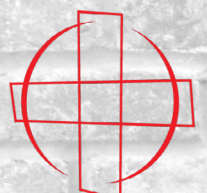


OVERCOME

MARCH 2021

ADULT
CONNECT CLASS
CURRICULUM



DONALD J. WILLS
SENIOR PASTOR

The purpose of First Baptist Church of Fort Worth is to **introduce** people into a loving relationship with Jesus, **instruct** them in spiritual growth through God's Word, **inspire** them to serve for God's kingdom, and **incorporate** them in authentic worship to glorify God.

A Note From Our Pastor

Dear FBC family and friends,

The Bible talks much about overcoming adversity in life whether it is circumstantial, physical or spiritual. The primary element in the process of overcoming is faith. Hebrews tells us that without faith we cannot please the Lord. We are told we must believe that He is and that He rewards those that diligently seek Him. Along the journey to overcome, it is essential to have faith in receiving God's Word into our lives and applying it. This month we are discussing topics that everyone faces and how faith assists us to overcome.

As a reminder, the layout of this Curriculum begins with a 7-day approach for both the teacher and the members to get the most from each study. We also acknowledge that teachers may have their own methods for preparing the lessons and we encourage them to prepare in the way that makes them most effective in presenting God's Word and the weekly lesson. We also encourage each teacher and member to use the suggested 7-day approach for their own personal study and encouragement.

Probably, the questions we need to ask ourselves when it comes to faith are: 1) Do we have faith?; 2) Do we believe God and that He is?; 3) Are we diligently seeking Him? I hope the answer to all these questions in your walk with the Lord is a resounding YES! If not, ask as the man who brought his son to Jesus in Mark 9 "help my unbelief." Have faith and trust God!

-Blessings
Pastor Don



2 WAYS TO GET FIT!

**MONDAYS • 10-11AM
CHAIR EXERCISE CLASS**

**THURSDAYS • 9AM-NOON
GYM OPEN FOR WALKING**

EVERYONE IS WELCOME!

**GET UP!
GET OUT!
GET FIT!**



first baptist
FORT WORTH

www.fbcfw.org

**Wrapped Candy &
Plastic Easter Egg
donations are now
being accepted!**

(Drop-off in Kitchen to red container)

KAZ



MINISTRY OPPORTUNITIES

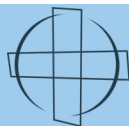
FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF FORT WORTH

WHY SHOULD I VOLUNTEER AT FBCFW?

As a believer, God has given you a spiritual gift to be used to serve Him and others. Many volunteers are needed each week to accomplish all God has placed before us as a church. Get involved to discover how you can be part of what God is doing at First Baptist Church of Fort Worth!

SOME OF THE IMMEDIATE NEEDS ARE:

- **SUNDAYS • PRESCHOOL PRESCHOOL MINISTRY (9:15-10:50AM)**
 - Teachers, Helpers, Secretaries, and Substitutes needed.
- **SUNDAYS • PRESCHOOL MINISTRY EXTENDED CARE SESSION (10:45AM-12:15PM)**
 - Serve only one Sunday a month, or sign-up to be on the substitute list.
- **FIRST WORSHIP TUESDAYS (10:30AM -NOON)**
 - Greeters
 - Ushers
 - Musicians
 - Media* (sound, lights, camera, or computer)
 - *Training is available, no experience is necessary.
- **WEDNESDAYS • CHILDREN'S LEADERS FOR VARIOUS AGE GROUPS (RESUME DATE TBA)**
 - Serve 6:15-8:15pm weekly (more info available soon)
- **FBCFW WORSHIP (CHOOSE TO SERVE YEAR-ROUND OR FOR SPECIAL EVENTS ONLY)**
 - Choir Members
 - Musicians for the Band or Orchestra
 - FIRSTMedia Team Members (No experience necessary, training provided)
 - Sound, lights, camera, or computer/slides



TO VIEW ALL MINISTRY OPPORTUNITIES GO ONLINE TO
[OPPORTUNITIES.FBCFW.ORG](https://opportunities.fbcfw.org)

Suggested Plan for Using this Bible Study Guide Effectively

Introduce

Day 1: Read and meditate on the Scripture, asking God to guide you throughout the week as you study His Word and allowing Him to speak to you through the Spirit. Read the **INTRODUCE** portion of the lesson commentary.

Instruct

Day 2: Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and read the **INSTRUCT** portion of the lesson commentary. Concentrate on memorizing the focal verse for that particular week.

Day 3: Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and answer the focal questions in the **INSTRUCT** portion of the lesson commentary.

Inspire

Day 4: Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and begin thinking about tangible ways you can incorporate the principles you learned in your daily life. Read the **INSPIRE** portion of the lesson commentary.

Incorporate

Day 5: Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and apply the theological principle that you learned from this week in a tangible way. Use the **INCORPORATE** portion of the lesson commentary to guide you.

Day 6: Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and in the journal section describe how God allowed you to apply this passage in a real and tangible way this week.

Day 7: Review the Scripture and share with others in your Connect Class on Sunday morning at 9:30am. Be ready to share your experience about how God allowed you to apply the lesson for that week.

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Faith Overcomes
Our Faults

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March 7, 2021

Faith **FEAR**

*Faith Overcomes
Our Fears
Psalm 34:1-22*

Focal Verse:

"I sought the Lord, and He heard me, and delivered me from all my fears."

Psalm 34:4

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Introduce

Depending upon the context, the word fear can have many different nuances. It primarily means to be afraid, but it can also describe worry, anxiousness, cowardice, and reverence or respect—to name a few. When we talk about overcoming our fears or having no fear, we generally refer to the removal of anything that hinders or cripples us from living life to the fullest. However, we need to have a proper understanding of fear. The Bible differentiates between a fear which is healthy and one which is unhealthy. Unhealthy fear can prevent us from engaging in the things which God has called us to do or it can introduce severe stress in our lives because we worry about the things over which we have no control, but He does. We need to rid ourselves of this type of fear. In his first letter, the Apostle John writes, “There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love” (1 John 4:18). When we have a relationship with Christ and fully rely upon Him, we have nothing to fear because He loves us and has a plan for us.

In contrast, we should fear the consequences of sin and our disobedience to the Lord. When critiquing the hypocrisy of the Pharisees in burdening and threatening the people with the law, Jesus announces, “But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear Him who, after He has killed, has power to cast you into hell; yes, I say to you, fear Him” (Luke 12:5). We ought to fear the Lord, especially the condemnation that we bring upon ourselves when we reject Him. God has given us wisdom in Scripture by which we should evaluate our actions and those of the world around us. Failing to use that wisdom and apply it to our lives daily should bring fear! Some in the world, however, use the call not to fear as an excuse to act recklessly and irresponsibly by removing any limitations or inhibitions. God never sanctions such foolishness. He expects us to live within the boundaries He has set for us and to act righteously according to the pattern He Himself demonstrated for us.

Several years ago, Bob Oatman, Dave Rutherford, and I were camping in Utah and had the privilege of visiting Canyonlands National Park. On the way back to Moab, we took the Shaffer Trail—a narrow, rough and winding dirt road that descended into the canyon and traveled along the Colorado River. Just outside the park, we encountered Gooseneck Overlook which was a beautiful spot to take pictures of the Colorado River snaking its way hundreds of feet below. God has given Dave and me a healthy respect for heights, so we enjoyed the beauty of the vista from a comfortable distance. Bob, however, had no such reservations and set up his camera and tripod closer to the

Introduce



edge and the vertical descent into the canyon. We sat, watched, made comments, and even sent a picture to Kathy, his wife. When he returned to the car, we began discussing how close he had gotten to the edge.

Bob reassured us that he had acted prudently and wisely—which was evident because he had returned to the car. He began describing

the process he had used to select the spot. He didn't scramble, but looked where he placed his foot. He even tested each spot to make sure it wouldn't give way and there were no loose rocks that could precipitate a fall. He also noted how he positioned his camera several feet from the ledge which was obscured somewhat from our vantage point. Many, however, have fallen to their deaths in places like Canyonlands and the Grand Canyon because they had no healthy fear and placed themselves in dangerous situations without thinking through the consequences of their actions—unlike Bob. When we call upon Him for salvation, God will indeed save us from our sins. Salvation, however, is not a call to act recklessly nor does it give us license to make unwise choices and believe that God will simply overcome them. God saves, but the consequences of our choices remain. Therefore, we must have the proper perspective when it comes to overcoming fear. Fear is overcome by faith in Christ. We display our faith by our obedience to His Word. The choices we make should reflect His wisdom! In Christ, we never need to worry or be afraid of anyone or anything when we abide by His Word. Yet, we do need to fear when we do things on our own and make poor choices. Let's overcome fear by faith with this right perspective.

Key
Question

What unhealthy fears do you have when it comes to serving Christ?

Psalm 34:1-4

REJOICING THAT DELIVERS FROM UNGODLY FEAR:

The heading to this psalm provides insight into how much trouble David faced on an almost daily basis throughout his life. He seemed to flee from one problem only to encounter an even greater problem! In this case, he tried to escape the clutches of King Saul by fleeing into Philistine territory where he was immediately recognized by the servants of King Achish of Gath as the successor to the throne in Israel as well as a mighty warrior who had slain tens of thousands in battle ([1 Sam 21:10-15](#)). As a result, they saw David as a formidable threat. This caused David to become greatly afraid for his life, so he “pretended madness” before the king and his court who then promptly released him—wanting nothing to do with an “insane” person whom they now perceived as no threat at all.

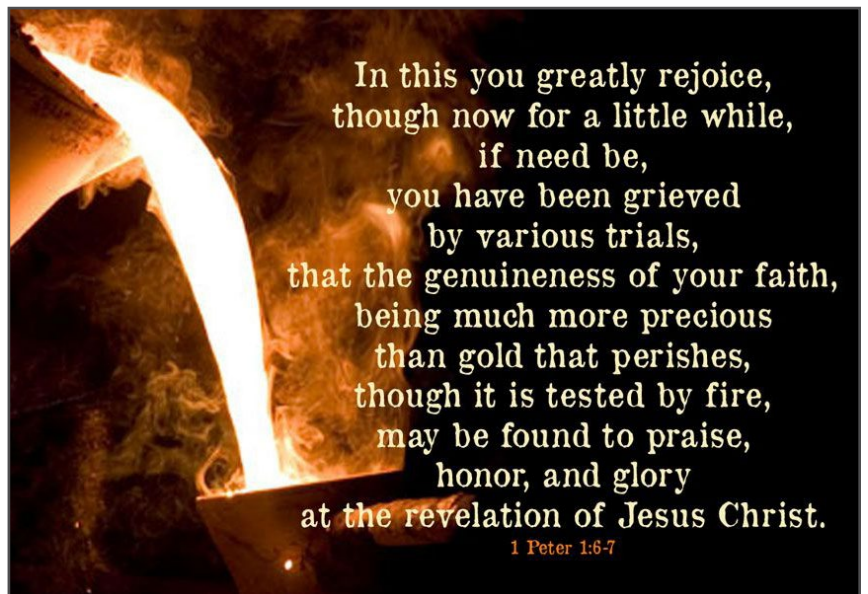
In Reference



Abimelech, in the heading of this psalm, is a title rather than a proper name. It means “my father the king” and refers to the position of Achish as king of Gath.

Some of us may feel like David at times. We only escape one problem to find ourselves in the midst of another. In ministry, I’ve often heard people describe how their problems come in multiples, grouped together in a very short time span. Many of you have shared with me personally as you related prayer requests how problems seem to come in bunches. How should we respond when we face problem after problem?

David provides the answer right here in Psalm 34! We should **ble**s**s the Lord at all times** (v. 1). He reinforces this idea by announcing that **praise shall continually be in his mouth**. Like David, we must acknowledge that our **praise** does not depend upon the outcome of the situation and whether or not God delivers us from an earthly trial based on His sovereign plan.



In this you greatly rejoice,
though now for a little while,
if need be,
you have been grieved
by various trials,
that the genuineness of your faith,
being much more precious
than gold that perishes,
though it is tested by fire,
may be found to praise,
honor, and glory
at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

1 Peter 1:6-7

Instruct

We must **praise** Him consistently no matter what happens!

Too many times, we make our praise conditional; we **praise the Lord** “if” or “when” we perceive something good has happened. Indeed, we should **praise the Lord** for the good things we experience in life, but He shouldn’t be the recipient of our **praise only** during those times. We shouldn’t be like the nine lepers who merely went on their merry way after being healed and never returned to thank Jesus. We must give Him **praise!** But we also can’t fail to **praise** God in the midst of tumult and turmoil. We need to be consistent. We need to rejoice **at all times** regardless of the situation. This must become our *modus operandi* and our very way of life! Therefore, rejoicing consistently not only recognizes God for who He is and what He has done, but it also reminds us that we are wholly dependent upon Him—during the good times and the difficult ones.

How do you ensure that you remain consistent in your praise for the Lord in both the good times and difficult?

Question
1

David now declares that his **soul will boast in the Lord** and **the humble will hear** this testimony and **be glad** (v. 2). We must verbally testify about the greatness and goodness of the Lord before others. We shouldn’t keep it to ourselves! We don’t keep our complaints, criticisms, and critiques (opinions) to ourselves; we share them freely. In fact, no one ever truly “complains” just to himself. The very nature of a complaint is designed to be heard by others in order to elicit a response or reaction. We complain in the presence of others so they will react by hopefully taking pity upon us, offering help, seeking to rectify the problem, or simply making us feel better that someone shares in our complaint! Rather than complain, let us testify about the Lord! Our testimonies are designed to be heard by others too, rather than kept to ourselves, so that we can rejoice together. Let us ask ourselves: Do I live a life of **praise** directed toward Christ or one of complaint and criticism when I don’t get my way?

Continuing his call to worship and rejoice together, David prompts the assembly to **magnify the Lord with** him and **exalt His name together** (v. 3). To **magnify** doesn’t just mean to glorify or praise as we have come to understand it in the modern sense. The Hebrew word behind this translation literally means “to make great.” In this sense, it serves as a reminder of our lowly position in relation to God’s majesty and

greatness. Consequently, it is a call to recognize that God is infinitely greater than we are. John the Baptist had the right perspective when he stated this about Jesus, “He must increase, but I must decrease” (John 3:30). Certainly, we should glorify and **praise** the Lord, but we must do it with the right perspective and never treat Him flippantly or casually. He is our “Father” and “Friend,” but He’s also our sovereign Creator and Master! We must always approach Him prepared to worship in the right way with the right attitude.



How should we prepare ourselves for worship when we approach the Lord any time?

Question
2

David can now report that he **sought the Lord** who **heard** him and **delivered** him **from all his fears** (v. 4). Even David had **fears** and needed to remind himself to remain focused on the Lord who is greater than **all** our **fears** and able to overcome anything! He had found himself in a vulnerable situation as he stood in King Achish’s court surrounded by men who recognized him as the enemy. 1 Samuel 21:12 records that “David took these words to heart, and was very much afraid.” However, this man who now cowered in fear in the king’s court was the same man who valiantly and fearlessly stepped onto the battlefield to face a giant named Goliath from Gath. What changed? It wasn’t God. It was David’s perspective. While in Philistine territory on the run from King Saul, David had begun to focus on the circumstances of the situation and what he could do.

As he went into battle outmatched against Goliath, however, he focused on what the Lord could do! To the Hebrew soldiers gathered across the field from Goliath, David exclaims, “The Lord, who delivered me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear, He will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine” (1 Sam 17:37). Here in Psalm 34, David had to re-orient his thinking when he found himself literally surrounded by trouble in the king’s court. He had to remind himself to seek the Lord consistently and intentionally. When **he sought the Lord**, **all his fears** subsided! God will do the same

Instruct

for us. Like David, this requires us to seek the Lord consistently and intentionally. We will never overcome our **fears** when we focus on our circumstances or our abilities; we can only overcome when our focus is wholly on the Lord!

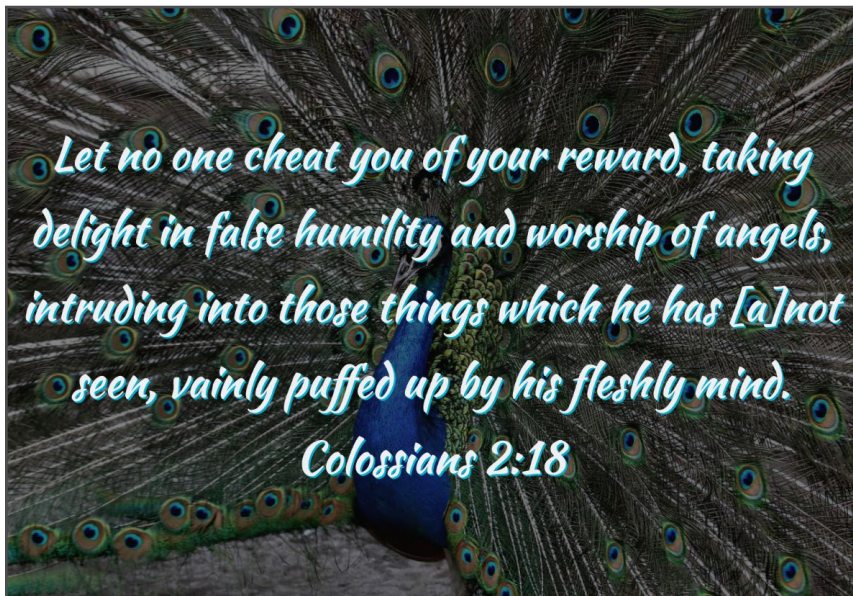
What causes you to fear or worry? When you fear or worry, whom or what are you truly focused on?

Question
3

Psalm 34:5-10

REFLECTING THE RADIANCE OF HIM WHOM WE SHOULD FEAR:

Having shown how God alleviates our **fears**, David now demonstrates how we should **fear the Lord** and reflect His radiance. The psalm describes how those who **looked to** the Lord for help became **radiant** and **their faces were not ashamed** (v. 5). As a **man** in need (literally **poor**), David **cried out** and **the Lord heard** and **saved him** from his **troubles** (v. 6). God dispatched **the angel of the Lord** to intercede on His behalf. Thus,



the psalmist notes that **the angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear God and delivers them** (v. 7). Before discussing our reflection of God's radiance, we must make some brief remarks about angels since the topic is widely misunderstood today and distracts from the true worship of the Lord.

God clearly is the focus of this passage and not **the angel**. God is the one who rescues and delivers those who cry out to Him—not **the angel**! **The angel** is simply a created being, literally a messenger, whom God uses to carry out His divine plan at times. This passage in no way indicates that we have "a guardian angel" who watches over us. This misses the whole point! God Himself watches over us; God Himself provides, protects, and preserves us. God is our guard! **The angel** can only do what God has decreed. To say that "my guardian angel" protected or delivered me wrongly removes the responsibility from the Lord. God acted and accomplished it—not **the angel**! The same principle applies in how

God chooses to work through us. God is at work through us when we obediently surrender to Him. We don't bring His divine plan to fruition! He does it through us and He alone should receive the glory. Moreover, those who speak of "guardian angels" generally never mention where the provision truly originated—the Lord! They have misdirected their focus and attributed the authority and power of God to work in His world to a mere created being. This distracts in worship and in no way enhances it. This brings us back to our original point about reflecting God's radiance. To reflect His radiance simply means that others can see God working in our lives. In this context, their radiance is a reflection of God's grace, provision, and deliverance. Those around us should always be able to see God working in our lives (see Isa 60:5). At times, however, we obscure His radiance because we ourselves get in the way. We allow our personal agendas to supersede the Lord. We get busy doing the things which seem most fulfilling and satisfying to us that we omit God—especially when things seem to be going well in life. When we elevate our own abilities and personal preferences having omitted God, sin has inevitably crept into our lives which dulls the radiance of His transformative work through Christ. We can't allow this to happen! We must focus on Him so that others can see Him at work in and through us, so that we don't tarnish His reputation amongst man by practicing our sinful desires.

How would you evaluate the radiance with which the work of God shines in your life?

Question
4

The psalmist now urges us to **taste and see the Lord is good** (v. 8). At the heart of this statement is a call to thanksgiving because we have experienced His goodness for ourselves. We don't have to take another's word for it! However, this really isn't a call to try or test to see if God is indeed **good** or even faithful to His Word. Rather, it's a call to wake up and recognize all the **good** things for which we have to be thankful in the Lord! If we have a relationship with the Lord through Christ, we have already experienced His goodness! Therefore, we have reason to express our joy

As newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby, if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious.
1 Peter 2:2-3

Instruct

and give thanks no matter the circumstance. In all, David urges us to look around the world and see God at work. He is constantly at work demonstrating His goodness. We don't have to look hard to find it when we are focused on Him.

To end this section of the psalm, David reminds us of the source of **all** our **fears**: self-sufficiency. Hence, the one **who trusts the Lord is blessed** (v. 8b) whereas **the young lions lack and suffer hunger** (v. 10). In nature, lions are referred to as king of the beasts because they have no natural predators greater than they and they truly have nothing to fear. Even in their own strength and self-sufficiency, however, they are never assured of a meal; they can, and often do, go hungry in the wild! In this way, the lion has become a symbol of the danger of self-sufficiency and a reminder that we need the Lord despite all our wisdom, accumulated knowledge, and ability. For this reason, David commands us to **fear the Lord** which we should see as synonymous with complete surrender to Him (v. 9). Consequently, he explains that those who **fear the Lord and seek Him will not lack any good thing** (v. 10). When we surrender to the Lord, He will supply all our "need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus" ([Phil 4:19](#)). We don't have to fear; we can count on Him!

In what ways does self-sufficiency lead to fears and worry?

Question
5

Psalm 34:11-14

RIGHTEOUSNESS PRODUCED THROUGH GODLY FEAR:

David now teaches the **children** of Israel what **fear of the Lord**, or complete surrender and devotion, looks like when applied in our lives (v. 11). He begins by asking two questions that would capture anyone's attention: **Who desires life** and **who** would love to live **many days that he may see good** (v. 12)? Everyone, even the lost, would answer "I would" to these questions! David then explains the key to such a life. **Fear, of the Lord**, or devotion to Him, produces righteousness! In the next two verses, he covers the righteousness we should exhibit in every area of our lives—in what we speak and what we do.

First, he warns that we must **keep** our **tongue from evil** and our **lips from speaking deceit** (v. 13). Second, he admonishes us to **depart from evil and do good**—seeking and pursuing **peace** (v. 14). To **seek** and **pursue peace**, in this context, means to be in

right standing with the Lord by abstaining from any type of sinful practice (Rom 5:1). We don't need to elaborate on these two areas other than to say that we must practice integrity and righteousness in every area of our lives to show our devotion to the Lord. We must constantly remind ourselves to distinguish between healthy and unhealthy fear. Healthy fear leads us to honor the Lord through obedience to His commands while unhealthy fear leads us to act recklessly and ignore them. Consequently, healthy fear leads us to respond in righteousness in every area of our lives at all times while unhealthy fear promotes self-sufficiency and the wrong belief that we can overcome our own problems. That type of reckless attitude we should indeed fear!

Psalm 34:15-22

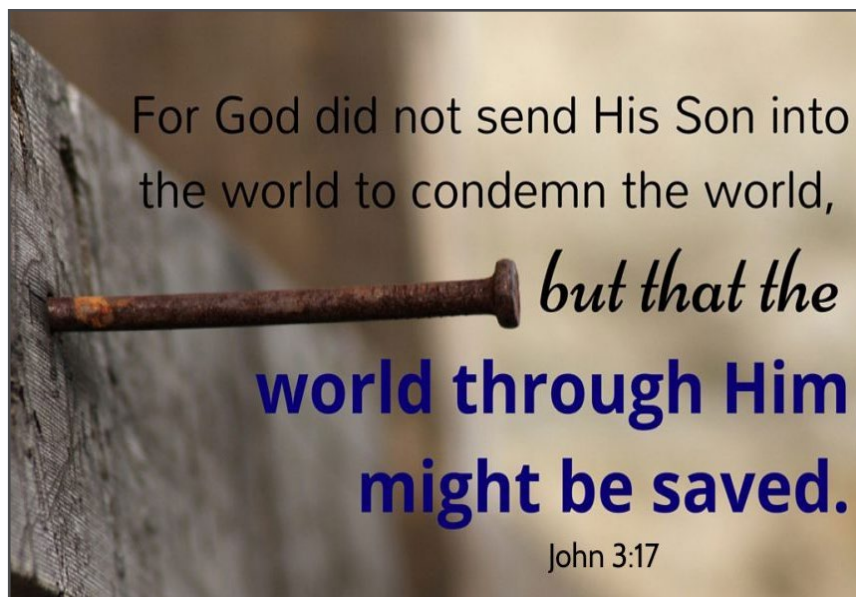
REDEEMED BY HIM WHO REMOVES ALL REASON TO FEAR:

The last eight verses of this psalm describe the fate of those who **fear the Lord** in contrast to those who don't. Those who have a relationship with Christ—which they have borne through a healthy **fear of the Lord** which has produced righteousness—have absolutely nothing to fear at the end of their lives! Quite oppositely, the same cannot be said for the wicked who will face a harsh reality through a grave judgment that awaits them. Consequently, God keeps watch over **the righteous**. His **eyes** are constantly on them and **His ears are open to their cry** (v. 15). The psalmist pictures the Lord as **near to those who have a broken heart** (v. 18), guarding **all his bones**, and protecting him so that none should be **broken** (v. 20). As a result, the psalm asserts that God **delivers** (v. 17) and **saves** (v. 18)! What a beautiful picture these words present about how much God loves and cares for His creation when we submit our lives fully to Him! Yet, this doesn't mean that we will have a trouble-free life and escape all our problems.

How have you seen God's deliverance and hand of protection in your life?

Question
6

On the contrary, David acknowledges that **many are the afflictions of the righteous** (v. 19). He knew this first-hand! We will all go through trials in our lives—and many of them for that matter. God provides the strength we need to endure whatever trial may come if only we would turn to Him and **trust** in Him (v. 22). David's words here in Psalm 34 look beyond the current struggles we face here on earth to an ultimate deliverance through Christ! Verse 22 ends the psalm on this note: **The Lord redeems the soul of His servants and none of those who trust in Him shall be condemned**. We can



overcome any trial and live without fear because we have hope of an even greater deliverance in Christ Jesus! No matter what may happen to us here on earth, we have hope of eternal deliverance—and no one or nothing can take that from us ([John 10:28-29](#))! Let's look beyond our temporary struggles to see the hope and salvation we have through a

redemption that is eternal!

How has knowing you have the hope of eternal life in Christ changed your perspective when you face trials here on earth?

Question
7

In contrast, the **wicked** who have rejected Christ and continue unabated in their sins have no such hope in deliverance. Instead, they will be delivered to judgment based on their self-serving and self-destructive acts and choices in life. For this reason, the psalmist describes the Lord as setting His **face against those who do evil** (v. 16). God sees their hearts and knows their deeds. Nothing has escaped His attention even though for a little while they may seem to get away with **evil** deeds here on earth. In the end, however, their **remembrance** will be **cut off from the earth**. They will face a sentence of eternal destruction and separation from God and His people when Jesus establishes the new heaven and new earth at His second coming.

The **wicked** have chosen this fate for themselves! Their own **evil** deeds hastened their fall. Thus, David can say that **evil shall slay the wicked** (v. 21). In other words, their own choice to participate in **evil** brought about their destruction. David caps this discussion with a dire picture of **those who hate the righteous** and practice **evil**; they **shall be condemned**. They have no hope because they have chosen to reject the only One who **delivers** and **saves**! They have reason to fear what awaits them in death. If we have a relationship with Christ, the promises of the Lord should give us joy and the assurance that we need not fear anything in life when we place our **trust** in Him.

He is sovereignly in control, orchestrating His divine plan He had before creating the world. Still, our relationship with Him should produce a healthy fear in which we seek to participate in righteousness by obediently following the boundaries He has established so that we can live an abundant and productive life. At times, we all will stumble and sin as believers continuing to live in the flesh (i.e., physical body). In relation to sin, we do need to fear bringing dishonor to His holy name and tainting our testimony in the eyes of the world. But we don't have to fear losing our salvation or that He will love us any less. He will always lovingly correct us and restore us to the right path when we seek Him! On the other hand, those who live a lifestyle of sin and have no relationship with Christ should live in fear. They have no hope apart from repenting of their sins and calling upon Jesus to save them! Their problem is that they focus entirely on the present and fail to see the grim future that awaits them in eternity. We as believers should praise God in the present through our verbal testimony as well as our actions, but our focus should be on eternity. We should begin living now in a way that reflects the eternal life we have in Christ.



When it comes to fear, we must have the proper perspective. Rather than acting foolishly and endangering our lives as we saw demonstrated in the introduction, we need to abide by the wisdom that God has given us through Scripture. God has also given us instincts and commonsense which point us back to the principles in His Word ([Rom 2:14](#)). We have no excuse for acting irresponsibly and recklessly; we deliberately choose to do it! Still, many people stubbornly choose to ignore God's wisdom and act in a self-destructive way even though He has shown us the way that always leads to success. By definition, such people who reject God's wisdom are fools—regardless of how intelligent they may be in the eyes of the world ([Psalm 14:1](#)).

We ought to fear failing to live according to God's wisdom and plan because nothing good ever comes from it! Such actions always lead to destruction. Without salvation through Christ, we have no hope—only condemnation for our sins. Yet, in Christ, we have nothing to fear that this world may hurl at us. But this requires that we constantly focus upon Him and allow Him to guide us. Therefore, we shouldn't allow fear to hinder our service to Him! He is greater than all our fears when we place our trust completely in Him. Like David, we need to remind ourselves of the source of our deliverance and salvation. We need to seek the Lord. When we do, He will alleviate our ungodly fears and strengthen us to endure life's trials.

Incorporate

Why should we fear the Lord? What does this healthy fear look like when we apply it in our lives?

How does rejoicing in the Lord deliver us from ungodly fear? How does reflecting on God's faithfulness in the past help us to alleviate our fears of the future?

During times of trials, how have you reflected God's radiance? How consistent have you been in reflecting God's radiance when you have gone through difficult times?

March 14, 2021



Faith Overcomes Our Foolishness

1 Corinthians 4:1-13

Focal Verse:

"Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful."

1 Corinthians 4:2

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Introduce

During two summers while home from college, I was introduced to full-time work in church where I earned minimum wage as a custodian. Being a large church in rural Kentucky, several people worked on this team under the oversight of the Property Maintenance Supervisor. The gentleman who held this position regarded himself in very high esteem. He saw himself as wise, educated, and experienced which led him to offer advice freely. He also prided himself on his ability to manage people effectively by being detailed-oriented and a good communicator which helped him to relate to people. In all his so-called wisdom, however, some obvious things escaped his attention.

In all his correspondence with the church office, he felt that the title Property Maintenance Supervisor was too long and cumbersome to write or type. So, on any official document, he signed his name, carefully added a comma beside it, and then used the first letter in each word of his title for this new abbreviation! However, this “new” abbreviation didn’t escape the attention of the secretaries and others in the office!

Although he had worked in other supervisory roles before being hired by the church, he had never worked as a custodian and had very little experience in any type of actual maintenance work which soon became obvious. While assigning tasks, he asked one custodian to clean the vents and in-takes for the air conditioning system. One would assume that you would simply get a ladder, a clean cloth, and wipe the dust. But he sincerely instructed her to put bleach into a spray bottle and then wipe them with a rag. This prompted her to ask which thermostats controlled the air conditioner units in particular parts of the building so she could shut them off as she cleaned. He earnestly responded that she need not shut them off because it would lead the building to become too warm!

Nonetheless, she still questioned this logic by inquiring, “What if the air conditioner kicks on while I am cleaning the vents? It will blow the bleach in my face!” Without hesitation, he instructed her to buy one of those medical cones that dogs wear around their necks and wear it around her neck so the bleach wouldn’t blow on her! Even so, he never realized the folly of his poor advice. Such a device does not protect her nose, eyes, and mouth! She would still be subjected to the back spray of the bleach when the air conditioner came on. This is the same gentleman I described in the curriculum several years ago whom I found standing on a metal ladder to work on a

Introduce



ballast for a florescent light while it was on because he couldn't see, electrocuting himself! He had obviously overstated his qualifications for this job. This became evident when one examined his actions and the advice which he gave in contrast to his own self-portrayal and the boasts he made.

In 1 Corinthians 4:1-13, some in the Corinthian church were making such arrogant boasts about their wisdom, wealth, and position. They greatly embellished their own status and abilities while spitefully putting down others, including Paul, whom they felt were beneath them. Their actions, however, betrayed them and showed how truly foolish they were. True stewards and servants of Christ serve faithfully and humbly—not seeking recognition for themselves, but to glorify Christ. The goal of a steward, therefore, is never to be noticed, but to represent the Master in a positive way that draws attention to Him. It is absurd and foolish to boast in our own achievements, abilities, and positions because without Christ we truly have nothing! Let us not foolishly participate in self-promotion or regard ourselves as self-sufficient. Rather, let us prove faithful stewards who represent Christ well so that others may glorify Him on account of us.

Key
Question

In what ways must a steward be found faithful?

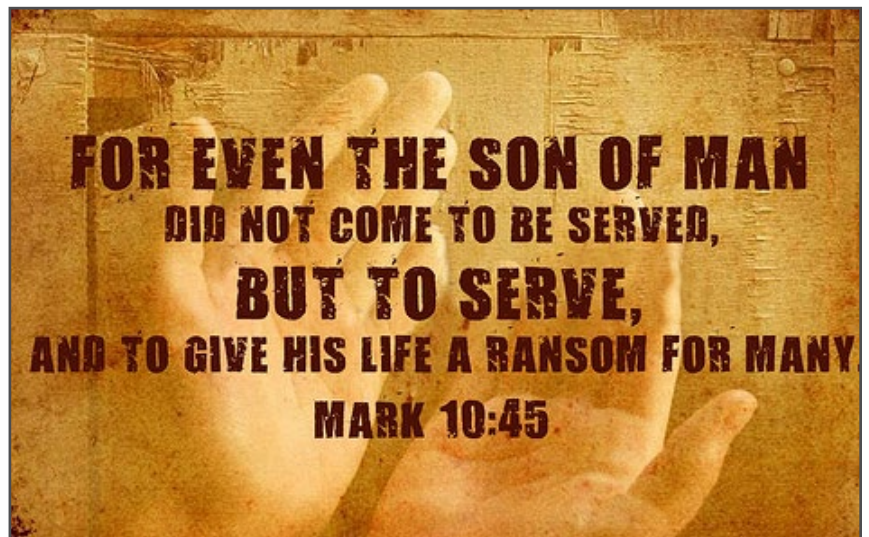
1 Corinthians 4:1-5

THE FAITHFULNESS OF STEWARDS:

Because some in the Corinthian church boasted in their self-perceived lofty position, Paul had to remind them of the right perspective with which they should view themselves by using Apollos and himself as an example. They should count, or **consider**, Apollos and him **as servants of Christ** and **stewards of the mysteries of God** (v. 1). Even though both men played key roles as leaders in the church in Corinth as well as other churches throughout Asia Minor and Europe, they were still to be regarded **as servants of Christ**. Christ Himself is the head of the body (church) who alone is to be magnified and exalted ([Eph 1:22-23](#); [Col 1:18](#)).

Christ, however, calls and appoints leaders within the local church who will keep the members of the body focused on Him and unified for the purpose of ministry and service, particularly the communication of the gospel. The human tendency is to pull in many different directions at the same time because we want to “do our own thing.” For this reason, Christ has invested leadership with the responsibility of ensuring that each member uses his or her spiritual gift together with the rest of the community to achieve the specific purpose of spreading the gospel through the local church. But leaders must still exercise humility and regard their position as one given by God’s grace.

Although leaders rightly exercise a certain amount of authority in guiding the body toward Christ, they too are still His **servants**. They are to be respected, honored, and followed by the members of the body when they practice Scripture and point to the collective service of Christ. Their position, however, should never become a reason for hubris or pride whereby they supplant the attention and focus that should



be on Christ. Consequently, leaders too must work in the trenches along with the people so-to-speak. They may have different roles and functions which only they can

Instruct

do, but they are still **servants**. They still lead by example. They don't simply bark orders without ever lifting a finger in service to Christ, but they serve in the way in which He has called and gifted them. Christ Himself was such an example to us. Even though He had every right as King to be served, He came to serve! In fact, Paul writes, "Who, being in the form of God . . . made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant" ([Phil 2:6-7](#)). Jesus provides the perfect example of the **servants** we all ought to be!

Regardless of our role, calling, and spiritual giftedness, why should we all consider ourselves servants? What is the danger if we don't?

Question
1

Not only are Paul and Apollos fellow **servants** along with the Corinthians, but they are **stewards** as well. Perhaps, the modern designation "estate manager" best captures the meaning of steward. In antiquity, a steward would oversee the management of his employer's entire household, represent him in business, and do anything else that he may ask. Thus, he would oversee the day-to-day operations of the household, including the physical property, the other servants, and even the employer's children and their education. He would also manage both household and business finances as well as conduct business on behalf of his employer. In the Old Testament, Joseph served Potiphar in this way: "He made [Joseph] overseer of his house, and all that he had he put under his authority" ([Gen 39:2, 4](#)).

Here, in 1 Corinthians, Paul uses the concept of **stewards** to refer to their role as managers of **the mysteries of God**—that is the communication of the gospel. The

But 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

word **mysteries**, in this sense, doesn't mean something unknowable or even intentionally concealed, but it refers to God's plan revealed through the coming of the Messiah at the right time ([Rom 5:6](#)). Through the centuries, God clearly communicated His plan through the prophets and, at the right time, He brought it to fruition through Christ. Literally, that which had been spoken by the prophets became visible

and was revealed through the birth, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

Still, those who look to human wisdom and philosophy, rather than God's wisdom in Scripture, cannot comprehend Jesus' purpose ([1 Cor 2:7-8](#)). God's plan seemed like foolishness to them ([1 Cor 1:18-23; 2:14](#)). Therefore, Paul can say, "We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery" because the world doesn't understand the crucifixion and has dismissed it ([1 Cor 2:7](#)). The cross, therefore, is central in understanding **the mysteries of God**. Consequently, Paul asserts, "For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified" ([1 Cor 2:2](#)).

Paul now identifies the chief characteristics that all **stewards** must exhibit: they must **be found faithful** (v. 2). Broadly, as **stewards** of the gospel, we must exercise faithfulness in three ways. We must **be faithful** to follow our *directives*, we must **be faithful** to execute our *duties*, and we must **be faithful** in safeguarding *doctrine*. First, **stewards** represent their masters and act on his behalf. They must faithfully follow the *directives* he gives. Because we represent Christ, we should conform ourselves to His character and obey the *directives* (commands) He has given us in His Word. Others should see Christ in us! We must live in a way that honorably reflects His character and points others to Him. Hence, we should exhibit integrity (righteousness), dependability, and reliability in all that we do. For this reason, some modern translations opt to substitute "trustworthy" for **faithful** (NASB; RSV). We certainly should practice this sense of trustworthiness, but our faithfulness as **stewards** of the gospel implies much more as we shall see in the next two areas.

Second, we must **be faithful** in our *duties* as outlined in Scripture, particularly with our call to communicate the gospel with everyone ([Matt 28:19-20; Acts 1:8](#)). Part of communicating the gospel is the exercising of the spiritual gifts He has given us through our service in the local church. When we use our giftedness within the church, the gospel should always be the focus of our service! God hasn't given us the gospel only to read and use for our own benefit; in other words, He hasn't given us the gospel to keep to ourselves. He has given us the gospel to share! If the gospel has truly transformed our lives, we should naturally want to share that message with others so it can impact their lives too! We must evaluate our faithfulness as **stewards** by asking: How often do I share the gospel with others?

What duties has God given us as His stewards?
Why should communicating (sharing) the gospel
be the priority?

Question
2

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Finally, **stewards** must safeguard the *doctrine* of the gospel. Thus, we are responsible for correct interpretation as well the clear communication. To safeguard *doctrine*, therefore, we must rely on the Holy Spirit who will grant us understanding and



rightly help us interpret Scripture ([2 Peter 1:19-21](#)). Our reliance upon the Holy Spirit, however, doesn't mean that we're passively involved in the effort. On the contrary, we must take an active role in reading Scripture in context, studying it thoroughly, and discerning the right principles and applications from the text. The Spirit will guide us, but we must extend the effort. This last responsibility of the steward is of great importance today since we live in a society that spends little time examining all the evidence before drawing

conclusions. Many people also dismiss facts or logic and skew them to fit the personal view they hold without warrant. We must hear God speak in context and safeguard the meaning of His Word from the relativism of society which distorts the truth in support of the way they see the world! We need to hear the Lord speak and see the world through His eyes which He has divulged explicitly through Scripture.

Specifically, how should we safeguard the gospel against incorrect interpretation?

Question
3

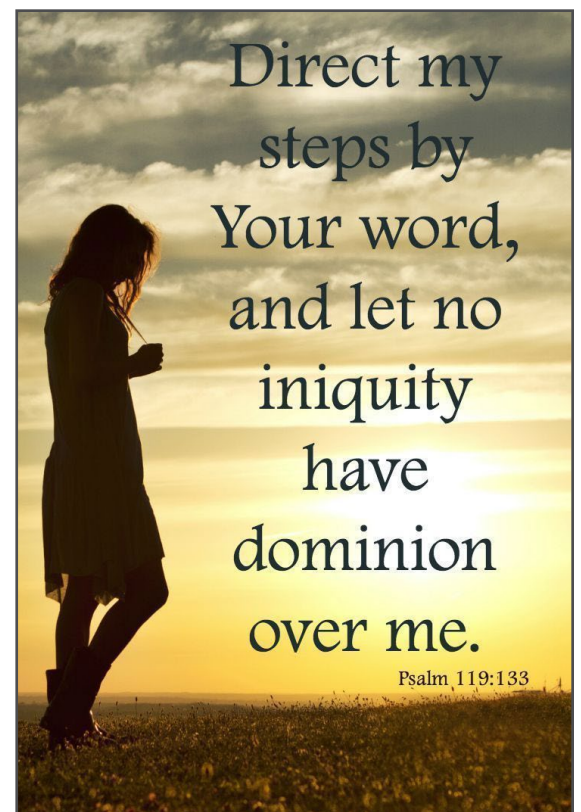
As we study these next few verses, we must take great care when we examine their meaning so that we can rightly understand the context and apply the teaching correctly. Paul asserts that it doesn't concern him (literally, **it is a very small thing**) that he **should be judged by** the Corinthians or **by a human court** for that matter (v. 3). Consequently, he explains that he doesn't know of anything that he has done wrong (literally, **I know nothing against myself**). Even so, he's not vindicated or **justified** by his own declaration and assessment of himself (v. 4). Rather, **the Lord is** the one **who judges** him. Paul then draws the inference that they should not rush to **judge** anything (literally, **judge nothing before the time**). Instead, they should wait **until the Lord comes** who **will bring to light** any sin (literally, **hidden things of darkness**) and **reveal** the motives **of the heart** (v. 5). As a result, if they are found righteous in

their actions and pure in their motives, their **praise will come from God.**

To interpret these verses correctly, we must first understand the historical context. The Corinthians had created divisions within their church based on the personality of the leader whom they chose to follow ([1 Cor 1:10-13](#)). These divisions led them to attack the character, knowledge, wisdom, and even spirituality of the other groups in the church along with the leader with whom they had aligned themselves ([1 Cor 4:6-13](#)). They did not base these judgments on actual actions or provable facts which demonstrated the wrongdoing or sin of the leader. They projected their own preferences, views, and perceptions skewed by their desire to elevate themselves by putting down others. Further, none of the accusations they brought had any scriptural basis which betrayed their own sinful motives in attacking others!

Now that we have seen the historical context, we can better interpret what these verses mean. As believers, we have a higher standard by which we are judged: the Word of God—that is both Scripture and Jesus. The “court” of individual and public opinion as well as cultural preferences, perceptions, and presuppositions don’t truly matter, particularly when they contradict Scripture and we are in right standing and practice with God’s Word. For this reason, Paul has carefully examined himself in light of God’s Word and could not find anywhere he had acted sinfully according to the standard therein. If anything had escaped his attention, Jesus would reveal that to him in time and he would be held accountable by Him alone for his actions.

Unsubstantiated accusations and charges brought against him by the Corinthians which do not violate the principles of Scripture have no place in judging him. We too ought to examine ourselves carefully to ensure that we are in right standing with the Lord and living by the principles of Scripture. Public perception does matter when we act dishonorably and sinfully, misrepresenting Christ. When specific charges can be brought against an individual which show that he has acted sinfully in disobedience to Scripture, then steps should be taken according to the biblical process to confront and restore such a member ([Matt 18:15-20; Gal 6:1](#)). In fact, Paul is putting this process into action right here in this letter because some in the church were clearly



acting sinfully in violation of Scripture. We cannot read Paul's statement as a blanket call which prohibits distinguishing between right and wrong or prevents us from enacting the steps that God has given us to confront sin. But there was no sin in Paul's case! Jesus will be the judge of that when he returns and declares **praise** for the one who has lived righteously.

What is the danger of allowing sin to continue in the church unchecked without applying the process of discipline outlined in Scripture?

Question
4

Like Jesus' teaching about judging in [Matthew 7:1](#), the world distorts the words here to fit their own agenda. They wrongly use both of these passages to claim that no one has any right to judge the actions of another in any way—even according to Scripture. Neither Jesus nor Paul teaches this! The world attempts to use these passages as a way to justify their sin and free themselves from guilt. Scripture provides the basis by which we can determine whether one's actions are right or wrong. We should never act judgmentally or stand in condemnation, but we should point others to Scripture to read what God has said. Judgment comes from Him! It's not about what we think or believe, but about what God has said. Hence, Paul points out in verse 6 that he wants the Corinthians to **learn in them not to think beyond what is written** (Scripture). Our mere opinions don't matter!

Since the Corinthians are attacking Paul and other leaders, let's apply this principle in a brief case study of leadership. Based on the context of 1 Corinthians, people do not have the right to judge or criticize any leader simply because they do not like or agree with what they do or how they lead. Personal preference is never the gauge for the soundness of an action. Conversely, this does not mean that leaders cannot be held accountable for their sinful actions when they clearly violate Scripture.

Thus, some have tried to misuse this passage to assert that leaders are only accountable to the Lord for their actions. God will certainly hold them to a higher standard and ultimately He will be the source of the final judgment against them ([Jas 3:1](#)). But, in the meantime, the church has the responsibility to enact discipline against leaders who have sinned—just as it does for any member based on Jesus' teaching ([Matt 18:15-20](#)). The charges against any leader must be solely based upon what the Bible defines as sin and they must be corroborated by at least two witnesses ([1 Tim](#)

[5:19-20](#)). As believers, we must hold ourselves to a higher standard and correct those who are sinning so that the church can remain pure and holy in Christ. But all this must be based on Scripture and not opinion or conjecture!

Why must the church take steps to confront, restore, or even expel those who have been caught in sin?

Question
5

1 Corinthians 4:6-7

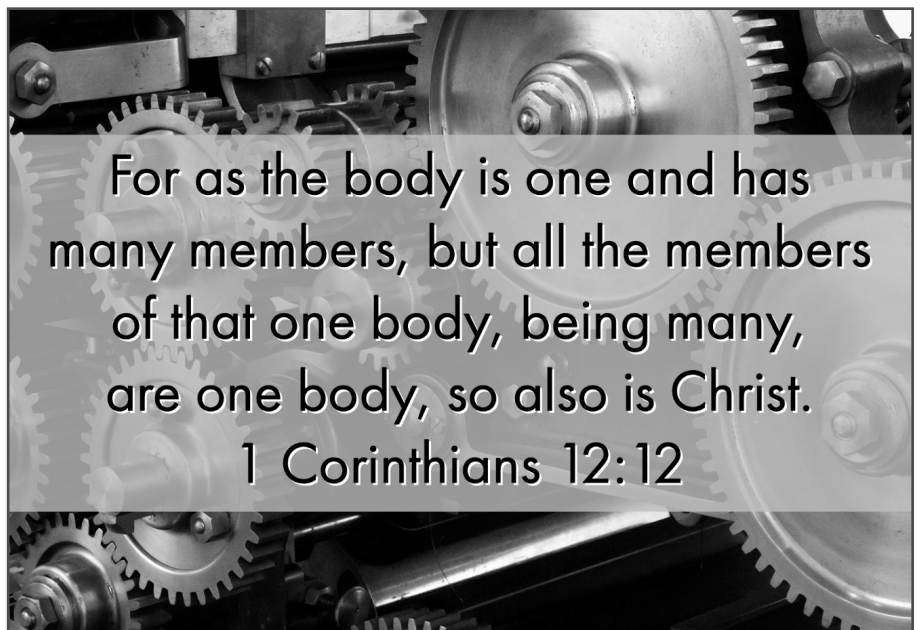
THE FOOLISHNESS OF SELF-PROMOTION:

Paul explains that he has used Apollos and himself as examples of how they ought to regard or think about themselves. He states that he has applied **these things**—that is his teaching about **servants** and **stewards**— to Apollos and him so that they may have the proper perspective and not become arrogant or prideful (literally, **puffed up**) **on behalf of one against another** (v. 6). Scripture gives us the only basis for properly evaluating ourselves and maintaining the right focus. Again, this is why Paul warns us **not to think beyond what is written**. In other words, we should see ourselves in light of Christ and “not to think of [ourselves] more highly than [we] ought to think” ([Rom 12:3](#)). We are all **servants** and **stewards** indebted to the grace of Christ, working together to praise Him and promote the gospel.

As servants, we must work together collectively, albeit with different roles and gifts, to point others into a relationship with Christ. We can't do that when we get in the way and become the center

of attention. Christ hasn't called us to self-promotion, but as His ambassadors and representatives. The Corinthians had forgotten this! They conducted themselves in a way which put the spotlight on themselves, especially their use of spiritual gifts. The gifts which should have been used for ministry and spreading the

gospel became a means of pride and self-promotion. [Chapters 12 through 14](#) detail



Instruct

the disorder and disunity this caused in the church.

How does self-promotion cause distraction and disunity in the church?

Question
6

Although they have different gifts, they have one overarching purpose with three emphases: to glorify Christ, to communicate the gospel, and to build the church. To illustrate the wrongheaded way in which the Corinthians were thinking, Paul asks a series of rhetorical questions: **For who makes you differ from another?; What do you have that you did not receive?; and If you did receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it** (v. 7)? These three questions anticipate the answers: “no one,” “nothing,” and “no reason.” In Christ, we are all His **servants** and **stewards** of the gospel. The different positions to which He has graciously called us in the church and the different gifts with which He has equipped us should always point to Him—and never to us individually.

We live in a competitive world that pushes self-promotion. People brag about their exploits (even sinful ones) and boast about their achievements. People, not just athletes and influencers, promote their brand or image. The world wants people to take notice. They want to be the center of attention and the recipients of conversation. They want their cause to be heard. In Christ, however, we must have a completely different perspective. It’s not about what we can do or even what we have accomplished. Rather, it’s about what He can do and what He has done through us. It’s about His transformative grace, not our individual achievement. We should never put the focus on ourselves! This can be difficult to do at times in a world that is self-seeking and self-promoting. As believers, we must point to Christ and allow others to see Him through us. Let’s not get in the way!

In what ways do people seek to promote themselves? How has this crept into the church?

Question
7

1 Corinthians 4:8-13

THE FOOLISHNESS OF SELF-SUFFICIENCY:

The Corinthians also boasted in their self-sufficiency. According to their own foolish

evaluation about their position in life, their abilities, and their achievements, they confidently asserted that they had it all together. They understood everything; they had everything they needed and they didn't need any assistance or advice from anyone—including Christ and certainly from Paul! Because they had “security” in their position, they now believed they had the freedom to do, say, and practice anything that they wanted—even sinful acts (see [chapters 5-9](#)). So, here verse 8, Paul likely uses their own words against them to show the error in their faulty self-evaluation. He notes that they see themselves as **already full** (i.e., well-fed) and **rich** (v. 8). They even view themselves as reigning **as kings!** Paul even sarcastically laments that he wished they really **did reign as kings**, so that they **might reign with** them!



What is the danger of claiming to be self-sufficient?

Question
8

He then compares their pompous and misdirected thinking about themselves to the reality he faces in ministry. Whereas they perceived themselves to **reign as kings, the apostles** were **condemned to death** and **made a spectacle to the whole created world** (v. 9). In the rest of these verses, 10 through 13, Paul continues that comparison to highlight the foolishness of their self-sufficiency. The Corinthians describe themselves as **wise in Christ, strong, and distinguished** (v. 10). They looked down on others, like Paul, whom they labeled as **fools for Christ's sake, weak, and dishonored** based on the perception that those who experienced hardships and persecution had an inferior relationship with Christ. In other words, they behaved in much the same way those do today who wrongly preach that anything but health and prosperity indicates a lack of faith or that suffering always means someone has acted sinfully. Scripture itself proves this is not always the case ([John 15:18-25; Job](#)). In contrast, Paul describes his life as an itinerate or traveling missionary and the

Instruct

hardships he faces presently. Both he and Apollos **hunger and thirst**, are **poorly clothed, beaten**, and **homeless** (v. 11, see also [Phil 4:12](#)). They support themselves to make sharing the gospel a priority. They labor with their own hands (v. 12). In addition to these difficulties, they have encountered severe persecution. Earlier Paul had noted that **the apostles** faced **death**; now he reveals that they are **reviled, persecuted, defamed, and have been made as the filth** (literally, garbage) **of**



the world (v. 13). However, they did not respond with retaliation in kind as the world would or perhaps immature believers may; instead, they displayed Christ-like character when they blessed, endured, and treated others with respect (i.e., **entreat**).

Paul isn't like the Corinthians, boasting about his triumph over hardship and persecution as a "badge of honor" for him. Nor is he telling us to look for trouble as if that proves how "Christ-like" we truly are. Troubles will find us in this world; we don't have to seek them out. Quite oppositely, he cites these things as a testimony to the source of his strength and endurance—Christ ([1 Cor 4:14-17](#)). Paul isn't self-sufficient, even though he does bi-vocational work to support ministry; he must still depend upon Christ for all things!

When troubles arise, we must certainly turn to Christ and depend upon Him. But it's not just when trouble comes; we must depend upon Him daily for everything. We must acknowledge that He alone is the source of our wisdom, knowledge, provision, protection, and life through salvation. It's the epitome of foolishness to claim self-sufficiency and refuse to depend upon Christ. Therefore, let us prove as faithful stewards who depend upon Christ for our daily needs as well as the ability to carry out the ministry to which He has called us by rejecting the foolish ideas of self-promotion and self-sufficiency.

How do you acknowledge your dependance upon Christ? What are the areas where you struggle most with your dependence upon Him?

Question
9

If we have a relationship with Christ, we have all been called to serve in the local church. Although we have many different gifts working together to glorify Christ, build the church, and proclaim the gospel, each one is vitally important. Some areas of service are more visible than others, but this has no bearing upon their importance. Consequently, we must have the right perspective when we serve—in particular in the areas which are most visible to the whole body. Still, we all must examine our motives about why we serve because service can easily become a way that we seek attention and praise. Pride and arrogance can easily distract from the focus of Christ by placing the focus on the individual. The world engrains the ideas of self-promotion and self-sufficiency within us from an early age. But we must resist these worldly motives to elevate Christ in everything we do. As believers, let's work together as servants of Christ who are faithful stewards of the gospel. May others see Christ in and through us.

Incorporate

In what ways has God called and gifted you to serve in the church? How are you using your opportunities to serve to share the gospel? Why should everyone be serving in some capacity in the local church?

How can we combat self-promotion within the church in a biblical way? Why must we always point to specific passages from Scripture when combating self-promotion?

How does an attitude of self-sufficiency affect our attitude toward service? In what ways must we depend upon the Lord as we serve through the church?

Journal: Document God's Work

March 21, 2021



Faith Overcomes Our Flesh

Romans 8:1-11

Focal Verse:

"For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit."

Romans 8:5

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Introduce

For those of us who have ever traveled overseas, we know that we must carry a set of adapters with us if we want to use or recharge any electronic device that requires power. The physical plugs in the United States differ from those in Europe which differ from those in South America and so forth. No region has the same configuration! Even if we haven't traveled much, we may have experienced a similar problem here at home, particularly with portable devices like our phones, tablets, and some laptops. For instance, the cords or cables



for one brand of phone won't work with the other. Even if we are brand loyalists, we will find that over time the connections to a device in the same series will also change! We can't use an older cord on our newer device. No matter how hard we press, push, or shove, the cord will not work and allow us to connect to the power supply. They are simply incompatible.

After eight years of responding to emails, writing thousands of pages of curriculum, and sundry other work, the keyboard on my laptop ceased to allow me to type certain letters, particularly the letter M, which became highly problematic. Think of how many words and sentences that have that letter, including my name. I couldn't send out emails from Ike! Fortunately, we were able to replace the aging computer with a brand-new model in the same series. While the new computer had many new and updated features, all the external connections had changed! The tip on the power cords differed and the new computer had no ports for USB, RGB, or HDMI cables. All required the purchase of a special adapter that would fit on the smaller, streamlined ports of this newer model. In addition, the computers would also not sync over the Internet to allow the transfer of files more easily by Airdrop. An error message popped up indicating that the two models were incompatible for this function!

Whether we know much about computers or electronics, we've all surely experienced compatibility issues at some point in our lives. In Christ, we should recognize that we have compatibility issues between our flesh (worldly, sinful desires) and the Spirit. In

Introduce

this case, to recognize the incompatibility between the two is a good thing! The old life we lived before Christ is incompatible with the new life we have through Him. Christ doesn't leave us in our old state dominated by the flesh; He makes us a new creation ([2 Cor 5:17](#)). Yet, many people try to live with a foot in both worlds. They claim to serve Christ, but they behave like the unrepentant world around them. This is impossible. We can't do both at the same time. Either we are living in the Spirit and surrendered in obedience to Him or we are following the course of the flesh according to the pattern of this world. There is no middle ground in this case. Our faith in Christ will overcome the flesh if only we will remain focused on Him, obedient to His Word, and surrendered completely to the leadership of the Holy Spirit.

Key
Question

In what ways is the Spirit incompatible with the flesh?

Romans 8:1-4

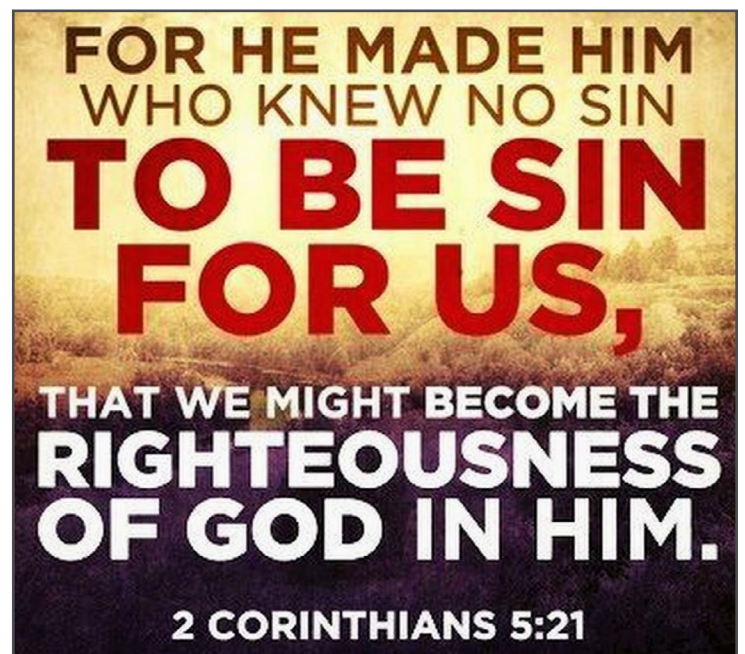
THE INABILITY OF THE LAW:

In [chapter 7](#), Paul describes the purpose and function of the law. He details both what it does and what it cannot do. The primary purpose of the law is to reveal sin (7:7) and help us know how far short of perfection we fall in contrast to God's righteous and holy standard (7:12). Subsequently, the law serves as a tool of judgment. It condemns us for our sins which transgress God's boundaries and it sentences us to death as the penalty (7:9). Because we all have chosen to break God's law, it only leads to death. It cannot give life (7:10-11) or deliver us from sin (7:24) because no one can ever perfectly fulfill it. As a result, the law cannot transform us to cease sinning and live righteously although we may occasionally do right things according to its principles (7:13-20). Without Christ, however, we cannot overcome sin because we will always surrender to our fleshly desires even though we know based on the law what we should and should not do (7:19). Because our flesh is weak and prone to sin, we need Someone greater to deliver us from our sinful desires and transform us according to God's holy standard (7:25).

With this background, we can begin to understand Paul's declaration in Romans 8:1

that **there is now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus**. Whereas the law brings **condemnation** and death based upon our actions, Christ brings life based upon His work upon the cross ([Rom 5:1, 6-11](#)). **Therefore**, we **no** longer stand under **condemnation** because Christ has **fulfilled** the law perfectly and has given us His own righteousness when we repented and surrendered to Him ([2 Cor 5:21](#)). Thus, Christ has the power to deliver us from sin and transform our actions and thoughts

because He has sent the Holy Spirit to live within us and guide us to righteousness.



If we do not have a relationship with Christ, why do we still stand under condemnation?

Question
1

For this reason, Paul explains that **the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made us free from the law of sin and death** (v. 2). He continues by reminding us of the law's inability to remove our guilt and save us from our sin. Hence, he contends that **what the law could not do in that it was weak in the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin** (v. 3). Christ, therefore, **condemned sin in the flesh** by fulfilling **the righteous requirement of the law in those who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit** (v. 4). In other words, Christ lived a sinless life and perfectly **fulfilled** every aspect of **the law**—something that we ourselves cannot do because we are **weak** and succumb to our fleshly desires and sin. As that perfect, unblemished sacrifice, He became our substitute by taking our sin upon Himself and paying the penalty of death in our place. To help us understand, let's consider traffic laws. If we have ever driven, we've broken at least one traffic law whether the speed limit, failure to stop fully at an intersection, unsafe lane changes without signaling, and so forth. And let's not lie and say we haven't because that breaks another law ([Exod 20:16](#)). Whether we've done these things intentionally or unintentionally, we've broken the law. Even if we've only driven one mile-per-hour over the speed limit, we stand guilty! Even as a conscientious and safe driver, we have certain habits in which we engage that break the law. For example, we may drive five miles-per-hour over the speed limit consistently, knowing that it most likely will not result in a ticket. Still, in the eyes of the law we stand guilty of a violation even though we may not have a "ticket" to prove how guilty!

One day, however, we see the familiar red and blue lights of a police car pulling us over for a violation. The officer may approach the vehicle and ask, "Do you know why I stopped you?" Some of us may protest with innocence and claim to have no idea, but in reality we can deduce why we've been stopped. As the officer writes the ticket, we can give excuses, protest, and beg for leniency, but that doesn't change the fact that we're guilty. At some point, the officer may say, "You'll have to take that up in court before a judge." The law in this way condemns; it has sentenced us to a predetermined penalty (a fine in this case). Based solely upon the law, we are guilty and have no other recourse but to pay the fine or face the penalty!

If we do protest the ticket and appear in court, it still doesn't change the fact that we've broken the law regardless of the outcome of the trial. The judge may extend mercy or have other options at his disposal for adjudicating the case, but the violation still goes on our record technically. Now, however, suppose the defender representing us

has a pristine driving record. He has never violated one traffic law! He miraculously pleads with the judge to substitute his flawless driving record for ours. He would take our violations upon him, pay the penalty which we should have paid, and give us his clean driving slate as if we had never broken one law. The law didn't take away our guilt; our defender took it upon himself. This is what Christ has done for us! The law pronounced us guilty as charged; we have no way around it. Christ,



however, gave us His perfect, sinless record and took our guilt upon Himself. Therefore, in Him we **now** have **no condemnation** for our sins because of what He has done! Now that we've seen the bigger picture presented in these verses, let's look at some things which people often misunderstand. The phrase **Spirit of life** simply refers to how we now belong to Christ when we have a relationship with Him. The Spirit serves as a guarantee or down payment ([2 Cor 1:22; 5:5; Eph 1:13-14](#)), signifying that we belong to God as His children (Rom 8:16). If the Spirit does not reside in us, we are not God's children and we have **no life!** Moreover, the **life** which comes through Christ supersedes our guilt of breaking God's **law** which constitutes **sin** and leads to **death**. Paul is not saying that the Spirit frees us from the **requirement** to fulfill **the law!** On the contrary, the Spirit is the sign that our guilt and **sin** have been removed through Christ who **fulfilled the law** for us.

Consequently, Christ's fulfillment of **the requirement of the law** does not give us the right to act lawlessly as though its **righteous** principles never applied to us in the first place. Some wrongly regard these verses as freedom from living by the **righteous** principles that God has instituted for us in Scripture as a means to justify their sin. Earlier, in fact, Paul even warned against abusing God's grace by repeatedly sinning ([Rom 6:1-2](#)). For this very reason, God has sent the Holy Spirit to help us live according to **the righteous requirement of the law** just as Christ has **fulfilled** it on our behalf and removed our guilt. In other words, the removal of our guilt doesn't give us the ability to act however we want!

Why is it important that we still follow the righteous principles found in God's Word?

Question
2

We now have no excuse for our failure to follow God’s pattern for our lives because the Holy Spirit lives within us and will guide us to righteousness. Therefore, we must allow the Spirit to guide our actions in a way which honors and glorifies the Lord. This



means that He will always guide us to fulfill the **righteous** precepts of God’s Word and His **law**—not in a legalistic sense, but rather in one patterned after the life of Christ who perfectly fulfilled **the law**. At the same time, we should no longer **walk according to the flesh**—that is fulfilling our selfish and sinful desires—which dishonors God. Just as in the case of salvation and the removal of our guilt of sin, we cannot live according to the **righteous** principles of God on our own; we will always revert to the **flesh** and sin! But with the help of the Spirit, we can overcome **the flesh** and live in righteousness! In the

rest of the verses that we’ll study this week, Paul describes this incompatibility of **the flesh** with **the Spirit** in order to show the holy standard by which we must now live in Christ through the Holy Spirit.

How does the Holy Spirit enable us to fulfill the righteous requirement of the law according to the pattern Christ established for us?

Question
3

Before we continue in our study on the incompatibility of **the flesh** and **Spirit**, we must clearly understand what Paul meant when he wrote that **God** sent **His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh** (v. 3). This does not mean that Jesus sinned as some take it! If that were the case, Jesus’ sacrificial death could not take away the sin of the world ([Heb 9-10](#)). Elsewhere, Paul makes it clear that Jesus never once sinned ([2 Cor 5:21](#)). So, what does he mean? The **likeness of sinful flesh** simply means that Jesus was fully human at the same time He was fully God. God, as Scripture states, “cannot be tempted by evil” ([Jas 1:13](#)). Yet, being fully man at the same time as fully God, Jesus in His humanity could be tempted just like we are ([Matt 4:1-11](#)). In fact, Scripture says that Jesus “was

in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin” ([Heb 4:15](#)). In both His divine nature as well as His flesh, that is His human nature, Jesus remained without sin and so could fulfill **the righteous requirement of the law** on our behalf!

Romans 8:5-8

THE INCOMPATIBILITY OF THE FLESH AND SPIRIT:

Paul now transitions to demonstrate the incompatibility of **the flesh** with **the Spirit**. In Christ, we have been moved from death to life which makes us a new person ([2 Cor 5:17](#)) and brings about a whole new set of responsibilities and obligations by which we must now live ([Rom 6:4](#)). Although we continue to live in the flesh (i.e., a physical, human existence) and are subject to temptation and sin, we should not live in a constant, habitual lifestyle of sin as if Christ has not saved and transformed us ([Rom 6:13](#)). With this understanding, Paul explains that **those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh** (v. 5). In contrast, **those who live according to the Spirit** will set their minds on **the things of the Spirit**. In other words, the Spirit will guard our minds and guide our actions when we surrender to Him. Paul emphasizes the mind in this context because it dictates our actions. Our thoughts are the source of what we do. The words translated **live** and **set** are in the present tense in the Greek which indicates a constant state of existence. People who continually think about the things of **the flesh** will continually act (i.e., **live**) upon those sinful desires. Therefore, we must purge our minds of any kind of fleshly thoughts and ask the Spirit to guard us against thinking them. We may think that certain thoughts are harmless, but they still will eventually lead to action the longer we dwell on them. We must exercise great caution with the ideas and thoughts that we entertain. We may consider our thoughts purely fantasy and even a stress-relief at times, believing that they will never actually influence our actions. But in doing so, we only fool ourselves!

In your life, what do you do to ensure that you think on the things of the Spirit rather than dwell on the things of the flesh?

Question
4

At times, many fleshly thoughts cross our minds from lust, anger, revenge, lying, cheating, greed, idleness or laziness, and the list can continue indefinitely. If we don't give the Spirit complete access and control of our minds, we're not capable of withstanding such thoughts on our own. We will always find ourselves acting upon them. Hence, this is why Paul later emphasizes: "And do not be conformed to

Instruct

this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God" ([Rom 12:2](#)). The carnal thoughts of **the flesh** always lead to **death** apart from Christ Jesus (v. 6). There is nothing good or rewarding about them. They are harmful in every sense and in any amount—whether thinking on them little or much! They always lead to **death**. If we have life in Christ, we should never think in ways that lead to **death**!

When you find yourself thinking about the things of the flesh, what do you do? Why should you take immediate action upon the first thought?

Question
5

Many household products, especially cleaning supplies, are harmful to consume. Their warning labels clearly mention the deadly consequences of consuming them and the immediate actions that should be taken if we do. The skull and crossbones should give us a clue as to how dangerous they are! We wouldn't even "think" about consuming just a little of these products. Just a little is enough to cause great harm! Yet, why do we not take this approach with our thoughts? A "little" carnal thought here and there still causes great harm! God's figuratively labeled them deadly with a skull and crossbones on the label. Don't even consume such carnal thoughts in a little quantity! They kill.

On the other hand, holy and righteous thoughts guided by the Spirit lead to **life** and **peace**. First, it leads to **peace** in the sense that it maintains our right standing with the

**Whatever things are true, whatever things are noble,
whatever things are just, whatever things are pure,
whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report,
if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy
—meditate on these things.**
Philipplians 4:8 (New King James Version)

Lord if indeed we already have **life** in Him through a relationship with His Son. In [Romans 5:1](#), Paul writes,

"Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have *peace* with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." When we dwell upon our fleshly desires, we stand in conflict with the Lord who wants to renew our minds. Thus, Paul asserts that **the carnal mind is enmity against God** (v. 7). In other words, any fleshly thought goes against **the law of God**

and fails to abide by the principles and pattern which He has commanded us to both think and live. Simply put, when we allow our selfish, fleshly desires to dominate our thoughts and subsequently influence our actions, we are at war with God!

Second, thoughts governed by the Spirit also lead to **peace** because it frees us from inner conflict. As believers, we know what God expects of us and we know the difference between what is holy and righteous and that which is not. If we don't, we have no excuse because God has stated it in Scripture and given us His Spirit. The lack of knowledge in this way becomes sinful in itself since we have not taken the time to do what we should by studying and applying His Word ([Rom 7:19](#))! Nonetheless, having thoughts that constantly conflict with Scripture causes inner conflict in the form of regret and frustration since our thoughts and actions are at war with God ([Rom 7:23](#)). We become disappointed in ourselves. We will live in a state of regret when we make bad choices when we know what is right to do because we know that **those in the flesh cannot please God**. At the same time, we will feel frustrated because we seem powerless to change. On our own, apart from the Holy Spirit, we are indeed powerless and there is no real hope for change. We need the Spirit to transform us.

: In what other ways do carnal thoughts bring inner conflict into our lives and rob us of the peace we can have in Christ?

Question
6

If we've ever watched or participated in sports, we've mostly likely seen athletes become angry and frustrated with themselves. They know the fundamentals of the game and the right techniques which they should execute. For example, a baseball player may slam his bat in frustration because he was undisciplined and swung and missed a bad pitch. He would tell you that he recognized the pitch, knew that he should lay off, but that he swung anyway. He knew what he should have done, but didn't do it! The same applies to us when we know what to do based on Scripture, but we don't do it because we are undisciplined and haven't surrendered to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. This creates conflict within us and robs us of our **peace** and joy in Christ.

Grave danger exists when we constantly dwell upon carnal thoughts. Eventually, we can be desensitized to such fleshly desires and not realize how entrenched in our lives they have become and how deadly they truly are ([Rom 1:28](#)). This is not the fault of our environment. We must take responsibility for our thoughts and actions. To borrow the sports metaphor, it's not always the umpire's fault for a "bad" call; rather,

Instruct

the player didn't execute in the way that he should. God, however, never makes a bad call. We can't blame others! We are responsible for our own actions. We must listen to the conviction of the Holy Spirit and seek His guidance. When we don't, we alone are responsible for our choices.

Romans 8:9-11

THE IDENTIFICATION WITH CHRIST THROUGH THE SPIRIT:

If we have a relationship with Christ, we ought to identify with the things of **the Spirit** rather than the things of **the flesh**. Paul reminds us we **are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in us** (v. 9). **If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ**, he does not belong to Him and does not have eternal life (v. 10)! How do we know if we belong to Christ and have His Spirit living within us? In Christ, **the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness** (v. 10). In other words, there will be evidence of change when we have a relationship with Christ.

We will no longer live in a constant state of sin; we will live in **righteousness**. A brown, wilted flower with the petals dropping off indicates that it is dead in contrast to a flower with a green stem and vibrant colors which gives evidence of life. In the same way, we should have evidence of life in the Spirit. We should live the way that the Bible teaches and abide obediently in God's commands. This shows that we have life in Him! It doesn't give us life, but it shows that we have life in Him!

What is some of the specific evidence that we have life in Christ? What Scripture can you cite to give proof of the validity of this evidence?

Question
7

Conversely, if we constantly live in sin and think carnally without conviction from the Spirit and correction from the Lord, we most likely do not have a relationship with Christ. If we can violate God's Word with impunity and challenge His authority to determine right and wrong on particular issues without conviction, we most likely do not have the Spirit living within us. There is no evidence of life in such actions. Habitual, sinful actions, as Paul has stated, lead to death. Neither I, nor Paul, say this to cause you to doubt your salvation and your relationship with Christ. I say this because

we must all carefully examine our lives to see the fruit or evidence of salvation and confidently know that we have a relationship with Christ ([1 John 5:11-13](#)). Let's not merely think, guess, or hope that we have salvation and eternal life; let's know for sure because the Spirit reveals it within our actions and thoughts which He has transformed from sin to righteousness.

Verse 11 provides an example of that evidence through the life of Christ. The

resurrection is evidence that Jesus did what He claimed that He would do ([Luke 9:22](#)) and that He is who He claimed to be—the Son of God ([Rom 1:1-4](#)). If Jesus had not risen bodily from the grave and did not present evidence of His resurrection, all His claims would be false and fraudulent. We would have no hope of salvation and life! Nevertheless, we have clear



eyewitness evidence that Jesus rose from the grave on that third day. Jesus is God who became flesh, died for our sins, and rose on the third day so that we might have life through Him!

In the same way, **if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in us, He will give life to our mortal bodies** on account of **His Spirit who dwells in us** (v. 11). Therefore, just as Jesus' resurrection from the dead is evidence of His claims, the Spirit working in our lives and designating us as God's children is evidence God has given us **life**. Let's not obscure that evidence from view by reverting to our old fleshly habits and failing to follow the guidance of the Spirit. Rather, let's surrender to the Spirit who alone can help us overcome the flesh through our faith and trust in Him.

How does the Spirit help us to overcome the flesh and show evidence that we are alive in Christ?

Question
8

In the introduction, we were reminded how plugs and cables do not work universally across the world. They are incompatible without an adapter which allows them to be used for their original or true intention. In life, the flesh (sin) is wholly incompatible with the Spirit. We need the Spirit to transform us into the person that God intended us to be from the beginning before sin entered into the world. However, the Spirit doesn't simply adapt us where we can live with one foot in the secular world and the other foot in the spiritual realm. It doesn't work that way with the Spirit. He will lead us to remove anything that conflicts with God's Word and that does not please Him. In this way, the Spirit also serves as evidence that we have life through a relationship with Christ by what we do.

With the Spirit dwelling within us, we cannot rely on our own strength or knowledge to overcome the flesh. We are weak and sin exploits our weaknesses. When we attempt to overcome the flesh (sin) on our own, we will fail. We will never be able to resist temptation and we will always be subject to a carnal way of thinking and living. God foresaw this weakness and so sent the Spirit to live within us so that we would have the power and wisdom to overcome the flesh and live in a way that glorifies and honors Him according to our obedience to His commands. Therefore, let's live in victory rather than defeat, knowing that the Spirit gives us the ability to conquer the flesh and resist sin! Let's show the world the evidence of the transformation of the life the Spirit brings when He comes to live within us.

Incorporate

How would you help someone understand the difference between living in the flesh and the Spirit? How do many Christians misunderstand this concept? Why is a failure to know or understand not a legitimate excuse in this case?

In [Rom 8:1-11](#), why is Paul not saying that we are free from the responsibility to follow God's law and pattern in Scripture to act righteously according to His standard? How would you explain this to someone who is clearly sinning, but says that God has given them the freedom to do that which contradicts Scripture?

As a church, how can we help one another overcome our fleshly desires? Why is accountability first to God and second to the church important?

March 28, 2021



Faith Overcomes Our Faults

Romans 5:1-11

Focal Verse:

“Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

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Romans 5:1

Introduce

George Wilson and James Porter were arrested and charged with eight counts associated with robbing two mail routes in Eastern Pennsylvania and wounding the mail carriers on December 6, 1829. At their trial in April of 1830, both men pleaded not guilty. Upon hearing the evidence presented against them, however, the grand jury found them guilty on two counts—specifically for robbing the Reading mail and wounding the carrier. On May 27, 1830, the Circuit Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania then sentenced them to be executed on July 2. So far, this seems like a typical case—one that the Supreme Court would never take the time to hear. But it would soon take an unexpected twist and come under their review in January of 1833 in the case *United States versus George Wilson*.

James Porter was executed as scheduled on July 2, 1830. But President Andrew Jackson intervened by issuing a conditional pardon on June 14, 1830 for George Wilson that momentarily halted his execution. In the official document presented to the Supreme Court, Jackson noted that “a numerous and respectable body of petitioners” sought clemency on Wilson’s behalf. To which the President responded by outlining the following conditions of Wilson’s pardon. Although he commuted the man’s death sentence, he left open the option that a twenty-year or “a still more severe imprisonment” may be imposed by the criminal courts for his crimes.



Still, this seems like a routine case. Why would the Supreme Court get involved? While appearing in person before a lower court, George Wilson refused the presidential pardon! No one before had ever refused a pardon, leading to two questions: Can someone even refuse a presidential pardon and what does this mean in terms of his sentence of death? The Supreme Court ruled that “the court cannot give the prisoner the benefit of the pardon, unless he claims the benefit of it.” The Justices further clarify that “he may accept it or not, as he pleases.” Therefore, they assert that “a pardon is an act of grace” which does not release a person from his sentence if he refuses to accept

Introduce

it. Despite a pardon signed by President Jackson, George Wilson was executed by hanging.*

Like George Wilson, we too have a death sentence. We may not have robbed the US mail, but we have broken God's holy law—even if we've lied just once! We also have a pardon. Christ signed that pardon by His blood that He shed on the cross. President Jackson merely picked up a pen; Christ laid down His life! He died in our place so that we could live. He didn't just commute our death sentence; He removed our guilt. Yet, we must accept this gracious pardon that Jesus offers. We have the right to refuse it which means that we ourselves have chosen to receive the death penalty and be eternally separated from Him. Our prayer is that you've accepted and received this pardon. But, if not, that you would accept it today.

Key
Question

What does it mean to have peace with God?

In Reference



The entire Supreme Court transcript for *United States v. George Wilson* can be found at law.cornell.edu.

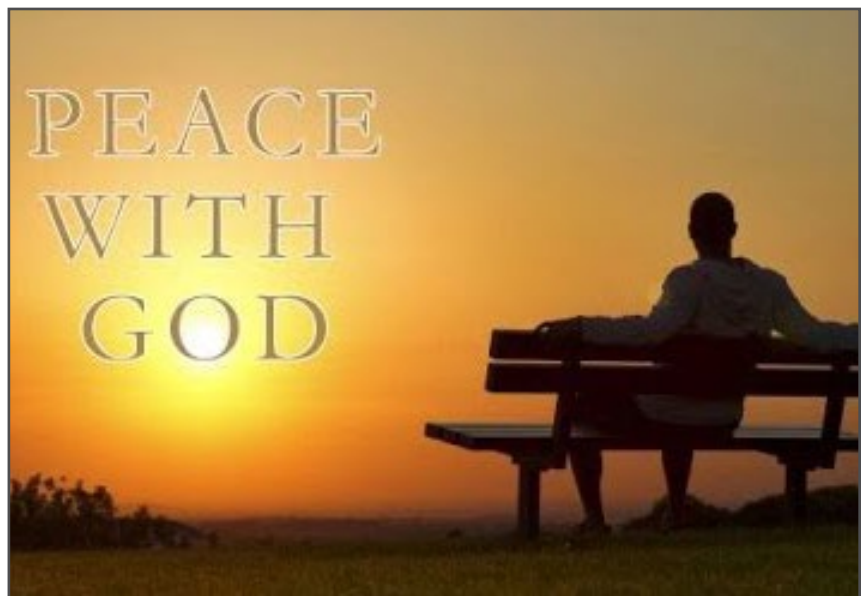
Romans 5:1-2

A FAITH THAT LEADS TO PEACE:

In chapter 4, Paul explains that we are **justified**, or declared to be in right standing with God, **by faith** and not our works. Think of the term **justified** in a legal sense in which we are declared not guilty. We will only hear this declaration if we have a relationship with Christ who has given us His righteousness and taken our guilt upon Himself—the concept which we studied in our lesson last week ([Rom 4:23-25](#)). Using Abraham as an example, Paul shows how God established His covenant based solely upon His grace ([Rom 4:4](#)). Abraham responded **by faith** to accept that gracious gift and demonstrated his **faith** by acting obediently upon God's instructions. Neither good works or religious rituals, such as circumcision and in our case baptism, merit us salvation; they are merely outwards signs and a testament (evidence) to the transformation that God has produced within us ([Rom 4:9-12](#)). Just as Abraham did nothing to merit God's covenant with him but responded in **faith** to God's grace, so also we can do nothing to merit salvation; still, we must respond **by faith** to God's grace in **Christ Jesus** displayed through our obedience to His Word ([Rom 4:16-17](#)).

Thus, in 5:1, Paul makes it clear that we only have salvation **through Christ Jesus our Lord** through which **we have peace with God**. First, we must rightly understand what it means to **have peace with God**. In this context, it is not a **peace** *from* God that He gives us as a feeling or emotion so we can cope with struggles and hardships in our lives. (For that kind of **peace**,

see [Philippians 4:7](#).) Because this is not a **peace** that God *gives*, it is also not the absence of inner conflict when we surrender to the Holy Spirit and participate in righteousness rather than evil—which we studied last week. Consequently, it is not a **peace** in which our consciences are placated because we have done no wrong. Rather, Paul speaks of **peace with God** because we are in conflict with the Lord



when we sin!

Before we repent of our sins and invite Christ to be our Savior, we stand in opposition to God. In this state of sin, Scripture describes us as God's enemies ([Rom 5:10](#)) and having enmity with Him because of our disobedience ([Jas 4:4](#)). In a literal sense, we are at war with God! Because we have willfully chosen to sin, we have also chosen to receive God's wrath against our sin. Romans 1:18 points out, "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness." Even so, God still loves us and desires a relationship with us, but He must punish sin because of His holiness and justness. God's wrath is always directed toward our sin as [Romans 1:18](#) indicates. But we endure His wrath upon ourselves and receive condemnation when we continue in sin and do not repent even though God has given us a way to escape this death sentence!

How would you explain to someone who says, "A good God would never send someone to hell?"

Question
1

Therefore, to **have peace with God** means that we have repented of our sins and have been made holy in Christ so that we can have fellowship with the Father. No longer are we recipients of God's wrath in conflict constantly struggling against Him, but we have received **His grace through Christ Jesus**. We have now been given the privilege of becoming His children who have been declared in right standing with Him ([John 1:12; 1 John 3:1](#))—that is we have **been justified by faith**.

Because we have been made in right standing with God through the righteousness of Christ Jesus, we can **have access** to God (v. 2). The word translated **have access** in the Greek refers to the introduction of a person before royalty—a king. As a human king sits on his throne, a servant will come to announce the presence of the person who will appear before him. He then introduces him to the king. In this same way, Jesus announces our presence before the Father and introduces us into a relationship with Him! We can only obtain an audience with the Father through Jesus! This serves to underscore Jesus' own words, "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father except through Me" ([John 14:6](#)).

Apart from Christ, in a figurative sense, God does not know us. For this reason, on the day of judgment, Jesus will say to those who have no relationship with Him, "I never

knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness” ([Matt 7:23](#)). In His omniscience, Jesus certainly knows everything about us. But this knowledge and **access** or introduction to the Father refers to an intimate relationship with God through Him. Does Jesus truly *know* you because you have an intimate, personal relationship with Him? Has He introduced you to the Father—the King of glory—or are you depending upon something else to grant you an audience with Him?



How would you evaluate how well you know Jesus? How do you manifest or show this knowledge of Jesus in your life?

Question
2

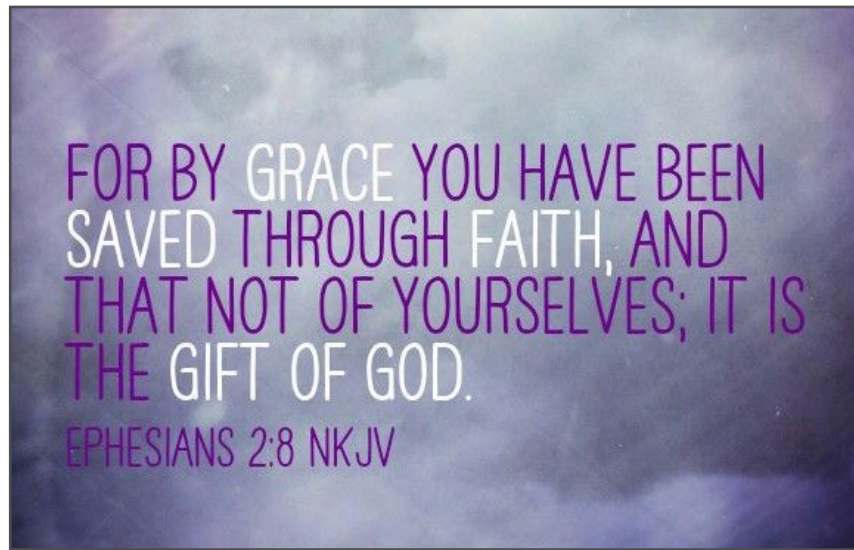
Essentially, verse two is a beautiful description of what it means to have salvation in Christ. Jesus has introduced us to the Father because of His **grace**. In fact, we cannot **stand** before Him based on anything else, but His **grace** dispensed to us when we have **faith** in Him! We cannot be good enough. We cannot do enough good things. Even saying that we “believe” cognitively in God doesn’t save us ([Jas 2:19](#))! Unless we have a personal relationship with Christ by confessing our sins, repenting, and accepting the grace and forgiveness offered by Christ, we have no **hope** of salvation. The gospel is simply this: Jesus came to earth to die as a sinless sacrifice on our behalf. We cannot save ourselves because of our imperfections and inability to fulfill God’s standard of holiness. Christ died on the cross, was buried, and rose again on the third day so that we might have life through Him when we repent of our sins and surrender in faith to Him.

It’s important for us to remind ourselves constantly of what it means to have salvation in Christ. Too many people, even in the church, do not understand what it means! And they cannot give a scriptural answer as to why they have eternal life or tell others how to have eternal life through Christ. Even if you cognitively “believe” in God and attend church, but do not have a relationship with Christ, you face destruction and an eternity in hell separated from the God who loves you. Scripture is clear on this.

Several years ago, I was on a mission trip, preaching in rural Kenya at a small church. After the service, the church leadership gathered to give us a meal, so we had time to

Instruct

fellowship and get to know one another. Glancing down, I saw that the Sunday School Director was carrying a copy of the New World Translation—the errant book of the



Jehovah's Witnesses. So, we began a conversation about how he had come to obtain that book which eventually led to the question: "If you died today, why would you say that God should let you into heaven?" He proceeded to tell us about all the things that he had done for God. He obviously served in a key leadership role within the

church and faithfully attended, but he also informed us that he read his Bible, prayed, and tithed—in fact he had made a rather large donation of land and property to help build the church! He concluded by saying that he had tried to do good and be a good person, so God would let him into heaven.

How often do you share the gospel and hear people's testimonies about their salvation—not just asking someone where they go to church?

Question
3

Unfortunately, even as a leader in the church, this man had no **hope** and no salvation. He depended upon what he was doing to get to heaven rather than what Christ has done for him! I had the opportunity to explain that all these things were good and that he should do them in obedience to the Lord, but they do not get us to heaven. Only a relationship with Christ by **grace** through **faith** and not of works affords us eternal life ([Eph 2:8](#)). Whether a person attends church or Bible study regularly or even is in a position of leadership, we should never assume that he or she has a relationship with Christ. Many Pharisees, Sadducees, and priests—the religious leaders in Israel in Jesus' day—had no relationship with Him and were headed to destruction! Their rituals and supposed "knowledge" of God and His Word could not save them.

How do you know that you will go to heaven when you die?

Question
4

We need to give our testimonies and we need to hear the testimonies of one another to make sure that what we believe about salvation is based on Scripture. When we have a testimony of salvation by **grace** through **faith** in Christ, we can **rejoice** together in the **hope** that we have! The word translated **rejoice** is better translated as “boast.” In fact, it primarily means to boast when it is translated throughout the New Testament. We are not arrogantly boasting in ourselves and what we have done, however. We are boasting in the Lord and what He has done in graciously saving us! Sometimes we can praise God and **rejoice** individually in the solitude of our worship with Him in private. But “boasting” does not carry such a connotation. To boast signifies that we must declare the greatness and goodness of God before others; we must praise Him before others, telling of His good works—especially salvation!

Have you shared your testimony with others in your Bible Study or this church or have you asked to hear the testimonies of others? It should never offend someone to be asked to share his or her testimony—especially one-on-one. Certainly, we never want to attack or put someone down, but we also should not want others to die and go to hell just because we assume they have a relationship with Christ based upon what they do! Share your testimony with someone this week in the church or in your Bible Study as well as ask to hear the testimonies of others. We need to boast in our Lord and declare out loud the hope we only have through Him! As we share with others in the church, let’s expand that to the world around us so that we are constantly declaring the gospel of Christ and the **hope** of salvation in Him.

In Prayer



Pray and ask the Lord to reveal one person this week with whom you should share your testimony. Also, pray and seek the Lord about whom you should ask to hear their testimony. Let’s use this as a way to boast in the goodness and greatness of our Lord!

Romans 5:3-5

A FAITH THAT PRODUCES PERSEVERANCE:

Not only does **faith** in Christ lead to **peace with God**, but it **also** produces **perseverance** in the midst of **tribulation**. Paul explains that we should **also glory in tribulations, knowing** that they **produce perseverance** (v. 3). The word **glory** is the same word translated as rejoice in verse 2. We are to rejoice or boast in **tribulation!** We are to see where God is working, taking delight and finding **hope** in His sovereign

provision in the world at present but also in the age to come! Paul continues to note



that **perseverance** produces **character** which in turn produces **hope** (v. 4). As I'm writing this lesson in mid-February, many of us have faced severe hardships with the unprecedented cold—having been left with no electricity or water and having pipes that burst. These are real life-threatening hardships that some of us may have never before experienced

outside of a car accident, fire, tornado, or other natural disaster. We had to persevere and adapt to survive in the second coldest temperature reading ever recorded in the history of North Texas.

Hopefully, we used the wisdom that God had given us to persevere in Him. It would have been easy to curse the power companies, water departments, and even the builders for not designing homes with the proper insulation. We could have complained about the government and the inactivity in preparation for this winter storm—still hopefully learning a lesson from our experience. As I write, it may bring these complaints to mind. However, over the course of the week, I saw God at work in the lives of many people in this church. People put aside their own problems to check on others and ensure they had what they needed. People helped to check on Senior Adults which neither I nor the rest of the staff could have done alone. Friends, families, and fellow believers offered whatever they had to those in need to keep them warm, fed, and hydrated. Some people drove on ice-covered roads to bring others to safety in a place that had warmth! The love of Christ shone through our community through the **perseverance** of these **tribulations** together.

In what other situations have you seen hope in Christ manifested despite tribulation?

Question
5

We can overcome **tribulation** only when we focus on Christ who produces **character** through this **perseverance**. In Greek, the word translated **character** doesn't mean

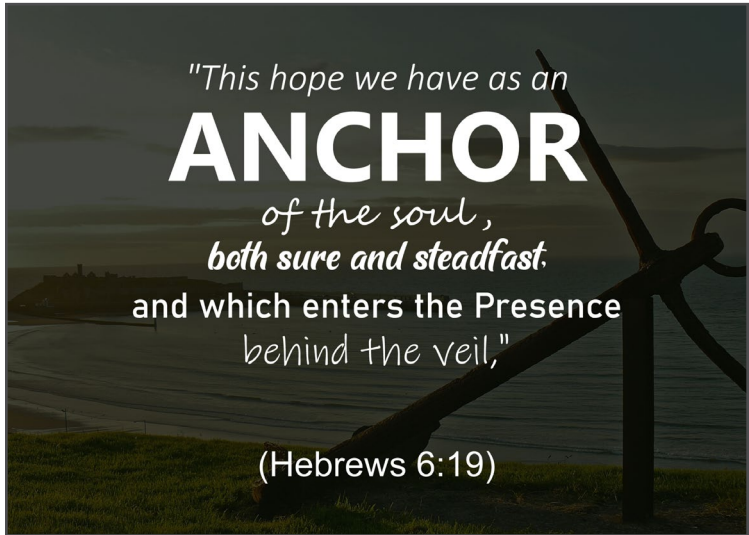
morality or integrity so as much as it means that we have withstood the test in Christ and triumphed through His strength. Peter speaks similarly of this principle in his first letter: "That the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ." (1Peter 1:7) Our **character** depends wholly upon our relationship to Christ. In other words, we must reflect His **character** and prove our **faith** in Him genuine whenever trials come. We must instinctively look to Him rather than to ourselves or other humans for our source of endurance and strength. When we look to Christ, our complaints and criticisms turn into rejoicing and praise for God's provision and protection. Our frustration turns into patience as we rely upon Him. Our disappointment and even anger turns into joy because we have a greater **hope** that awaits than the temporary reality we face!

How have tribulations and trials produced the character of Christ within you or you have observed in others?

Question
6

As a result of our **perseverance** and **character** that has weathered the storm in Christ, Paul concludes this section by asserting our **hope** is assured; it **does not disappoint** when we rely upon the Lord (v. 5). In fact, God has **poured out His love in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us**. When all is in disarray and dysfunction is all around us, we have the Spirit of God living within us who guides us, protects us, and delivers us to something greater; He never fails! We can always rely upon Him. Governments will fail. The economy will fail. The people we love and trust the most will fail at times.

Yet, this **hope** in God is certain because He never fails. Often, when we use the word **hope** to describe something in this world, it embodies the chance that something may or may not happen. It's really a toss-up, a fifty-fifty chance. When we use the word to describe God, it's not the same! There is no doubt or uncertainty. Hence, we can truly replace the word **hope** with confidence. With God, we know the end of the story! We know how things will turn out. We may not know the outcome



"This hope we have as an
ANCHOR
of the soul,
both sure and steadfast.
and which enters the Presence
behind the veil,"

(Hebrews 6:19)

Instruct

of events in life along the way, but our **hope** in God is assured when we trust Him throughout life's journey—both in the good times and the turbulent ones! We can be confident because of what He has done for us and what He will do through us if we allow Him!

Romans 5:6-11

A FAITH IN BLOOD THAT PARDONS:

Throughout this passage, Paul has discussed what it means to be **justified** and **have peace with God**. Now, he reveals the Person and event through which we can obtain such justification. As we learned in the previous section as well as in our lesson last week, we cannot save ourselves; we are weak in our flesh and prone to sin which Paul describes here as **without strength** (v. 6). Because we cannot not fulfill the righteous requirements of the law on our own, we are subject to the death penalty. We are powerless to change and have no ability to overcome our sinful condition on our own. Sin has enslaved us within its grips ([Rom 6:16-23](#)). God, however, has the power to overcome sin and cancel our debt! According to His eternal plan, **Christ died** at the right **time**—the **time** God had predetermined even before He created mankind!

Even though humans can break some “bad” habits from time to time, in what ways are we truly powerless to change in regard to sin?

Question
7

Christ's death on our behalf shows how much God loves us! He loves us so much that He was willing to give His most prized position so-to-speak—His own Son. God doesn't just love those who love Him in return, however. He loves the world—even those who continue to sin and reject Him. His love for the entire world never ceases and He desires all to come to a knowledge of repentance to have a relationship with Him. As humans, especially for those who don't have a relationship with Christ, it's difficult to fathom such radical and comprehensive love. For this reason, Paul asserts that someone would **scarcely die for a righteous man**. But from time to time we do see people make sacrifices and **dare to die for a good** person (v. 7). Parents have given their lives to save their children from harm during a disaster. First responders risk their lives to save strangers in need.

But no one has ever given his life for a convicted criminal on death row waiting to be executed. No one has ever died in the place of a convicted murderer! But Christ did!

He didn't just take the place of the convicted criminal Barabbas on the cross. He died for every sinner—including you, me, and the vilest person who has committed the most heinous of acts. **In that**, God demonstrated **His own love toward us** when **Christ died for us while we were yet sinners** (v. 8). In verse 10, Paul even labels us **enemies** of God. Nonetheless, **Christ** still **died for us** in the greatest act of love ever performed. He shed His **blood**; He gave His life for us! Therefore, Paul emphasizes the only way we can be **justified** is through the **blood** of Christ (v. 9). In Christ, we will **be saved from the wrath** of God which we rightly deserve because of our sin and disobedience. We have now come full circle from where we began in verse 1 with the declaration of **peace with God** through Christ Jesus. Paul now describes that **peace** as being **reconciled** (vv. 10-11). The word **reconciled** pictures someone making amends after an argument or conflict. It's not God who stands in the wrong, however; it's us. We must be **reconciled** to Him through **the death of** Christ which is the offering that brings **peace**! Consequently, when we accept this gracious sacrifice, we must apologize (i.e., confess and repent) for our sins against Him and ask for the forgiveness that Christ has already granted through His **blood**. Although we do nothing to earn our salvation, it does require us to realize that we have been wrong (i.e., acknowledge that we're sinners) and take the step to accept the **peace** in Christ that God has already offered. Even though God is holy and has never wronged us, He initiated the forgiveness! He didn't wait for us to come to Him; He came to us literally in His Son! He took steps to **reconcile** with us while we were battling against Him! This is a great picture of the God we serve!

Paul concludes with another charge to boast (i.e., **rejoice**) **in God for the reconciliation we have now received** in Christ (v. 11). We need to tell the world. We cannot keep silent. In addition to telling others what God is doing in our lives currently, part of our testimony should always be to tell others how Christ has saved us from sin and given us life. We need to tell others so that they too may know how to have this life. Only through faith in Christ and the work that He accomplished on the cross can we overcome our faults and be reconciled to God. Let's not focus on the temporary and trivial things of this world that have little value, but let's celebrate our life and salvation in Christ Jesus for all to see and hear!

How do you express the joy of your reconciliation through Christ? How do you declare it in a way for the world to see and hear?

Question
8

In the introduction, we heard the true story of George Wilson who refused a presidential pardon for his crimes in robbing the mail in Eastern Pennsylvania. This was an unprecedented case; no one knew what to do. In the end, the Supreme Court ruled that one cannot be forced to accept a pardon. Christ has offered us a pardon from all our sins. It wasn't just a written document signed in authority. He paid our penalty Himself and granted us a pardon through His blood. Yet, we must accept that pardon and be reconciled to Him. He initiated it with us and did all the work, but we must accept it. He will not force it upon us.

Unfortunately, many people are like George Wilson. They have refused this gracious pardon from Christ and so have taken upon themselves the wrath of God and the penalty of death. It's their choice. On the other hand, many have overcome their faults (sins) through Christ and have been made in right standing with Him. As God's children, they will enjoy the inheritance of life He now offers. I pray that you've accepted this reconciliation through the blood of Christ and now have peace with God. If you have, I pray that you boast (rejoice) daily by telling the world of the hope of salvation that you have. Let's be a church that boasts in our Lord and doesn't get caught up with the trivial things of this world, filling our lives with mundane busyness. Let's declare the work of the Lord to the world so that we might see many come to a relationship with Christ and be transformed from death to life just as we have been.

Incorporate

Why is it important that we as a church be focused on the gospel (applying, living, and sharing it)? What will happen if we aren't? What will happen if each member doesn't take time to share the gospel?

Why should we share the gospel with others and not worry about their response? In other words, why is it our duty to share the gospel regardless of how another person may respond?

Why should we not become discouraged and stop sharing if people reject the gospel?

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