

Living life on this planet causes us to experience a variety of emotions every day. We experience emotions such as negativity, hurt, anger, weariness, fear, and anxiety, even to a point of helplessness, **IF** we have left God out of our lives.

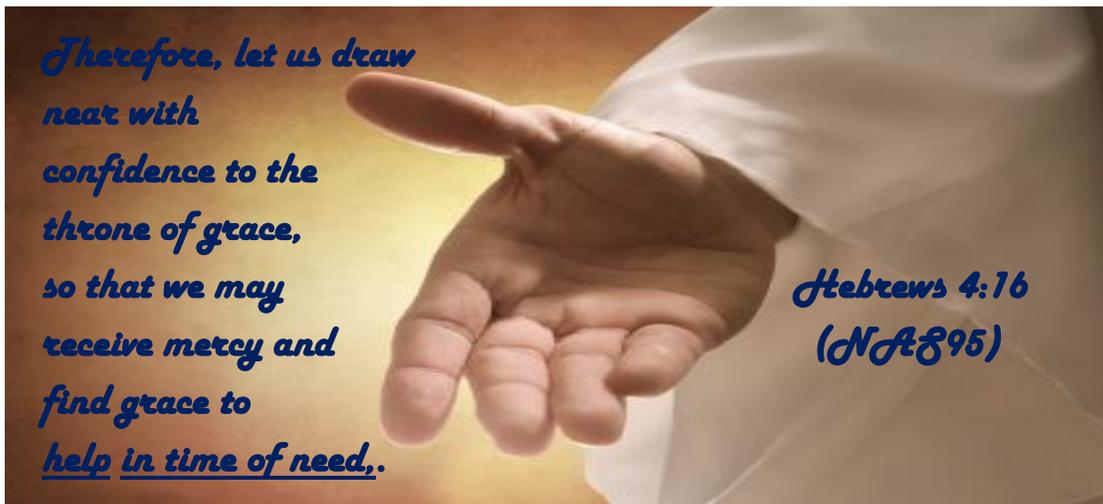


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AFRAID

Why are you afraid? Jesus asked His disciples in Mark 4:40, and then He answered by asking another question, "Why do you have so little faith?" Did they not realize who Jesus was, sleeping in the same boat?

We are often afraid [*fearful*] of many things in our lives and, like the disciples, we are afraid of death almost above all else. "And they came to Him and woke Him, saying, 'Save us, Lord; we are perishing!'" Matthew 8:25.

Jesus stated to His disciples many times, "Do not be afraid." (Luke 1:13, 30; 2:10; 8:50; 12:32; John 6:20). Why must Christ continue to admonish them to not be afraid?

They were afraid of many things.

Herod was afraid of John, Mark 6:20. Chief priests and scribes were afraid of Christ, Mark 11:18, and the people, Luke 22:2. Some were afraid of angels, Luke 1:13.

When Jesus walked on the water to be with the disciples in the boat, some thought it was a ghost, causing fear,) "For they all saw Him and were terrified. But immediately He spoke with them and said to them, 'Take courage; it is I, do not be **afraid**,'" Mark 6:50. This passage shows that courage defeats fear.

Fear is a powerful motivator, whether for good or evil. Many believed in Jesus, even among the religious leaders. They would not confess Christ because of fear, being put out of the synagogue, John 9:22. Act 27:24 the Lord told Paul, "**Do not be afraid**, Paul; you must stand before Caesar; and behold, God has granted you all those who are sailing with you."

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to give you an answer concerning this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire; and He will deliver us out of your hand, O king. But even if He does not, let it be known to you, O king, that we are not going to serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up," Daniel 3:16-18. Because of their faith in God they did not show any fear of losing their lives; obeying God was more important than their lives, even to the end. (Revelation 2:10)

The real scriptural lesson is that our dependence on God can remove fear. Such statements as, "be not afraid" or "do not fear" are spoken by Jesus and others because they understood there is nothing to fear in serving the Lord. "I say to you, My friends, **do not be afraid** of those who kill the body and after that have no more that they can do," Luke 12:4. Jesus used these words with His disciples as another method of teaching them to trust in God. "But I will warn you whom to fear: fear the One who, after He has killed, has authority to cast into hell; yes, I tell you, fear Him!" Luke 12:5. We are fearful of the unknown, events that have not happened yet, such as death. However, God provides a method of removing that fear when we accept His offer. "Are not five sparrows sold for two cents? Yet not one of them is forgotten before God. "Indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered. **Do not fear**; you are more valuable than many sparrows," Luke 12:6-7. Jesus uses an illustration that is very personal, God knows the number

of hairs on your head. Ponder that for a moment, He also knows every thought inside your head. Because of that close relationship with Him, do not fear. "And I say to you, everyone who confesses Me before men, the Son of Man will confess him also before the angels of God; but he who denies Me before men will be denied before the angels of God," Luke 12:8-9.

There are many references where God assured His servants He would be with them, Deuteronomy 31:8; Joshua 1:5; and 1 Chronicles 28:20. He makes that commitment to us in Hebrews 13:5-6, "Make sure that your character is free from the love of money, being content with what you have; for He Himself has said, "I WILL NEVER DESERT YOU, NOR WILL I EVER FORSAKE YOU," so that we confidently say, "THE LORD IS MY HELPER, I WILL NOT BE AFRAID. WHAT WILL MAN DO TO ME?" When we come to understand the full meaning of this instruction, we also, without hesitation will boldly state, "God is my helper" and understand the meaning. We will openly proclaim His infinite power, wisdom, and goodness are real, present, and permanent help in the face of trouble.

Doubts and fears will be put aside and replaced by *fearlessness* because our minds, thoughts and judgements will be settled on God's help. This assurance produces a resolution to keep follow His will both in word and in deed even in the midst of opposition and persecution.

There is another side of fear, being afraid. "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade men, but we are made manifest to God; and I hope that we are made manifest also in your consciences," 2 Corinthians 5:10-11.

The primary message in verse 10 is that every person WILL stand before the judgement of Christ: then every person will give an account for the actions of our lives; plans, purposes, word, thoughts, and deeds. *Mediate on that for a moment*, nothing will be hidden, all will be open and naked before the Lord. This verse should motivate every one of us to take a personal inventory of our lives and our relationship with God and man, TODAY. With this scene in mind, immediately make whatever corrections the Lord requires to escape the wrath of God on the sons of disobedience. (Ephesians 2:2, 5:6; Colossians 3:6)

The second concern is a desire to save others from this dreadful day of wrath. Paul states, "We persuade men" persuade them to prepare for this day, to prepare for heaven. It is not through fear of alarm but by the effort to induce to escape the coming wrath. "Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; **we beg you** on behalf of Christ, be **reconciled to God**," 2 Corinthians 5:20.

"It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God," Hebrews 10:31.

"Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather *fear* Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell," Matthew 10:28.

The Lord is my helper, I will not be afraid.

Article:

"We of Little Faith" 12/9/18

HELPLESS

**“For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly,”
Romans 5:6 (NAS95).**

Helpless means without strength, weak, and unable to rescue yourself from a dire physical situation. On a spiritual level it means to have weak faith, be in a dying state, ungodly, and without knowledge or worship of God. This is a state where Satan lives, rules and enslaves their hearts. “For if while we were **enemies** we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life,” Romans 5:10.

From the word “enemy” comes the thought of hatred, enmity, and acting hostile to God because we have fallen away from Him through sinful behavior. We are without strength, having lost righteousness and true holiness. The ungodly have lost the strength to do good, having lost sight of God. We turn to the things of the world looking for peace and happiness however, they are not found so the sinner dives deeper into earthly things, searching but never finding satisfaction. The daily news reports are filled with examples of the exploits of failed happiness seekers. Paul states in Titus 3:3, “For we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, **enslaved** [addicted] to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another.” Also refer to Titus 2:3; Galatians 4:9; and 2 Peter 2:19. This describes the world in New Testament times as well as today.

What happened to change the circumstances?

“But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit,” Titus 3:4-5.

“Who gave Himself for our sins so that He might **rescue** [*deliver*] us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father,” Galatians 1:4. Christ does not “pluck out” believers from death or another world but He promises to rescue sinners from the domination of the world and provide spiritual separation from the it. “Then the **Lord knows how** to rescue the godly from temptation, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment for the day of judgment, 2 Peter 2:9. God forcible delivered righteous Lot from the wicked to punish the evil doers for their ungodliness. The believers are NOT delivered from temptation, but they will be preserved in temptation and will be delivered out of it. (Psalms 34:17,19; Daniel 3:15-17.

“Now you followed my teaching, conduct, purpose, faith, patience, love, perseverance, persecutions, and sufferings, such as happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium and at Lystra; what persecutions I endured, and out of them all the Lord **rescued** me!” 2 Timothy 3:10-11. Paul states, “I set you an example to follow.” Therefore, God rescued Paul and will also rescue you and me. Be steadfast in teaching the pure gospel. Conduct yourself in a manner that is pleasing to the Lord. Our purpose must be to demonstrate our faith and love even while enduring persecution knowing that God will rescue us from this evil world.

“How will we **escape** if we neglect so great a salvation? After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard,” Hebrews 2:3. Neglect will ruin every relationship in life, whether physical or spiritual. IF we neglect a proper diet, we ruin our health, neglecting our home ruins our family and marriage relationship, neglecting homework ruins our education, etc. IF we neglect our spiritual relationships, we ruin church family, our relationship with God, and our reward in heaven.

Without Him there can be NO escape!

“See to it that you do not refuse Him who is speaking. For if those did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, much less will we escape who turn away from Him who warns from heaven,” Hebrews 12:25. The Hebrew writer draws attention by stating, “See to it,” or look, take heed what follows is extremely important. He illustrates using an event the Jews know well between the Lord and Moses, stressing the importance of listening and obeying the words of the God of Heaven. The Israelites did not escape the punishment of undervaluing the word of God which He spoke on Mt. Sinai, wrote a table of stone, and then delivered by the hands of Moses.

Neither shall we escape if we ignore the word spoken by His son from heaven, Hebrews 1:2. We will be in the same category as those who scoffed at the foot of the cross; disregarding His sacrifice and His gospel which was ratified by the shedding of His own blood.

“For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a terrifying expectation of judgment and THE FURY OF A FIRE WHICH WILL CONSUME THE ADVERSARIES. Anyone who has set aside the Law of Moses dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace? For we know Him who said, "VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY." And again, "THE LORD WILL JUDGE HIS PEOPLE." It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God, Hebrews 10:26-31.

“And to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power,” 2 Thessalonians 1:7- 9.

“For speaking out arrogant words of vanity they entice by fleshly desires, by sensuality, those who barely escape from the ones who live in error, promising them freedom while they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by what a man is overcome, by this he is enslaved. For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world by the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and are overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first. For it would be better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn away from the holy commandment handed on to them.” 2 Peter 2:18-21.

Peter gives believers a stern warning about neglecting God's word after having escaped the defilement of the world, returning the "pig pen of sin," verse 22. There is no hope for this person of being rescued from the Lord's judgement UNTIL they are willing to listen and obey God's word. Perhaps we could help. "The Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and **escape** from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will," 2 Timothy 2:24-26.

"But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me, so that through me the proclamation might be fully accomplished, and that all the Gentiles might hear; and I was rescued out of the lion's mouth. The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed and will bring me safely to His heavenly kingdom; to Him be the glory forever and ever. Amen," 2 Timothy 4:17-18/

Extra study: Psalms 41:1; Job 5:16; Exodus 23:5; Isaiah 25

Other sources:

Articles

"When the Fire Flickers" 12/16/18

"The Pattern of Personal Apostasy 9/23/16

Sermon

"Rescued" 6/23/19

COURAGE

"These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation but **take courage**; I have overcome the world," John 16:33 (NAS95). When Jesus said, "take courage," What did He mean? What was to be the source of their courage? Jesus used this phrase a dozen times to His disciples as well as Paul.

"**Be strong and courageous**, *do not be afraid* or tremble at them, for the LORD your God is the one who goes with you. He will not fail you or forsake you," Deuteronomy 31:6. Courage is built, developed, then strengthened by means of use, practice, being encouraged, by God who provides the source of courage, replacing fear by faith in God.

Fear is a reaction; courage is a decision. Winston Churchill

Four times in the first chapter of Joshua, God told him to be strong and courageous. Then God gave him the reason and motivation to be strong and courageous. Primarily, God, with His power and might, would be with him. God said to Joshua, "I've got your back." The times Jesus stated, "Take courage," He was exhorting them to action, to make the decision to be courageous. There are many examples of the courage of the disciples in the book of Acts such as in 5:29 and chapter 7. The mighty men of valor in the Old Testament refers to bravery, daring, and fearlessness in battle. The Old Testament and New refers to the mighty men of valor in a spiritual sense. In Hebrews 11 they are called the heroes of faith.

Where do we obtain courage today?

The answer is the same source as Joshua, Noah, Abraham, Joseph, Stephen, Paul, Peter and many others. "Make sure that your character is free from the love of money, being content with what you have; for He Himself has said, "I WILL NEVER DESERT YOU, NOR WILL I EVER FORSAKE YOU," so that we confidently say, "THE LORD IS MY HELPER, I WILL NOT BE AFRAID. WHAT WILL MAN DO TO ME?" (Hebrews 13:5-6. Reread these verses, ponder what is said by the God of Heaven through the Hebrew writer. This is the same God who spoke to the heroes of faith, Stephen, Peter, and Paul. He is the same God who makes this promise to us. "Take courage," make the decision to be courageous because God is my helper. In verse 6 he adds, "with confidence, assurance, boldness, without doubt we can profess to the world our faith in Jesus Christ." We can, without fear, openly declare that we are not ashamed of our faith and trust in Christ. Our trust in the infinite power, wisdom, goodness and that it is real, present and a permanent help against all troubles and supplies all our needs while replacing fear with faith in God's promises. God has done His part; the rest is on us. It is our responsibility to trust in God, (Psalms 56:11). He promises that He will NEVER forsake the righteous, (Psalms 37:25). Faith expels fearfulness and is replaced by fearlessness, a heart that is fixed on the premise that "God is my helper." When we can reach this level of trust in God, we will have a mind that is unmovable, drawing closer to God and His word which is demonstrated by our words and deeds. One of the responsibilities of a Christian is to strengthen and encourage each other. "Now we who are strong ought to bear the weaknesses of those without strength and not just please ourselves," Romans 15:1. We need to continually exhort with brotherly love and mutual kindness. We should strengthen those who are weak, who may not have achieved this deep trust in God. Perhaps they have not realized He will always be there for them. "Then those who feared the LORD **spoke to one another**, and the LORD gave attention and

heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear the LORD and who esteem His name,” Malachi 3:16. “Fear” in this passage means reverence for God. Those who were following God’s word were encouraging one another. This pleased God so it was recorded in a book of remembrance, saved for future learning and example.

Paul strengthens the souls of the disciples and encourages them to continue in the faith, “Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God,” Acts 14:22. This is one example of Paul helping these young converts develop a stronger faith and trust in God, and Paul, who had been stoned and left for dead was encouraging them to face personal persecution. In Acts 11:19-24 the Spirit records the success of spreading of the gospel. Barnabas was sent to Antioch where he witnessed the grace of God. “When he arrived and saw what the grace of God had done, he was glad and encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts. Acts 11:23. He met brethren with a determined heart, fixed purpose, and united with Christ; as Ephesians 4:5 states, “one spirit with Him.”

“That their hearts may be encouraged, having been knit together in love, and attaining to all the wealth that comes from the full assurance of understanding, resulting in a true knowledge of God’s mystery, that is, Christ Himself,” Colossians 2:2. There is no greater comfort or encouragement than the solid Christian friendship. One that is cemented or knit together through love, during periods of difficulty, trials, and persecution. These times create a strong union of affection (Ecclesiastes 4:12).

The first letter to the Thessalonians contained several verses designed to strengthen and encourage those Christians who were under persecution. “And we sent Timothy, our brother and God’s fellow worker in the gospel of Christ, to **strengthen and encourage** you as to your faith,” 1 Thessalonians 3:2.

“Therefore **comfort one another** with these words,” 1 Thessalonians 4:18.

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

“We urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, **encourage the fainthearted, help the weak**, be patient with everyone,” 1 Thessalonians 5:14.

All these verses place a responsible on Christians to aid and assist one another in remaining faithful. Helping others is fundamental to being united with Christ (Luke 10:30-36).

“Now may our God and Father Himself and Jesus our Lord **direct our way** to you; and may the Lord cause you to increase and abound in love for one another, and for all people, just as we also do for you; so that He may **establish your hearts** without blame in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints, 1 Thessalonians 3:11-13. This is Paul’s desire for them as well as for you and me. He is asking God to direct our way, through the scriptures, to increase our love for one another and establish our hearts.

Courage is extremely important because without it we cannot practice other virtues.

Courage is resistance to fear, mastery of fear, not the absence of fear. Mark Twain.

Articles on this website

“Drawing Strength from the Courage of Others”

“Surround yourself with Good People” 5/11/14 - 12/27/15

Sermon

“Finding courage in God” 3/15/20

ANGER

**“BE ANGRY, AND YET DO NOT SIN;
do not let the sun go down on your anger,” Ephesians 4:26 (NAS95).**

Anger: strong feelings of displeasure. More forceful words are **rage:** strong violent feelings difficult to control. **Fury:** overwhelming rage violent loss of self-control. **Wrath:** desire or intent to punish or get revenge. (Webster’s online dictionary)

How can the Lord help us fight against anger? Anger is a passion, an excitement or agitation of the mind that is caused from having a sense of danger, fear of injury, either physical or emotional. When a situation suddenly arises, we are quick to defend ourselves against this possible injury. It is usually spontaneous, a reaction rather than a decision which allows for regrettable words to be spoken. Angry words can escalate into even more regrettable actions. The real danger is that anger can place a strong burden on maintaining self-control in any relationship. Having a strong feeling of displeasure is not sinful, **BUT** self-control must be on high alert to prevent the strong passionate feelings of anger from escalating into sinful behavior. Rashly spoken words are like feathers in the wind, they **CANNOT** be retrieved not matter how strong the effort.

Anger can become sinful in many circumstances:

- (1) Some people have extraordinarily strong triggers that anger sets off without a good cause.
- (2) If we harbor anger it will become sinful. Solve the problem before sundown.
(Colossians 3:13)
- (3) Developing into an unforgiving spirit, implacable. (Romans 1:31)
- (4) Desire for revenge. (Romans 12:17,19)

Let us examine Paul’s solution for this problem of anger. Beginning in Ephesians 4:17-19 he reminds the believers of their former life, using words like calloused, hard hearted, ignorance, sensual, impure, and greediness. “But you did not learn Christ in this way,” Ephesians 4:20. Verse 22 instructs to, “lay aside, or put away, the old self because it was corrupt with lust, and ut on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth,” Ephesians 4:24.

“Therefore, laying aside falsehood, **SPEAK TRUTH EACH ONE OF YOU WITH HIS NEIGHBOR**, for we are members of one another, Ephesians 4:25. He is writing to Christians, let’s solve the problem quickly because you haven’t sinned yet, verse 26. However, he warns, “and do not give the devil an opportunity,” Ephesians 4:27. This is very fertile ground for Satan’s work. He will make suggestions and offer temptations to persuade us to harbor unkind, angry feelings which push us into bitterness and resentment. **BINGO** sinful behavior and Satan won! Be angry and sin not, but rage, fury and wrath belong to the Lord. These most often are speaking about God’s judgements on Israel, heathens, or final judgement.

Hebrews 10:27 offers Paul’s solution for us. “Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption,” Ephesians 4:30. Warning: if you walk as the Gentiles you will grieve the Spirit of God. So, how can we avoid that dreadful mistake? “Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor **be put away from you**, along with all

malice, Ephesians 4:3. Resist these sinful practices and replace them with “Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you,” Ephesians 4:32. God always provides the solution to our problems.

“Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me,” Psalms 51:10. David is asking for a new heart because the old one was corrupt and could not be repaired. The purpose of the gospel is to create a new heart within each believer. When we are baptized into Christ’s death, we are raised to a new life (Romans 6:4) and because of the new heart we can be united with Christ (Romans 6:5) in His death resurrection.

“That I may **know Him**,” Philippians 3:10-11. This must be the highest object of desire in the mind of every Christian. To fully understand His nature, character, and work and to fully comprehend the magnitude of God’s love that provides salvation to mankind.

“And the power of His resurrection,” Ephesians 3:19. We need to experience the influence of the resurrection that provides the hope for heaven’s reward, immortality which will sustain us even in the face of persecution. “and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; participate in the same type of suffering, Romans 8:17; 2 Timothy 2:12; James 1:2. “But to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation,” 1 Peter 4:13. In order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

**ANGER IS AN ACID THAT
CAN DO MORE HARM
TO THE VESSEL
IN WHICH IT IS STORED
THAN TO ANYTHING ON
WHICH IT IS POURED.**

Mark Twain

**When you cannot control what is happening around you,
Challenge yourself to control the way you respond to
What is happening. YOU HAVE THE POWER!**

Articles

“Anger” 9/18/16

“Bitterness” 11/17/18

“Self-control” 3/8/18

HURT

“He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.”

Psalms 147:3 (NAS95)

For this study we will be looking at hurt, injury, and offense in a spiritual sense rather than physical wounds. Those things that harm the body will heal, although possibly leaving a visible scar. However, the wounding of a person’s feelings will leave an invisible scar that may never heal.

“For through your knowledge he who is weak is ruined, the brother for whose sake Christ died. And so, by sinning against the brethren and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ,” 1 Corinthians 8:11-12. Paul’s discussion is about preventing Christians from committing sin when, at times, we do not consider the result of our actions. Eating meat offered to idols was a real problem at the time of his writing. Inexperienced Christians were being offended and their conscience wounded because of their lack of knowledge concerning the new gospel of Christ. Mature Christians possessed the knowledge needed to understand that the idol was nothing and posed no threat to them. However, they did not consider the spiritual maturity level of their brothers and sisters in Christ. As a Christian we have a responsibility to assure our conduct, behavior and example will lead the uninformed, unlearned Christian or the unbeliever closer to Christ.

Case in point: an unbelieving spouse attended worship services with a believing spouse then left the building to eat a meal together. The unbeliever observed a person near them drinking beer with their meal. The unbeliever’s statement to their spouse, “that guy was sitting in front of us at church and now he is drinking. What a bunch of hypocrites.” His actions could stop anyone from discussing religion in any way. The believer may ask, “do you think drinking one beer will cause me to go to hell?” Think it all the way through, will eating meat offered to an idol cause you to go to hell? Paul says yes it will **if** you offend a weak brother or hinder the work of God. You violate the law that requires you to love your neighbor.

What effect can this have on the weak brother? 1Corinthians 8: 7-11

Verse 7- defile him, make him unclean, corrupted

Verse 9 - liberty becomes his stumbling block

Verse 11- ruined – perished – destroyed

“For if because of food your brother is hurt, you are no longer walking according to love. Do not destroy with your food him for whom Christ died,” Romans 14:15. This verse teaches the same principle as 1Corinthians 8. Hurting the conscience of a weak brother is NOT living a life according to the principle of love for our fellowman. It is possible for a brother to be eternally lost because of my stumbling block, if I don’t think about the end results of my actions. Romans 14:20 expresses the same thought.

What are some things we could do today that would hurt a weak brother? Pause at this point to consider the answer to this question. There are many possibilities, many things that have happened in local congregations that have been hurtful to all but especially to the uninformed,

immature Christian. Churches have divided over small relatively unimportant issues; what color to paint the walls, color of carpet, time to meet, choice of a preacher, the covering, second serving of the Lord's Supper, and the list continues.

Attitude is high on the list of things that often offend new Christians. Proper attitude toward our brethren begins with a sincere and fervent LOVE - the major ingredient in any relationship (John 13:34-35; & 1Peter 1:22-23). Fervent comes from the root where we get the word fever, burning up, intense love which provides a foundation for every successful relationship. Our love for every Christian allows us to forge a working relationship which Paul illustrated using the human body in 1 Corinthians 12:12-27. There is no partiality, no schism, the oil of love reduces the friction between the moving parts producing cooperation to build and strengthen each one. Submitting to one another begins by applying the proper attitude in sincere, fervent love. 1 Peter 2 and 3 presents strong teaching on both "who" and "how" we are to submit and "why" it is necessary.

"**Submit** yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority," 1 Peter 2:13. The "why" is for the sake of God, we show our love for God by obeying the laws of the land that do not conflict the laws of God. We can easily hurt a young Christian in failure to submit to the king, or governor. A mature Christian should be careful of how we speak of those in authority, Ephesians 5:29. We may have a difficult time truly submitting to man's authority because of the laws passed that violate God's laws such as abortion, legal liquor and marijuana. However, when we consider the circumstance of the time of Peter's writing, the political situation was far worse than today. Verse 14 explains that the purpose of government is to punish the evil doers, such as robbers, murders, and rapist. Without a stable government there is chaos, anarchist, and unrest, and Christians cannot freely worship under those conditions. The second responsibility of government is given in verses 14, to praise them that do well. This may be in the form of allowing us to lead a quiet and peaceful life with our person and property protected, defending our rights as a citizen.

"And to make it your ambition to lead a quiet life and attend to your own business and work with your hands, just as we commanded you," 1 Thessalonians 4:11.

"For kings and all who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity. (NAS95) Verse 15 instructs us to set a good example of the unlearned," 1 Timothy 2:2.

" Servants, be **submissive** to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and gentle, but also to those who are unreasonable," 1 Peter 2:18. Even if your boss is unreasonable, forward which means crooked, perverse, wicked, or unjust God requires that we treat them respectfully. "Slaves, in all things obey those who are your masters on earth, not with external service, as those who merely please men, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord," Colossians 3:22.

"All who are under the yoke as slaves are to regard their own masters as worthy of all honor so that the name of God and our doctrine will not be spoken against." 1 Timothy 6:1/ These verses emphasis that we are to give a good day's work regardless of the circumstances because it is about serving God, not the character of the supervisor (verse20) finds favor with God and you will not hurt the new Christian with your tongue or actions.

“In the same way, you wives, be **submissive** to your own husbands so that even if any of them are disobedient to the word, they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives, 1 Peter 3:1. Peter introduces the family relationship in chapter 3, beginning with the wives, showing how powerful a living example of God’s principles can be. They can save a soul and are precious in God’s sight. Think about how quickly a young Christian can be hurt by observing a wife who does not follow God’s instructions given in these passages, showing signs of rebellion against her husband and God.

“You husbands in the same way, live with your wives in an understanding way, as with someone weaker, since she is a woman; and show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers will not be hindered” 1 Peter 3:7. In the same way, husbands and wives are to be submissive to one another, “for the sake of the Lord.” God requires it! If the husband does not show understanding, honor, and respect to his wife there is a price to pay, **hindered prayers**, no favor in God’s sight.

What is Peter’s purpose in these instructions? “To sum up, **all of you** be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit,” 1 Peter 3:8. These are the qualities that prevent us from hurting a young Christian, scaring that person maybe for life and causing eternal loss. “Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from these things, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified, useful to the Master, prepared for every good work,” 2 Timothy 2:21.

**Trust in the LORD with all your heart,
And do not lean on your own understanding.
In all your ways acknowledge Him,
And He will make your paths straight.
Proverbs 3:5-6**

Articles

“Unjust Criticism 7/30/17

“One Another’s” 11/11/18

“Blessings” 5/27/18

STRENGTH

“And he answered, ‘You shall love the lord your god with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your **strength**, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself,’” Luke 10:27 (NAS95). **Strength** is defined as the capacity for exertion or endurance. Other terms that are often used are **power**, the ability to act. And **force** means actual effective exercise of power. The word **energy** means power extended and **might** means overwhelming power. The antonyms are weak, weakness and powerless which describe the opposite state of strength.

Strength is acquired by exercise, lifting weights and CrossFit training which will build physical strength Every Christian is responsible for taking care of the physical body, 1 Timothy 4:8. It is the container of the soul, the method God chose to transport the soul, to move about spreading the gospel. (Acts 17:28).

Spiritual strength is developed by spiritual exercise and training. Hebrews 5:12-6:1 expounds on the “how” of spiritual development, beginning with the elementary, using training and practice to gain strength pressing toward maturity. Time only will not produce teachers or spiritual strength (verse 12). They had plenty of time and opportunity to improve their spiritual strength however, they had neglected God’s method of gaining strength which was gaining the knowledge of the doctrine of Christ. Discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness,” 1 Timothy 4:7b.

Now they needed to go back to the elementary things: to 5-pound weights rather than the 50-pounds; back to the first principles which they had neglected through lack of commitment, endurance, and determination. The fundamental principles of Christianity, the milk of the word, produces faith in Jesus Christ, God’s son our Savior. The plainest and easiest truths of the gospel aid in understanding the meatier things of the gospel. In John 3 Jesus was speaking with Nicodemus and asked, "Are you the **teacher of Israel** and do not understand these things?" John 3:10. He did not understand being born again was in the spiritual sense, he was stuck in the physical.

Verse 13 talks of being unskillful in the word of righteousness. They did not utterly understand. They were not proving, exercising, or practicing in the oracles of God. Understanding provides us with the opportunity to conform to the mind and will of God. This is an example of the maturing process. (1 Corinthians 13:11, 14:20) “Like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation, 1 Peter 2:2. The Hebrews did not have that **longing** for the pure truth of God’s word that causes growth leading to salvation.

“But solid food [strong meat] is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil, Hebrews 5:14.

How does an unskilled Christian become mature?

“Therefore leaving the elementary teaching about the Christ, let us press on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God,” Hebrews 6:1. One of the greatest dangers to any Christian is NOT having a continual growth pattern. 2 Peter 3:18 commands us to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. The Hebrew writer instructs us to MOVE from elementary things such as repentance and

a changed life toward mature things. We need to be progressing toward God and seeking a higher level of spirituality. Some translations speak of going on to perfection, greater skills in the doctrine of Christ, fuller understanding of the word of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:20). As we grow toward maturity, we will instill God's knowledge in our minds, learning perseverance and determination to cling to His will.

Paul gives the most complete description of God's plan for the spiritual development of mankind in Eph. 4:11-16. "And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers," Ephesians 4:11. The apostles and some prophets were endowed with the Holy Spirit to guide the early church, building on the foundation of Jesus Christ. They were to provide the continuation and edification of the church, which consist of growing Christians. It also consists of evangelist; whose primary job is to preach the gospel. Pastors, elders, and shepherds are to guide, feed and protect the flock of God. Teachers are those who instruct because they have developed skill in the word of God through practice, exercise, and application.

The purpose of this arrangement is given for the equipping or perfecting (NKJV) other saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ," Ephesians 4:12. Most people are reluctant to use the word perfect because of how we use it today. So we hear, "nobody is perfect," which is true if we are omitting the grace of God. We are not perfect on our own, but the meaning of the word throughout the scriptures is, "being complete, fully equipped, not lacking anything, James 1:4 and Colossians 2:10. "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work, 2 Timothy 3:16-17. God has provided **everything** that we need to become mature, knowledge, complete and perfect in His word. We are to use this maturity, the perfecting in the work of ministry, for edifying the body of Christ, His church. This is a lifelong work. (Ephesians 4:13)

Until we all attain to the unity of the faith, until Christians reach a state of complete unity, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, reaching a practical acquaintance with Christ, Ephesians 3:17-19, to a mature man. "To the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ," 1 Corinthians 14:20. Christ is the standard, the ultimate goal for our moral character. Having attained this level of maturity, it changes how we behave; not like children who are easily influenced by others. They are changeable without conviction, tossed here and there by the latest religious opinion, unstable like the waves (James 1:8). The first aim of every new Christian is to become firmly grounded in the doctrine of Christ and it is the duty of every mature Christian to aid in that development (Titus 2:2-3). Without that grounding (verse14) the trickery, cunning and deceitfulness of men will lead you astray, away from God into spiritual ruin. When we speak the simple, unvarnished truth (verse15) it stands on its own, no need for cunning or trickery, spoken in love with a positive effect on the outcome on the young soul (Galatians 6:1; 2 Timothy 2:25). Aiding and assisting in the growth toward the complete/perfect man in Christ.

"From whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love," Ephesians 4:16. This verse shows the wisdom of God and the learning of Paul as he illustrates the importance of EVERY member working together with other members to build up the body of Christ, His church.

Here is where we find strength in the Lord, opportunity to serve others and to benefit fellow Christians through loving obedience to God. Read the reminder of Ephesians 4 for further insight into applying these principles in your service.

The struggles you are in today
are developing strength for tomorrow.



Articles

“Are You an Asset?” 11/26/17

“Divine Antidotes” 8/11/19

TIRED

**"Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest."
Matthew 11:28 (NAS95)**

Jesus understood being tired, weary, drained of strength to the point of exhaustion. (John 4:6) Jesus was physically tired in this reference but in the text passage He is offering a different kind of rest for those who were weary and heavy laden. Some commentators suggest the heavy burden were the numerous Mosaic rites however, Jesus is referring to the oppressive additions of the Scribes and Pharisees. They required the people pay temple tax, give their property, and placed extremely strict regulations about every part of life that had moved beyond being reasonable or expedient. Jesus is offering relief for this burdensome system, to lay down the heavy load which could not deliver the forgiveness that is provided by Jesus Christ. All are invited to come: **sinner**s who are tired of their sinful ways, the **penitent** who are burdened with guilt of a wayward life, and **believers** who are oppressed and fearful of the Jews. All are invited to come and receive the promised rest and be cleansed from all unrighteousness removing guilt. Strength is provided to overcome oppression, fear, and temptation. Jesus has just spoken about removing the heavy burden in Matthew 11:28, possibly referring to Psalms 55:22, "Cast thy burden upon the Lord and He will sustain you." He then used a metaphor that may seem strange to us, Matthew 11:29, "take my yoke upon you." Those who are weary and burdened down are asked to take on a YOKE, the very symbol of strenuous labor. Oxen wore yokes to pull ploughs or loaded wagons. The yoke that Jesus asks us to take or put on is not a burden but an obligation to believe His doctrine, conform to His will, and commit to serving Him. "Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart," Matthew 11:29. Jesus contrasts His manner with that of the Jews, "meek and lowly in heart" as compared to prideful and arrogant. Where the meekness and humility of Christ dwells all is smooth, even peaceable, and quiet; for the work of righteousness is peace, and the effects of righteousness, quietness, and assurance forever. (A. Clark)

"YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS," Isaiah 32:17. This invitation to all is offering relief from all the heavy burdens of being in the world, without a place to rest, refresh and renew. Whether from Jewish doctrine, false doctrine, or the ways of the world, we need a place of rest. "But the dove found no **resting place** for the sole of her foot, so she returned to him into the ark, for the water was on the surface of all the earth," Genesis 8:9.

Examine Isaiah 40: 28-31. God does not grow weary or tired, but He is the source of renewed strength to the tired and weary so we can walk and run but not get tired.

"Yet those who wait for the LORD Will gain new strength," Isaiah 40:31. The idea of "waiting on the Lord" is prominent in Isaiah, Proverbs, and the Psalms. We get tired, He does not, we need the **new** strength that He is willing and able to provide. He will bear our burdens, IF we are willing to follow Him, follow His timetable in humility and most of all patience. Then They will mount up with wings like eagles, they will run and not get tired, they will walk and not become weary. Other passages to consider Isaiah 8:17; Proverbs 20:22; Psalms 40:1, 33:20, 119:81.

Jesus spoke of "waiting for the Lord" in a little different way but still requires patience and not growing weary. In all these passages, Mathew 24:43-44, 25:13; Luke 12:40, 21:34, 36;

Mark 13:33, Jesus is admonishing His disciples to “wait on the Lord” being alert and sober. If we are tired and weary it is difficult to be alert, but God provides the rest and renewed strength needed. We are not left on our own to do the best we can but when we are dependent upon the Lord we can preserve. They will mount up with wings like eagles. They will run and not get tired. They will walk and not become weary.

The coming of the Lord is an unknown time, described as a thief in the night, so we must be prepared for His coming every hour, day or night. As a teenager, I had an experience of large magnitude, a group of guys were out one-night misbehaving, when in the sky a brilliant display of lights appeared like I had never seen. My first thoughts were the Lord is coming! It turned out to be the northern lights, called the aurora. It had a great impact on me, it caused me to make a stronger commitment to the Lord, I was NOT ready for Him to come because my heart was not right.

Paul writes, “For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night,” 1 Thessalonians 5:2. Repeating many of the events Jesus spoke about, using labor pains, verses 3, to illustrate the unknown timing, but then emphasizes the need to be alert.) “So then let us not sleep as others do, but let us be alert and sober,” 1 Thessalonians 5:6. Peter also places strong emphasis on just how important it is for you and me to be sober and alert, 1 Peter 4:7, 5:8. James 5:7-8, patiently waiting for the Lord is near. Ponder that thought, is He far away in heaven?

Peter concludes the second letter with a striking statement in chapter 3, you already know BUT he is reminding them to “wait on the Lord.” Beginning in verse 10 he renews the thought that Christ will come unexpectedly but All will see and know. For the unprepared it will be too late to get prepared (5 virgins) everything will be consumed with intense heat, destroyed, and burned up. With this backdrop, Peter provides a very motivating statement, “what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness” (2 Peter 3:11). With the realization that the earth and all its contents will be burned up, does that not motivate us to greater spiritual heights? Increasing our level of spirituality and making us more deeply committed to the Lord?

(2 Peter 3:12) looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God. Are we truly earnestly looking for the coming of the Lord? Are we seriously asking God to hasten the day Christ returns? Because of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat! (NAS95) Everything we can see and all the things that we are familiar with will be gone, melted with fervent heat. Peter is stirring up knowledge by way of remembrance of what we have learned.

“Therefore, beloved, since you look for these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless,” 2 Peter 3:14. BE DILIGENT: (1) self- examination, are you ready? (2) to perform your Christian duties (3) have patience to overcome the trials of this life. With heaven as our ultimate goal, the events of this life are not worthy to be compared to the glory that awaits us (Romans 8:18) when we will be relieved of all trials and temptations, sorrow, pain and tears. We are slow to assume the place of **spotless and blameless**, but we should be careful NOT to allow our shortcomings to limit the power of God to remove spots and blemishes. This should be our greatest desire before we stand before God in judgement.

“Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ,
1Thessalonians 5:23.

We can be tired, weary
And emotionally
Distraught, but after
spending time alone with
God, we find that He
Injects into our bodies
Energy, power and
Strength.
Charles Stanley

**He gives strength to the weary,
and to him who lacks might
He increases power. Isaiah 40:29**

ANXIOUS

“Casting all your anxiety on Him because He cares for you.”

1 Peter 5:7 (NAS95)

Anxiety may be one of the most prevalent disorders in the world today. It effects millions of people in many ways and on many different levels. Experts from various fields of study have written an untold number of books, articles, and research on the subject without presenting a real solution for most who suffer from this disorder. As an uneducated layman, the underlining cause seems to be rooted in fear. Not intending to oversimplify the devastating effects on the lives of those who suffer and their families however, most research points in that direction. Anxiety is one of the strongest emotions that moves mankind into action or causes people to withdraw into themselves doing nothing for fear of failure.

The most applicable passage on this subject is recorded in Matthew 6:25-34 as part of the sermon on the mount.

Jesus provides 8 reasons or arguments against anxiety.

- (1) "For this reason I say to you, do not be worried about your life, as to what you will eat or what you will drink; nor for your body, as to what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?" Matthew 6:25. Take no thought, do not be anxious for food or clothing because God will provide. As proof, God created your body, He gave you life and He will feed and clothe that which He created. These are small unimportant things when compared to our relationship with the God of Heaven, creator of the body that He designed as the vessel to contain the soul. Proverbs 37:25; Luke 21:34; Philippians 4:6
- (2) "Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they?" Matthew 6:26. The second argument is based on having confidence in the providence of God. He provides for the birds which He created; therefore, He will care for you because you have far greater value than birds.
- (3) "And who of you by being worried can add a single hour to his life?" Matthew 6:27. "Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature?" Matthew 6:27 (NKJV). A probing question, but the answer is that you can worry about all of this and will fail to add length to your life or inches to your height. BUT God will care for you, do not worry.
- (4) "And why are you worried about clothing? Observe how the lilies of the field grow; they do not toil nor do they spin," Matthew 6:28. The lily is used in Song of Solomon to describe his bride in glowing terms, for its sweet aroma and beauty. All the riches of Solomon could not compete with the simple flower created by God. "But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, will He not much more clothe you? You of little faith!" Matthew 6:30.

At this point Jesus concludes the discussion about food and clothes by stating God will care for you. Where is your trust in Him?

- (5) "For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things," Matthew 6:32. To the Gentiles who had no understanding about God, His providence or His promise to care for them, they spent their lives eagerly acquiring food and clothing, material things.
- (6) "For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things," Matthew 6:32. He knows and has promised to provide for His children as an earthly father provides for his children.
- (7) "But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness," Matthew 6:33. The key to this verse is in the word **seek**; in supreme pursuit of the greatest objective in this life, Heaven. It is available to us because the God of Heaven has established His kingdom on earth. His church is a dwelling place, shelter, and training academy for the spiritually recovered. Romans 9:30, 1 Timothy 6:11, and 2 Timothy 2:2 give further instruction—**pursue righteousness**. Jesus's teaching in this verse is to pursue righteousness with the choices we make to have our heart right with God. "And all these things will be added to you." Because God knows our needs, He will provide the physical things.
- (8) "So do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own." Matthew 6:34. The future belongs to God; it is out of our control and beyond planning that includes God and His righteousness. James 4:13-17

The conclusion of these passages can be summed up in a few words: **our only job on earth is to seek the righteousness of God wholly and completely.**

Someone with anxiety may...

Get **overstimulated** in busy environments

Delay replying to messages for days/weeks at a time

Overanalyze/read into things too much

Create a **false time constraint**/excuse to leave an event early

Appear "fussy" about the details surrounding social events

Need **reassurance**

Have an "**outburst**" in a situation they know doesn't warrant it

Cancel plans last minute



Worrying is assuming
that God does not know
what He is doing.

ANXIETY

Deuteronomy 31:6

Psalms 9:9; 23:4; 27:1; 34:4; 46:1;
55:22; 56:3, 11; 91:1-2

Proverbs 1:33; 3: 5-6; 12:25

Isaiah 40:31; 41:10, 13; 43: 1-4

Matthew 11:28-30

Luke 12: 25 – 26

John 14:27

Romans 8:28,31; 16:20

Philippians 4:6-7,13

2 Thessalonians 3:16

2 Timothy 1:7

1 Peter 5:7

Revelation 21:4

Article

“Preachers” 9/02/18

FORGIVEN

“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

1 John 1:9 (NAS95)

Beginning with the sermon on the mount and continuing throughout the gospels Jesus often spoke about forgiveness. In Mathew 6:12-15 Jesus gives conditions for God forgiveness, which we so desperately need, with our forgiveness of our fellowman. This condition is repeated in the other gospels, Mark 11:26 and Luke 11:4. What does it mean to condition forgiveness? This is about the state of the heart. IF we are burdened with sin, guilt and feeling lost, we can humbly submit ourselves to God. We can acknowledge our sins by confessing and seeking His righteousness. He promised to provide mercy, Psalms 32:5, forgiveness, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. To be free from our sins requires a change in our hearts because sin has defiled the heart, making it unclean. God will NOT be dwelling in a sinful heart. “Create in me a clean heart, O God, And renew a steadfast spirit within me,” Psalms 51:10. After David acknowledged his sins, he prayed that God would create in him a clean heart, to renew his spirit. Sin creates guilt that must be forgiven and pollution that must be cleansed from all unrighteousness. “Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart,” 1 Peter 1:22. Peter explains that their souls had been purified through obedience to the truth and they were to fervently love the brethren including forgiveness to those who offended them.

The greatest act of forgiveness is recorded in Luke 23:34, “But Jesus was saying, ‘Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.’ And they cast lots, dividing up His garments among themselves.” This pray is offered for those who had just nailed Him to the cross and perhaps for the Jews who caused His death. The Roman soldiers were blindly following orders however, the Jews could have known who Jesus was by the evidence of the prophets, the miracles, and His teachings. Both groups were ignorant of what they had done to the Son of God and yet Jesus hanging on the cross used His remaining few moments to approach God in prayer on behalf of these men seeking their pardon, their forgiveness. There are several lessons for us in this verse: (1) It is our duty to pray for our enemies even when they are trying to injure you. This seems hard for us until we consider this verse and Acts 7: 54-60. It is a command from Jesus Christ, “But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,” Matthew 5:44. (2) We should pray that God would pardon them and give them a better understanding. (3) This principle demonstrates the power and excellence of the gospel of Christ. No other religion teaches men to pray for their enemies. Men of the world seek revenge, while Christians pray for their forgiveness and pardon, not their destruction. (4) The greatest of sinners can be pardoned. Saul of Tarsus persecuted the Christians, casting them in prison and possibly putting them to death and God chose him to carry the gospel to the Gentiles.

"And now, brethren, I know that you acted in **ignorance**, just as your rulers did also. "But the things which God announced beforehand by the mouth of all the prophets, that His Christ would suffer, He has thus fulfilled," Acts 3:17-18. Ignorance did not make them innocent! They were guilty of crucifying the son of God but were ignorant of the fact that He was the Messiah. They had been led into darkness by the spiritual leaders of Israel who had been binding their own rules

on the people in place of God's instructions. A word of caution for us today: demand that preachers proclaim the whole counsel of God not just the soft easy parts. (Acts 20:27 NKJV) Peter does not ignore their guilt even through ignorance; he calls on them to repent of this great crime. This is similar to 1 Corinthians 2:8, "the wisdom which none of the rulers of this age has understood; for if they had understood it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory." Paul states had they had known His true character they would not have crucified the Son of God, because He was their hope for the nation. However, they were looking for a conqueror, a liberator who would throw the Romans out of the country and provide freedom from repression. Because of this earthly expectation they failed to examine the scriptures concerning the coming Messiah.

With these thoughts in mind let us examine to the scriptures about forgiveness.

"But one whom you forgive anything, I forgive also; for indeed what I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, I did it for your sakes in the presence of Christ," 2 Corinthians 2:10.

"Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you," Ephesians 4:32.

"When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions," Colossians 2:13.

"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness," 1 John 1:9.

"I am writing to you, little children, because your sins have been forgiven you for His name's sake," 1 John 2:12.

"Bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone, just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you, Colossians 3:13.

Articles

- "Saving Grace" 2/17/19
- "Give Evidence" 9/18/19
- "U Broke It" 9/29/19

HOPE

**“Why are you in despair, O my soul? And why have you become disturbed within me?
Hope in God, for I shall again praise Him For the help of His presence.”
Psalms 42:5 (NAS95)**

Webster defines hope, “to cherish a desire with expectation or anticipation.” Paul writes, “According to my **earnest expectation and hope**, that I will not be put to shame in anything, but that with all boldness, Christ will even now, as always, be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death,” Philippians 1:20. “For the **anxious longing** of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God,” Romans 8:19. In both verses Paul expresses the same idea of looking to the future with hope. Although he is in prison, his earnest expectation is about his life, living or in death, honoring God in the spreading of the gospel. Paul’s personal life was secondary to the spreading of the gospel, standing up for the gospel with boldness so that Christ could be magnified whether in life or in death. There are a number of references where Paul spoke **BOLDLY** (Acts 4:13; 9:27; 13:46; 14:3; 9:8), even when his life was in danger, because he had his hope fixed on the living God (1 Timothy 4:10).

There are many adjectives used in the scriptures to help us fully understand the insurmountable value of HOPE while living on the Earth.

“So that by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have taken refuge,” Hebrews 6:18. All those who have submitted their lives to the Lord has this place of safety and comfort with greater security than the cities of refuge (Numbers 35) or the horns of the altar (1 Kings 1& 2). It is a strong tower of safety (Proverbs 18:10).

“... would have strong encouragement” this promise of safety will eliminate doubts, fears, sorrows, and worldly distractions, giving the heart a quiet peaceful rest even in the face of trials, temptations or even persecution. (Colossians 1:22-24)

“... to take hold of the hope set before us.” Our goal is to reach heaven after this life, it is there for each of us to grasp, take hold of, lay hold of. Hope has been made available to us through the sacrifice of God’s only Son, Jesus Christ. That is the hope that is set before us. “For in **hope** we have been saved, but hope that is seen is not hope; for who hopes for what he already sees? But if we **hope** for what we do not see, with perseverance we **wait eagerly** for it,” Romans 8:24-25.

Good hope - 2 Thessalonians 2:16

Living hope - 1 Peter 1:3-5

Fixed hope - Timothy 6:17, 1 Pet. 1:13

Blessed hope - Titus 2:3

Better hope - Hebrews 7:19

All these references guide us to a deeper understanding of what God has placed before us to make our lives better and to benefit others.
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The Apostle Paul refers to **hope** (the strong desire with anticipation and expectation) in many ways in most of the epistles that he wrote. He places enormous value on the ability of his readers to fully understand the value of **hope**. “In preserving the saints, in providing motivation to

remain faithful and to prevent the shipwreck of their faith, 1 Timothy 1:19.

The common thread in most of the references is the realization of the promised reward:

- (1) is attainable (Acts 26:7)
- (2) was called the **hope** of Israel (Acts 28:20)
- (3) possessed by the Gentiles (Romans 15:12)
- (4) of righteousness (Galatians 5:5),
- (5) of salvation (Romans 8:24, 2 Corinthians 1:10, 1Thessalonians 5:8)
- (6) of glory (Colossians 1:27)
- (7) in God (Romans 15:13; Ephesians 1:18; 1Timothy 4:10)

“Through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God,” Romans 5:2.

In the earnest desire and expectation of obtaining that glory. Hope is a complex emotion made up of desire for an object, and an expectation of obtaining it. Where either of these is wanting, there is no hope. Where they are mingled in improper proportions, there is no peace. But where the desire of obtaining an object is attended with an expectation of obtaining it in proportion to that desire, there exists that peaceful, happy state of mind which we denominate hope. And the Apostle here implies that the Christian has an earnest desire for that glory; and that he has a confident expectation of obtaining it. The result of that he immediately states to be, that we are sustained in our afflictions. Barnes

“But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope,” 1 Thessalonians 4:13. Paul desires to relieve the Thessalonians of their concern about those of their number who are deceased and correct their misconception about the resurrection. The habit and practice among prominent people in the Greek culture was to hire professional mourners who would tear their clothes, throw dirt in the air, scream, beat their chests, all to draw attention to the deceased. Paul is not telling them not to mourn the dead but to understand that these had **no hope!** “Remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having **no hope** and without God in the world,” Ephesians 2:12.

Our world is no different today, millions upon millions are in the same state. They have no **hope** because they are without God:

- (1) They have no knowledge of God or understanding of the promise God made from the beginning (Genesis 3), confirmed to Abraham and delivered by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.
- (2) There is a second group which could be some in the Lord’s church, this should serve as a great warning to everyone today. “For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened,” Romans 1:21.
- (3) “For not knowing about God's righteousness and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God,” Romans 10:3. This verse should serve as a stern warning to every Christian today to examine themselves according to God’s word to assure that we are truly seeking God’s righteousness.

“But Christ was faithful as a Son over His house--whose house we are, if we hold fast our confidence and the boast of our hope firm until the end,” Hebrews 3:6.

**I hope for Your salvation, O LORD,
And do Your commandments.
Psa. 119:166**

Article

“Self-Forsaken” 3/24/19

PEACE

**"Peace I leave with you;
My peace I give to you;
not as the world gives do I give to you.
Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful."
John 14:27**

Forgiveness, discussed in lesson 9, produces hope, which is discussed in lesson 10. Hope produces **peace** which many people think is an absence of war. Webster's dictionary defines **peace** as, "a state of tranquility, free of agitation, turmoil or disturbance. I view **peace** as a quiet peaceful state of mind.

As we examine the context of John 14:25 Jesus has summarized the teachings during His time on Earth (verse 26). He announces the promise of "the Comforter," the helper who will guide, teach, and provide perfect recall as they proclaim the gospel of Christ (verse 27). He promises **peace**, a common form of Jewish benediction as people parted company. However, this verse is far beyond any common statement. Jesus explains this is not about the peace of this world because their world was about to be filled with agitation, turmoil and evil beyond anything they could imagine. The sinless Son of God was about to be crucified, they would flee from Him, deny Him, forsake Him and **peace** would be the furthest thing from their minds. Yet, Jesus said, "don't let your heart be troubled nor let it be fearful." WHY? HOW?

Jesus gave them, and us, a plan for **peace** that is not dependent, removing the turmoil of everyday life caused by others, places, or things that interfere with a state of tranquility. Just typing these words is almost a joke because every day is a new set of problems but to give us some prospective read 2 Corinthians 11:24-28 then compare your day. The peace that Jesus gave, "peace I leave you" has its foundation in submission to the will of God. Before conversation, the mind of man is in turmoil, agitated, in conflict with their conscience and with the laws of God. The peace the world offers is in the form of fame, fortune and pleasure which leaves mankind lacking, never satisfied, always seeking more and bigger (Luke 12:15-20). False religions offer peace but fail to deliver forgiveness of sins and reconciliation to God, proving to be unsatisfying.

After conversation to the gospel of Christ, mankind is in a state of peace, being reconciled to God, removing the guilt of sin, and becoming one with God (Galatians 5:22; Rom 5:1; Phil 4:7). It frees us from fear of persecution, trials and difficulties of this life because they are not worthy to be compared to the PEACE that is to come (Romans 8:18).

"These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have **peace**. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world," John 16:33. This is the final sermon recorded from Jesus before He was crucified. In simple terms, Jesus leaves His disciples with a remarkable lesson: Jesus is the ONLY source of **peace** and joy. The **peace** of God is always to be understood to include all possible blessings: {A} strength, {B} comfort, {C} support, {D} light, {E} divine favor, {F} purification of heart, {G} being reconciled Him. These things are all made possible through Jesus Christ. Jesus stated in John 16:33, "so that in Me you may have peace."

We must come to an understanding that peace is available only because God, through Christ, provides us with:

{A} **strength** “Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might,” Ephesians 6:10. In the verses following verse 10 Paul gave us detailed instructions about how to apply the armament of God that will make us strong in the Lord bringing about peace.

{B} **Comfort** “For just as the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance, so also our comfort is abundant through Christ. But if we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation; or if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which is effective in the patient enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer,” 2 Corinthians 1:5-6. God is willing and able to provide comfort even while suffering.

{C} **Support** “Make sure that your character is free from the love of money, being content with what you have; for He Himself has said, "I WILL NEVER DESERT YOU, NOR WILL I EVER FORSAKE YOU," so that we confidently say, "THE LORD IS MY HELPER, I WILL NOT BE AFRAID. WHAT WILL MAN DO TO ME?" Hebrews 13:5-6. These verses are the foundation of **peace**. With this kind of support **peace** is very attainable.

{D} **light** “In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men. The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it,” John 1:4-5. The fear of darkness will take away our peace however, Jesus is THE LIGHT that eliminates darkness contributing strength, comfort and light to our peaceful state of mind.

{E} **divine favor or grace** “For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience? But if when you do what is right and suffer for it you patiently endure it, this finds favor with God,” 1 Peter 2:20. When the Apostle Paul appealed to God to remove the thorn in the flesh, God replied, “And He has said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.’ Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me.” 2 Corinthians 12:9. The divine favor, grace, will never be less than we need to have peace.

{F} **Purification of heart** “Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart,” 1 Peter 1:22. “For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling those who have been defiled sanctify for the cleansing of the flesh, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?” Hebrews 9:13-14.

{G} **reconciled to God** “And through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven,” Colossians 1:20. “Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God,” 2 Corinthians 5:18-20.

These are just some of the things God provides us in this present world. These are also the things that prepare us to have joy as we are in training for the world to come. “For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust. 2 Peter 1:4. Now attach the following verses of 2 Pet 1: 5-11 for a life-time warranty, as long as you own your life.

**For, "THE ONE WHO DESIRES LIFE, TO LOVE
AND SEE GOOD DAYS,**

**MUST KEEP HIS TONGUE FROM EVIL AND
KEEP HIS LIPS FROM DECIET**

**"HE MUST TURN AWAY FROM EVIL AND DO
GOOD; HE MUST SEEK PEACE AND PURSUE IT.**

1Peter 3:10-11

Articles

"Lessons in Disaster 9/24/17

"Do you Feel Saved?" 10/22/19

WAITING

**Wait for the LORD;
Be strong and let your heart take courage;
Yes, wait for the LORD.
Psalms 27:14**

If you are afraid, anxious, or feeling helpless, wait on the Lord and He will strengthen your heart. What does it mean to wait on the Lord? What is required to wait on the Lord? The Psalmist used this expression many times. The idea is one of dependence on God to care for us, strengthen, provide help (Psalms 33:20), deliverance, and providing salvation. Many of the Old Testament passages refer to a physical deliverance or salvation from an enemy or distress (Psalms 33:20). However, the promise of the Messiah is the focus of most of the Old Testament prophets.

Waiting is one of the most difficult things we do every day, whether we are meeting someone for an appointment, sharing a ride, or sitting at a traffic signal. We are restless people, in a hurry, impatient and often lack self-control (2Timothy 3:3). Observe the thoughts of Psalms 37:7-8, “Rest in the LORD and wait patiently for Him; Do not fret because of him who prospers in his way, Because of the man who carries out wicked schemes. Cease from anger and forsake wrath; Do not fret; it leads only to evildoing.” The Psalmist emphasizes the need for patience. When waiting for the Lord we are not to fret because it only leads to evil doing. If the mind is allowed to be idle while we wait, bad things happen. My mother always said, “an idle mind is the devil’s workshop.” So, put the time to good use by studying the scriptures, mediating on God’s word or in prayer for self-control.

Patience is the cornerstone of successful “waiting”. If we have not learned patience, it will be exceedingly difficult; trust and be dependent on the Lord. The concept of “waiting” on the Lord is so completely intertwined with salvation and eternal life they cannot be separated. We all understand that God’s time is not connected to man’s time (1Peter 3:8). God was patient during the days of Noah (1 Peter 3:20) while He provided salvation that was rejected by all creation. God is still offering salvation to mankind and most are rejecting it once again. Just as in Noah’s time, while waiting he had work to do, build an ark and plead for the souls of man. We have been given a job to do also, as stated in 2 Corinthians 5:20, “Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. Our job during the days of waiting is to make an appeal, beg on behalf of Christ for all to be reconciled to God.

“Trust in the LORD with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding,” Proverbs 3:5. **IF** our waiting is to be successful, then trusting in God’s promises is of paramount importance.

Trust in God is a most important precept.

- (1) God is the source of all good. Mark 10:18
- (2) He created mankind to be dependent on Him. Proverbs 3:5
- (3) It is His desire that we are conscious of our dependence. 2 Corinthians 1:9-10
- (4) He has promised to provide what mankind needs. Mathew 6:26

- (5) He desires that mankind believe His promises. 2 Peter 1:4
- (6) He instructs the believers to look for the fulfillment. Hebrews 6:18
- (7) He instructs us to believe without doubt or fear. Matthew 21:21
- (8) With the whole heart. Matthew 22:37

To fully commit our trust, dependence and confidence in God requires that we submit ourselves to Him, not a little bit, not sometimes but with our entire being. “And He said to him, ‘YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND.’” Matthew 22:37. First recorded in Deuteronomy 6:5 and again in Deuteronomy 10:12, "Now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require from you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways and love Him, and to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul.” The Lord is more specific about what He requires: walk in all His ways (not my way), love Him, serve Him with every fiber of our being, which He created within us for the very purpose of giving Him glory, honor and praise. In Deuteronomy 30:6, He adds loving God with all your heart provide life. In Luke 10:27, and the companion verse in Matthew 22:37, adds with all your strength, the addition of this word speaks to the effort and diligence needed to fully serve God.

“But He gives a greater grace. Therefore, it says, "GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE." Submit therefore to God. God’s will require believers to yield their will to follow His will in all things. This is pleasing to God, the creator, it is for our benefit, our wellbeing in this life and for our salvation in the life to come. James’s instruction shows how we can please God by resisting Satan, with a humble spirit, willingly accepting God grace through fully submitting to God will. Resist the devil and he will flee from you,” James 4:6-7.

“Therefore, humble (submit) yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time,” 1 Peter 5:6. Peter gives the instruction to submit or humble ourselves to the Lord with a subliminal message- under the mighty hand of the Lord- we should submit because this mighty hand can bring severe judgement upon us OR that same mighty hand will exalt the humble. The choice is ours.

To wait for His Son from heaven, we believe that Jesus has gone to heaven, seated at the right hand of God until He comes again (1 Thessalonians 1:10). We should be waiting with eager anticipation for His return (Acts 1:11). He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, his resurrection, overcoming death and the grave provide believers with the hope of eternal life because God promised it to all who follow (Mathew 22:37). He rescues us from the wrath to come. Paul was rescued many times in his life but from our point of view this refers to the wrath of God on the disobedient 37 times in New Testament.

“Looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat! But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells,” 2 Peter 3:12-13. Peter’s summary brings all these thoughts together in capsule form; our responsibility as believers is to love the Lord with all our being, patiently but eagerly anticipating the return of Jesus Christ.

**For our citizenship is in heaven,
from which also we eagerly wait
for a Savior,
the Lord Jesus Christ.
Philippians 3:20**

*“Looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory
of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus.”
Titus 2:13*

Sermons

"Righteousness, Joy, Peace" 11/18/18

"The Hope of Glory" 1/26/20

"Yielding to God's Will" 3/15/20