



A



B



C

What Do You See? Three
Different Images of "Jesus" A,
B, C?

WHAT DO YOU SEE?

"He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation." (Colossians 1:15)

When someone says "picture Jesus Christ" what image "pops" into your mind? When you see these images - all of which are intended to represent Jesus Christ - what do they make you think? Perhaps "A" makes you think of traditional religious iconography/experiences centered in western culture. "B" may remind you of the prophet Isaiah, when he said of Jesus *"He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him."* (Isaiah 53:2) Lastly, "C" may cause you to think of common false doctrines and

the “watering-down” of christian conviction. In any case, Jesus Christ demands us to answer the question “*Who do you say I am?*” (Matthew 15:16)

Clarity on Who/What Jesus Is

Paul brings clarity about Jesus Christ in the letter to the Colossians. Many different versions of Jesus have surfaced since the beginning of Christianity. We must choose where we will get our ideas about who – and what – Jesus is. It is our nature to craft our own version of Jesus that we are comfortable with. We want a Jesus that is agreeable to us and accepts our sensibilities, life, and notions. The scriptures say that we are created in God’s own image. We must not create God (or “gods”) in our own image! We must see Jesus according to Jesus in his Word! The Word will give us clarity to see the true Jesus!

Clarity on Who/What Jesus Is Not

Idolatry, in the Old Testament, is the act of creating some kind of statuette or image of a god (or gods) and worshipping that image. Today, this kind of “idolatry” in worshipping a statue and/or created image(s) is not as commonplace nor clear in “Western” cultures. However, this practice of idolatry is the norm throughout India, Asia, and Southeast Asia and many parts of the “Eastern” world. However, *spiritual* idolatry – creating “God” in our image – is the norm in “Christianity” today.



Ancient household fertility figures ("household gods") common in Israel. "***When Laban had gone to shear his sheep, Rachel stole her father's household gods.***" (Genesis 31:19)



Bronze figurine of a Baal, 14th–12th century BC, found at Ras Shamra (ancient Ugarit) near the Phoenician coast. ***“No one stops to think, no one has the knowledge or understanding to say, ‘Half of it I used for fuel; I even baked bread over its coals, I roasted meat and I ate. Shall I make a detestable thing from what is left? Shall I bow down to a block of wood?’”*** (Isaiah 44:19)

Today traditions, experiences, culture, and social norms define and influence what many “see” when they “picture Jesus Christ.” When I was growing up, I had a myriad of traditional experiences of Jesus, many of them contradictory as well as eurocentric. I was a freshman in college taking “A History of World Religions” before it was clear in my mind that Jesus was in fact *not a white person at all*. I was taught that the experience of “speaking in tongues” and “praying Jesus into your heart” was a measure of my relationship with God and salvation. These are all things family, friends, and church-groups believed in the mid-western “culture” I grew up in.

Clarity On How To Define Jesus

I recall before studying the bible, numerous contradictions within the varying churches I’d attended growing up in the nature, tone, and teachings of “Jesus.” We learn from Colossians 1:18 that Jesus *“is the head of the body, the church.”* This means that the members of the church “body” represent the “head” in their “life and doctrine.” There are many “churches” claiming to be “Christian” but they do not practice what Jesus practiced nor do they preach what Jesus preached. This is “*spiritual idolatry*” – crafting a “Jesus” from traditions, sentiments, feelings, and experiences instead of letting God speak for himself through his Word.

Who Do You Say Jesus Is By Your Example?

The point here is not to become critical of “Christianity” or to deconstruct denominationalism. The Apostle Paul drives the point home in Colossians demanding clarity on who – and what – Jesus actually is *to the Colossians*. Our focus then becomes how have we created an inaccurate and idolatrous image of Jesus *in our own view* instead of focusing on

falsehoods in other churches. Where have *I personally* warped Jesus? Do presume to speak for him and/or put words in his mouth? Where is *my "life and doctrine"* personally and does *my* example accurately reflect the "*head*", who is Jesus? Does my life show that I'm following the true Jesus of the bible or am I following "my own" version of Jesus? (John 8:31-32)

Am I An Alienated Enemy Or Faithful And Reconciled?

"Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation—if you continue in your faith, established and firm, and do not move from the hope held out in the gospel..." (Colossians 1:21-23)

When we are alienated and God's enemy it is not merely by our actions! Our actions demonstrate our mindset, and it is in our mind where God is our enemy! In actuality, we make him our enemy, even though he does not want to be our enemy! When we are in sin and/or when we continually sin, our evil behavior alienates us from God in our minds. The Greek word for "repent" is "μετανοέω (metanoeō)." When you break it into its two parts, they mean Meta (μετά) = *after* or *change* and Noeō (νοέω) = *to think* or *to perceive*. Therefore, to "repent" means "*To change one's mind*" or "*to think differently afterward*." This means it is on us to change our minds and think differently about God *and* our actions!

What Does Jesus See?

In fact, God so deeply *does not want* to be "my enemy" that he "reconciled me completely" by sacrificing his Son Jesus! That is not someone who wants to see me as an enemy no matter what I think! On one hand, I am not God's friend if I continue in my sin regardless of what I think! (John 15:14) I'm going to see an enemy and be seen as an enemy unless I repent! What do you see when you picture Jesus Christ? What does Jesus Christ see when he pictures you? Friend or foe? (Hebrews 10:26-31)

"Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ

is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.” (Colossians 3:1-3)

In Conclusion

In conclusion, we want to see the real Jesus as defined by Jesus in the scriptures. We must allow God’s word tell us who God truly is. Our traditions, experiences, opinions, culture, or anything else cannot be the basis of our image of Jesus Christ. We must picture *“the way, the truth, and the life”* (John 14:6) when we “picture Jesus Christ.” And finally, we must change *our* minds about God and *our* behavior, and follow the bible’s *actual* picture of Jesus Christ closely.

“This is what the LORD says: “Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls...” (Jeremiah 6:16a)

Amen!

“For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you...” (Colossians 1:9)

Paul starts Colossians off just like he did Ephesians and Philippians, with emphasis on praying for them! *“For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all God’s people, I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better.” (Ephesians 1:15-17)*

What a thoughtful and intense prayer for the Ephesians! Paul also starts Philippians with a powerful prayer for them! *“I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 1:3-6)*

Interestingly, Paul does not start off the book of Galatians with an emphasis on praying for

them. Of course, we know that it is implied both by Paul's overall practice and teaching that he was praying for them. Paul talked about being [spiritually] in the pains of childbirth and being perplexed about the Galatians and this implies prayer as well. However, Paul does not *specifically* mention praying for them like he does in Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians! That just goes to show how tough, directive, intense, and necessary the letter to the Galatians was!

Do Not Stop Praying For One Another

"For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you. We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives, so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and giving joyful thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of his holy people in the kingdom of light." (Colossians 1:9-12)

When we pray for each other, it is important for us to ask ourselves, what exactly are we praying for? Paul gives us three outlines of how to pray for other disciples in our midst or ministry. We find these outlines in Ephesians, Philippians, and here in Colossians. Paul says here that they have **not stopped praying** for them and do so **continually**! The Colossians prayer starts off right away asking for the disciples in Colossians to be filled *"with the knowledge of [God's] will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives."* The goal of this knowledge is *"to live a life worthy of the Lord."* Paul then, through this example of how to pray for each other, teaches us what a **worthy** and **God-pleasing life** looks like.

#1 Bearing Fruit In Every Good Work

First, we should be *bearing fruit in every good work*. So when I pray for other disciples of Jesus, I need to consider *every good work* they are doing and be praying for them. This is why we'd pray for someone that is being reached out to by another disciple, or we'd pray for their evangelistic efforts overall, or their efforts to get the Gospel out (such as internet

ministry, MERCYworldwide, and so on). We need strong bible talks so our relationships with each other are deep enough to where we actually know what good work each other is doing. Then we can pray specifically about every good work for every disciple in our bible talk.

#2 Growing In The Knowledge of God

Secondly, we should be *growing in the knowledge of God*. Do I pray that my brothers and sisters are growing in their knowledge of God? Do I know what they want to learn about and are we close enough so that we know what each other needs to grow in and/or learn about? This means that we need great fellowship that goes beyond the surface and outside of typical pleasantries. The simple question of “what do you want to grow in the knowledge of God” or something like it is a fantastic conversation starter with a brother or sister!

#3 Strengthened With All Power According To His Might

Thirdly, we should be strengthened with all power according to his glorious might. We need to be strong and powerful via God’s glorious might, not our own. We can get confused or distracted by trying to be strong in ourselves. *“For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come.”* (1st Timothy 4:8 NIV) I believe it is very important to exercise and go after your health. However, in today’s mindset, there can be an emphasis on relying on our own strength and power. The scriptures teach that this kind of thinking leads to being cursed (Jeremiah 17:5); planting evil, reaping evil, and eating the fruit of deception (Hosea 10:13); making our strength our “god.” (Habakkuk 1:11)

The purpose of this strengthening with all power according to his glorious might is to give us *“great endurance and patience.”* I need this power and might when I am feeling tired, discouraged, distracted, or dismayed! We need this strengthening all the time, even if we are feeling great! I will always need strengthening with all power according to his glorious might to help me with my endurance and patience. Satan, our enemy, is always attacking with arrows of doubt and darts of temptation. Sometimes our own consequences or circumstances are heavy and haunting. Prayers that strengthened us in this way are always

needed! Imagine the impact on our bible talk if we prayed for this kind of strengthening for one another daily?

#4 Give Joyful Thanks

Lastly, we should pray giving joyful thanks to the Father! Why? Because he has qualified me to share in the inheritance of his holy people in the kingdom of light! What an inspiring truth – a repentant, baptized disciple of Jesus is qualified to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light. Think about that! When I pray, am I “joyfully thankful?” We need to make sure that we are thankful to God about all things – especially our relationship with God in the light and the salvation he’s given!

I was baptized March 11th, 1992, by the grace of God. That night, I was brought from the “*dominion of darkness*” into the “*kingdom of light!*” Jesus is the Light! (John 1:4-10) “*For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.*” (Colossians 1:13-14) My inheritance is redemption, the forgiveness of sins, and eternity with my God!

Certainly, there are a great many things to thank God for – but my redemption and forgiveness of sins need to be at the core of that gratitude. I’ve been redeemed, forgiven, and have an eternity with a loving and kind father to look forward to. Am I “giving joyful thanks” for these things? Imagine the impact in our hearts if we did make it a point to **give joyful thanks** for these things daily?

Closing Challenge

In conclusion, Paul often taught disciples to imitate his faith and his example. “*Join together in following my example, brothers and sisters, and just as you have us as a model, keep your eyes on those who live as we do.*” (Phlippians 3:17) “*Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me–put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.*” (Phlippians 4:9) “*Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.*” (1st Corinthians 11:1) There are many other places where imitation of Paul and his example is urged and lifted-up. (cf 1 Thessalonians 1:6, 1 Corinthians 4:17) Let’s imitate Paul as a bible talk and

pray like this for each other – not just for today or this week, but from here on!

Let's pray for one another that we will:

Bear Fruit In Every Good Work
Grow In The Knowledge of God
Be Strengthened With All Power
Give Joyful Thanks

Mnemonic devices are things used to help us remember something. Our bible talk is using one right now for our current series – “God Eats Pop Corn.” This catchy mnemonic device is used to help us remember the books in our series – “Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians.” For this kind of prayer for one another, we can think of “BGBG” or “Bear, Grow, Be, Give.” “Bear fruit, Grow in knowledge, Be strengthened, Give thanks.” God’s word gives us this as one of many inspiring examples for us to imitate for when we may feel stuck in our prayer life!

Amen!

“For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord’s holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.” – Ephesians 3:14-19

When was the last time I knelt before the Father? Why did I kneel before Him? Was I suffering, struggling, or overwhelmed? What are some reasons that “drive me to my knees” before God? Paul the Apostle says that he kneels before the Father in prayer for the disciples in Ephesus. Paul says something interesting about “the Father” here as well, pointing out

that from God, *"the Father"*, *"every family in heaven and on earth derives its name."* God's will is supreme, he dictates all of existence and all life itself. There is no naming of/concept of family for – not just us humans – but all creation apart from God, the Father. It is no wonder then why Paul "kneels" before the Father when he's praying about the family of God. Amen, so should we!

We should examine each part of Paul's prayer here so we have an understanding of how we could pray for all the disciples, their children, and their families, that are in our bible talk.

#1 Out of His Glorious Riches

"I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being," (Ephesians 3:16) First, we must recognize God's *"glorious riches."* The phrase *"glorious riches"* shows up in Colossians 1:27 as well: *"To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory."* We can see plainly from Colossians 1:27 that the *"glorious riches"* is Christ in us and that Christ in us gives us *"the hope of glory."*

Paul writes about the impact of Christ (living) in us in Romans 8:9-11:

"You, however, are not in the realm of the flesh but are in the realm of the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ. But if Christ is in you, then even though your body is subject to death because of sin, the Spirit gives life because of righteousness. And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of his Spirit who lives in you."

Christ living in us puts us in the realm of the Spirit. A spiritual mindset/worldview.

Christ living in us signifies and solidifies that we belong to Christ. The Spirit (of Christ) is the seal that marks us. He (the Spirit) is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance and that we are God's possession. These are eternal and *"glorious riches"* indeed!

[Eph 1:13-14 NIV] 13 And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, 14 who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the

redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory.

Look carefully at how Romans 8:9-11 describes *"the Spirit."* We can see that *"the Spirit of God"* and *"the Spirit of Christ"* are used interchangeably. We can also see that just *"the Spirit"* is also used contextually the same way as *"the Spirit of God"* and *"Christ."* This contextual equivalency can be easily remembered as *"the Spirit" = "the Spirit of God" = "the Spirit of Christ."* To have *"the Spirit"* living in us is indeed *"glorious riches!"*

"The Spirit" gives us life and is the same Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead. (Romans 8:10-11 above) This scripture emphasizes another aspect of the *"glorious riches"* we have in Christ – that we will be given new life by *"the Spirit"* during our life's journey and be raised by *"the Spirit"* on judgment day.

More On Having The Spirit Being "Glorious Riches"

Let us consider the following passages:

[Rom 6:3-5, 8-11 NIV] 3 Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 4 We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. 5 For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly also be united with him in a resurrection like his. ... 8 Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. 9 For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. 10 The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. 11 In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

[1Cor 15:42-45, 1Cor 15:51-52 NIV] 42 So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; 43 it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; 44 it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. 45 So it is written: "The first man Adam became a living being"; **the last Adam, a life-giving spirit***. ... 51 Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed– 52 in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. *A reference to Jesus!

[1Th 4:13-18 NIV] 13 Brothers and sisters, we do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death, so that you do not grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope. 14

For we believe that Jesus died and rose again, and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. 15 According to the Lord's word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. 16 For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. 18 Therefore encourage one another with these words.

In this life, through the Spirit, we are raised to a new life through our faith at baptism.

In the beginning of the next life, judgement, resurrection day, the Spirit raises us just as it raised Jesus, from the dead. Romans 8:11 teaches us that *"he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of his Spirit who lives in you."* So we understand that our eternal resurrection is *"out of His glorious riches!"*

#2 Strengthening Your Inner Being

"I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith." - Ephesians 3:16-17a

The same Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead is the one we are to pray others get power through. This power is for strengthening us in our *inner being*. This means it is not a physical strength, but a spiritual one.

The purpose of this power's strengthening in their inner being is so that Christ will dwell in them through faith. It takes spiritual power from the Holy Spirit in order for Christ to dwell in me through faith.

We put a lot of stock in our physical health and strength these days. Physical health and training is certainly valuable and can help our character and overall well being. 1st Timotny 4:8 puts it best: ***"For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come."*** Our inner being's strength determines if we remain godly and hold onto the promises of God!

#3 Rooted And Established In Love

"And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ,

and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.” – Ephesians 3:17b-19

I must be rooted and established in love in order to access this spiritual power. The more love – from God, for God, and of God’s people – the more power I have with “all the Lord’s holy people” to understand how wide/long/high/deep is the love of Christ. This understanding of the love of Christ is something we do together. This is not an understanding I can come to all by myself. There is a “together with” here – meaning, I have to invest in the disciples around me. I can’t just “do bible talk” and “do church” and think that’s investment. “Going to meetings” is not this kind of depth. Intentionality.

[1Th 2:8 NIV] ...so we cared for you. Because we loved you so much, we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well.

This kind of love is not about how much I know, or we know, or some sort of esoteric knowledge of the bible or our intellect. This is a love that is even greater than that. This is a love that fills us with the very fullness of God. This is worth fighting for. This is another layer of what it really means to “*love one another!*”

This is what Paul prayed about for the disciples in Ephesus. He wanted them to truly make every effort – and that takes energy, that takes power and strength in our inner being!

#4 Summary – the Parts of an “Ephesians” prayer for others

Kneel – “For this reason I kneel before the Father”

*Pray God may strengthen them – with power through his Spirit – in their inner being
So that Christ will dwell in their hearts through faith.*

Pray for them to be rooted and established in love together with all God’s holy people.

Pray for them to have power to grasp how wide/long/high/deep is the love of Christ

Pray for them to know love that surpasses knowledge and be filled with God fully!

Introduction (Please turn to Psalm 119)

Studying Psalm 119 for the month of May.

Famous for the first two verses.

Ps 119:1-8 Aleph

1 Blessed are they whose ways are blameless, who walk according to the law of the Lord.

2 Blessed are they who keep his statutes and seek him with all their heart.

Powerful principles in these two verses. And an intense promise.

Blessed – the word itself. “Esher” – it means, Happiness. Superlatively happy. The understanding that you live in the favor of God Himself.

Connect with us on fb.com/phxicc – studies over zoom/meet/etc.

The reason they did not translate this simply as “happy” is because the things that typically make us happy – like financial security, comfort, “things” (cars/houses/stuff) – really have nothing to do with being “blessed” or “happy” like this means.

Are you still seeking God with all your heart? Where are we going to get our comfort?

Walk with Dimitry. Prayed. Thankful for another day. The warm breeze on my arms.

Beautiful Arizona sky. Every single day we have is a gift.

A little bit more about Psalm 119 and the Psalms overall...

Psalm 119 has 22 sections of 8 verses each and each line or verse begins with the same letter of the Hebrew alphabet. This is called an “Acrostic” poem.

Psalms were considered part of the “Hagiographa” or “sacred writings” by the early church fathers.

A series of five collections. It does not reflect a specific single author – however, 73 as ascribed to David, others to Asaph and the Sons of Korah.

The Psalms were composed over a period of 1000 years –

From the time of Moses ~1400 BC to the Babylonian Captivity ~586 BC.

The Hebrew title was "Tehillim" - "praises" - but both "Tehilim" and "Tephillot" (Prayers) are contained within.

The word Psalm - from the Greek word "psallo" - to pluck - indicating that much of the Psalms were meant to be accompanied by a stringed instrument (and such is commonly referred to in the actual Psalms themselves.)

Psalm 119 - like many Psalms - is a declaration of the Psalmist's relationship with God.

[Psa 119:1-8 NIV]

Aleph

1 Blessed are those whose ways are blameless, who walk according to the law of the LORD.

2 Blessed are those who keep his statutes and seek him with all their heart-

3 they do no wrong but follow his ways.

4 You have laid down precepts that are to be fully obeyed.

5 Oh, that my ways were steadfast in obeying your decrees*!

6 Then I would not be put to shame when I consider all your commands.

7 I will praise you with an upright heart as I learn your righteous laws [judgments].

8 I will obey your decrees*; do not utterly forsake me.

(v1) "Tamiym" = "blameless" - "complete, whole, entire, sound."

"Torah" = "Law" of the LORD; His "instruction, direction."

(v2) "'Edah" = "Statutes" - "Testimony", "Witness." Always plural and always as divine testimonies. Sometimes translated as "stipulations."

(v3) "Derek" = "[His] ways" - "way, road, distance, journey, manner."

(v4) "Piquwd" = "precepts" - "precept, statute."

Precept: "A general rule intended to regulate behavior or thought."

(v5/v8) "Choq" = "decree(s)*" "Ordinance, limit, something prescribed, due."

"An enactment." Like Joseph establishing the law that a "5th of the grain goes to Pharaoh."

Associated often with an event – like when Moses threw a piece of wood into the waters to make them sweet...God made a "choq" – a "decree" – for them there.

(v6) "Mitsvah" = "commands." "Commandment."

(v7) "Misphat" = your righteous "laws." "Judgements, Justice, Ordinance(s)."

Walk according to God's Law, keep His Statutes, follow His Ways, obey His Precepts and Decrees, consider all His Commands, and learn His righteous Judgments (Ordinances)...ALL of these things are in the Bible. The WORD of God. If what I tell you today is just tradition, speculation of man, or my opinion – *ignore it*. If it is from the Word of God – then love Him.

This is about a heart of complete and total obedience to God from *every single angle*. This sets the tone for the whole of Psalm 119. This is what the whole thing is all about. This makes sense – as to love God is to obey him.

#1 If You Love God – You Obey Him Immediately (please turn to John 14)

How should we obey? Immediately. Completely. With A Good Attitude.

As a parent, wow – do I feel love when my kids obey me immediately. The worst feeling as a parent is having to say the same thing three times knowing my kid could hear me the whole time...(Take out the recycling...so hard to hear...but...let's get some pizza...I could whisper that on the other side of the house...)

Kids are actu14lly really good. I was the one who was deafened by my apathy towards obedience growing up. (Sorry mum!)

Asked Paisley to logoff her PC – did it right away...feel very loved. No complaints, no fuss...wow.

Do we equate this with God? He is our Heavenly Father after all! When we are presented with a challenge from the scriptures – with one of God's laws (), statutes/stipulations (if you do what is right, will you not be accepted – Gen 4:7), ways (pursue righteousness -Pro 15:9),

precepts, decrees, commands or ordinances?

Do we obey God immediately, completely, and with a good attitude?

John 14:15

“If you love me, keep my commands.”

Maybe when I’m older. Malia, teen, I can’t just assume it’s all good. Seek God now. Zach’s baptism. Travis Hamblin. Going after it. Sense of “immediately.”

John 14:21

“Whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me...”

Can’t have what you don’t know. Study the bible. Don’t let your religious assumptions define you, hold you back, don’t assume you understand, know you understand by knowing the Word of God.

John 14:23

“...Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching.”

What are you obeying? We all are obeying something. Your own feelings? Your traditions? For me, it was my selfishness, my appetites.

John 14:24

“Anyone who does not love me will not obey my teaching.”

Simple enough. What parent is going to feel love from their child if the child does not obey their teaching? Most good parents teach their kids things that will help them with their life, their character, and their well-being.

John 15:10

“If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commands and remain in His love.”

Cannot keep what you don’t have in the first place. Study the bible – know the commands of Jesus, keep them, and remain in his love.

A relationship with God is conditional. God’s love – is unconditional. You cannot remain in Christ’s love if you do not keep his commands! That’s Bible!

John 15:14

“You are my friends if you do what I command.”

Are you and Jesus even friends? Who says that!? Only God could get away with saying that and not come across crazy.

1 John 5:3-4

“In fact, this is love for God: to keep his commands. And his commands are not burdensome”

It’s critical to know the Bible, to know Jesus’ teachings...why? So you can LOVE GOD.

Look at the second part of Psalm 119 – and it explains why this concept of knowing God’s commands is so critical – and the impact and promises with knowing God’s commands!

#2 Know The Word By Heart – Completely

[Psa 119:9-16 NIV]

Beth

9 How can a young person stay on the path of purity? By living according to your word.

10 I seek you with all my heart; do not let me stray from your commands.

11 I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.

12 Praise be to you, LORD; teach me your decrees.

13 With my lips I recount all the laws that come from your mouth.

14 I rejoice in following your statutes as one rejoices in great riches.

15 I meditate on your precepts and consider your ways.

16 I delight in your decrees; I will not neglect your word.

Vs 10 is reminding us of Psalm 119:2 "Blessed are those who keep his statutes and seek him with all their heart..."

We are going to see throughout Psalm 119 a clear connection between seeking God with all your heart means knowing and obeying God's word.

This is a prayer. He wants to be taught by God God's decrees.

What are we praying about lately?

Challenge - pray through this Psalm. Read through it. Pray through the verses. It'll change your heart. Pray through them the month of May. You could do one or so a day...

With my lips I recount...he's reciting the *Bible*! How? Because he's hidden it in his heart!

What scriptures can you recount on your lips? How much of God's word do you have on your heart?

My daughter has tons of Disney lyrics memorized! Everybody memorizes things they love...and they love to talk about it...

My son, recounts every new thing he does and learns in Roblox.

We become pop-culture experts...and memorize a lot more than we realize. Stop lying to ourselves - we can memorize the bible. (vs 16 - you memorize what you delight in)

Struggling with purity? Masturbation. Pornography online is up 18%.

"Listen, I'm no social scientist and haven't done a survey. I don't pretend to know what [John Q citizen](#) thinks about this. But I've lived in prison for a long time now and I've met a lot of men who were motivated to commit violence just like me. And without exception, every one of them was deeply involved in pornography. Without question, without exception. Deeply

influenced and consumed by an addiction to pornography.” – Ted Bundy, 1989

“...well-meaning decent people will condemn [the] behavior of a Ted Bundy while they’re walking past a magazine rack full of the very kinds of things that send young kids down the road to be Ted Bundys.”

#2 Know The Word By Heart – 1 John 1-2 *Changed my life.*

Thank the Hollands.

What do I meditate on? Do I neglect the Word? Time to dive in the deep end. Psalm 119 is a great place to jump in!

No memorization? No mediation? that is Neglect! A heart that will be prone to sin! Lousy day...why? Did not start it with God. Got my coffee, but did not get with God...drink deeply of the Word of God, that’ll wake you up!

The Psalmist is praying about this – this is the heart we all want to have.

#3 Delight & Wonder In God’s Law – With A Good Attitude

[Psa 119:17-24 NIV] *Gimel*

17 Be good to your servant while I live, that I may obey your word.

18 Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law.

19 I am a stranger on earth; do not hide your commands from me.

20 My soul is consumed with longing for your laws at all times.

21 You rebuke the arrogant, who are accursed, those who stray from your commands.

22 Remove from me their scorn and contempt, for I keep your statutes.

23 Though rulers sit together and slander me, your servant will meditate on your decrees.

24 Your statutes are my delight; they are my counselors.

I am a stranger on earth.

Stranger = gar: Sojourner. A temporary inhabitant. A foreigner. A newcomer lacking inherited rights.

Of the Israelites themselves – Genesis 15:13, “...know for certain that for four hundred years your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own...”

Our home is in heaven. What makes heaven “heaven” is God’s presence there. If we don’t want to listen to and obey God here – why would we expect to go to heaven?

[1Pe 1:15-17 NIV]

15 But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; 16 for it is written: “Be holy, because I am holy.”

17 Since you call on a Father who judges each person’s work impartially, live out your time as foreigners here in reverent fear.

Philippians 4 (*This lesson can be watched/listened to [here on YouTube](#)*)

Introduction

Philippi was situated on the [Via Egnatian](#), the highway running east and west linking Rome to Byzantium (Istanbul). Leading City of that district of Macedonia. Modern day Greece.

Paul had a vision of the “man of Macedonia” in Acts 16, and then he and his companions set sail immediately for Macedonia. Willingness to follow a visionary.

They passed through a few cities and then focused on Philippi – it was the leading city, that is the pattern in the scriptures. Plant the church in the prominent city then from that city evangelize the surrounding areas.

The first two conversions in Philippi? Lydia, the dealer in purple cloth – powerful woman – along with her household. The Philippian Jailer and his family. God Opens hearts and so we need to open our mouths!

We learned from Chapter 1 that we need to be praying for each other, deeply, that each other’s love may abound in more and more depth of insight, knowledge, and discernment.

(Introduction To The Series)

Chapter 1 (A Deep Trust In Man, Or A Shallow Focus on God – Phil 1:9)

Need to be praying for each other!

Chapter 2 (Think Different – Philippians 2:1-5)

Think Different Phroneo “to exercise the mind, i.e. entertain or have a sentiment or opinion; by implication, to be (mentally) disposed (more or less earnestly in a certain direction); intensively, to interest oneself in (with concern or obedience)”

The word “to think” or “phroneo” – occurs 11 times in this epistle, more than any other book.

Chapter 3 (Preparing For The Resurrection – Philippians 3:13-21)

Spiritual circumcision, done by the hands of Christ, Colossians 2:9-13. Necessary part of preparing for the resurrection.

Stand firm by forgetting what is behind, strain towards what is ahead, and following Paul’s example!

This brings us to Philippians 4... “To our God and Father be glory forever and forever...”

Phil 4:1

Therefore, my brothers, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, that is how you should stand firm in the Lord, dear friends!

What is the therefore there for? I wanted to review this and crystallize it.

How do you stand firm in the LORD? Where am I doing the spiritual wobble?

Where am I *not* standing firm? (Greek word, “stationary” e.g., unmoving, persevering)

Missions? Commitment? Righteousness? Depth in relationships?

Got to go back and think about the context for myself!

(1) What Is The “Therefore” there for?

Phil 3:13-14

13 Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, 14 I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

15 All of us who are mature should take such a view of things. And if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you. 16 Only let us live up to what we have already attained.

17 Join with others in following my example, brothers, and take note of those who live according to the pattern we gave you. 18 For, as I have often told you before and now say again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. 19 Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is on earthly things. 20 But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, 21 who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.

“Therefore” is there for the purpose of clarifying how we are to stand firm in the Lord.

3:13-14, *Forget what is behind, strain toward what is ahead!* Press on to the goal – which is heaven. Refuse to live in or by the past! Live by faith, not by sight.

Chris Chloupek – Kicked by the Giraffe? Get up. Fallen off your horse? Get up. Depressed because of your sins? Get out of regret and get up in repentance! Why let the evil one win twice!?

Smith Wedding. Good to have them back, refreshed, ready to serve. Good to see you radiant.

3:15-16, *Live up to what we have already attained!* Refuse to backslide. Refuse to backpedal. Refuse the temptation to serve God any less. Hold your ground in the Lord. Don't listen to the negative thoughts that are in there, coaxing you into self-dooming prophecy. That does not come from the Holy Spirit! Evil suspicions, anticipating mistakes in yourself or others.

Deepen in your connection to God, live up to consistency, live up to devotion to the body, live up to the consistent sacrifice, live up to the daily evangelism, live up to the weekly discipleship, live up to the greatest commandment – to love the Lord your God with all your

heart, mind, soul and strength!

Live up to deeper relationships, deeper love, with each other! Greater devotion. Refuse to pull back! *Urge you to be early.*

3:17-19, *Join with others in following Paul's example!* He mentions here why we should do so, there are enemies of the cross that live by their appetites, glory in their shame, and have their minds on earthly things. They think they way of the earth, that is their mindset. This is opposite the pattern that Paul lived. What was that pattern? What was that example?

(2) Join With Other's In Following Paul's Example

Acts 20:17-35

18 When they arrived, he said to them: "You know how I lived the whole time I was with you, from the first day I came into the province of Asia. 19 I served the Lord with great humility and with tears, although I was severely tested by the plots of the Jews. 20 You know that I have not hesitated to preach anything that would be helpful to you but have taught you publicly and from house to house. 21 I have declared to both Jews and Greeks that they must turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus.

How did he live? Served the Lord with GREAT humility and tears.

Can I say that I've served the Lord with humility and tears? When was the last time I wept because I wanted to serve the Lord or was serving the Lord? When I had that deep of concern for my brothers and sisters and for the lost?

He did not hesitate to preach anything that would be helpful, taught publically and from house to house.

Do I hesitate in my preaching? Do I hesitate in discipling – in getting it or giving it? Do I hesitate to preach anything? Am I so man focused that I fear men more than God so I shut in all my qualms and quiet reservations? (They are loud to God!)

Am I afraid of conflict with men or do I truly love God?

A conflict avoider has rejected sincere love and real friendship with God, not just with those in their lives that they are gossiping or slandering.

It is an insidious form of cowardice and teaches you to be fake in your relationships. There is

no fear in Love. Love drives out fear, love does not just “live with it.” 1 John 4:18. Fear is the absence of God. Man focused.

I want people to walk into this room and feel the presence of God in each and every one of you members of this church. Filled with God. Filled with love. Deeply focused on him, deeply attuned to HIS Word, His Will, and His purpose!

Acts 20:21-22 And what I preach, is it helpful!? Does it build faith, conviction, and love for God because I am diligently applying the bible? Is it true, is it necessary, and is it the right time to truly help!?

Acts 20:23-24

23 I only know that in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me. 24 However, I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me — the task of testifying to the gospel of God’s grace.

Do I consider my life worth nothing to me for the sake of testifying to the gospel of God’s grace? What is more valuable than that in my time?

Prayer with Chad and Mark, “God, help us give up our free time for the sake of your Gospel!” A lousy time with God starts with how I spent my time the night before.

Acts 20:25-35

25 “Now I know that none of you among whom I have gone about preaching the kingdom will ever see me again. 26 Therefore, I declare to you today that I am innocent of the blood of all men. 27 For I have not hesitated to proclaim to you the whole will of God. 28 Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood. 29 I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. 30 Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. 31 So be on your guard! Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you

night and day with tears.

Paul preached the Kingdom with others to *others*! Do I? Do you? Do you really even know what the Kingdom is? do I proclaim the will of God? Do I know the word of God even well enough to do that?

Am I warning disciples night and day with tears?

Savage wolves. They will not spare the flock. From your own number, arise, distort and draw disciples away.

That is the pattern! Live that way and it is part of standing firm!

(3) God's Cure For Anxiety!

Phil 4:2-3

2 I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to agree with each other in the Lord. 3 Yes, and I ask you, loyal yokefellow, help these women who have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.

Plead with them? He labors to plead, to beseech, both of them to be of one mind, there is that word again, *Phroneo* – “to exercise the mind, i.e. entertain or have a sentiment or opinion; by implication, to be (mentally) disposed (more or less earnestly in a certain direction); intensively, to interest oneself in (with concern or obedience)”

“You” here is singular. Either this is someone’s name, (*Syzygus*) or this is a reference to someone who “knows who they are” or this could be, “anyone who is with me...” whatever the case, there is a plea for unity and a plea for help from Clement.

Names in the book of life. Amen. They were struggling to get along, and yet their names were in the book of life. These were prominent women in the church in Philippi, but did not agree with each other. They contended at Paul’s side and were each united with him, but not united with each other.

I am not sure what is going on with Clement, but whatever it is, Paul had to ask that he get help. Paul asked the whole church to help, amen!

Issues? Get people involved!

Phil 4:4-9

4 Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! 5 Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. 6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

8 Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable — if anything is excellent or praiseworthy — think about such things. 9 Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me — put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

He shifts (apparently) from talking about these divided relationships to rejoicing in the Lord, and just how to do that.

From verse 5 – he is still addressing dynamics in our relationships. How does a lack of joy affect my relationships? The actual word is akin to the word “Cheerful!”

chairō – calmly happy

Indeed – he brings up relational dynamics, “let your gentleness be evident to all!” It is as if he’s still addressing Euodia and Syntyche.

What happens to me when I stop rejoicing? I am not gentle.

What happens to me when I forget that the Lord is near? I am not gentle.

When I am anxious, it hurts my relationships around me as well, not just my relationship with God.

Anxiety is practical atheism.

The cure for Anxiety is

Prayer – proseuche, “worship” implied, oration.

Petition – deesis, “a petition” – not the people with clipboards on ASU campus or going door

to door, but as the dictionary puts it, “a request made for something desired, especially a respectful or humble request, as to a superior or to one of those in authority; a supplication or prayer: a petition for aid; a petition to God for courage and strength.”

Thanksgiving – Present requests to God.

Phil 4:7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Phil 4:8-9

8 Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable — if anything is excellent or praiseworthy — think about such things. 9 Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me — put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

Think about such things. In the church. About this church. Kids class workers.

Amen – put what you learn, receive, hear, or see into practice!

(4) The Secret In The Heart To Sacrifice

Phil 4:10-23

10 I rejoice greatly in the Lord that at last you have renewed your concern for me. Indeed, you have been concerned, but you had no opportunity to show it. 11 I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. 12 I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. 13 I can do everything through him who gives me strength.

Contentment – whatever the circumstances. Content with your standard of living, or even a lower one.

Scott – midweek service for the men. Excellent job teaching them.

14 Yet it was good of you to share in my troubles. 15 Moreover, as you Philippians know, in

the early days of your acquaintance with the gospel, when I set out from Macedonia, not one church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving, except you only; 16 for even when I was in Thessalonica, you sent me aid again and again when I was in need. 17 Not that I am looking for a gift, but I am looking for what may be credited to your account. 18 I have received full payment and even more; I am amply supplied, now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent. They are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God. 19 And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.

2 Cor 8:1-7. They excelled in Giving.
Missions, car washes!

Three main areas of support for world missions.

(1) Plantings in 2013

Las Vegas, Nevada – Jason and Sarah Dimitry, Inaugural service will be May 19th. Las Vegas is about 5 hours from here, I am going to encourage as many of you as possible plan to attend that service to support the work in our new sister church...also...in the desert!

Sydney, Australia – Joe and Kerry Willis

Denver, Colorado – Jeremiah and Julie Clark with Mike and Dene Sanicola, support of which is being handled by the Washington DC church, which is led by Ron and Tracey Harding.

Atlanta has been tabled for consideration in 2014

(2) Ongoing Missions Support

Africa – Kinshasa (won over the ICOC, that church joined our movement of churches)

India – New Delhi, Chennai, Mumbai

Kiev

Manila

Mexico City

Santiago

Sao Paulo (ICOC ministry couple, Artur Alvin, 15 joined us)

Paris

Boston, Orlando, (Led by disciples from Pheonix) and San Francisco.

(3) Ministry Training, Travel and Relocation

Argo and Anu Arenson – Russia

Kyle and Joan Bartholomew – Manila Planting

Tyler and Shay Sears – Dallas, Tx

Oleg and Alianna Sirotkin's – Moscow

Joe and Kerry Willis – Sydney

(1) What Is The "Therefore" there for?

(2) Join With Other's In Following Paul's Example

(3) God's Cure For Anxiety!

(4) The Secret In The Heart To Sacrifice

Our 55,000 on May 5th will be a " They are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God!"

Philippians 4:20-21

20 To our God and Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

21 Greet all the saints in Christ Jesus. The brothers who are with me send greetings. 22 All the saints send you greetings, especially those who belong to Caesar's household.

23 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.

TO LOVE GOD IS TO FEAR HIM, TO FEAR HIM IS TO LOVE HIM!

Please turn to Deut 10. YOU CANNOT LOVE GOD WITHOUT FEARING HIM, AND YOU CANNOT FEAR GOD WITHOUT LOVING HIM

And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God ask of you but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in obedience to him, to love him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul. (Deuteronomy 10:12)

Loving and fearing God are like two sides of the same coin. You really cannot understand one without the other. You cannot understand God's love fully if you do not fear him, and you cannot understand the fear of the Lord, in its proper context, if you do not love him.

Therefore, we need to grow in our knowledge of God.

"Fear" here in the Hebrew is "yaw-ray" (יָרָא) and means "to fear, revere, be afraid." It can also mean "awe" or "dread" and also to "terrify."

When Adam said he was afraid and tried to hide from God in Genesis 3, it is this word. When Sarah, Abraham's wife, was afraid when the angel of the LORD called her out for laughing at the prophecy that she'd be holding a baby in a year..it is this word. When Lot was afraid and in his fear left Zoar to live in a cave with his two daughters, it is this word. When God told Abraham to not fear, that God was his shield and very great reward, it is this word. When God comforted Hagar when she was cast out of Abraham's camp by Sarah with her infant son Ishmael, he told her to not fear. Again, this word. And in another almost 320 instances in the scriptures.

So here we are told God asks us to fear him. Why? Well consider what manifests when we fear God? Walking in obedience. Loving God. Service with all our heart and soul to God.

When we fear God, "Yaw-ray" these things manifest in our lives.

Obedience: Struggling with your purity? With your evangelism? With your discipleship? With commitment to meetings of the body? With confession – when was the last time you confessed sin?

Love: Do we love God? Time with him. Prayer, bible study, church? Is church a chore or a chance for you to love God? Love what he loves? Worship him?

Service with all your heart and soul? Lateness happens, but sometimes it is because of a lack

of heart. Do you want to serve in the children's ministry? Do you want to usher? Do you want to lead a bible talk?

Do we want Jesus to serve us o'er and o'er again on the cross, all the benefits but none of the self-denial and self-sacrifice of true discipleship? Do we want a "religion" that works for us (convenient, feeds into entitlement), or a relationship we work at with all our heart and soul? Need to see, TO LOVE GOD IS TO FEAR HIM, TO FEAR HIM IS TO LOVE HIM!

Well, what about the God of the New Testament? I mean, didn't he get baptized or something and is like, nicer now? Please turn to Isaiah 11:1. And Let's talk *a little bit* about Jesus. You all understand of course that the bible that Jesus taught from, the bible that his disciples lived by and taught about the messiah from throughout the first century was the "Old Testament." Scholars believe the first NT book written was James' letter in 45 AD, then likely Galatians in 49 AD, and John Mark did not pen his gospel until 50's AD and Matthew likely in the late 50's and 60's. You realize that the Pentecost, the first "official gospel sermon" in Acts 2 occurred in 29 AD. So for the first 20-30 years of discipleship and the church in the first century they used the Old Testament to teach people about Jesus Christ, the messiah.

This is why in the book of Acts, chapter 8, the Ethiopian Eunuch / official was reading from Isaiah the prophet and Phillip used that passage (and others in the "scroll" of Isaiah) to explain to him the Gospel of Jesus Christ. But we digress. Isaiah 11:1-3...

A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; From his roots a Branch will bear fruit. The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him - the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of might, the Spirit of the knowledge and fear of the Lord - and he will delight in the fear of the Lord. (Isaiah 11:1-3)

Jesus here is described in his ancestry as a shoot from the stump of Jesse. Jesus is described as having the Spirit of the LORD resting on him. This is the same Spirit of wisdom and understanding, of counsel and might, the Spirit of Knowledge and the fear of the LORD. And he will delight in (all the people getting baptized...all the love in the church...all the mercies of the gospel...) no. He will delight in the fear of the LORD.

Do we delight Jesus? Is the fear of the LORD in us?

To delight in something is to enjoy it enormously. I sometimes delight in having a good slice

of pizza. I particularly like a good chezburger. So, does my wife Amy – and we are fired up to go to Inn-n-Out. Once it comes, we delight in it, as we a good burger with our whole heart! Jesus delights in the FEAR of the LORD – so should we! God wants us to fear him for our own good. The fear of the Lord saves us from death, and we need this fear.

#1 DELIGHT IN THE FEAR OF THE LORD

Please turn to Isaiah 33...

[Isa 33:5-6 NIV] 5 The LORD is exalted, for he dwells on high; he will fill Zion with his justice and righteousness. 6 He will be the sure foundation for your times, a rich store of salvation and wisdom and knowledge; the fear of the LORD is the key to this treasure.

This prophecy about Jesus speaks about how Jesus *will fill Zion (Jerusalem)* with his justice and righteousness. It teaches that Jesus will be the sure foundation for our times, a rich store of salvation, wisdom, and knowledge. How do we unlock these riches, this treasured foundation from Jesus, the Messiah?

The Fear Of The LORD is The Key To This TREASURE!

Psalm 112:1, 7

Blessed are those who fear the Lord, who find great delight in his commands... They will have no fear of bad news; their hearts are steadfast, trusting in the Lord.

Don't find comfort in the world. Netflix, gaming, etc.

Take time with God. Extra time in prayer. Extra time in the scriptures. Depth to face difficult things.

Fearing God...insulates us from fearing "bad news." You believe in the total sovereignty of God. Romans 8:28

What did Jesus himself say about the FEAR of the LORD? (Please turn to Luke 12:4-7) The God of the OT is the same God of the NT, the covenant has changed and is through Christ, but our God is consistent in what he wants and in his teaching of us.

I tell you, my friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that can do no more. But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear him who, after your body has been

killed, has authority to throw you into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him. Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? Yet not one of them is forgotten by God. Indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows. (Luke 12:4-7)

Mankind can only take your physical life – that's their worst. God, however, can not only take your physical life, but has the authority to throw you into hell.

Simplest way to understand hell = eternal separation from God.

Hell, Gehenna or Gehenna of Fire – “Hell is the place of the future punishment called “Gehenna” or “Gehenna of fire”. This was originally the valley of Hinnom, south of Jerusalem, where the filth and dead animals of the city were cast out and burned; a fit symbol of the wicked and their future destruction.”

It is where the filth of the city, the sewer repository, was – and they burned everything there that was unclean and dead.

God has the authority to do this, no one else. Fear him. Respect him. Revere him.

This image is fitting indeed. Jesus taught about hell some 11-12 times and as did James and Peter. Revelation clarifies it as the second death, the destiny of Satan, his minions, and all who follow him.

#2 FEAR GOD AND NOTHING ELSE

Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground outside your Father's care. And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows. (Matthew 10:28-31)

Don't fear any person. Fear God who can destroy both soul AND body in hell!

Do not fear God because he tracks and cares for the sparrows, which we are worth far more than. He cares so much about us, he know the numbers of hairs on our heads.

If we fear God we have nothing else in this life to fear.

BECAUSE: THE FEAR OF THE LORD TAKES AWAY YOUR OTHER FEARS

We fear all kinds of things. Finances (economy, political issues). Health. Loss (of life, family, job). Crime. Traffic. Loneliness. Work or school failures, infidelity.

[Psa 19:9-14 NIV] 9 The fear of the LORD is pure, enduring forever. The decrees of the LORD are firm, and all of them are righteous. 10 They are more precious than gold, than much pure gold; they are sweeter than honey, than honey from the honeycomb. 11 By them your servant is warned; in keeping them there is great reward. 12 But who can discern their own errors? Forgive my hidden faults. 13 Keep your servant also from willful sins; may they not rule over me. Then I will be blameless, innocent of great transgression. 14 May these words of my mouth and this meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer.

Electricity – not walking around terrified if it is going to shock me all the sudden. However, I still have a healthy fear of electricity. It is a force more powerful than I, and I would never put my finger, much less my tongue, in the electric socket. In light of that, I am careful with it. With God, we need to be the same way. We need not go around thinking that God wants to send us to hell, but we do need to understand that God is, dare we say, a force that is a lot more powerful than us. If you do not mess with him, he will not mess with you. It is good to have a healthy fear of the Lord!

#3 THE FEAR OF THE LORD IS THE KEY TO HOLINESS

[Psa 19:9 NIV] 9 The fear of the LORD is pure, enduring forever. The decrees of the LORD are firm, and all of them are righteous.

To purity. (Boundaries) If you are not pure, understand this, you do not fear the LORD nor what he can do.[Eph 5:3-7 NIV] 3 But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people. 4 Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving. 5 For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person—such a person is an idolater—has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. 6 Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient. 7 Therefore do not be partners with them. Deal with greed radically.

[Mal 3:6-10 NIV] 6 “I the LORD do not change. So you, the descendants of Jacob, are not destroyed. 7 Ever since the time of your ancestors you have turned away from my decrees and have not kept them. Return to me, and I will return to you,” says the LORD Almighty. “But you ask, ‘How are we to return?’ 8 “Will a mere mortal rob God? Yet you rob me. “But you ask, ‘How are we robbing you?’ “In tithes and offerings. 9 You are under a curse—your whole nation—because you are robbing me. 10 Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this,” says the LORD Almighty, “and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it.

Robber vs. Thief? Utterly disrespectful to God. Testing his restraint. He will curse you. Nothing to God for weeks? Shameful. Shame.

Return to me? You’re announcing your departure and your need for restoration. Nothing to missions, really? How unholy, untrusting, and ungrateful. Improper. Repent and return to God. It is all about God and having “The Fear of the LORD”

Look at this promise – Psalm 34

[Psa 34:9 NIV] 9 Fear the LORD, you his holy people, for those who fear him lack nothing.

[Psa 34:10, 12-16 NIV] 10 The lions may grow weak and hungry, but those who seek the LORD lack no good thing. ... 12 Whoever of you loves life and desires to see many good days, 13 keep your tongue from evil and your lips from telling lies. 14 Turn from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it. 15 The eyes of the LORD are on the righteous, and his ears are attentive to their cry; 16 but the face of the LORD is against those who do evil, to blot out their name from the earth.

To seeking God. To honesty. To loving life and seeing many good days. To making a difference in many people’s lives and their eternities instead of making many excuses as to why you can’t do bible studies, can’t do missions, or can’t do evangelism. Let’s do God’s will.

[Pro 1:7 NIV] 7 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction.

[Pro 2:1-6 NIV] 1 My son, if you accept my words and store up my commands within you, 2 turning your ear to wisdom and applying your heart to understanding– 3 indeed, if you call

out for insight and cry aloud for understanding, 4 and if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure, 5 then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God. 6 For the LORD gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding.

[Pro 10:27-29 NIV] 27 The fear of the LORD adds length to life, but the years of the wicked are cut short. 28 The prospect of the righteous is joy, but the hopes of the wicked come to nothing. 29 The way of the LORD is a refuge for the blameless, but it is the ruin of those who do evil.

When we cling to our life, our way, our opinions and our feelings *over God's word*, we will find ourselves the victim in the Kingdom. Our footing is unsure when we do not fear the LORD.

[Pro 14:26-27 NIV] 26 Whoever fears the LORD has a secure fortress, and for their children it will be a refuge. 27 The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life, turning a person from the snares of death.

Life.

[Pro 15:16-17 NIV] 16 Better a little with the fear of the LORD than great wealth with turmoil. 17 Better a small serving of vegetables with love than a fattened calf with hatred.

Love

[Pro 16:6 NIV] 6 Through love and faithfulness sin is atoned for; through the fear of the LORD evil is avoided.

Avoidance of evil.

[Pro 19:22-23 NIV] 22 What a person desires is unfailing love; better to be poor than a liar. 23 The fear of the LORD leads to life; then one rests content, untouched by trouble.

Unfailing love. Real contentment.

[Pro 22:4 NIV] 4 Humility is the fear of the LORD; its wages are riches and honor and life.

Humility IS the fear of the LORD. Pride is it's complete absence. How is our humility

tonight? What wages will our humility earn us? What wages pride? Are we critics?

[Pro 23:17-18 NIV] 17 Do not let your heart envy sinners, but always be zealous for the fear of the LORD. 18 There is surely a future hope for you, and your hope will not be cut off.

Do we have hope in the Kingdom of God? Do we know the future God holds for his faithful ones – those that fear him?

Fearing God is tied to recognizing consequences. For example, adultery, speeding tickets, jail time, failing out of school or college, getting fired...but it is not the same.

Recognizing there are consequences, fearing them, is not the same as fearing God. This is “healthy” to a degree, we should have the sense to fear consequences, they should help us “pump the brakes” and think twice. But this is where matters of fearing God should *start*.

Fearing losing my relationship with God is not the same as fearing God. Losing my relationship with God is a healthy thing to fear though. This is a much better “fear” than merely fearing the consequences. Who would like to hear “...the only reason I did not sleep with my co-worker(s) is because I did not want you to leave me for it.” Wouldn’t we agree, “I did not sleep with that other person because I knew how much it would hurt you, and that I really want to repair and rebuild our relationship because it means so much to me.” This is not the same as “I did not sin with that person because I know what you would do to me if I did such a thing.”

Fearing God is...fearing *God*.

Fear of God = Love of God / Love of God = Fear of God

In Light of Giving to God

[Ecc 5:5-7 NIV] 5 It is better not to make a vow than to make one and not fulfill it. 6 Do not let your mouth lead you into sin. And do not protest to the temple messenger, “My vow was a mistake.” Why should God be angry at what you say and destroy the work of your hands? 7 Much dreaming and many words are meaningless. Therefore fear God.

Reverence

[Ecc 8:12-13 NIV] 12 Although a wicked person who commits a hundred crimes may live a long time, I know that it will go better with those who fear God, who are reverent before him.

13 Yet because the wicked do not fear God, it will not go well with them, and their days will not lengthen like a shadow.

[Ecc 12:13-14 NIV] 13 Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the duty of all mankind. 14 For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil.

Who Knows All Our Secrets?

"Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ." (Ephesians 4:15)

"Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbor, for we are all members of one body." (Ephesians 4:25)

"Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices..." (Colossians 3:9)

"I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. ... They are not of the world, even as I am not of it." (John 17:14, 16)

"If we claim to have fellowship with him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live out the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin." (1 John 1:6-7)

Disciples of Jesus are commanded to speak the truth in love. Christians must *"put off falsehood and speak truthfully"* to each other, our fellow *"members of one body."* Those in the body of Christ are taught to *"not lie to each other"* as such things are *"practices"* of our *"old self."* Therefore, honesty is fundamental to loving *"one another."* In light of this, the disciples of Jesus in our lives, in our ministries, those mentoring us and *"over us in the Lord"* (1 Thessalonians 5:12) should know our "secrets."

There is a distinction between disciples, members of the body, and those that are *not* in the body of Christ. There are those that are *"in the world"* and there are those that are *"not of*

the world." We are called to be "in the light" as people of the light, belonging to God. It is this "*walking in the light*" that grants us "*fellowship with one another.*" The scriptures draw this line between those who are lost and in the dark and those who are saved and in the light in many different additional ways. If someone is a member of the body of Christ, we are commanded to speak truthfully to them in love, put off falsehood, and we are not to lie to them. This is walking in the light and ensures we have fellowship with them.

There is a marked difference between how people of the light's shrewdness and people *not* of the light – those "of this world" – and their "shrewdness." "*The master commended the dishonest manager because he had acted shrewdly. For the people of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own kind than are the people of the light.*" (Luke 16:8) We cannot act like this "*dishonest manager*" with each other for we are "*the people of the light.*" It is expected that "*the people of this world*" will be "*dishonest*" and manipulative, concealing their motives – even behind their kindness. If we are the people of the light, we must not be shrewd in the same way. Therefore, this begs the question, how then are the "people of the light" to be shrewd, yet "less shrewd" than the people of this world?

First, to understand what it means to be "shrewd" as "people of the light" we must look at Jesus. Second, we must look at what we'd consider a "good example" of a disciple. Then we must consider why they were "shrewd" or "secretly" acting, what they were concealing, and what their intentions were. Lastly, did they lie or "act in secret" from their fellow disciples?

Why Would Jesus Act In Secret (Shrewdly)?

"In his defense Jesus said to them, 'My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I too am working.' For this reason they tried all the more to kill him; not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God." (John 5:17-18)

As soon as Jesus Christ made his teachings and identity known, the Jewish leaders wanted to murder him. Jesus' intentions on *acting "in secret"* in the start of John 7 before the festival were because the "*Jewish leaders there were looking for a way to kill him.*" (John 7:1)

However, Jesus' teachings and identity were already well known. Jesus did not change his message nor did he reveal some new plan or intention. What Jesus taught before John 7 and

after hiding himself from murderers until the right time in John 7 did not change. This is why Jesus could say *"I have spoken openly to the world," Jesus replied. "I always taught in synagogues or at the temple, where all the Jews come together. I said nothing in secret."* (John 18:20 NIV)

Who did Jesus act in secret from? Those who were seeking to murder him. What did Jesus keep secret in his teaching or intent? Nothing. Jesus *"said nothing in secret."* His message and plans did not change and there was no "big reveal" of some kind scheme or division or "new teaching." The LORD kept right on preaching what he'd already been preaching for the second half of the festival. Certainly, none of Jesus' disciples were "surprised" by some sudden change of ministry direction...because no such drastic change occurred!

Why Was Joseph of Arimathea A Disciple Secretly (Shrewdly)?

"Later, Joseph of Arimathea asked Pilate for the body of Jesus. Now Joseph was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly because he feared the Jewish leaders. With Pilate's permission, he came and took the body away." (John 19:38)

We have already established that Jesus hid himself from those that wanted to murder him. Certainly, the same groups that plotted for and demanded the brutal murder of Jesus would have shown no quarter to Joseph. Therefore, Joseph treated his would-be murderers *shrewdly*. Interestingly, Pilate knew exactly what Joseph was doing, his intention, and his actions. Additionally, disciples of Jesus knew that Joseph was their brother in Christ – else, why write about it here? Joseph did not hide his discipleship from disciples! This is an example of righteous shrewdness. The questions are who is Joseph being shrewd with, why is he being shrewd, and what is his goal with this shrewdness?

Joseph, like Jesus, was hiding himself from those who (would likely) murder him. Like Jesus who told his brothers (in John 7) plainly why he was waiting to reveal himself at the festival, Joseph told Pilate plainly his intentions by asking permission for Jesus' body himself. As to "why" Jesus and Joseph "acted in secret?" Both Jesus and Joseph faced death should they be exposed. What about their "intentions?" Jesus' intent was to wait until the opportune time to

continue to preach what he'd been preaching all along when the attendance at the festival would be its greatest. Joseph's intent in this moment was to make sure he could care for Jesus' body and give it proper burial. Both of their actions were very encouraging for all the disciples as they were inspired by Jesus' preaching and Joseph's kindness.

Should A Disciple "Act In Secret" (Shrewdly) Today?

So today, when is it permissible to be shrewd and "*act in secret*" or to be a disciple "*secretly*?" What can we glean by looking at these two examples? First, we know both of them were under threat of death. Secondly, we know that both of them spoke plainly to other parties about their plans and what was going on. Jesus told his physical brothers (and his *disciples*) why he was not acting in public – yet. Joseph of Arimathea had to get permission from Pilate himself (risky) and the *disciples* certainly knew Joseph was their brother, else it could not be noted in the scripture! Thirdly, both Jesus and Joseph had righteous and plain intentions that served God's purposes. Jesus' intention was to maximize the impact of his message, the same one he'd been preaching all along. Joseph intended to give Jesus a proper burial and serve the LORD in a very meaningful way. Neither of these moments of shrewdness brought about great "surprises", consternation, and/or division between *disciples of Jesus*.

We have disciples today in foreign missions fields where shrewdness just like these two examples is necessary and the right thing to do. For example, the brothers and sisters that are in mainland China and in the predominantly Muslim nations need to be disciples in secret until they know that the people they are reaching out to will not report them to the authorities. At some points, people have given death threats to leaders in our movement. As such, those leaders "acted in secret" and moved about discreetly and notified the authorities. In these cases, the disciples – the members of the Body – are not the ones who are treated with shrewdness. Neither Jesus nor Joseph hid their intent from *disciples* – otherwise, how could it have been recorded?

In any case, we see that when Jesus and Joseph of Arimathea were under the threat of death, they "*acted in secret*." Therefore, we can conclude that when someone *who is not a disciple*

wants to murder us, we too can act shrewdly towards *them*. However, we cannot conceal matters and be shrewd with *"the people of the light"* or *"each other"* as *"we are all members of one body."* Furthermore, many disciples refused to back down and hide their discipleship and so they were arrested and imprisoned. History and the scriptures show many died because of their testimony and admission of Jesus' Lordship. Jesus himself died because of his teaching and preaching that he was the Son of God. Therefore, we too should expect that our admission of discipleship very well could *eventually* lead to our own death! Lastly, we must consider the intent and impact of what we are doing *"in secret"* and who we are keeping secrets from. May it be said of us that we are speaking to one another as if speaking *"the very words of God."*

"If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen." (1 Peter 4:11 NIV)

When Are Disciples Of Jesus Commanded To Act In Secret?

"But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you." (Matthew 6:3-4 NIV)

Giving to the poor. We are to never "announce it with trumpets" and make a spectacle of it. Give to the poor with God as our focus, knowing that as we give "in secret" he sees all, and he will reward us! God wants our hearts to be pure when giving to the needy! We must take heed, Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5:1-11 gave with the wrong motives. God exposed them through Peter, and then God struck them both dead for their impure motives. Certainly, a pure heart when giving to the needy is a matter of life and death!

"But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you." (Matthew 6:6 NIV) And *"When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their*

faces to show others they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full."
(Matthew 6:16 NIV)

Praying and fasting. God sees what is done in secret, and he rewards us accordingly. Our personal prayer life and our fasting should not be for boasting or a show of our "spirituality." Clearly, God wants us to maintain a level of personal and deep connection with him. God also wants us to show him, not others, that we are fasting – as it is our entreatment for his will! True fasting is detailed in Isaiah 58, and even there God warns about the temptation to make a "show" of fasting *"Is it only for bowing one's head like a reed and for lying in sackcloth and ashes..."* (Isaiah 58:5) God wants fasting to change our hearts so we *"lose the chains of injustice"* and *"break every yoke!"*

It's clear that keeping our giving, prayer, and fasting a secret is important in our walk with God. There are some things God wants only for him and our private, personal, relationship with him. Furthermore, it is clear that we are not to lie to each other, but in the case of the threat of death, we may choose to be shrewd with those who are *of the world* or *intend* to kill us. We are not to keep the truth from each other. Neither Jesus nor Joseph lied to disciples, nor did they "surprise" people with some new agenda or teaching. Jesus *"said nothing in secret."* (John 18:20) Therefore, neither should we.

"Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the duty of all mankind. For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil." – (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14)

(1) Encouraged By or Embittered By, Reminders?

Philippians 3:1

3:1 Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord! It is no trouble for me to write the same things to you again, and it is a safeguard for you.

Philippians 4:4-5

4 Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!

Reminding them. Rejoice used 8 times in Philippians. Strong idea throughout the text.

We could use a reminder to rejoice in the Lord.

Why? Jesus Christ rose from the dead. It is why I believe the bible is the Word of God and why I am here this morning.

Source: American Psychological Association, American Institute of Stress, NY

Research Date: 4.6.2012

Percent of people who regularly experience physical symptoms caused by stress 77 %

Regularly experience psychological symptoms caused by stress 73 %

Feel they are living with extreme stress 33 %

Feel their stress has increased over the past five years 48 %

Cited money and work as the leading cause of their stress 76 %

Reported lying awake at night due to stress 48 %

Causes of Stress

Job Pressure Co-Worker Tension, Bosses, Work Overload

Money Loss of Job, Reduced Retirement, Medical Expenses

Media Overload Television, Radio, Internet, E-Mail, Social Networking

Annual costs to employers in stress related health care and missed work. \$300 Billion

Stress = to experience stress or worry:

Rely on money, instead of on God. Stresses you out! No way to live.

Philippians 4:4-7

5 Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. 6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

What is the real problem? No God! No turning to God! No gratitude!

An anxious person is ungrateful. A bitter person, ungrateful. A person giving into their anger? No gratitude.

There is no gratitude in a bad attitude!

Bad attitude about commitment?

Good attitude is a “God” attitude – with an extra “Oh” for the surprises in it!

Reminded, there is no hope of holiness without mercy.

The blood of Christ brings perfection, sanctification.

Heb 9:22, Heb 10:26-31 (Treat it with the sacredness it deserves!)

No cross, no connection to God.

If you don't see he picked up the the cross for you, you won't pick up your cross for him!

Easter, a reminder, Jesus Christ Rose from the DEAD!

Everyday, honest with ourselves regarding our sin, we'll see our need for the cross and thus our need to live radically different – to repent, to change the core of our thinking and our mind.

Open about life, open about heart, open about struggles and weaknesses

Anderson/Smith – grateful for their openness!

(2) Justification Through Christ Or Rationalization Through Self?

Philippians 3:2-6

2 Watch out for those dogs, those men who do evil, those mutilators of the flesh. 3 For it is we who are the circumcision, we who worship by the Spirit of God, who glory in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh— 4 though I myself have reasons for such confidence.

If anyone else thinks he has reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: 5 circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; 6 as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for legalistic righteousness, faultless.

Huh? Mutilators of the flesh?

Self-justification. Listing off his religious credentials.

My own conversion...all the reason's I was right with God.

Acts 15:1-2; 5-11 (50 AD)

Galatians 1:6-10

6 I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel— 7 which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some

people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. 8 But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned! 9 As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let him be eternally condemned!

10 Am I now trying to win the approval of men, or of God? Or am I trying to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a servant of Christ.

Galatians 5:2-4

2 Mark my words! I, Paul, tell you that if you let yourselves be circumcised, Christ will be of no value to you at all. 3 Again I declare to every man who lets himself be circumcised that he is obligated to obey the whole law. 4 You who are trying to be justified by law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace.

Cannot possibly earn your forgiveness. You don't earn a gift, but you can lose it!

Dad - wanted to win his love. Often drove me to different kinds of success, a weird bitterness, as if the more I did the more I'd fill his heart with regret. Humanistic, think our worth is measured by our "success" as a disciple, as an individual...

Christ's blood is priceless. That's what God gave up for you.

Love my son very, very much. He's Turning 1 on Tuesday. I can't imagine watching him grow up only to be crucified.

That is priceless. To God, *you could* be worth it!

Galatians 5:11-13

11 Brothers, if I am still preaching circumcision, why am I still being persecuted? In that case the offense of the cross has been abolished. 12 As for those agitators, I wish they would go the whole way and emasculate themselves!

13 You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love

Persecuted for truth. The offense of the cross? Removes need for circumcision.

Freedom from the Law, but not freedom from obedience to God.

Galatians 3:26-29

26 You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, 27 for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

What promise? Heirs?

Genesis 17:9-14

9 Then God said to Abraham, "As for you, you must keep my covenant, you and your descendants after you for the generations to come. 10 This is my covenant with you and your descendants after you, the covenant you are to keep: Every male among you shall be circumcised. 11 You are to undergo circumcision, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and you. 12 For the generations to come every male among you who is eight days old must be circumcised, including those born in your household or bought with money from a foreigner — those who are not your offspring. 13 Whether born in your household or bought with your money, they must be circumcised. My covenant in your flesh is to be an everlasting covenant. 14 Any uncircumcised male, who has not been circumcised in the flesh, will be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant."

How can a covenant be everlasting that is in the "flesh?" It can't!

We learn if you are not circumcised, you are not God's people, you are cut off. You cannot participate in the new covenant and have broken it.

Philippians 3:3

3 For it is we who are the circumcision, we who worship by the Spirit of God, who glory in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh.

No confidence in the flesh – e.g., the physical circumcision.

How on earth then, are "we", disciples, "the circumcision!?"

Colossians 2:11-15

11 In him you were also circumcised, in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with a circumcision done by the hands of men but with the circumcision done by Christ, 12 having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead.

13 When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, 14 having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross. 15 And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.

When a person who has faith in the power of God is baptized, they are spiritually circumcised by the hands of Christ, their sinful nature is circumcised/removed and the written code, the LAW, get's nailed to the cross.

It says "dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature!" Faith, in the power of God, baptized, alive in Christ!

That is how we are the circumcision, it is spiritual, it is done by Christ when someone is baptized and has faith in the power of God in the very resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Got to have faith, got to have your own faith, in the power of God at Jesus' Christ's resurrection! Why I have not baptized my infant son, no faith.

(3) Living in The Past Or In The Hope of The Future Resurrection?

Philippians 3:7-11

7 But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. 8 What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ 9 and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ — the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith. 10 I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, 11 and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead.

There are no hearses with trailers hitched to them.

He who dies with the most toys...still dies.

Naked we came, naked we depart.

The power of his resurrection!

12 Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. 13 Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, 14 I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

Christ takes hold of us, for a goal. What goal is that? The prize? The call heavenward!

15 All of us who are mature should take such a view of things. And if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you. 16 Only let us live up to what we have already attained.

It is a mark of maturity to forget what is behind! Learn from the past, DON'T LIVE IN IT! We must REFUSE to let our past dictate our response to challenges instead of our future in Christ! This is a mark of maturity spiritually.

"I'm just that way. That's just how I am, because of my past..."

Mature? This is who I can become, because of my God. I strain toward the last day, the resurrection, and eternal life with my God, with my Father!

17 Join with others in following my example, brothers, and take note of those who live according to the pattern we gave you. 18 For, as I have often told you before and now say again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. 19 Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is on earthly things. 20 But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, 21 who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.

Paul's example – imitate it. Grateful for the good examples around us and even from this church (Like Colton, like Ashley Godwin, like Matt and Helen, like Chris and Sonja – who came back).

Enemy of the cross, defined right here. Their mind is on earthly things!

Transform our lowly bodies?

1 Corinthians 15:12-19

12 But if it is preached that Christ has been raised from the dead, how can some of you say

that there is no resurrection of the dead? 13 If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. 14 And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. 15 More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God, for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead. But he did not raise him if in fact the dead are not raised. 16 For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either. 17 And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. 18 Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. 19 If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men.

1 Corinthians 15:20-23

20 But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. 21 For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. 22 For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.

1 Corinthians 15:42-45

42 So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; 43 it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; 44 it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body.

If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.

1 Corinthians 15:50-54

50 I declare to you, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. 51 Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed— 52 in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. 53 For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. 54 When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: “Death has been swallowed up in victory.”

1 Corinthians 15:58

58 Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.

Living in the hope of the resurrection – you will stand firm, the failures of the past and even the present will not move you from fully giving yourself.

Work of the LORD? (Missions)

2013 Plantings

Las Vegas

Jason Dimitry – Special Report from the Las Vegas Mission Team! This weekend, Sarah & I took the entire LV Mission Team to “*spy out the land*” of fabulous Las Vegas! Special thanks to our overseeing Evangelist and Women’s Ministry Leader Tim & Lianne Kernan, who came as well and absolutely poured their hearts out to prepare the Mission Team for its landing!

We all came together at the Westin Resort located at the base of the beautiful Las Vegas Lake. This “mini-conference” was entitled, Oasis Not Mirage! The goal of this weekend was to unify the disciples, give vision for this dark city, and to search for jobs and apartments. Tim kicked-off the weekend on Thursday evening by preaching a stirring lesson which set the pace for our three day retreat. So on Friday morning, all the disciples were up early and dressed in “their best” to attend interviews and fill-out job applications. Excitingly, our prayers are being answered as already four of the disciples have secured job offers!

Sarah & I also landed an apartment only four blocks away from CSN – a community college of 44,000 students, and Jeff & Lucia Eitelbach of Portland found their apartment close to UNLV – a university of 28,000 students! The evening concluded with challenging charges from our intern David Jefferson and our administrator Emilio Bonilla! Saturday started out with a morning d-group, then it was off to “stomp the land” claiming it for the Lord at the Hoover Dam, at UNLV and at the Stratosphere! And OF COURSE no Vegas trip would be complete or righteous without a “cranking buffet,” which we thoroughly enjoyed at the Treasure Island Hotel and Resort!

After checking out the Bellagio Water Show and walking “The Strip,” the disciples left with heavy hearts, as they saw the level of degradation through the widespread public intoxication and prostitution solicitation! It became very apparent to us all that this great city is in dire need of the Kingdom of God!

The overwhelming message that I believe God wanted to get across to us is best summed up

with an inspirational quote found on a monument at the Hoover Dam that described the sacrifice and commitment of the workers who built it, "They died to make the desert bloom." After a weekend of inspirational preaching and discipling, I can say confidently that the hearts of the disciples are ready to go in the desert and die to themselves so that the Kingdom of God can BLOOM in Las Vegas. (John 12:24-26) Please, please pray for the soon-to-be Las Vegas International Christian Church, as our official send-off is April 14, 2013 at the City of Angels All Congregational Service, and our Inaugural Service will be – Lord willing – on May 19, 2013! And to God be the glory!

Sydney Planting
Ongoing Support
Africa – Kinshasa

Lola Lof of Kinshasa: Greetings from the Lord's mighty prayer warriors in the Democratic Republic of Congo! The Kinshasa Church is determined to help Congolese disciple parents in the education of their children according to the Scriptures, as children are the true happiness of the family! (Psalms 127:3) This was the topic of our workshop. Micky did a great job in teaching and challenging the audience, as he was assisted by our awesome sister Marthe Mupala, who was the speaker for the women classes! It was wonderful!

Then on Sunday almost 370 attended the service, as Micky preached a powerful sermon entitled, Raising Awesome Kids! Of note, the waters of baptism were stirred again, as Julie was plunged into this refreshing water of hope! She is the fruit of neighborhood evangelism, because she lives in the same street with our awesome couple John & Chantal Itetsi. To God be all the glory!

India – Chennai, Mumbai, New Dheli

Raja Rajan of Chennai: Greetings from Southern India! Last Sunday, we had a record "non-push" attendance of 107, while meeting in family groups! So exciting is that three more souls have been added to His Kingdom! Varun, a young man of 17 years, who ran away from home after fighting with his parents was desperately seeking God. When his parents heard the news that he is becoming a Christian they too wanted to celebrate! Today, our first baptism was Felix – a sophomore from the prestigious Madras Christian College!

Next, Vignesh – who just graduated as an Aeronautical Engineer – also entered the waters of the Indian Ocean to be baptized into Christ!

Excitingly, more great news from the New Delhi Remnant Group! Evelin, the mother of Neha and Barkha, made the decision to become a Christian and was baptized! Please continue to keep the 1.2 billion lost souls of India in your prayers!

Kiev

Manila

Mexico City

Paris

Anais Laurent of Paris: Bonjour mes frères et sœurs! God has indeed shown Himself to be great here in Paris! We are so excited as this past week our dear sister Carine was baptized!!!!!!! She used to take a salsa class with our sister Sandra, but recently fell out of contact until Carine “happened to walk by” the cafe where we have Bible Talk! (Acts 17:26-27) Since then, her heart to give-up everything and let Jesus truly be Lord has been so inspiring that her mom is now studying the Bible and several of her friends have already come out! To God be all the “gloire!”

Santiago

Sao Paulo

NEWS FLASH! Raul Moreno of Sao Paulo: “At the present time there is a remnant chosen by grace!” (Romans 11:5) God’s plan has always been to gather His faithful remnant, so that God could bless the earth with the knowledge of Him! (Isaiah 11:9-12) In 1987, the Sao Paulo (International) Church of Christ (ICOC) was planted. By 2001, this vibrant congregation numbered 3,200 disciples with an attendance of 5,000, as well as having planted six other ICOC congregations around Brazil!

However, at the “Unity Meeting” in LA in November 2002, the ICOC returned to a more “Mainline Church of Christ theology” abandoning the Biblical teachings of Kip McKean upon which the ICOC (Boston) Movement had been built such as discipling, a central leadership and Jesus’ vision of the evangelization of the nations in this generation. In fact, the return to Mainline theology was so complete that most ICOC congregations changed their name from “International Church of Christ” to “Church of Christ!”

In February 2003 just three months after the “Unity Meeting” where the ICOC Central Leadership was dissolved and called “unbiblical,” the Kreite Letter became the match that

set-off an explosion of bitterness throughout the world in “what was left of the ICOC.” So, not only did the former Sao Paulo ICOC Church fall to 800 members, but they became autonomous and most who stayed grew “lukewarm.” Then a short time later, its 12 sectors separated and became autonomous from each other as well!

One of those sectors – the East Sector – became the Artur Alvin Church, which was led by Renato & Maria Jose Tria. Since Renato has always believed that there needed to be “a movement” to evangelize the world, it is not surprising that certain leaders in the Sao Paulo Church of Christ tried to fire the Trias, but “Renato’s” congregation stood by him! Then, a little over two years ago, Renato reached out to Kip on Facebook! From that time, Kip, Lynda & I have studied the Scriptures with the Trias about God’s remnant through the centuries.

So it was very exciting last week when Renato & Maria Jose courageously called their whole church of about 90 “on the roster” to join God’s new movement! Although this was their membership on paper, only about 40 were attending Midweek Services showing its true membership. Unfortunately, the Financial Board did not want to be called back to “total commitment,” and they opposed Renato by coming to the front and speaking out loud to the church after Renato made this announcement last Sunday! For the last eight days, they have conjured up terrible lies about Renato’s & Maria Jose’s characters, and have “poisoned” many in the church. (Acts 14:2)

That said, for us in the Sao Paulo International Christian Church, today was historic as Renato & Maria Jose Tria officially joined God’s Modern Day Movement by placing membership along with five other courageous souls! The Trias are “heroes in the faith” throughout Brazil, as they have been in the fulltime ministry for 15 years! God used them to plant the Recife (Brazil) ICOC Church; to lead the Belo Horizonte (Brazil) ICOC Church to over 500 disciples; as well as leading various sectors in the Sao Paulo ICOC Church!

Sunday was amazing! The group that came from Renato’s congregation was so happy! One of the mothers told me that she felt like how she did the very first time she came to church! Renato & Maria Jose were happy too! We gave them a huge basket of fruit saying that they will see much, much more fruit to come! Pray because at this time we are “counting the cost” with each disciple from Renato’s church, who wants to place membership in the next few weeks! Truly, God is gathering His remnant!

Ministry Training, Travel and Relocation

Argo and Anu Arenson – Russia

Kyle and Joan Bartholomew – Manila Planting

Tyler and Shay Sears – Dallas, Tx

Oleg and Alianna Sirotkin's – Moscow

Joe and Kerry Willis – Sydney

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

13 Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. 14 We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. 15 According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. 16 For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. 18 Therefore encourage each other with these words.

Think Different – Yet Be Like-Minded

Philippians 2:1-5

2:1 If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, 2 then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. 3 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. 4 Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.

5 Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:

Like-minded, purpose, attitude, all the same word in the Greek:

Phroneo “to exercise the mind, i.e. entertain or have a sentiment or opinion; by implication, to be (mentally) disposed (more or less earnestly in a certain direction); intensively, to

interest oneself in (with concern or obedience)”

The word “to think” or “phroneo” – occurs 11 times in this epistle

Understand for comparison

In the OT, (the Septuagint) “Phroneo” occurs 15 times.

“Phroneo” occurs 30 times in the NT.

In the NT, “Phroneo” is almost exclusively apart of the Pauline vocabulary.

The word appears 27 times in the Pauline corpus.

It is found, twice in 1 Corinthians, once in Galatians and Colossians and 11 times in the book of Philippians (Phil. 1:7; twice in 2:2; 2:5; twice in 3:15; 3:16, 19; 4:2; twice in 4:10.) and 11 times in the book of Romans (which is *four times the length of Philippians*)

Think Different – About the People Around You

Philippians 1:7

7 It is right for me to feel this way about all of you, since I have you in my heart; for whether I am in chains or defending and confirming the gospel, all of you share in God’s grace with me.

Paul was thinking about these disciples – “his” people. Why? They share in God’s grace with Paul.

This ministry had a ton of problems! (Philippians 1:27, 2:4, 2:12, 2:14, 3:1, 3:2, 3:15, 3:18, 4:1, 4:2, 4:4, 4:12)

Paul still felt a great joy about this ministry and his *thinking* was:

You share in God’s grace with me!

I pray with joy when I *always* remember you – because you are my partners in the Gospel.

Confident of our partnership, God will finish the good work he’s begun in you!

Philippians 1:19 – Paul expresses that their prayers with the help given by the Holy Spirit...he will be delivered!

Crucial nature of asking our people to pray for us, even as we pray for them!!!

No matter what – how he *felt(phroneo, “thought”)* about *them* was ...

Philippians 1:3-6

3 I thank my God every time I remember you. 4 In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy 5 because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, 6 being

confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

Think Different About Your Circumstances

Philippians 1:12

12 Now I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel.

Very interesting – “prokopo”

Examining the Greek roots – “pro” and “kopo.”

Pro – “in front of, prior to, ‘fore’”

Kopo – “to chop”; specifically, to beat the breast in grief.

Figuratively, to drive forward (as if by beating), i.e. to advance.

Defining the section Philippians 1:12 through Philippians 1:25.

This is the technique of inclusio, or “inclusion” where a section starts with the deliberate use of a word (in this case, prokopto) to define a conceptual segment.

Philippians 1:25-26

25 Convinced of this, I know that I will remain, and I will continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith, 26 so that through my being with you again your joy in Christ Jesus will overflow on account of me.

How?

Philippians 4:4-7

4 Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! 5 Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. 6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

When we are not rejoicing? When we are not gentle? Fix your eyes – they are broken!

2 Corinthians 4:18 – heaven. What more could we be grateful for!? Lose sight of salvation – the light and momentary troubles take over our thinking.

Hebrews 12:2 – Jesus Christ. Lose sight of the love of God – bitterness makes its way into us and taints our view of ministry.

Think Different About Unity In Jesus Christ

Philippians 2:1-5

2:1 If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, 2 then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. 3 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. 4 Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.

5 Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:

He's trying to get them to recall and submit to the pattern of Jesus Christ, they need to change their attitude (phroneo) (especially towards one another!)

Think like Christ, have the purpose of Christ.

Luke 19:10

Do you have biblical clarity on who is lost and who is saved?

Matthew 7:13-14; 21-23

Mark 10:17-22

Do you want to make exceptions to God's teachings about salvation, repentance, and discipleship? Do you put words into the mouth of God, telling him to think differently because of how you *feel*? Do we have a right to tell God he must "think different" about who is lost and saved – because of our sentimentality? Sentimentality is the pinnacle of selfish arrogance. Sentimentality defines truth by our feelings, thoughts, and opinions. We have nothing in common with Jesus, the Truth, when we are sentimental.

Are you unified with Jesus in mind? Check with his Word! Hebrews 13:8

Think differently about discipleship and spiritual authority. Both of these lead us to unity in Jesus Christ.

Do not wait to confess sin! (James 5:16) Don't linger. Get real (1 John 1:5-10) and get Jesus in the situation! Get help with your struggle.

Are you missing giving for weeks? It is time for you to be honest about it and deal with the sin of greed. Do not be deceitful about financial pain personal irresponsibility.

Interests of others. Know their hearts and life situation well enough to do so?

Kids class, Children's ministry. MERCY?

Personal: Better and better at listening. Better and better at discipling the heart, the attitude, the thought life (helping people take captive their thoughts and make them obedient to Christ! 2 Cor 10:4-6)

Personal: Lift up Kristen and Josiah, pre-marital, her heart radically changing, deep study of the roles in the marriage, grateful to see her heart transformed by the Word of God, the Mind of Christ.

Think Different About Your Destiny

Philippians 2:5-30

5 Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:

6 Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, 7 but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. 8 And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death — even death on a cross! 9 Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, 10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

What was Jesus' destiny? Jesus served and was humble – even unto dying on the cross so other's would have life! (Luke 9:23)

12 Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed — not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence — continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, 13 for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.

Consider your response to those around you. Think about your responses to your circumstances. Ponder your unity (or lack thereof) with the mind of Christ (the Word of God). Additionally, realize, all of these are your responsibility. Ultimately, your spiritual destiny you are responsible to work out with fear and trembling!

Will you be blame shifting until the day of Judgement? Will you spew the same rationalizations on judgment day to try to excuse putting God off and giving Jesus a back seat? Will we be able to blame our circumstances, our relationships, our hardships or even

our ignorance on judgment day?

What God understands is that he gave his all to you. His one and only Son.

14 Do everything without complaining or arguing, 15 so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe 16 as you hold out the word of life — in order that I may boast on the day of Christ that I did not run or labor for nothing. 17 But even if I am being poured out like a drink offering on the sacrifice and service coming from your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you. 18 So you too should be glad and rejoice with me.

Children's ministry. Missions, evangelism, follow up for women's day, bible studies, picking up people for Sunday service. Do it all without complaining or arguing. Shine like a star, it is your destiny!

19 I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, that I also may be cheered when I receive news about you. 20 I have no one else like him, who takes a genuine interest in your welfare. 21 For everyone looks out for his own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. 22 But you know that Timothy has proved himself, because as a son with his father he has served with me in the work of the gospel. 23 I hope, therefore, to send him as soon as I see how things go with me. 24 And I am confident in the Lord that I myself will come soon.

For now our destinies are intertwined. We are here to shine. We are here to change a hurting world. We are here to hold out the word of life. We are here to look out for the interests, the mindset, of the Lord Jesus Christ.

25 But I think it is necessary to send back to you Epaphroditus, my brother, fellow worker and fellow soldier, who is also your messenger, whom you sent to take care of my needs. 26 For he longs for all of you and is distressed because you heard he was ill. 27 Indeed he was ill, and almost died. But God had mercy on him, and not on him only but also on me, to spare me sorrow upon sorrow. 28 Therefore I am all the more eager to send him, so that when you see him again you may be glad and I may have less anxiety. 29 Welcome him in the Lord with great joy, and honor men like him, 30 because he almost died for the work of Christ, risking his life to make up for the help you could not give me.

May we have the same heart – a willingness to die for the destiny of working for Christ, for if

that is our heart, we will share in destiny eternal and spend eternity with our Lord Jesus Christ.

"I'm part of the fellowship of the unashamed, the die has been cast, I have stepped over the line, the decision has been made- I'm a disciple of Jesus Christ. I won't look back, let up, slow down, back away or be still.

My past is redeemed, my present makes sense, my future is secure. I'm finished and done with low living, sight walking, smooth knees, colorless dreams, tamed vision, worldly talking, cheap giving & dwarfed goals.

My face is set, my gait is fast, my goal is heaven, my road is narrow, my way is rough, my companions are few, my guide is reliable, my mission is clear. I won't give up, shut up, let up until I have stayed up, stored up, prayed up for the cause of Jesus Christ.

I must go till He comes, give till I drop, preach till everyone knows, work till He stops me & when He comes for His own, He will have no trouble recognizing me because my banner will have been clear."

A blurb about Ole' Saint Patty.

Born in Roman Britain in the fourth century, into a wealthy [Romano-British](#) family.

His father was a [deacon](#) and his grandfather was a clergyman in the Christian church.

At sixteen, he was kidnapped by Irish raiders and taken captive to Ireland as a slave.

He was told by God in a dream to flee from captivity to the coast, where he would board a ship and return to Britain.

In 432 AD, he again said that he was called back to Ireland, though as a bishop, to [Christianise](#) the Irish from their [native polytheism](#).

Irish folklore tells that one of his teaching methods included using the [shamrock](#) to explain the Christian doctrine of the [Trinity](#) to the Irish people.

After nearly thirty years of evangelism, he died on 17 March 461, and according to tradition, was buried at Downpatrick.

Originally, the colour associated with Saint Patrick was [blue](#).

(1) Deep Trust Comes From Deep Conviction

Philippians 1:1

1:1 Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus,

To all the saints in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the overseers and deacons:

About Timothy

Acts 16:1-5

16:1 He came to Derbe and then to Lystra, where a disciple named Timothy lived, whose mother was a Jewess and a believer, but whose father was a Greek. 2 The brothers at Lystra and Iconium spoke well of him. 3 Paul wanted to take him along on the journey, so he circumcised him because of the Jews who lived in that area, for they all knew that his father was a Greek. 4 As they traveled from town to town, they delivered the decisions reached by the apostles and elders in Jerusalem for the people to obey. 5 So the churches were strengthened in the faith and grew daily in numbers.

Deep trust! Shared purpose. Paul and Timothy's deep relationship was based on their shared convictions and purpose. Timothy had a powerful desire to be used by God.

Why did Paul circumcise Timothy? Paul knew that one cannot go into synagogue uncircumcised. Ironical, the first place that the H.S. really led them to evangelize was Macedonia, e.g. - Philippi was the first city that Paul and Timothy actually evangelized together!

Before that, delivering decisions reached by a central leadership.

Much like us, Crown of Thorns Project.

(2) Deep Love Comes From Deep Prayers

Philippians 1

2 Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

3 I thank my God every time I remember you. 4 In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy 5 because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, 6 being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

7 It is right for me to feel this way about all of you, since I have you in my heart; for whether I

am in chains or defending and confirming the gospel, all of you share in God's grace with me. 8 God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus. 9 And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, 10 so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ, 11 filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ — to the glory and praise of God.

(3) Deep Rejoicing From Deep Trust

Philippians 1

12 Now I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel. 13 As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ. 14 Because of my chains, most of the brothers in the Lord have been encouraged to speak the word of God more courageously and fearlessly.

Acts 28:16-22, 30-31

Sect, cult.

Must have converted that guard!

Deep trust in God, throughout the shipwreck. Did not try to escape!

Philippians 1:15-26

15 It is true that some preach Christ out of envy and rivalry, but others out of goodwill. 16 The latter do so in love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel. 17 The former preach Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing that they can stir up trouble for me while I am in chains. 18 But what does it matter? The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached. And because of this I rejoice.

Yes, and I will continue to rejoice, 19 for I know that through your prayers and the help given by the Spirit of Jesus Christ, what has happened to me will turn out for my deliverance. I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful

labor for me.

Yet what shall I choose? I do not know! I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body. Convinced of this, I know that I will remain, and I will continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith, 26 so that through my being with you again your joy in Christ Jesus will overflow on account of me.

Paul did not need to be in control. Let go, let God.
Fruitful labor.

Philippians 1

27 Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in one spirit, contending as one man for the faith of the gospel 28 without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you. This is a sign to them that they will be destroyed, but that you will be saved — and that by God. 29 For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for him, 30 since you are going through the same struggle you saw I had, and now hear that I still have.

Deep trust, still conduct oneself in a way that is worthy.

Relational vibration = how well you are really doing spiritually. Matthew 5, Matthew 18, John 13:34-35. John 15:13-17

Deep trust, know you will suffer for Christ and at peace with it!