels guilt because he is a sinner, and he knows he has sinned against his holy God.

Throughout this commentary, the unity of all of Scripture has been emphasized. When we read about the Passover in the Old Testament (Exodus 12 and Leviticus 23), God is laying groundwork for what would be revealed in Christ. “For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect” (Hebrews 10:1).

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✓	Day	Scripture Reading	Scripture to Discuss
	November 26	1 Corinthians 10-13	<p>“Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(1 Corinthians 10:1-4)</p>
	November 27	1 Corinthians 14-16	<p>“Let your women keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak; but they are to be submissive, as the law also says.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(1 Corinthians 14:34)</p>
	November 28	2 Corinthians 1-4	<p>“Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(2 Corinthians 3:17)</p>
	November 29	2 Corinthians 5-8	<p>“Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(2 Corinthians 6:14)</p>

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Starting Point for Discussion

When God brought the Israelites out of Egypt, He baptized them in the Red Sea (Exodus 14:21-22). While the Israelites wandered in the wilderness, Christ fed them manna and gave them water from the rock. But, says Paul, that food in the wilderness was spiritual as well as physical. The food the Israelites ate in the wilderness was Christ. Paul goes on to ask concerning our present communion, “The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?” (vs. 16) The Bread of Life has been the same from the beginning. The fact that the Old Testament Church existed before Christ’s birth does not change the fact that believers during the days of Moses and the prophets relied upon the same spiritual food for their nourishment. They needed communion with Christ every bit as much as Paul, the Church at Corinth and the Israel of God today.

This is a very unpopular Scripture in our times, but one that is nonetheless a part of the infallible, timeless word of God. Many have argued that Paul was speaking as a man of his times and would not hold such “sexist” views were he a citizen of our own generation. However, as with all of Scripture, we are not to conform it to our culture; rather, we are to conform our culture to Scripture. Consequently, it is not Paul who is behind the times, it is the Christian who tries to explain away clear teachings of Scripture as mere cultural preferences rather than the holy Word of God.

“Liberty” is too often defined as freedom to do whatever one wishes. However, liberty is a concept that only regenerate man can understand. We are slaves to Christ, yet we are free. Our liberty comes in being set free from the bondage of sin. The Law was what condemned our disobedience. But Christ set us free from the curse of the Law by keeping the Law perfectly and charging His life to our account. The Law, instead of being a curse, becomes a guide, because we now have the ability and the desire to obey Christ’s commands. This is what Jeremiah had in view when he prophesied “I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts” (Jeremiah 31:33).

Unequal yoking is addressed in both the New Testament as in this verse and in the Old Testament (Deuteronomy 7:2-3). Unequal yoking involves more than issues of marriage and personal associations. Basically, having any unity with the world can be considered being unequally yoked. One can be yoked to the world in how he speaks or dresses. There is no neutrality. In all that we do, we convey either a message of liberty in Christ or slavery to sin. We should ask ourselves every day whether we are living our lives yoked to Christ or the world.

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✓	Day	Scripture Reading	Scripture to Discuss
	November 30	2 Corinthians 9-13	<p>“So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(2 Corinthians 9:7)</p>
	December 1	Galatians 1-3	<p>“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.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Galatians 3:28)</p>
	December 2	Galatians 4-6	<p>“And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Galatians 6:9-10)</p>
	December 3	Ephesians 1-3	<p>“[J]ust as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will...even when we were dead in trespasses, [He] made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Ephesians 1:4-5, 2:5)</p>

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Starting Point for Discussion

“You shall not harden your heart nor shut your hand from your poor brother” (Deuteronomy 15:7). God has freely given us all we possess, out of His abundant love for His people. When He asks us to give back to Him, He expects us to give with the same generous heart. Any gift that is given out of compulsion or grudgingly is repulsive to God. It does not matter how much we give and to whom, unless we honor His Word and give cheerfully.

God chooses, but He does not discriminate. Even in the Old Testament, foreigners had the opportunity to become covenant members of the Church (Genesis 17:26-27). He does not discriminate based on gender, race, nationality or creed. He saves men and women of all nations, of all peoples, of all backgrounds. He is the God of the rich and the poor, the black and the white, the male and the female, the slave and the freeman.

Here, the Christian is given assurances that his labor is not in vain. If rewards are not achieved on earth, they will be reaped abundantly in heaven. This should encourage the believer to continue to run the race and fight the good fight. The weapons of our warfare are not of flesh and blood, so neither is our reward in most cases. However, this should not result in our constantly looking heavenward and forgetting our responsibilities on earth. Although our weapons are not of this world, the battlefield is very much on the earth. We must strive to be good soldiers for our King, knowing that He takes delight in rewarding His servants.

The glorious doctrine of predestination is powerfully and joyfully proclaimed by Paul to the church at Ephesus. The wonderful grace of our loving Lord saved us even when we were dead in our trespasses and sins! Moreover, Christ loved us before the foundation of the world. He loved us before we “died” in our trespasses and sin. Nothing illustrates the awesome and limitless love of our Saviour more than this doctrine that He came into the world to save specific sinners. We were in His mind before the creation of light. As He hung on the cross, it was for specific sinners, not sinners in general. Salvation is by invitation only. This way, there can be no boasting. We did not invite ourselves into Christ’s Kingdom. He actively sought us and breathed life into our dead flesh. He clothed us in His righteousness. He calls us friends. He is a personal God, not one who simply saved a certain quota of individuals that can be filled on a first-come, first-serve basis.

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✓	Day	Scripture Reading	Scripture to Discuss
	December 4	Ephesians 4-6	<p>“And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Ephesians 6:4)</p>
	December 5	Philippians 1-4	<p>“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God, and the peace of God which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Philippians 4:6-7)</p>
	December 6	Colossians 1-4	<p>“Bondservants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh, not with eye service, as men-pleasers, but in sincerity of heart, fearing God. And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men....”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Colossians 3:22-23)</p>
	December 7	1 Thessalonians 1-5	<p>“[P]ray without ceasing,”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(1 Thessalonians 5:17)</p>

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Starting Point for Discussion

Scripture makes it clear that parents are responsible for the education, discipline and training of children -- not the village, not the government. Specifically, fathers are charged with the primary responsibility of training their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Abraham is described as this sort of father. “For I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they may keep the way of the Lord, to do righteousness and justice” (Genesis 18:19). In this verse of Scripture, fathers are exhorted to find the right balance in disciplining their children -- to avoid overly harsh discipline that provokes children to wrath. In determining this balance, let us look to all of Scripture for God’s wisdom for parenting His children.

Christ exhorts His disciples not to worry (Matthew 6:25). In this Epistle, Paul reiterates Christ’s exhortation. Paul also tells us how to fret not. Algebraically, we could summarize Paul’s counsel this way: thanksgiving + prayer + trust = freedom from worry. The “peace of God” eliminates anxiety. No matter how dire or hopeless a situation may appear, thankful/confident prayer to God can provide a peace which passes all understanding. At the end of each day, we should thank the Lord for His daily provision and protection, prayerfully requesting the same for tomorrow -- then we can “both lie down in peace, and sleep” (Psalm 4:8).

Labor is part of the dominion mandate from creation. Work is not the result of Adam’s sin. Sin brought thorns and thistles into our gardens, making work more tedious, but God’s created order includes work. God expects His people to take dominion over whatever their hands touch and wherever their feet fall. Our calling in life may be glamorous, or it may be very common. But regardless of what we do to earn our daily bread, we should work as though Christ was our immediate supervisor. “Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might” (Ecclesiastes 9:10).

Such a simple command, yet so difficult in practice! Job understood the importance of prayer (see Job 1:5). We tend to look at prayer as an easy offering to the Lord. Consequently, it’s easy to forget to do it. But prayer is the most powerful thing Christians can do, for in prayer, we petition the greatest Power in the universe. We offer thanks and our requests to our Heavenly Father, Who promises to hear the prayers of the righteous. “Whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in His sight” (1 John 3:22).

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✓	Day	Scripture Reading	Scripture to Discuss
	December 8	2 Thessalonians 1-3	<p>“Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely . . . He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(2 Thessalonians 3:23-24)</p>
	December 9	1 Timothy 1-6	<p>“A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, of good behavior, hospitable, able to teach; not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but gentle, not quarrelsome, not covetous; one who rules his own house well, having his children in submission with all reverence....”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(1 Timothy 3:2-4)</p>
	December 10	2 Timothy 1-4	<p>“Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(2 Timothy 4:2)</p>
	December 11	Titus and Philemon	<p>“[T]hat they [older women] admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands....”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Titus 2:4-5)</p>

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Starting Point for Discussion

Our Lord and Savior not only saves us, but He sanctifies us. If it were not for the faithfulness of Our Sanctifier, there would be no answer to the conflict that Paul so vividly describes in the lives of all saved sinners: “For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate that I do” (Romans 8:15-16). But, thanks be to God, “who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to God our Savior Who alone is wise, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever. Amen.” (Jude 24-25)

The qualifications that Paul lists for the office of bishop in the Church make an excellent measuring stick for leadership in other areas of society as well. First, the Bishop must be a man. Second, if married, he must be the husband of one wife. Right off the bat we see how the modern Church has strayed from these two basic requirements of leadership in the church. We have denominations that ordain women as bishops or elders. We also have men with multiple wives or “domestic partners” regularly submitted as candidates for the ministry. If this is the condition of the Church, is it any wonder why our political institutions are plagued with corruption and scandal? The Church is the moral compass of a society. If our communities are ever to be pointed in the right direction, the Church must return to the exhortations of Paul when choosing her leaders.

Timothy, as a preacher and evangelist, is given a simple command by his spiritual mentor, Paul: “preach the word.” In other words, preach all of Scripture. Sometimes preachers feel they have to add “bait” to the teaching of Scripture. Long sermons are considered outdated and boring. We have to spice up worship services to keep people awake and coming back week after week. But Paul says to preach the word. In light of this exhortation, should Bible-believing Christians attend churches that do not emphasize and point to God’s Word as the sole source of truth?

Older women have a unique role in God’s Church. Their age and experience are vital teaching tools for young women. What a great opportunity older women have to bless their younger sisters in the Lord by helping them prepare to be wives and mothers! Homemaking is not easy. Learning to respect a husband may not be easy. Practicing discretion is not easy. Older Proverbs 31 women should disciple and train younger Proverbs 31 women. “Her children rise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her” (Proverbs 31:28).

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✓	Day	Scripture Reading	Scripture to Discuss
	December 12	Hebrews 1-4	<p>“For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Hebrews 4:15)</p>
	December 13	Hebrews 5-7	<p>“[W]ho does not need daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins, then for the people’s, for this He did once for all when He offered up Himself.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Hebrews 7:27)</p>
	December 14	Hebrews 8-10	<p>“For if that first covenant had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second. Because finding fault with them, He says: Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah....”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Hebrews 8:7-8)</p>
	December 15	Hebrews 11-13	<p>“If you endure chastening, God deals with you as sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten?”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Hebrews 12:7)</p>

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Starting Point for Discussion

Jesus Christ is our Great High Priest, but He is no ordinary priest. The High Priests of the Old Testament were groomed for their position from their earliest years. They were men without physical spot or blemish. If they married, it could only be to another priest's daughter. If they incurred any serious bodily injury or maiming, they could be disqualified from their office. They were the spiritual “elite” of the Jewish society. But when Jesus came, He was not born of the tribe of Levi. He endured temptation that a priest inside the temple would be largely shielded from. Yet He lived a life free from sin. He was tempted in all the ways a man could be tempted--yet without sin. Christ was “a Man of sorrows and rejected by men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief” (Isaiah 53:3). How encouraging it is for the “common man” that his High Priest can sympathize with all his temptations and sufferings.

Christ died once for all. No more must sacrifices be offered on an altar that is never satisfied with fire and blood. Our blessed Savior's holy life was sufficient to stop the bloodshed and satisfy the righteous wrath of God the Father. The majestic words uttered by Christ as He gave up His life to His Father on the cross--“It is finished”--were the freedom bells proclaiming a new day of liberty for all of creation.

Long before Christ, Jeremiah prophesied a new covenant (Jeremiah 31:31). Why was a New Covenant necessary? What was wrong with the Old Covenant? Why was the New Covenant considered “more perfect?” Was it because God made a mistake? Was it because the laws were hopelessly strict and burdensome? The problem with the Old Covenant is that no one wanted to follow it. We are told that God found fault in the people with whom He made His covenant--not in the covenant itself. It was the disobedience of God's people that made a New Covenant necessary for salvation. Christ became our substitute and charged His perfect life to our account.

All of Scripture tells us that God chastens us as a father chastens a son. “You should know in your heart that as a man chastens his son, so the Lord our God chastens you” (Deuteronomy 9:5). Human fathers who love their sons and daughters correct them when they begin to wander from the “straight and narrow.” In the same manner, our heavenly Father treats us as sons and promises to chasten us to bring us back to the paths of righteousness. Hebrews 12:2 tells us that Jesus is not only the author, but the finisher of our faith. This passage assures us of chastening, but also assures us of an eternal life with our Father. Thanks be to God, our Father.

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✓	Day	Scripture Reading	Scripture to Discuss
	December 16	James 1-5	<p>“What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him?”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(James 2:14)</p>
	December 17	1 Peter 1-2	<p>“Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ...”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(1 Peter 1:13)</p>
	December 18	1 Peter 3-5	<p>“Husbands, likewise, dwell with them [wives] with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(1 Peter 3:7)</p>
	December 19	2 Peter 1-3	<p>“For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them. But it has happened to them according to the true proverb: ‘A dog returns to his own vomit,’ and, ‘a sow, having washed, to her wallowing in the mire.’”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(2 Peter 2:21-22)</p>

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“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.”

(2 Timothy 3:15-17)

Starting Point for Discussion

Faith without works is dead (James 2:17). However, there are many evangelism programs in the Church today that seek simply to get people to make a profession of faith and nothing else. Discipleship is completely neglected. The apostle James shows that this so-called “lifeboat evangelism” is fruitless and cannot save souls. Good works can never earn salvation, but salvation always produces good works. As an apple tree produces apples, so faith produces works. You cannot have one without the other.

Being a Christian does not mean someone has to check his mind at the door. Peter admonishes his brethren to “gird up the loins of your mind.” This statement creates an interesting word picture. It essentially means to prepare your mind for some heavy-duty lifting. The gospel message begins as milk, but gradually the courses change until the real “meat” is served. These hearty meals are not for the spiritually immature, and the apostles more than once petition their hearers to discern the word they preach.

For the prayers of a son of God to be heard without hindrance, that son must honor his wife. The apostle Peter demands that husbands give honor to their wives and treat them with deference. Although the wife is to submit herself to her husband and obey him, both husband and wife are joint heirs of the grace of God. When it comes to the grace of God, there is no male or female. To those men who expect their wives to submit, “love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her” (that is, gave His life for her) - (Ephesians 5:25).

It is better to live in ignorance of the gospel, than to hear it and then reject it. The ignorant tribesman in Africa is far better off having never heard the Name of Jesus Christ, than the backsliding American who was raised in the Church and rejected the God of his fathers. The Scripture teaches that to whom much is given, much will be required (Luke 12:48). By hearing the Gospel, we become instantly accountable not only to submit to it, but to spread it. The ignorant merely suppress the truth in unrighteousness. The informed reject the truth outright, over and over again -- like a dog returning to its vomit (Proverbs 26:11).

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✓	Day	Scripture Reading	Scripture to Discuss
	December 20	1 John 1-3	<p>“Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(1 John 2:15)</p>
	December 21	1 John 4-5	<p>“In this we love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(1 John 4:10-11)</p>
	December 22	2 John 3 John & Jude	<p>“Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to God our Savior, Who alone is wise, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever. Amen.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Jude 1:24-25)</p>
	December 23	Revelation 1-2	<p>“[A]nd you have persevered and have patience, and have labored for My name’s sake and have not become weary. Nevertheless, I have this against you, that you have left your first love.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Revelation 2:3-4)</p>

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Starting Point for Discussion

Reading Scripture in context of all of Scripture is vital to understanding its message. In John 3:16, we are told that “God so loved the world.” But in 1 John, we are admonished not to love the world. Is there a contradiction in the Scripture? From the context of the entire book and specifically chapter 2, it is clear that the word “world” is used figuratively to describe the carnal or sinful world. However, in John 3:16, “world” is used to describe Christ’s world, the world that is run not according to the flesh. Christ’s kingdom is of this particular world-- not the world of sin. To understand a passage from God’s Word, we must understand the context of that passage. This again shows the importance of letting all of Scripture interpret itself.

We love God because He first loved us. How many times throughout the Scripture are Christians reminded that God loved them, sent His Son to die for them, and then sent His Holy Spirit to abide with them while they were still dead in their trespasses and sins? Why is this point so important? Because we have no excuse for not loving our enemies. God loved us while we were His enemies. God tells us we are to so love our enemies. We can be certain that God never asks us to do anything He isn’t willing to do Himself. There is no partiality with God.

In times of despair and temptation, Jude’s benediction reminds us that our Savior is able to keep us from stumbling. In the Lord’s prayer, we petition God to “lead us not into temptation.” One way to avoid a rocky road is to avoid the road altogether. However, sometimes the road must be traveled. But thanks be to God that even on a bumpy road, He is able to keep us from stumbling.

The church of Ephesus was a very busy church. They were very careful to oppose heretical doctrine coming in through false prophets. The church was doing everything in the Name of Christ, and Jesus commended their labors. However, “man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.” (I Samuel 16:7) Christ was concerned that the church of Ephesus was losing its heart. It was a busy church, but its labors had evidently become repetitive and monotonous. The honeymoon was over; they had lost their first love. A lesson for the modern Church is that we should periodically remind ourselves of the fundamental reasons for our labor. It’s not just a job, it’s our liberty.

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✓	Day	Scripture Reading	Scripture to Discuss
	December 24	Revelation 3-5	<p>“I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot, I could wish you were cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of my mouth.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Revelation 3:15-16)</p>
	December 25	Revelation 6-8	<p>“[A]nd crying out with a loud voice, saying, Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Revelation 7:10)</p>
	December 26	Revelation 9-11	<p>“Then the seventh angel sounded: and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, ‘the kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!’”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Revelation 11:15)</p>
	December 27	Revelation 12-13	<p>“And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Revelation 12:11)</p>

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Starting Point for Discussion

There is no neutrality with Christ. It is impossible for a Christian to keep one foot in the world and one foot in heaven. We are either for Christ 100 percent, or we are against Him 100 percent. Christianity is not *a* way to eternal life; it is *the only* Way. It is a no-compromise faith. If it were not, then Christ's death would have been pointless. We could have negotiated with God about our eternal state. We could have offered Him, say, 90 percent of our hearts. However, God the Father demands 100 percent loyalty and holiness. This is what makes grace so amazing. The stakes are high, and our condition hopeless. We need a Savior, and He demands all the honor that is rightly due Him.

Salvation does indeed belong to God. It cannot be bought or sold to the highest bidder. In Acts 8, the magician Simon was cursed by Peter because he “thought that the gift of God could be purchased with money” (vs. 20). Many world religions have elaborate sacrificial systems. Others allow the wealthy to buy eternal life. The purpose of these practices is to gain favors from the gods. But in Christianity, salvation is of the Lord and is distributed according to His sovereign and merciful will. No one may possess saving grace unless it is first given as a gift from God.

The end of history as we know it will record the culmination of His story. Christ the King declared that all authority in heaven and on earth had been given to Him (Matthew 28:18). Daniel prophesied the complete rule and dominion of the coming Messiah (Daniel 7:14). One way or another or one place or another (heaven or hell), “every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is the Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Philippians 2:11).

“Blood of the lamb” and “word of their testimony” describe a one-two punch that every disciple of Christ can wield against the devil. With the first punch we know that our eternal victory has been assured. “We have been “justified by His blood” and, as a result, “we shall be saved from wrath through Him” (Romans 5:9) With the second punch, we have all of Scripture to resist Satan just as Christ Himself resisted temptation. “It is written again, ‘you shall not tempt the Lord your God’” (Matthew 4:7). With this one-two punch, disciples of Christ should confidently recognize that they can fulfill the exhortation of James. “Submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you” (James 4:7).

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✓	Day	Scripture Reading	Scripture to Discuss
	December 28	Revelation 14-16	<p>“Who shall not fear You, O Lord, and glorify your name? For you alone are holy. For all nations shall come and worship before You. For Your judgments have been manifested.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Revelation 15:4)</p>
	December 29	Revelation 17-18	<p>“[A]nd saying, ‘Alas, alas, that great city that was clothed in fine linen, purple, and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls! For in one hour such great riches came to nothing.’”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Revelation 18:16-17a)</p>
	December 30	Revelation 19-20	<p>“And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: King of Kings and Lord of Lords.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Revelation 19:16)</p>
	December 31	Revelation 21-22	<p>“And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Revelation 21:4)</p>

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Starting Point for Discussion

“All nations shall come and worship before You.” This one sentence contains a victorious prophecy. John says that the world will one day bend the knee to Christ. This statement does not refer to the new heavens and new earth, because there will not be the same political divisions called “nations” in that future world. The only other explanation is that the Gospel of Jesus Christ shall be victorious on this earth to the point that all nations will submit to our Savior. In our day, when Christianity is being attacked, it is good to be reminded that the apparent decline in Christianity will one day be overshadowed by a tremendous period of growth. As the old hymn proclaims, “Christ shall have dominion over land as sea, earth’s remotest regions, shall His empire be.”

The pleasures of this world are fleeting. In this passage, we are told that a great city, a new “Babylon” was snuffed out in an instant. All the glory; all the beauty; all the prestige; gone in an instant. Those who put their trust in earthly riches are hanging by a thin thread over a very hot fire.

Jesus is not merely our great High Priest. He is also a King. He is King of Kings. That means all earthly kings owe their ultimate allegiance to Christ the King. It makes no difference what type of government exists in a nation, the civil rulers still owe their lives and loyalties to Christ. Jesus is Head of the Church, Head of the State, and Head of our families. His reign is complete and comprehensive. “For the Lord is our Judge, the Lord is our Lawgiver, the Lord is our King” (Isaiah 34:22). One of our jobs as His people is to press for the crown rights of King Jesus in our civil government.

The message of Scripture from beginning to end is one of hope: for the weak, for the lame, even for the dead. The serpent’s head was predicted to be crushed from the beginning (see Genesis 3:15). The happy conclusion in Revelation is that Christ is victorious. He has defeated Satan. No more pain. No more tears. No more death. Revelation is not a book of gloom and doom prophecy as some evangelical sensationalist writers would have us believe. It is a message of hope and victory. *All Scripture Advocate* concludes with this prayer, the last verse of all of Scripture: may “the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.” (Revelation 22:21)

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by Robert E. Clayton

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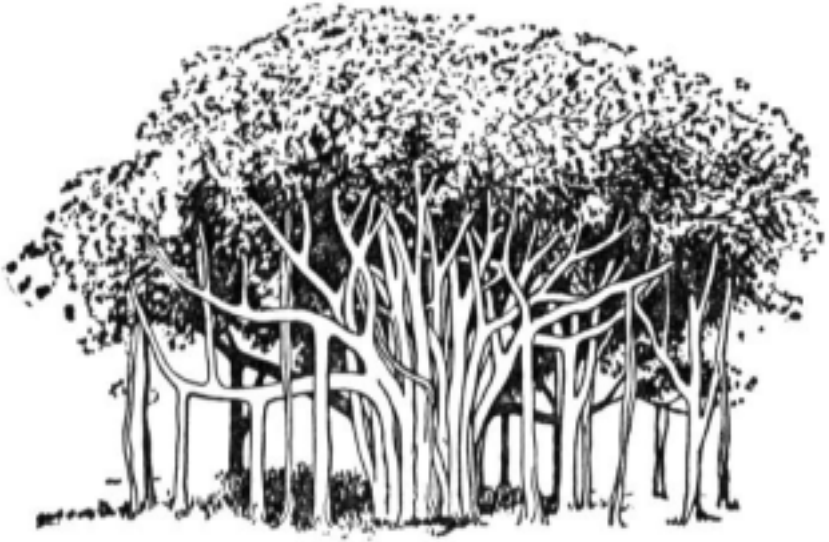
(2 Timothy 3:15-17)

“This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.”

(Joshua 1:7-8)

By following the Scripture guide in this book, all of Scripture can be read in the course of one year -- in as little as 15 minutes per day.

***All Scripture Advocate* was first published by Banyan Publishing.**



The growth of a Banyan Tree provides a profitable metaphor for the effect of the Word of God in those who read the Holy Scriptures consistently and completely. As a Banyan tree grows, vines descend from its branches taking root in the ground below. Once rooted, the vines become trunks supporting further growth of the tree. By constantly expanding its foundation as it matures, Banyan trees sustain extraordinary growth.

Birds bring Banyan seeds to the branches of other trees. As the seeds sprout and a Banyan tree grows, the host tree and others nearby are smothered and die.

The Spirit of God causes the seeds of God's Word to sprout in men's hearts. As the seed of God's Word grows, the old man is smothered and dies. "Old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new." (2 Corinthians 5:17)