

## 2002

### Wednesday, January 23<sup>rd</sup> - Hebrews 11:1

The writer has exhorted his readers not to throw away their confidence in Christ (Heb. 10:35), but to continue doing the will of God (Heb. 10:36) even when the way of obedience is long, costly, and arduous. The incentive given for believers persevering in such costly obedience is the promise of God (Heb. 10:36-38). Only those possessing and exercising true faith, however, can be indefinitely sustained through manifold pains by the Lord's promises. Therefore, this chapter opens with an elaboration of what faith is, and concludes with a number of Old Testament examples of those who ran their earthly course by faith. Such explanation of faith and examples of the faithful serve as great, practical encouragements for those of us who are in the midst of our pilgrimage. The way to eternal and glorious life may be narrow, and trod by fewer than those walking in the world's way, yet it is a way well enough traveled and abundantly brightened by shining saints.

### Thursday, January 24<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 11: 1

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### Thursday, January 24<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 11: 1

Faith is the assurance of things hoped for. The word translated *assurance* (u`po,stasij) can also be translated *substance*. It is a compound word, meaning literally a setting under that which stands. It implies something which has deeper support and structure than is apparent. Faith is not insubstantial, but rather is the power by which divine promises become concrete. Faith rightly reckons that if God has raised our hopes by His great and precious promises, those hopes are even now for us as good as realized.

### Friday, January 25<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 11: 1

When our writer has just quoted from Hab. 2:4 that the righteous shall live by faith (Heb. 10:38), he goes on to show how the faith of the righteous is solid and substantial. Believers do not subsist upon air, but rather by a power that apprehends in the divine promises subsistence for the mind and heart. Faith does not give a hungry man a feeling of fullness, as it feeds him upon vain hopes. Rather, faith actually draws the essence of the glorious things God promises into a man's mind and soul, so that he is truly sustained upon heavenly manna, however hidden it may be from physical apprehension. Nothing is more powerfully nourishing and life sustaining than faith fixed upon the Lord's promises.

### Saturday, January 26<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 11: 1

Faith is further defined as the conviction, or evidence of things not seen. The things not seen are the being of God and His deeds, not only past and future, but also His loving work in present providences. The

Canaanite woman (Mt. 15:21-28) saw Jesus ignoring her pleas, heard Him telling her that He was sent only to Israelites and calling her a dog. Yet, her faith perceived the merciful and abundant provision of God in the crumb of Jesus' word that it should be done for her according to her desire. Faith opens the eyes of our hearts, so that even if God should seem to be against us, we know He is for us (Rom. 8:28,31), even if He seems to hate us, we know He loves us, even if He should slay us, still will we trust Him. Neither dark circumstances nor divine withdrawals and hidings can obscure the God of life and love from faith's sight.

### **Sunday, January 27<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 11: 1**

Faith is the evidence, or proven conviction of things unseen. Faith is not irrational, prompting us to think and act against reason. It is suprarational, empowering us to reckon rightly above and beyond the limits of our own finite and fallen reasoning. Faith prompts no leap into the dark, but enables us to perceive light through the darkest events (Ps. 36:9). Instead of being based on feelings, hunches, or unverifiable testimony, faith rests upon solid evidence of the highest sort, namely, that which is granted to us by God's own revelation. Faith sustains the soul through all perplexities and pains because it lays hold of higher realities than are dreamt of in any man's philosophy.

### **Monday, January 28<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 11: 2**

The men of old are those believers from Adam to the generation contemporary with the first readers of this epistle. All those possessing and exercising faith, of which the members of the ensuing gallery are but representative, maintained a good testimony by their faith. By good testimony, or approval, we are not to think of their testimony before men. For the faithful do exploits which men may not see, such as their mortifying sinful thoughts and passions, or serving diligently when no one is looking (Col. 3:22-24). Indeed, the faithful often stand and serve in ways mocked by the world. Yet, believers ever maintain a good witness before God. The Lord sees, is pleased by, approves of, and rewards all that they do by the precious faith which He has given to them. Even a cup of water given by the promptings of faith in God does not lose its reward (Mt. 25:31ff).

### **Tuesday, January 29<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 11: 3**

Faith does not lead us into mystic mazes, impractical labyrinths, and sanctimonious confusion. Faith leads to the truest and highest understanding. This is so because faith enables us to consider not merely those data and factors which we perceive by our limited powers of reasoning, but also those greater realities which are granted to us by divine disclosure. The fear of the Lord is the height of practical wisdom (Ps. 1:7). Elisha, by of his faith, was not crazy, but was more understanding than his servant, whose eyes he asked God to open (2 Ki. 6:15ff).

### **Wednesday, January 30<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 11: 3**

By faith we understand the highest and most critical realities which exist beyond reason's extremities. For example, we understand that the universe, in all of its vastness and complexity, has neither existed forever nor resulted from random physical forces at work over eons of time. Rather, we know and accept the fact that the universe was created and formed out of nothing by the will and power of God expressed through His Word. By faith, we accept the testimony of the One who was at the beginning of all things, calling them into being according to His plan, purpose, and power. We accept His testimony regarding this vast, and to us, mysterious event, and, while what the Lord tells us about cosmogony (the world's beginning) is beyond the discovering power of human reason, there is nothing about what He tells us that, when properly understood, is unreasonable. And if faith enables us to understand the world's beginning, it also enables us rightly and practically to understand the Lord's sovereign sustaining of the world and all that it contains.

### **Thursday, January 31st - Hebrews 11: 3**

By faith we understand that God created and fashioned all things out of nothing. This is to say that the world's features and forces had no existence—even in their raw material—prior to God's calling them into being. They had no antecedents except in the mind and will of the God who is invisible and immortal. All things came from the God who is a Spirit. All phenomena we perceive by our senses, as well as all that we posit to have being as we extend our perception through tools, machines, and formulae of physics, have come into being from the God whom we may apprehend only by faith. The fact that all things have issued from the unseen God informs us that the material things we see actually have less substantial reality than does their source, the God who is a Spirit. Those who know this God, who originated and governs all things, have the true key to understanding all things.

#### **Friday, February 1<sup>st</sup> - Hebrews 11: 4**

In vv. 1-3, the writer set out a definition of faith. From v. 4 to the end of this chapter, he portrays for us a gallery filled with representative heroes of faith. The men and women he presents for our consideration were living examples of those who by faith apprehended the living God, and, in Him, the first cause, governing power, and highest end of all things. As such, they lived spiritual, as opposed to natural, fallen lives. Their actions demonstrate their faith working itself out by love, and those demonstrations are recorded so that we, by like precious faith, might imitate them in living lives to the glory of God and the highest good of man, including our own highest good.

#### **Saturday, February 2<sup>nd</sup> - Hebrews 11: 4**

Our gallery of heroes of faith does not begin with the first man created by God. Adam quite likely was a believer who instructed his family in the true worship of God. However, Adam is more known for his fall than for his faith. Cain, the first man born into the world, certainly was not a man of faith. He held the worship of God in contempt and was the murderer of his brother. Faith does not so defy God and destroy man. Therefore, we are brought to Abel, Adam's second-born son, who is the first person on earth renowned for his faith. By this we perceive that God bestows saving faith not according to natural order, but rather according to His merciful election.

#### **Sunday, February 3<sup>rd</sup> - Hebrews 11: 4**

The faith of Abel was demonstrated through his worship of God. Faith prompted Abel to acknowledge God, not merely with a mental assent, but by a costly sacrifice of life. The account in Genesis tells us that in the course of time—namely, after Cain and Abel were grown men, each in his own vocation, having been brought up under the instruction of their parents—the two sons of Adam brought their sacrifices to God (Gen. 4:3). As to the sacrifices offered, Cain's was apparently offered first, was costly, and was devoted to God. However, when compared with Abel's offering, we see several significant defects in what Cain brought to God. Abel's offering was of the *firstlings of his flock* (Gen. 4:4); that is to say, he offered the best he had. Cain simply offered of *the fruit of the ground*, with no consideration for highest quality. Cain's offering was bloodless; Abel's a sacrifice of life. Cain's offering more closely resembled his parents' fig leaves than the slain animals whose skins God used to cover the nakedness of our fallen first parents. Good gifts offered to God are not acceptable to God. The Lord must be served only with the best, the most precious, the perfect, and that which is vital and in accordance with His revealed instruction and example. In sum, we can approach God only through that perfect sacrificial Lamb which He graciously provides for us.

#### **Monday, February 4<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 11: 4**

The critical difference between the sacrifices of Cain and Abel was that Cain's resulted from his own determination, whereas Abel's proceeded from his faith. Cain reckoned rightly that God was Creator and so should be acknowledged by tokens from the creation. Abel's faith lifted his consideration of God infinitely higher. He apprehended God as a saving Redeemer, who by a vicarious sacrifice would deliver men from

their sins. By his faith, Abel beheld Jesus in the promise of Gen. 3:15, and his offering reflected that saving apprehension.

**Tuesday, February 5<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 11: 4**

God had regard for Abel and his offering (Gen. 4:4). It was not the gift that secured the divine acceptance of the giver; rather, it was a righteous man who brought a righteous offering. Abel was justified by his faith, not by his offering. His gift but accurately represented the Redeeming Lamb of God promised by God in Gen. 3:15. That atoning Lamb of God was the true object of Abel's faith, and resulted in the righteousness of the Christ, at that time yet to come, being imputed to Abel. Therefore, Jesus Himself acknowledged Abel as being righteous (Mt. 23:35). It is nothing less than the testimony of God in Scripture that Abel was justified by faith, and it was from that faith in the saving mercies of the Lord, that he offered acceptable service to God (Rom. 12:1).

**Wednesday, February 6<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 11: 4**

That Abel, by his faith, was accepted by God, while Cain, because of his faithless devotion to God was not so accepted, teaches us from the outset of the world's history that the mere outward performance of worship will never secure the acceptance of God. Only the perfect, beloved Son of God provides the clothing of righteousness for sinful man which is acceptable to God. By faith alone in Jesus' righteous person and redeeming work do we don that clothing, upon our heart's attitude and our outward actions.

**Thursday, February 7<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 11: 4**

Abel's faith spoke through and beyond his death. The distinction that his faith made between himself and his brother before God tells all men through the ages that it is inward faith, not outward performance of duty, which is the rule of man's acceptance with God. Abel's faithfulness unto his own death further speaks to us of the persecutions and sufferings the believers in every age will endure at the hands of the faithless (2 Tim. 3:12). Abel sealed his devotion to God with his own blood, counting himself blessed, no doubt, to suffer momentary, light affliction for the sake of the One by whose wounds he was healed unto eternal life. Finally, the faith of Abel speaks beyond his death, telling us that his God would be the avenger of his murder. The blood of Abel cried from the earth to God (Gen. 4:10), as does the blood of the Lord's faithful lambs cry to Him through all ages. Those who, by faith stand for God and by His power, will ever find the Lord standing for and with them against their enemies (Acts 7:56).

**Friday, February 8<sup>th</sup> - 11: 5**

Abel, the first hero of faith in this gallery, was put to death by his faithless brother. Enoch, the second representative of the faithful in this list, did not die at all. Sometimes our faith serves to deliver us from death, as when Peter escaped from Herod's murderous designs (Acts 12:1ff). At other times, our faith serves to deliver us through death, as was the case with Stephen (Acts 7:54-60). One way or another, to the Lord's faithful belong escapes from and victories through death (Ps. 23:4; 68:20; Rev. 1:18).

**Saturday, February 9<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 11: 5**

The faith of Enoch pleased God, so that God saved him from death, just as Abel's faith pleased God and led the Lord to save him through death. Where the faith of Abel was most conspicuous in his worship, that of Enoch was demonstrated in his daily living. Scripture tells us that Enoch walked with God for three hundred years (Gen. 5:22,24). By his faithful trust and obedient service, Enoch maintained a singular and holy intimacy with the Lord. Enoch walked *with* God. He did not walk *before* the Lord presumptuously, or *after* the Lord in procrastination. His food and drink was to do the will of God, and thus he was ever ready and quick to hear and heed the Lord's will, even and especially when his heavenly Master summoned him out of this world into His nearer presence.

### **Sunday, February 10<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 11: 6**

The faith, like that of Enoch's (v. 5), which pleases God is here further defined. First, we are told how a man can relate to God without faith. Those lacking faith cannot please God. It is for them an impossibility that their persons or works should be countenanced by the Lord. Be they ever so diligent in effort, careful in outward conformity to religious dictates, and considerate of other men, if they do not have faith they are not objects of divine approbation, but of divine wrath. This is so because without faith in the atoning work of the Savior, they stand before God being contemptuous of His grace, defiant of His revealed will, with all of their thoughts, words, and actions being tainted by sinful rebellion against Him.

### **Monday, February 11<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 11: 6**

The faith whereby a person pleases God enables that person to believe that God is. Belief is not merely intellectual assent, but involves vital commitment. When one believes in this way that God is, he does not simply acknowledge the possibility of God's existence, but rather he accepts God as He reveals Himself to be through His Word and by His Holy Spirit. Ultimately, this means one's knowing God only through His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, for it has pleased the Father to reveal His essential nature and fullness through Him (Col. 2:9; Heb. 1:3). Only those acknowledging and approaching God through Christ are accepted and beloved by God (Eph. 1:6); all others are subject to the holy wrath of God (Jn. 3:36). There are no people to whom God relates in neutral fashion.

### **Tuesday, February 12<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 11: 6**

James tells us that faith without works is dead (Jas. 2:20). Likewise in this verse, we learn that those who believe in God are not sedentary, but seekers of Him as the gracious Giver of all blessing (Eph. 1:3). Faith perceives the Lord as the One who rewards those who seek not some gift apart from God, but God Himself as their shield and great reward (Gen. 15:1). Faith seeks first the Lord and His kingdom, and is content to let God add all other blessings (Mt. 6:33). By faith, we seek to glorify and enjoy our God as our highest good, forsaking self or the world as sources of our true and lasting blessing (1 Jn. 2:15-17).

### **Wednesday, February 13<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 11: 7**

Perhaps none of the faithful demonstrates better the vast and vital distinction between those who by faith please God and those who are objects of the divine wrath than does Noah. His faith in God was demonstrated through his words. Peter calls him a preacher of righteousness (2 Pet. 2:5). His faith was also demonstrated through his deeds. His sermon illustration was the ark, which grew larger every day for a century. By his building the ark, he showed his commitment to God's Word of warning of the coming flood. In contrast, the rest of the world's people manifested their reliance upon their own fallen reasoning, which apprehended in their circumstances no coming flood. The result of Noah's faith, and his faithful works issuing therefrom, was the salvation of himself and his family. The unbelief of all others resulted in their death and subsequent divine condemnation. Faith is never popular, and in some days it is quite rare. But it is no less precious or savingly potent for its relative scarcity amongst men.

### **Thursday, February 14<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 11: 8**

Abraham is considered the father of the faithful, not because he was the first man to have and exercise faith, but because he was the first man whose faith was tried with multiple tests which covered virtually all the challenges the faithful could face in any generation. Also, it was through Abraham's faith that God granted descendants leading up to and carrying on beyond Christ. Therefore, Scripture in the Old Testament, as well as here in this hall of fame of the faithful, devotes special attention to Abraham, whose life shows perhaps the fullest and most prolonged exercise of faith. If we, by God's grace, have the faith which Abraham had, we, too, will be delivered from the natural life, which is really death in sin and trespasses, to a new, fruitful, and glorious eternal life.

### **Friday, February 15<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 11: 8**

The first manifestation of faith in the life of Abraham was that he perceived and responded to God's calling. By a special divine communication, the Lord called Abraham from his family and homeland in order that he might receive the inheritance promised by God. Abraham obeyed this divine summons, leaving all that was natural, secure, and comforting to him, and setting out, not knowing the goal so much as he knew, trusted, obeyed, and followed the divine Guide who had called him. Thusly did Abraham experience and illustrate the faithful response to the saving, effectual call of God, whereby sinners living complacently in their trespasses and sins, are made new creatures in Christ, and as such they set out on a pilgrimage through this life to their heavenly inheritance.

### **Saturday, February 16<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 11: 8, 9**

The natural man gives heed above all things to his own desires. He fancies himself a competent monarch over all his affairs. The spiritual man is one who has heard and obeyed a call higher than his own natural appetites. Thus did Abraham leave the immediately gratifying comforts and substantial surroundings of Ur. He left his familiar homeland to go to a destination unknown to him. But while he did not know the country to which he traveled, he did retain supreme confidence in the God who had called him. When he arrived in the promised land, it resembled a poor consolation for the splendors of Ur he had left. He had no standing or position amongst the inhabitants of Canaan except that of an alien sojourning in their midst. He owned no property, except by divine promise; he had no dwelling more substantial than a tent, which sufficed for a nomadic existence. Faith does not launch us into things more agreeable to our sense than those things we may leave behind when we heed God's effectual calling. But faith does ever focus upon the God who calls and promises, and faith rightly reckons that His wisdom, love, and power will ever orchestrate all things, even those initially appearing adverse to us, for our good.

### **Sunday, February 17<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 11: 9, 10**

The faith of Abraham was constantly tested for the duration of his life. The test carried on even through the lives of succeeding generations, for throughout the lives of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob these faithful patriarchs lived in the land of promise as though they had no deed or right to it. Canaan, which was itself but a token of the glorious heavenly inheritance of all the faithful, seemed inferior to anything else on earth. But faith looks beyond the token, and considers the trustworthiness of the God who promises something more glorious than the best this world can offer (1 Jn. 2:15-17).

### **Monday, February 18<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 11: 10**

While Abraham's body dwelt in impermanent tents, his faith anchored his soul in a city. It was not just any city, but *the* city, the glorious New Jerusalem, more spacious, substantial, enduring, and satisfying than a tent. All that Abraham had left, and all he lived without for the rest of his life, did not compare with the sure hope of the order, beauty, and loving, unceasing joy he would have with the Lord and with perfected fellow-citizens in that precious and everlasting city (Rev. 21).

### **Tuesday, February 19<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 11: 10**

By faith the soul of Abraham was lifted up from this cursed creation inhabited by fallen humanity. His soul dwelt in the city not made by man, but by God. Nor is it a haphazardly evolved city. Faith rightly perceives that the Lord Himself is the architect of the New Jerusalem. This is to say that the glorious city of God has been planned by infinite and unfailing wisdom and love. Throughout eternity we shall be constantly making delightful discoveries of the wise and loving plans and purposes of our God in that glorious, heavenly city to which He calls us in Christ.

### **Wednesday, February 20<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 11: 10**

God is not only the planning architect of the heavenly city to which Abraham's faith looked. He is also the builder of that glorious city. The plans of the divine architect will not fail to be perfectly realized, for His own almighty power will establish for all eternity the ceaseless perfection and marvelous glory of the city of God. If this world, created in six days, being full of fallen men and cursed by God, retains sublime wonders, what will that city be like which God has been preparing since the foundation of the world, and wherein Jesus has been for centuries preparing a place for us?

#### **Thursday, February 21<sup>st</sup> - Hebrews 11, 12**

God promised Abraham not only a country, but also a child. The testing and triumph of Abraham's faith in regard to this promised descendant are well recorded in Gen. 15-21. Paul comments further upon this course of testing in Rom. 4:18-21, where he tells us that with inextinguishable hope, Abraham believed so as to become a father. Here, in Hebrews, the writer supplements the testing of Abraham with that of Sarah. She, too, was tested, and her faith finally triumphed, enabling her to conceive a son, not through her own natural powers, still less through her sinful machinations with Hagar, but through her conquering consideration of the faithfulness of God who had promised her a son.

#### **Friday, February 22<sup>nd</sup> - Hebrews 11: 11, 12**

Faith does not rely upon great numbers or likely natural circumstances. From one woman, beyond the age of conceiving, and from one man, whose body was practically dead, came countless descendants, living stones in the household of God. The determinative factor in this fruitful production was faith that apprehended the trustworthiness and supernatural power of God. Faith is well pleased with human weakness (2 Cor. 12:9, 10), for it stands, serves, and succeeds upon the promise and power of God.

#### **Saturday, February 23<sup>rd</sup> - Hebrews 11:13**

All men die, for all men are sinners, and death is the wages of sin (Rom. 6:23). Enoch is the only exception to this rule listed in this chapter. However, believers die as they had lived, by and in faith. The radical difference between those who die in faith and those who die without faith may be perceived in what Jesus says in Jn. 11:25,26, where He tells us that the one believing in Him shall never die, but even in his death shall live. Additionally, in Jn. 5:24, Jesus says that the one believing in Him does not face judgment after death. That the sting of death should be removed for the believer (1 Cor. 15:56), and that the soul of the believer should live in Christ's nearer presence, facing no condemnation, but experiencing ceaseless and immeasurable joy—these are glorious realities possessed by those who die in faith. Such fruition of the divine promises after death more than compensates for any loss or deprivation experienced by believers in their life (Rom. 8:18; Rev. 21:3,4).

#### **Sunday, February 24<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 11: 13**

By faith, these heroes and representatives of believers of all ages, rightly reckoned that death was not the end of their opportunity to have and enjoy blessing. Their faith penetrated the veil separating time and eternity, earth and heaven, grace and glory. They lived by their faith enabling them to be nourished upon the promises of God. Their faith bridged the distance between their having the promises in time and enjoying the fullness of divine provision in eternity. By faith, they lived richly, as more than conquerors; and by faith they passed through their death into immeasurably greater riches of blessing.

#### **Monday, February 25<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 11: 13**

The faith of the saints mentioned in this chapter did not blind them to those things which were perceivable by sight. Each believer, in face of his death, recognized that he was leaving this world without having

received the things promised by God. Yet, the faith of each also gave him an apprehension of what the physical senses could not perceive. By faith these believers saw and accepted that the provision promised by God was far distant from them. They did not complain of this, as though it were a defect in God's provision. Rather, they welcomed the promises as certain tokens of what would one day surely be theirs. We can afford to exercise patience when we know we have possession of every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.

**Tuesday, February 26<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 11: 13**

As this world cannot contain the books which could be written regarding the life of Jesus, so this world cannot contain the full, glorious provision of God promised to His people. By faith, we understand and accept that this world is too small to hold our blessings. Thus, we by faith confess that our inheritance and citizenship belong to a world infinitely greater than this one. Our home is not in this world, populated with fallen men, ravaged by demons, and made miserable by the righteous curse of God. We have been called by God's grace from our natural home and relations to the realm of eternal, glorious life and immeasurable love.

**Wednesday, February 27<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 11: 13, 14**

The faithful may at times be tempted to envy those whose reward is found in this world (Ps. 73). Yet, believers' confession of their being strangers and exiles on the earth is not a result of their being deprived of anything for which they should envy the worldly man. The exile of the believer from this world is really his liberation from the corruption and cursedness of this world. Nor is it merely liberation from a sinking ship, but entails the possession of a perfect, glorious country.

**Thursday, February 28<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 11: 13, 14**

By our attitudes, words, and actions, we who have saving faith confess that this world is for us a vale of soul sanctifying, and no more. Those residual splendors of this cursed creation we do see do not hold our attention, but point us to the higher creation for which we are bound (Col. 3:1-4). Here we are in the workshop; upstairs is the showroom, and our true home. Faith is that divinely given homing device which ever directs our affections to the heavenly realm that is inconceivably more wonderful and more ravishingly satisfying than the best this cursed world has to offer (1 Cor. 2:9). The glorious perfection of that higher world to which faith draws us is radically different from this imperfect and cursed world, which is the only world we have ever experienced. Yet, faith makes us strangers here, not there. Upon our first entrance into that glorious new creation, we shall be perfectly at home and supremely comfortable. For that glorious country is, by God's conferring, a country of our own, procured and prepared for us by our blessed Redeemer (Jn. 14:2), whose Holy Spirit now is preparing us for our eternal life therein. We lost this world by our sin; we own that glorious world by God's grace.

**Friday, March 1<sup>st</sup> - Hebrews 11: 15**

Faith opens our eyes to the cursed nature of this world and to the superlatively desirable nature of the glorious realm promised to us by God. Faith also shuts the eyes of our hearts to the enticing glitter of this world, to the momentary pleasures of sin, and to the deceptive promises of the world, flesh, and devil. Nothing physically compelled Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to remain in Canaan, with its repeated famines (Gen. 12:10, 26:1, 42:5), and with those patriarchs dwelling there as sojourners in tents. They could have returned to the comfort, seeming security, and familiarity of Ur at any time. But their faith had opened their eyes to the ruined state of this world, as well as to the lasting and glorious riches of the land promised to them by God. Likewise, no physical power compels us to live as strangers and exiles in this world. But our faith enables us to perceive that our place of true blessing and belonging is not in or of this world, but rather in the heavenly glories of God (Col. 3:1-4). That is why the faithful never return to the city of destruction, but ever press on through all challenges to the celestial city.

### **Saturday, March 2<sup>nd</sup> - Hebrews 11: 16**

Faith gives to those possessing it an appetite for things this world can never provide. While faith makes us content with the provision God makes for us during our pilgrimage through this world (Phil. 4:11-13), it also fills us with an increasingly ardent desire for and aspiration after things infinitely greater than any and every thing contained in this world. Nor is this desiring for higher, heavenly things an appetite for wishful, non-existent things. It is the hunger and thirst for those green pastures and still waters to which our great and good Shepherd is with loving certainty leading us.

### **Sunday, March 3<sup>rd</sup> - Hebrews 11: 16**

Faith, as exercised in these early representatives of the faithful, prompted those possessing it to desire not simply a country better in degree, but one infinitely better in kind. Faith does not cause us to focus upon our gaining better possessions or greater competence in this world, although, since the fear of the Lord is the height of wisdom, the faithful do tend to be quite competent in practical matters. But faith prompts our desires toward heaven and especially toward the divine King of heaven. The God who gives such faith is, accordingly, not ashamed to be called the God of those who seek Him and that blessing which only He can graciously give. It does not cause our heavenly Father to blush, so to speak, when He is sought after by His faithful children with all of their hearts, souls, strength, and minds. But from this it follows that God is ashamed to be acknowledged by those who seek Him only to promote their own worldly aims.

### **Monday, March 4<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 11: 16**

That men, made worms and worse than worms by their sin, should desire to reign with the living God in His glory may seem the epitome of an overarching greed that would insult the God of glory. On the contrary, our God is pleased by our fervent desires for that which He sovereignly possesses. Such desire is awakened, directed, and fanned into zeal by the gift of faith which the Lord has given to us. Our longing for the glorious city of God accords with the plans and productions of God, since He has prepared for us the very celestial city which we desire. Our desire for glory prophecies our possession of that which our God has designed and determined to give to us.

### **Tuesday, March 5<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 11: 17, 18**

Abraham was promised by God not only a country but also a child. The Lord graciously provided the land of Canaan, but that rose was not without its testing thorns (e.g., famines, Abraham's sojourning in tents). Those thorns were designed by God to test Abraham's faith. They acted as prods, reminding Abraham that Canaan was but the pledge and token of the city of God, and urging him by faith to look heavenward to the glory reserved for him. By God's grace Abraham was also given a son. The primary thorn in that rose was, for Abraham, more like a spear. The day came when God bluntly commanded Abraham to offer his son, Isaac, as a sacrifice. With that command, God appeared to contradict His own promise and crush the hopes which His gift had raised in Abraham. The tests that the father of the faithful experienced were of such nature and magnitude that he could sustain them by nothing less than faith in his God. Abraham's faith was, through these tests, found tried and not wanting, but brightly shining.

### **Wednesday, March 6<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 11: 17, 18**

The testing of Abraham's faith through the hardships he endured in the country of Canaan were hard enough. Yet, the test of his faith through what God commanded with respect to his child was harder by many magnitudes. The language of God in His command to Abraham heightens this awful difficulty. Isaac was Abraham's cherished son, his only son begotten through his wife, Sarah, and by the promise and power of God (Gen. 22:2). Furthermore, the son to be sacrificed was the seed and source of God's promise of many descendants to issue from Abraham through Isaac (Gen. 12:2; 15:5; 17:1-7; 21:12). Here was a test far beyond reason's height, and one to be reached only by a pure faith set solely upon the divine promising and giving God, whom faith rightly reckons to be blessed and blessing when He gives and when He takes

away. Far from Abraham's faith failing this test, it grew in purity, depth, and strength. May our faith, through the divinely designed tests brought upon us, similarly increase.

#### **Thursday, March 7<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 11: 17, 18**

The temporal gifts of God, be they property or people descended from us, are not essentially the treasures of those spiritual blessings we have in Christ, so much as they are tokens of that blessing. As tokens, they point to the treasure, but also they provide occasions for the testing of our faith. A pure and strong faith rests upon God in Christ alone. Thus, we should not be surprised to find even the good gifts, given to us by our loving Lord, subjected to treatment which amounts to a kind of death for them. Their deaths do not result from divine negligence, impotence, or malice, but rather from the highest, holiest, and most loving design of God to purify the greatest treasure we have in this life, our faith.

#### **Friday, March 8<sup>th</sup> - 11: 17-19**

The hands and heart of Abraham held Isaac gratefully and lovingly until the day God commanded the father of the faithful to put his beloved son to death. With that dreadful divine command, Abraham shut his eyes to Isaac's face and form, his ears to his son's voice, and reckoned him to belong to him no more than a man would deem a corpse to be a member of his family. Against all obstacles and awful consequences, Abraham gave up to the divinely commanded death both Isaac and the promise of a numerous posterity through him. Yet, while he so reckoned Isaac to be dead, by faith he considered Isaac and his promised descendants to be alive again, resurrected by the power of God which reigned supreme over all things, even death. Prior to the day when God told this faithful father to sacrifice his son, Abraham beheld Isaac as a token and reminder of the goodness and power of God. On that dreadful day, Abraham no longer considered God through Isaac, but rather considered Isaac through God. The father, with child-like trust in his heavenly Father, gave up his son, not to death, but to God, who in and through death makes His people to reign as more than conquerors (Rom. 8:37-39).

#### **Saturday, March 9<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 11: 17-19**

Abraham had considered the promises of God (v.17). Concerning the birth of Isaac, he rightly reckoned that the power of God could give life through a man as old and as good as dead as he then was. Yet, when Abraham obeyed God's command to sacrifice Isaac, he considered the person of God, esteeming Him as being greater than His promises. The gifts of God are wonderful, but God Himself is the source of all wonder. The temporal gifts of God all perish. Isaac would die and did die one day, if not by Abraham's hand. But God Himself endures forever. Thus, Abraham considered God, and in his faithful considering of the One who is true, merciful, and powerfully almighty, he reasoned that though he should slay his son and burn his body to ashes, God could and would raise him from death and dissolution. It was from this reasoning, this exercise of the highest, heavenly logic (

All men die, for all men are sinners, and death is the wages of sin (Rom. 6:23). Enoch is the only exception to this rule listed in this chapter. However, believers die as they had lived, by and in faith. The radical difference between those who die in faith and those who die without faith may be perceived in what Jesus says in Jn. 11:25,26, where He tells us that the one believing in Him shall never die, but even in his death shall live. Additionally, in Jn. 5:24, Jesus says that the one believing in Him does not face judgment after death. That the sting of death should be removed for the believer (1 Cor. 15:56), and that the soul of the believer should live in Christ's nearer presence, facing no condemnation, but experiencing ceaseless and immeasurable joy—these are glorious realities possessed by those who die in faith. Such fruition of the divine promises after death more than compensates for any loss or deprivation experienced by believers in their life (Rom. 8:18; Rev. 21:3,4).

#### **Sunday, February 24<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 11: 13**

By faith, these heroes and representatives of believers of all ages, rightly reckoned that death was not the end of their opportunity to have and enjoy blessing. Their faith penetrated the veil separating time and eternity, earth and heaven, grace and glory. They lived by their faith enabling them to be nourished upon the promises of God. Their faith bridged the distance between their having the promises in time and enjoying the fullness of divine provision in eternity. By faith, they lived richly, as more than conquerors; and by faith they passed through their death into immeasurably greater riches of blessing.

#### **Monday, February 25<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 11: 13**

The faith of the saints mentioned in this chapter did not blind them to those things which were perceivable by sight. Each believer, in face of his death, recognized that he was leaving this world without having received the things promised by God. Yet, the faith of each also gave him an apprehension of what the physical senses could not perceive. By faith these believers saw and accepted that the provision promised by God was far distant from them. They did not complain of this, as though it were a defect in God's provision. Rather, they welcomed the promises as certain tokens of what would one day surely be theirs. We can afford to exercise patience when we know we have possession of every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.

#### **Tuesday, February 26<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 11: 13**

As this world cannot contain the books which could be written regarding the life of Jesus, so this world cannot contain the full, glorious provision of God promised to His people. By faith, we understand and accept that this world is too small to hold our blessings. Thus, we by faith confess that our inheritance and citizenship belong to a world infinitely greater than this one. Our home is not in this world, populated with fallen men, ravaged by demons, and made miserable by the righteous curse of God. We have been called by God's grace from our natural home and relations to the realm of eternal, glorious life and immeasurable love.

#### **Wednesday, February 27<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 11: 13, 14**

The faithful may at times be tempted to envy those whose reward is found in this world (Ps. 73). Yet, believers' confession of their being strangers and exiles on the earth is not a result of their being deprived of anything for which they should envy the worldly man. The exile of the believer from this world is really his liberation from the corruption and cursedness of this world. Nor is it merely liberation from a sinking ship, but entails the possession of a perfect, glorious country.

#### **Thursday, February 28<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 11: 13, 14**

By our attitudes, words, and actions, we who have saving faith confess that this world is for us a vale of soul sanctifying, and no more. Those residual splendors of this cursed creation we do see do not hold our attention, but point us to the higher creation for which we are bound (Col. 3:1-4). Here we are in the workshop; upstairs is the showroom, and our true home. Faith is that divinely given homing device which ever directs our affections to the heavenly realm that is inconceivably more wonderful and more ravishingly satisfying than the best this cursed world has to offer (1 Cor. 2:9). The glorious perfection of that higher world to which faith draws us is radically different from this imperfect and cursed world, which is the only world we have ever experienced. Yet, faith makes us strangers here, not there. Upon our first entrance into that glorious new creation, we shall be perfectly at home and supremely comfortable. For that glorious country is, by God's conferring, a country of our own, procured and prepared for us by our blessed Redeemer (Jn. 14:2), whose Holy Spirit now is preparing us for our eternal life therein. We lost this world by our sin; we own that glorious world by God's grace.

#### **Friday, March 1<sup>st</sup> - Hebrews 11: 15**

Faith opens our eyes to the cursed nature of this world and to the superlatively desirable nature of the glorious realm promised to us by God. Faith also shuts the eyes of our hearts to the enticing glitter of this world, to the momentary pleasures of sin, and to the deceptive promises of the world, flesh, and devil. Nothing physically compelled Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to remain in Canaan, with its repeated famines (Gen. 12:10, 26:1, 42:5), and with those patriarchs dwelling there as sojourners in tents. They could have returned to the comfort, seeming security, and familiarity of Ur at any time. But their faith had opened their eyes to the ruined state of this world, as well as to the lasting and glorious riches of the land promised to them by God. Likewise, no physical power compels us to live as strangers and exiles in this world. But our faith enables us to perceive that our place of true blessing and belonging is not in or of this world, but rather in the heavenly glories of God (Col. 3:1-4). That is why the faithful never return to the city of destruction, but ever press on through all challenges to the celestial city.

#### **Saturday, March 2<sup>nd</sup> - Hebrews 11: 16**

Faith gives to those possessing it an appetite for things this world can never provide. While faith makes us content with the provision God makes for us during our pilgrimage through this world (Phil. 4:11-13), it also fills us with an increasingly ardent desire for and aspiration after things infinitely greater than any and every thing contained in this world. Nor is this desiring for higher, heavenly things an appetite for wishful, non-existent things. It is the hunger and thirst for those green pastures and still waters to which our great and good Shepherd is with loving certainty leading us.

#### **Sunday, March 3<sup>rd</sup> - Hebrews 11: 16**

Faith, as exercised in these early representatives of the faithful, prompted those possessing it to desire not simply a country better in degree, but one infinitely better in kind. Faith does not cause us to focus upon our gaining better possessions or greater competence in this world, although, since the fear of the Lord is the height of wisdom, the faithful do tend to be quite competent in practical matters. But faith prompts our desires toward heaven and especially toward the divine King of heaven. The God who gives such faith is, accordingly, not ashamed to be called the God of those who seek Him and that blessing which only He can graciously give. It does not cause our heavenly Father to blush, so to speak, when He is sought after by His faithful children with all of their hearts, souls, strength, and minds. But from this it follows that God is ashamed to be acknowledged by those who seek Him only to promote their own worldly aims.

#### **Monday, March 4<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 11: 16**

That men, made worms and worse than worms by their sin, should desire to reign with the living God in His glory may seem the epitome of an overarching greed that would insult the God of glory. On the contrary, our God is pleased by our fervent desires for that which He sovereignly possesses. Such desire is awakened, directed, and fanned into zeal by the gift of faith which the Lord has given to us. Our longing for the glorious city of God accords with the plans and productions of God, since He has prepared for us the very celestial city which we desire. Our desire for glory prophecies our possession of that which our God has designed and determined to give to us.

#### **Tuesday, March 5<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 11: 17, 18**

Abraham was promised by God not only a country but also a child. The Lord graciously provided the land of Canaan, but that rose was not without its testing thorns (e.g., famines, Abraham's sojourning in tents). Those thorns were designed by God to test Abraham's faith. They acted as prods, reminding Abraham that Canaan was but the pledge and token of the city of God, and urging him by faith to look heavenward to the glory reserved for him. By God's grace Abraham was also given a son. The primary thorn in that rose was, for Abraham, more like a spear. The day came when God bluntly commanded Abraham to offer his son, Isaac, as a sacrifice. With that command, God appeared to contradict His own promise and crush the hopes which His gift had raised in Abraham. The tests that the father of the faithful experienced were of such

nature and magnitude that he could sustain them by nothing less than faith in his God. Abraham's faith was, through these tests, found tried and not wanting, but brightly shining.

### **Wednesday, March 6<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 11: 17, 18**

The testing of Abraham's faith through the hardships he endured in the country of Canaan were hard enough. Yet, the test of his faith through what God commanded with respect to his child was harder by many magnitudes. The language of God in His command to Abraham heightens this awful difficulty. Isaac was Abraham's cherished son, his only son begotten through his wife, Sarah, and by the promise and power of God (Gen. 22:2). Furthermore, the son to be sacrificed was the seed and source of God's promise of many descendants to issue from Abraham through Isaac (Gen. 12:2; 15:5; 17:1-7; 21:12). Here was a test far beyond reason's height, and one to be reached only by a pure faith set solely upon the divine promising and giving God, whom faith rightly reckons to be blessed and blessing when He gives and when He takes away. Far from Abraham's faith failing this test, it grew in purity, depth, and strength. May our faith, through the divinely designed tests brought upon us, similarly increase.

### **Thursday, March 7<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 11: 17, 18**

The temporal gifts of God, be they property or people descended from us, are not essentially the treasures of those spiritual blessings we have in Christ, so much as they are tokens of that blessing. As tokens, they point to the treasure, but also they provide occasions for the testing of our faith. A pure and strong faith rests upon God in Christ alone. Thus, we should not be surprised to find even the good gifts, given to us by our loving Lord, subjected to treatment which amounts to a kind of death for them. Their deaths do not result from divine negligence, impotence, or malice, but rather from the highest, holiest, and most loving design of God to purify the greatest treasure we have in this life, our faith.

### **Friday, March 8<sup>th</sup> - 11: 17-19**

The hands and heart of Abraham held Isaac gratefully and lovingly until the day God commanded the father of the faithful to put his beloved son to death. With that dreadful divine command, Abraham shut his eyes to Isaac's face and form, his ears to his son's voice, and reckoned him to belong to him no more than a man would deem a corpse to be a member of his family. Against all obstacles and awful consequences, Abraham gave up to the divinely commanded death both Isaac and the promise of a numerous posterity through him. Yet, while he so reckoned Isaac to be dead, by faith he considered Isaac and his promised descendants to be alive again, resurrected by the power of God which reigned supreme over all things, even death. Prior to the day when God told this faithful father to sacrifice his son, Abraham beheld Isaac as a token and reminder of the goodness and power of God. On that dreadful day, Abraham no longer considered God through Isaac, but rather considered Isaac through God. The father, with child-like trust in his heavenly Father, gave up his son, not to death, but to God, who in and through death makes His people to reign as more than conquerors (Rom. 8:37-39).

### **Saturday, March 9<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 11: 17-19**

Abraham had considered the promises of God (v.17). Concerning the birth of Isaac, he rightly reckoned that the power of God could give life through a man as old and as good as dead as he then was. Yet, when Abraham obeyed God's command to sacrifice Isaac, he considered the person of God, esteeming Him as being greater than His promises. The gifts of God are wonderful, but God Himself is the source of all wonder. The temporal gifts of God all perish. Isaac would die and did die one day, if not by Abraham's hand. But God Himself endures forever. Thus, Abraham considered God, and in his faithful considering of the One who is true, merciful, and powerfully almighty, he reasoned that though he should slay his son and burn his body to ashes, God could and would raise him from death and dissolution. It was from this reasoning, this exercise of the highest, heavenly logic (*logisa,menoj*), that Abraham received Isaac back from the dead. Our faith enables us rightly to reason that if we give up to our God the most precious things

He has given to us, we shall receive more from such giving than we ever had to hold before our renunciation.

**Sunday, March 10<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 11: 17-19**

Abraham gave up his only begotten and beloved son for the sake of the Lord. By such giving, he lost nothing and gained much. He gained a more pure and perfect faith in His God, reckoning Him to be sufficient to provide more through His apparent taking back of a promise than what Abraham had as he held the provision of that promise. Abraham's testing showed to God, to himself, and to us, that he loved, trusted, and would obey His God above anything else. He also received back Isaac, whom he had given up. But he received back Isaac not merely as his son, but as a parable (evn parabolh/l) of the Father's sacrificial love and the Son's willing death whereby the people of God obtain a lasting, glorious inheritance, and a perfected fellowship in holy love which shall endure forever.

**Monday, March 11<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 11: 20**

The account of Isaac's life as given in Genesis makes plain that he was faithless and foolish in his preference for Esau over Jacob. Nevertheless, his faith was demonstrated in his blessing both Jacob and Esau, the eternal blessing being given to Jacob and temporal blessing to Esau by the overruling providence of God. Because Isaac laid hold of God's covenant by faith, his blessing was far more than happy wishes; it was the conferring of substantial blessing.

**Tuesday, March 12<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 11: 21**

The writer here sets out as the chief example of Jacob's faith his blessing the sons of Joseph as he was dying. This example might seem to us not nearly as great as was the incident of Jacob's wrestling with the angel of the Lord and, by his faith, prevailing. However, when we read of this blessing of Jacob, we see how full of faith it is (Gen. 48:15,16). That blessing was given by a man at death's door, who would, naturally speaking, have nothing to give. Yet, he called upon the covenant God before whom His fathers walked, acknowledged that God had been his shepherd all of his life, and that the angel of the Lord with whom he prevailed in his wrestling had redeemed him from all evil. It was this God, who had so richly blessed Jacob, upon whom he called to bless Joseph's sons, giving the greater blessing to the younger. Thus did the faith of Jacob grow in strength even as his outer man decayed.

**Wednesday, March 13<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 11: 22**

Joseph was another example of a man attaining his fullest measure of faith as his physical life was about to expire. Joseph was a man who, at seventeen years of age, received direct, divine communication in two dreams. Those dreams, and whatever teaching he had absorbed from his parents, were grasped by faith sufficiently to sustain him through the treachery of his brothers and the years of manifold affliction in Egypt. Yet, our writer points to Joseph's dying directive with respect to his mortal remains as being the height of his faith. It was his faith's zenith because by his directing that his bones be taken from Egypt and carried to Canaan, he testified that Egypt, the land in which he was exalted, was not his home. He foresaw the exodus and esteemed the promised land so far above Egypt that he would not allow a trace of himself to remain in the land of Pharaoh.

**Thursday, March 14<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 11: 23**

With this verse, the faith of the parents of Moses is extolled. Far from them obeying Pharaoh's edict to put all Hebrew male infants to death—doing so in order to preserve their own lives—they hazarded their lives in order to save their son. They did this not from the prompting of natural affection, but by the impulse of faith. Our writer tells us that the parents saw that their son was a beautiful child. When we compare that statement with what Stephen said about Moses being beautiful to God (Acts 7:20), we conclude that the

eyes of their hearts beheld in Moses a special divine claim, and it was that which made them risk their lives in order to save his. We are always more safe and serve more effectively when we throw off our fears and serve God by faith, and not by natural sentiment.

**Friday, March 15<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 11: 24, 25**

In these verses, the faith of Moses himself is celebrated. He who had been raised by Pharaoh's daughter to be a veritable prince of Egypt, showed himself not spoiled by the riches and worldly glories of that great nation. Had Moses retained the relation of his being Pharaoh's grandson, he might have enjoyed worldly power and prestige. He might also have rationalized that he would have been able to relieve the earthly woes of his fellow Hebrews if he retained his high position in Egypt. Instead, he renounced all carnal position and provision and chose to stand, serve, and suffer with the people of God. Only faith enables one to esteem the promises and people of God above the riches and respectability of this world.

**Saturday, March 16<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 11: 24-26**

Moses refused the worldly honor and powerful position of his being the son of Pharaoh's daughter. He, like Paul with his impressive natural endowments and attainments, counted the best things in the world without Christ to be but rubbish (Phil. 3:4-14). By faith, Moses rightly reckoned pleasures to be curses if they came to him sinfully. By faith he also rightly reckoned that curses and afflictions borne for Christ's sake and in fellowship with the Lord's people were honors to be relished (Mt. 5:10-12; 2 Cor. 12:7-10). The faith of Moses enabled him rightly to see the cursed nature of worldly ease without God and the blessed nature of the furnace of affliction with God. Our faith should enable us to see and seek the true blessing and avoid the true curse as well.

**Sunday, March 17<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 11: 24-26**

Faith makes men consider above all the only true, saving object of faith, namely, Christ. Thus, Abraham, who lived many centuries before Jesus, saw the Savior's day and was glad (Jn. 8:56). So too Moses, by faith, regarded Christ, and considered reproach suffered for Him to be more precious and pleasing than all of the fading treasures the world could offer. By faith, Moses had supreme regard for the reward of eternal, glorious life with God in Christ. That made him discontented with the world's trinkets, and caused him to delight in the narrow way, with all of its pains, since it led to life.

**Monday, March 18<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 11: 27**

The faith of Moses led him not only to have and hold right convictions, but also supplied him with courage to follow his godly convictions. Thus, he stood bravely before Pharaoh, the mightiest man on earth in his day, demanding that Egypt's king should let his Hebrew slaves go because they belonged to the King of kings. This demand was enforced by the plagues, until Pharaoh told Moses to leave Egypt or face death (Gen. 10:28,29). Moses left Egypt, not because he feared the death with which Pharaoh threatened him, but because he by faith beheld his invisible God, whom he knew to be his shield and exceeding great reward (Gen. 15:1). By faith, the eyes of Moses were opened—as were Elisha's eyes opened, and, by his prayers, so were his servant's eyes opened (2 Ki:6:16,17)—to the fact that the God who is with us is infinitely greater than any who can stand against us (1 Jn. 4:4).

**Tuesday, March 19<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 11: 28**

Moses faithfully instituted the Passover, giving to Israel detailed instructions for that holy sacrament. But more than this, Moses kept the Passover himself. His exaltation by God to lead the people did not exempt him from humbly and carefully observing the Passover, trusting the blood of the slain lamb to preserve his own family. By his faith in this holy ordinance, the life of Moses' own first born son was spared, as was the life of Aaron, the older brother of Moses (Ex. 7:7), and likely the first-born of Moses' parents. As great as

Moses was made to be by His God, he yet demonstrated by his keeping the Passover that he and his household were sinners saved by divine grace.

**Wednesday, March 20<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 11: 28, 29**

By faith, Moses kept the Passover, and thus he and all Israel were preserved from the destroying angel of the Lord. The divine wrath was confined as a pledge to but a portion of the people, namely, the first-born. But all deserved to die as sinners. Those covered by the blood of the lamb were saved. Once Moses and the people of God had life and peace with God through the blood of the lamb which typified Christ, and once they were delivered from their bondage in Egypt, their lives were threatened by Pharaoh's pursuing army. With that pursuit, the lives of all of the people of Israel were in jeopardy. As Moses saved himself and the people from the wrath of God through the Passover faithfully kept, so he saved them all from the wrath of the wicked by his trusting that God would create through the barrier of the Red Sea a way of escape. The people of God under Moses were trained early in their freedom to live by faith.

**Thursday, March 21<sup>st</sup> - Hebrews 11: 29**

In this verse, it is not only the faith of Moses which is acclaimed, but also the faith of the whole people of God. For they dared to venture into what should have been for them a watery grave, in order to escape from the sword of Pharaoh. They believed that God would make a way of life for them through death, because He had promised that He would do just that (Ex. 14:15-18). Not only so, but while the people trusted God to hold back the waters for their passage, the Lord did above what they expected and covered the army of Pharaoh with those same waters, thus freeing the people forever from the threat of Pharaoh's pursuit. Those trusting God in the valley of the shadow of death will find that valley to serve for their safe passage and for the destruction of their enemies.

**Friday, March 22<sup>nd</sup> - Hebrews 11: 30**

The walls of Jericho fell not by any physical law. The people's tramping, the trumpets blowing, and the shout of the Lord's hosts did not make those stone defenses fall. Those things rather accompanied the power by which the walls were brought down. The effective power was the faith of the people of God. By faith, not only are waters divided and held up like walls (Ex. 14:22), but solid walls are dissolved as though they are but liquid. By faith we escape our enemies, and by faith our enemies are exposed before us, they having no defenses or way of escape.

**Saturday, March 23<sup>rd</sup> - Hebrews 11: 31**

This verse alerts us to the fact that faith is graciously dispensed by God. The people of Israel did not have a corner on the market of faith. Rahab was not only a Canaanite, but also a woman who made her living by a sinful trade. By any kind of moral reckoning, she deserved to perish along with all of the other inhabitants of Jericho. Yet, she aided those Israelite spies who came as the prelude to the destruction of her city and her people. Through the faith that prompted her action, she made peace with Israel and with Israel's God. Her faith inclined and empowered her toward reconciliation, with the result that she was spared in Jericho's fall. She also was incorporated by God as a living stone into the household of faith. She attained a place of great significance amongst the redeemed, as she was in the line from which Jesus was descended (Mt. 1:5). Saving faith makes radical changes in our allegiances, our service, and our destinies.

**Sunday, March 24<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 11: 32**

With this verse, the writer begins the summary and conclusion of his hall of fame of the faithful. The giants of faith listed prior to this verse are outstanding amidst a multitude of those who have done exploits by

faith. There were judges such as Gideon, Barak, Samson, and Jephthah—all of whom achieved victories over the numerically superior forces of the enemies of God's people. King David is also mentioned as one who wrought great deliverances for Israel in battle, while Samuel, who was a judge and prophet, is listed as a representative of the prophets who by faith received and delivered God's saving Word to His people. We know something of what these men did, but compared with what God knows they did by faith we do not know the half of it. It is no wonder that these giants of faith are characterized by God's Word as being the majestic ones of the earth (Ps. 16:3). Yet, we are amongst their company, and have a faith the same as theirs in character, if not in measure or consistency of exercise. Let us be drawn by their example to make more of and do more with our faith.

#### **Monday, March 25<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 11: 32**

None of these shining examples of faith were without their sin. Some of them, such as Samson and David, towered above their fellows not only in their accomplishment of wonderful deeds of faith, but also in the grievous magnitude of their sins. We learn by the account of their sins what sort of men they were naturally. We learn by the account of their faithful exploits how greatly they were enabled to serve for the glory of God by their faith. Be our own sins ever so great, let us throw them off and arise to run our race by faith (Heb. 12:1).

#### **Tuesday, March 26<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 11: 32-34**

Men of faith are listed in v.32, while mighty deeds of faith are set before us in vv.33,34. The mighty deeds mentioned allude to more men than the ones listed in v.32. The judges, and certainly David, conquered kingdoms, did righteous deeds, and obtained promises. Yet, we are led to think of Daniel with the reference to shutting lions' mouths, and of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, with the mention of quenching fire (Dan. 3,6). The other references, such as escaping from the sword, being made strong from weakness, becoming mighty in war, and routing foreign armies are more general and seem to apply not only to the faithful leaders of God's people, but to the masses making up the host of the Lord who as companies of faithful servants and soldiers did valiantly by and for the Lord. Faith may be remarkable in each and every instance of its exercise, but it is not rare among the Lord's people. Indeed, as King Solomon made silver as common as stones in Jerusalem (1 Ki. 10:27), our divine King makes the precious power of faith to be the indispensable treasure possessed by all of His redeemed children in the body of Christ.

#### **Wednesday, March 27<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 11: 33, 34**

These deeds of faith, wrought out in history, are still representative of what we may accomplish spiritually by faith. We can, by faith, quench Satan's flaming darts (Eph. 6:16), obtain divine promises (2 Pet. 1:4), shut the roaring mouth of the devil (1 Pet. 5:8,9), find strength in our weaknesses (2 Cor. 12: 9,10), and stand in the most evil day as more than conquerors (Eph. 6:10ff; Rom. 8:35-39). Today is our day to perform exploits by faith.

#### **Thursday, March 28<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 11: 35**

It was not only men who wrought mighty deeds by faith, but women also, by their exercise of faith, wrought great changes in desperate situations. That which the natural man—the mightiest in physical strength, the most capable doctor, or the most wealthy and competent collection of men—can never do, women did by their faith. They received back their dead. We think of the son of the widow of Zarephath, whom Elijah raised from the dead (1 Ki. 17:17ff), the Shunamite's son, whom Elisha raised from the dead (2 Ki. 4:18ff), and Lazarus, the brother of Mary and Martha, who was raised by Jesus from the dead (Jn. 11:1-46). The accounts of these emblematic resurrections do not seem to indicate the exercise of much, if any, faith on the part of the women associated with them. Yet, this verse makes it clear to us that their belief, though clouded by unbelief, was essential to the marvelous work. If little faith can do so much through ones so naturally weak, how much can we do with great faith?

### **Friday, March 29<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 11: 35**

As we learned from the examples of Abel and Enoch (vv.4,5), so we gather again from this verse that to faith, whether we live or die is not a matter of essential importance. Faith can deliver and has delivered some from death, and faith can deliver and has delivered others through death. Faith reckons that whether we live or die, we are the Lord's (Rom. 14:8); that to live is Christ, to die is gain (Phil. 1:21); and that we are blessed by the Lord if we experience escapes from death (Ps. 68:20), or if we glorify the Lord by our death (Jn. 21:18,19). Faith enables us to regard death not as a curse to be avoided at all costs, but rather as a servant compelled to work for our highest good (Rom. 8:28).

### **Saturday, March 30<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 11: 35**

Faith emboldens its possessors, making them defiant of the threats or actual experience of suffering and death. Faith also makes us impervious to whatever shame and pain may be heaped upon us prior to our death. The faithful may rightly reckon that the sufferings of this life are not worthy to be compared to the glorious compensation they will receive after this life (Rom. 8:18). We may not always feel that we could endure torture because we have the highest regard for a resurrection better than we would experience were we to pacify our tormentors with denials of our faith. However, it is true, as Charles Spurgeon remarked in response to a friend's observation that few, if any, Christians in their easy day would go to the stake for their faith, that when burning times come upon the saints, God gives them burning grace.

### **Sunday, March 31<sup>st</sup> - Hebrews 36-38**

These verses compile practically the whole range of possible suffering a believer may endure for his faith. The compilation is grim, indeed, and reminds us of the infernal ingenuity of the wicked, as manifested in their having devised and practiced many ways to inflict pain upon the righteous. Yet, the fact that the faithful actually have endured such sufferings tells us a greater truth, namely, that faith empowered them to sustain any and every sword, stone, saw, lion's pit, or fiery furnace Satan and his infernal instigation of wicked men threw at them. We need not fear these things, for even if we are caught in their grip, we may by the exercise of our faith stand in them as more than conquerors (Rom. 8:35ff).

### **Monday, April 1<sup>st</sup> - Hebrews 11: 36-38**

The faithful have been compelled not only to endure awful deaths, but also to lead deprived lives. The innocent lambs of Jesus have been despised, imprisoned, and executed as criminals. In evil days, believers have been treated as cursed ones, untouchable by any except for those with a mind and the power and opportunity to hurt them. Yet, appearances are deceitful. The reality of the suffering saints' blessedness is parenthetically stated. Through the wicked violence exercised against them, believers were not receiving justly deserved punishment, but were being ushered out of a world for which they, by God's grace, had been made too good. Their awful deaths did not destroy them, but delivered them to their blessed and glorious inheritance.

### **Tuesday, April 2<sup>nd</sup> - Hebrews 11: 36-38**

The world and suffering believers can together easily see the afflictions heaped upon the righteous. What is not, through such suffering, evident to anything but faith is why the Lord's people are made to endure such afflictions. The sufferings of the redeemed do not come upon them, as the faithless suppose, because they are neglected or despised by their God, but rather because God loves and disciplines His people (Heb. 12:5,6), because the heavenly Father is refining the faith of His children (1 Pet. 1:6,7), and because the Lord is causing the production of an eternal weight of glory for His people (2 Cor. 4:16-18), while He causes through their testing an increase, not a decrease, of their imparted righteousness (compare Job 2:3 with Job 42:7-10). Faith penetrates the parenthesis, which covers from sight the truth that the righteous suffer not because they are unworthy of this world, but because they are too worthy for it, and thus are destined for a new heaven and earth wherein righteousness dwells.

**Wednesday, April 3<sup>rd</sup> - Hebrews 11: 37, 38**

The treatment the Lord's faithful people receive at the hands of the men of this world has been and still is almost unspeakably awful. We may rightly say that the Lord's best servants have often been treated as though they were trash. The faith of the righteous, however, enables them not to lose sight of the fact that they are treasured by the God of heaven, who causes all things, even their most painful sufferings, to serve for their highest good.

**Thursday, April 4<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 11: 39, 40**

In these verses, the writer makes explicit what has been implicit throughout his rehearsal of the heroes and heroic deeds of the faithful, namely, that they are examples to inspire and empower us to live by a victorious faith such as they had. The suffering saints of the past may not have received, in this life, the full provision of what God had promised, but they did possess through their exercise of faith the approval of God. By our faithful working out of our salvation, we, too, may please our Lord, not only by who we are, but also by what we do. If our heavenly Father approves us, what should it matter to us that the world afflicts us with all of its puny, fading power?

**Friday, April 5<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 11: 39, 40**

Faith enables us rightly to perceive and submit to the truth that it is sufficient in this life that we receive the approval of our God before we receive the substance and fullness of what He promises to us. The fact that we have peace with God, and that, by His Holy Spirit's working in us, we will and do His good pleasure, are abundant guarantees that we shall have the fullness in due course. Furthermore, the nature of the divine promises precludes any believer from enjoying their fullness in this world. For this world, even with the divine curse removed, is too small to contain the glory promised to us. Part of that glory is the fellowship we shall enjoy with all of the redeemed, including those from past ages, and those yet to be born. It is the whole body of Christ which is the fullness of Him who fills all (Eph. 1:23).

**Saturday, April 6<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 11: 39, 40**

By the design and calling of God, we are joined together with this company of faithful heroes. They who in the past lived and died, who were tried and made triumphant by their faith, have the fulfillment of God's promise to them suspended until every believer in every age works out his salvation by faith to the glory of God. We are part of this great and glory bound company. We are called to record our histories, to strive and prevail by the exercise of our faith, and thereby to take our place in this growing army of faithful victors. The fullness of the promises of God cannot be had by any until all of the faithful enjoy its commencement together at the marriage supper of the Lamb. It is no wonder, then, that the Spirit and the bride say, *Come quickly, Lord Jesus.*

**Sunday, April 7<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 12: 1**

We are not pious spectators, watching and wondering at this gallery of heroes of faith. Rather, the faithful ones sketched for us in chapter 11 form a luminous cloud of victors, whose lives testify to us the true way to earthly victory and heavenly reward. These faithful ones are not watching us (they are not qewrou/ntej), they are testifiers to us (martu/pwn) of the triumphant sufficiency of faith. Though they are dead, they still speak to us through Scripture of the great power and magnificent possibilities of the faith that we, by God's gracious giving, possess as they did.

**Monday, April 8<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 12:1**

The Scriptural record we have of the lives of the faithful in Chapter 11 is but representative of a great cloud of witnesses. Pure and potent faith may seem rare in any given generation. Elijah thought that he alone

possessed it in his day, only to be informed by God that there were yet 7,000 in Israel who had not bowed the knee to Baal (1 Ki. 19:14,18). The company of those who lived, died, and triumphed by faith is not small, but great. We have testimony from a great and victorious host.

#### **Tuesday, April 9<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 12: 1**

The image of this great cloud of witnesses surrounding us is one that is full of fortifying encouragement. It indicates to us that every step we take in our pilgrimage has been taken by faithful ones who have preceded us. No matter which way we turn, at least some from this circle of the faithful surrounding us have been there in their own walk. If they safely passed through the twists and turns in the course, which can to us seem so threatening and lonely, then we may be assured that we shall also safely pass through them to glory.

#### **Wednesday, April 10<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 12: 1**

The writer exhorts us to join the procession of faithful victors. He calls us to become like them in our performance. The lives of the witnesses attract us to imitate them. But in addition to that attractive power, we have the call of the Holy Spirit through the inspired writer of this letter, exhorting us to commit ourselves to following their course. This gives us warrant to trust that by our responding to this call, we shall find grace ministered to us by the Spirit of God, who led and sustained all of these witnesses in their race, so that we shall not fail to fulfill our own unique place in the glorious parade of redeemed super-conquerors.

#### **Thursday, April 11<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 12: 1**

We are not only called to run the race of the faithful, we are also told how we must run. The first part of our instruction is negative. We are to lay aside anything that encumbers us. As a race is not run while we wear heavy, encumbering clothes, so we are told that in our spiritual race we are to lay aside anything that would divert us or slow our pace. This may mean that we shed many legitimate things, for the good may keep us from the excellent, as busy Martha learned (Lk. 10:38-42). We certainly must lay aside the one thing that not only impedes our progress, but mires us to a standstill, namely, sin. Hereby, we are called to subdue those remnants of our sin nature which, if not constantly mortified, will certainly concentrate and reassert dominion over us (Rom. 6:12-14). Our failure so to mortify our residual sin, will enable the fragmented remnants to grow in power quickly, so that we are not merely annoyed, but are easily and woefully entangled. Unmortified sin can reduce us from our having an unconquerable power, to our being like Samson, shorn of his hair by his sinful disclosure to Delilah, and easily ensnared by the Philistines (Jud. 16:15-21). Let us, then, make no provision for the flesh, as we put the Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 13:14).

#### **Friday, April 12<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 12: 1**

We are called to run a race. Unlike a leisurely stroll, a race demands costly exertion. Faith does not render us passive, but is rather a stimulating power, inciting and energizing us to believe great things of our God and to attempt and achieve great things for His glory. However, this race is no quick sprint. We are called to run a protracted course full of trying obstacles. Therefore, we must know that endurance of pain and suffering is required of us if we are to press on in this race. No pain, no price we may have to pay, no trial, no enemy must be allowed to stop us from our glorious goal. As Jesus finished His saving work (Jn. 19:30), so faith in Jesus makes us finishers (2 Tim. 4:7,8), who run, without growing weary, who walk, without fainting (Is. 40:29-31).

#### **Saturday, April 13<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 12: 1**

The race we are called to run by an enduring faith is set before us. This informs us of two things. First, we should know that the course is near us. Indeed, by our regeneration we entered this race. Thus, the way is not unknown to us nor is its commencement distant from us. However we may have drifted aimlessly up

to this day, the race is set before us this day and, by God's calling and gracious enabling, we are well equipped to run it. Secondly, the race is set before us by our sovereign Lord. He knows the way He has sovereignly determined for us, and we may thus run with assurance that He will be with us, sustaining us through all twists, turns, and trials. We may run with confidence that He who set our course not only knows the way and accompanies us in it, but also that He is committed to sustaining us to its end (Ps. 23:4, Mt. 28:20, Heb. 13:5).

### **Sunday, April 14<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 12: 1, 2**

We are surrounded by the testimony of those who have run and finished their race by faith. Though these saints are dead, their testimony recorded in Scripture still powerfully speaks to us. But there is before them all One who surrounds us not with testimony alone, but also with His triumphant presence. Jesus is the author and perfecter of this faith by which we race to eternal glory. He is the alpha and omega, the beginning and the end, the One who by His incarnation, life, death, resurrection, and ascension has run the perfect race and accompanies us in our run every step of our way (Rev. 1:17,18; 22:13). Jesus has planned, accomplished, and applied, in concert with the Father and the Holy Spirit, all the blessed benefits we have by His redeeming work, and by which benefits we are sustained in our race. We should heed the witnesses' words as they apply to our race, but we focus our faith not upon them, but upon our living and victorious Savior, who ever lives to direct and empower us to our glorious finish.

### **Monday, April 15<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 12: 2**

We are told how Jesus ran his earthly race so that we might follow His example. The joyful and glorious consummation of His redeeming sufferings was His focus. He therefore considered the crown of His highest exaltation to the glory of God (Phil. 2:9-11), and the joy of His marriage to His bride, the Church (Jn. 17:20-26) to be His empowering, sustaining incentives leading Him through His sufferings. We are told that this concentration led Him to despise the costly shame and agony of His humiliation and death, meaning, that He thought little of them, counting them a cost not worthy to be compared with the glorious reward (Rom. 8:18). The final results of this focus were His accomplishment of the redemption of the people of God, and His highest exaltation to the place of supreme honor, authority, and power, as He, having finished His course, now sits at the right hand of the sovereign God. It is this victorious and glory laden Christ who has been given to reign effectually over His Church (Eph. 1:22, 23). With this example and empowering, how can we fail to run the race well to its glorious end?

### **Tuesday, April 16<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 12: 3**

Our Lord has set the course of our race, plotting its direction and filling it with opportunities for us to walk in those good works He has prepared for us (Eph. 2:10). All things in the course serve for our good (Rom. 8:28), which good is defined as our sanctification (1 Thess. 4:3). In addition to our Lord's setting our course, He sets the example for our race by His own life. Therefore, as we run this race from grace to glory, we are called not so much to concentrate on the way, as we are told to focus on Jesus, who has plotted and has Himself completed the course. We are told in this verse to consider Jesus. The word, *consider* (avnalogi,sasqe) means that we recognize and reason over the facts of our Savior's earthly life. In His life, He endured challenges, just as we are called to run with endurance. However, there is a great difference between what He endured and what we are called to endure. He was a perfect Man, submitting voluntarily to suffering at the hands of sinners in order that He might redeem His people from their sins. We are sinners, and so deserve our sufferings. Nor do we ever suffer to the extent that we deserve. Our Savior triumphantly traversed the course of sufferings not to keep us out of it, but so that we, too, might carry on through it to triumph. We grow weary if we lose sight and understanding of the fact that the worst burden has been borne by Him, and that thereby He has transformed all of our sufferings into servants for our good.

### **Wednesday, April 17<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 12: 3**

In this verse, the writer shifts the personal pronouns from *us* and *our* (vv.1,2), to *you*. By this, he indicates that he has not ceased considering Jesus as his readers, at least to some extent, had done. Nor had he grown weary and disheartened in his race as they had done. From this we see the value of a vital doctrine and practice of fellowship with other believers. For Satan cannot lure us all from Jesus at the same time. Some may drift, but there will always be others cleaving to the Savior, and calling those drifting from Him to return to Him.

#### **Thursday, April 18<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 12: 3, 4**

In v.3, the dignity of Christ's person and His loving endurance of undeserved sufferings to save us is contrasted with our sinful deserving of our sufferings. In v.4, it is the difference in degree between our Lord's suffering and ours that is mentioned. These contrasts are drawn to give our sufferings their proper perspective. We grow weary and disheartened when we lose sight of the fact that our sufferings are but shadows compared with the awful substance of suffering our Redeemer endured. These verses present to us the truth that a better Man, indeed a perfect Man, has suffered worse things than we shall ever endure. This truth should not discourage us, but rather fortify us in the knowledge that if the greatest sufferings did not destroy Christ, then neither shall our lesser sufferings destroy us.

#### **Friday, April 19<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 12: 4-6**

The original recipients of this letter may have suffered for their faith, but the writer reminds them that they have not suffered to the infinitely extreme extent that Jesus suffered in His atoning work. They had not even suffered to the point of some of the heroes of faith listed in Heb. 11:35-37, for such suffering is rare in any day. What can make our suffering seem so awful and disheartening to us is not its objective weight, but our subjective misunderstanding of the source and effects of our suffering. We easily forget that our God sovereignly ordains all things, including the afflictions we bear. He has wise purposes guiding His ordaining of our sufferings. Our remembering that infinite wisdom ordains our sufferings fortifies us with hope.

#### **Saturday, April 20<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 12: 4-6**

Our God is not only our sovereign Lord, wisely ordaining our afflictions according to His wise and holy purposes, He is also our heavenly Father, who has adopted us through Christ as His sons. In that capacity, He sinlessly and lovingly employs all that would destroy us to discipline us. The cursed elements of the world, the wickedness of men, and the hatred of devils would ruin us, but our Father turns their assaults into strokes which refine us.

#### **Sunday, April 21<sup>st</sup> - Hebrews 12: 7, 8**

We naturally want to be rid of our suffering. We view it as the great curse, encumbering our life's race, and we would accordingly lay it aside before we would ever lay aside our sin (v.1). Yet, our holy, heavenly Father is lovingly committed to saving us from the real encumbering power which so easily entangles us, namely, sin. Our afflictions serve as effective tools in our Father's hands for our sanctification. Thus, rightly viewed, our disciplinary sufferings are tokens of our Father's love. When we desire to be free of chastisements, we are seeking less divine love, not more. We tend still to think that our sin is not so bad as our suffering. Our wise and loving God does not indulge His children in that delusion, but delivers them with painful prods from it.

#### **Monday, April 22<sup>nd</sup> - Hebrews 12: 9-11**

The true perspective in which we should view our sufferings is here illustrated through an earthly example. A loving father does not indulge his son, allowing him to enjoy gratifications that will later injure him. Loving fathers impose restrictions and even, when appropriate, the rod of correction upon their children. They do this not because they hate and want to ruin their children, but rather because they love them and

seek, through discipline, to make them wiser, and stronger. Sooner or later, children see the wisdom and love of parental discipline, and offer, in response, grateful respect to their faithful parents. If the wise and loving application of earthly discipline results in fruits which vindicate such discipline, we should accept that the same will hold true, to perfect extent and effect, through the discipline we receive from our heavenly Father.

#### **Tuesday, April 23<sup>rd</sup> - Hebrews 12: 9**

There are, alas, irresponsible, incompetent, abusive parents in the world, more perhaps in our day than ever before. Yet the writer here speaks about the general experience of decent parents who try to prepare their children for safe and successful living in the world. Even a poor parent has valuable lessons to teach his children through his disciplining them. Eventually, children grow to see and appreciate, if not the methods, then at least the intention of their parents. If we can so respect our imperfect parents who succeed in only partially equipping us for life in this fading world, we should without limitation respectfully submit ourselves to the discipline of our heavenly Father, whose love is pure and immeasurable for us, and whose wisdom infallibly attains His highest aim for us, namely, our eternal life with Him in glory.

#### **Wednesday, April 24<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 12: 9, 10**

Earthly fathers discipline their sons in order to train them into being worthy and responsible heirs. Their conception of what makes a worthy heir is less than perfect, their discipline is either too lax or too severe, and their success only partial. Yet, in due course, those being so disciplined by their fathers grow to appreciate the intention of their fathers, and, at least to some degree, come to respect them for it. Our heavenly Father disciplines us not only while we are children, but throughout the course of our earthly lives. He does so according to His perfect wisdom and love. Thus, the discipline we receive from Him is perfectly suited to our need as well as to the high goal to which our God has destined us. The discipline of our heavenly Father serves for our highest good. That good is not defined by our low desires and carnal aspirations, but by the character of our divine Father. He disciplines us not to make us happy, but rather to make us holy. The Father's calling and will are for our sanctification (Eph. 1:4; 1 Thess. 4:3; 1 Pet. 1:15). His discipline does not fail to achieve this high design. No intention could be more loving, and no means could be more effectual, than we find through our heavenly Father's discipline. Nor can any end, once achieved, call for higher love and respect from those who have by such discipline been led to it.

#### **Thursday, April 25<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 12: 9, 10**

The discipline of the Lord is not an oppressive regime designed to gratify our heavenly Father at the expense of our suffering and sacrificing our own happiness. Instead, our sharing in God's holiness results in His glory and our supreme good. The divine discipline conforms us to the image of Christ, from whom the perfect character of the Father shines forth (Heb. 1:3). Our being made perfect, as our Father is perfect (Mt. 5:48), will not fail to delight us with enjoyment of the highest good, namely, our permanent and perfect possession of the glorious moral excellency of our God, and our full and final deliverance from the corruption, guilt, and misery of our sin (2 Pet. 1:4).

#### **Friday, April 26<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 12: 11**

The glorious production of perfect holiness in us more than justifies the loving wisdom of God in His application of such discipline, and more than compensates for the pain we endure in its productive course (Rom. 8:18). This bright end, when kept in view, casts a comforting and empowering light upon us as we are led through valleys of painful refinement. Our God is not primarily concerned with our current pain and suffering, but cares supremely for the glorious and gladdening fruition of His sanctifying work in our lives. Therefore, He puts His most beloved children through painful, purifying fires of affliction. The examples of Job (Job 1, 2, 42:5-17), and of Paul (2 Cor. 11:23-33; 12:9,10; 2 Tim. 4:7,8) indicate to us that our heavenly Father does not spare us for our cries, but He maintains supreme confidence in His immeasurable love for us and in His infallible wisdom and power to accomplish His highest aim for us. Accordingly, He

graciously sustains us to stay the course to the goal of our gain. That gain is so glorious that the pains we endured in the discipline producing it will fade in the brightness of our gratitude, wonder, and love for our Father who so loved us and led us to that blessed end.

#### **Saturday, April 27<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 12: 11**

Our learning to see the connection between the pain of our discipline and the glorious product it yields in our lives enables us to sustain the course of our refining fires. The production of righteousness in us yields a peace and pleasure that erase even the memory of our pains. However, our sufferings are not useless. Those pains which seem most counter to our good and happiness serve most directly to promote our highest and most enduring blessedness. We do not see this and draw sustaining power from it except through our gradually being trained in the gymnasium (gegumnasme,noij) of those divine disciplines which lead us to look beyond current sorrow to the joy of our perfected sanctification.

#### **Sunday, April 28<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 12: 11-13**

In our cursed world, thorns and tares grow more readily than wheat. Those plants most useful and pleasing to man must be cultivated. Similarly, we do not grow stronger and better by perpetual ease and gratification. We attain greater strength, better health, and higher usefulness by our submitting to a course of training. The peaceable fruit of righteousness is one that is highly cultivated by the painfully pruning hand of the Lord. Thus, we have the exhortation to strengthen weak hands and feeble knees by our understanding and submitting to the fruit-bearing discipline of the Lord. Our hands, representing our actions, are naturally slack in the performance of righteousness. Our knees, representing our walk—the course and direction of our lives—tend naturally to fold us into a complacent sitting in the seat of scoffers (Ps. 1:1). The paths for our feet, representing our ordering our affairs and prioritizing our commitments, tend to be littered with low goals and carnal aspirations that distract and encumber us in our race to righteousness. It is the commitment of our God to strengthen our godly attitudes and actions, and to strip our paths of carnal litter. This divine commitment should be ours as well.

#### **Monday, April 29<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 12: 14**

The practical application in this great letter continues in this verse. Our faith in and focus upon our Lord will result in a changed way in which we live with men. We are thus exhorted to pursue after peace with others. There is a note of realism, so characteristic in all biblical teaching, in the call to pursue after this peace. For it will not be possible for us to achieve peace with all men. If many rise up in defiant resistance against the Lord and His Anointed, they who hate and persecute the Master will not lovingly embrace His servants. Yet, our calling is to strive to be at peace with others (Rom. 12:18). Our commitment to be peaceable, offering to establish a pacific bond between ourselves and others, should not be diminished or forsaken because we reckon the achievement of peace with them will be unlikely. The Prince of Peace is rejected by many men, not because He does not offer peace to them, but because they refuse the precious gift. Similarly, any lack of peace between ourselves and others should result not from our refusal to strive for it, but from their sinful rejection of it.

#### **Tuesday, April 30<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 12: 14**

We are to pursue after peace not only with our brethren and friends. Even with them, the maintenance of peace calls for our diligent commitment (Eph. 4:3). But we are to pursue after peace with all men. We do this not by our ignoring our neighbors, but by our loving them (Lev. 19:18; Mt. 22:39). We serve to reconcile and pacify our enemies not by our cowardly flight from them or vindictive fighting against them, but by our loving them (Mt. 5:44; Rom. 12:19-21). We may not attain peace with all men, but we certainly can offer it to all men.

#### **Wednesday, May 1<sup>st</sup> - Hebrews 12: 14**

We do well to note the connection between peace and purity in this verse. Our striving after peace with men must not be done in such a way that we sacrifice our sanctification. That friendship with the world which comes at the price of enmity against God is neither commended to us nor commanded of us in this verse (Jas. 4:4). Our aim must be peace and purity. Nor should we erroneously conclude that because peace is mentioned before purity in this verse that peace is the highest priority. Our writer is telling us instead that our pursuit after peace with men must never so engross us that we lose sight of our consecration to God or slacken our cultivation of godliness. We become the best peacemakers only when we cleave to the pure and holy Prince of Peace.

#### **Thursday, May 2<sup>nd</sup> - Hebrews 12: 14**

If we sacrifice our sanctification, even in that pursuit after peace with all men which is a divine directive to us, we shall not only fail to attain a true and lasting peace with men, but we shall also compromise our consecration to the Lord. Such consecration is the only basis for perfect peace. Without sanctification, we lose sight of Christ, who is our peace with God and men.

#### **Friday, May 3<sup>rd</sup> - Hebrews 12: 14**

Peace without purity results in an indiscriminate toleration, apathy, and dissolution. Purity without peace results in a cold and killing censoriousness. The Corinthian church practiced an indiscriminate toleration that neglected purity and resulted in factions rather than peace. The Pharisees were committed to a purity which made them hostile toward the Savior. Our model is Jesus, who drew men to a peaceful reconciliation with Himself and His Father through His sanctifying Himself (Jn. 17:19ff).

#### **Saturday, May 4<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 12: 15-17**

Our understanding and profiting from the discipline of the Lord (vv. 5-13) and our pursuing after peace with men while maintaining personal purity (v.14) can only be realized by the grace of God. Though the grace of God is freely and generously showered upon us, we abuse that grace if we treat it cheaply, despising it in favor of our own immediate gratification. Therefore, the writer here gives us another exhortation wherein he calls upon us to prize and diligently apply divine grace. He illustrates his exhortation by drawing upon the example of Esau, who despised God's grace. The exhortations of God's Word can be illustrated by countless examples, for there has never been in all of history an exception to the rule that those who follow the Lord fully succeed (Josh. 1:8), while those who spurn divine grace suffer in time and eternity.

#### **Sunday, May 5<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 12: 15**

The exhortation that we not come short of the grace of God may appear to be a call for unaided human power to grasp an elusive divine grace. The true import of this exhortation is that we, by God's grace, prize and pursue the application of that grace in every area of our lives. It is of the nature of God's grace to stimulate us to hear and heed the voice of the Lord in His Word. The grace of God stirs us up to will and do God's good pleasure (Phil. 2:12,13). The grace of God prompts us to love the Law of the Lord (Ps. 119:97), and to take its directives seriously and personally. It is an encouraging comfort for us to know that God's grace calls and enables us to avoid despising and neglecting the fresh, daily mercies of the Lord which fit us to be more than conquerors in the new challenges of each new day.

#### **Monday, May 6<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 12: 15**

We are to prize and pursue God's grace personally and corporately. Thus, the writer urges us to see to it that no one within the community of faith should fail to persevere by God's grace. The consequences of such failure on the part of even one member of the body will have disastrous corporate consequences. Graceless souls are troubled and troubling souls. They are also sinfully mired, and thus defiling agents.

Only the grace of God, and our perpetual application of it, can preserve and promote the peace and purity of the Church.

**Tuesday, May 7<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 12: 16, 17**

Esau is cited as an example of one coming short of the grace of God. He began life as a twin with his brother, Jacob. He was born to and raised by godly parents who, by their prayers, precepts, and examples, taught him the way of the Lord. He possessed the birthright by virtue of his having preceded Jacob in their delivery at birth. Yet Esau threw away all of his blessings and spiritual advantages for a single meal. His god was his gut, and thus he is designated godless. He was devoted to his carnal appetites rather than to the Lord and His Word. Another area of his sensual incontinence is found in his marrying Canaanite women, despite the objection of his godly parents (Gen. 26:34,35; 36:2,3). Due to this, he is designated immoral. Any man who yields to the temptation to have immediate, physical gratification, must harden himself against the gracious enabling of God. The gravest danger involved in such hardening is that it tends to become permanent, yielding a miserable remorse rather than godly repentance for the sinful choices made. Those who will not yield to God find that eventually they cannot yield to Him (Jn. 12:36-40).

**Wednesday, May 8<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 12: 18, 19**

In these verses, the writer develops his exhortation to believers to pursue after peace with men while maintaining purity before God. He has informed us that this is possible only by God's grace (v.15). Now he contrasts the sweet attractions of grace with the awesome manifestations of divine justice. Christians have not come to Mount Sinai, with its terrible displays of divine power prohibiting an impure people from too familiar an approach to God. At the place where Israel received God's Law, it appeared that God was at war with them, which, in a sense, He was, due to their having broken His Law. Grace was there at Sinai, but it was far from explicit. Thus, most of God's own people begged for less, rather than more, of the revelation of God's blazing purity. It was inexcusable but quite understandable that men should retreat from such an encounter with God. But our encounter with our God is not like that, and so even more inexcusable would be our coming short of His grace.

**Thursday, May 9<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 12: 20, 21**

The crushing severity of the Law of God delivered to sinful men is further demonstrated by the divine command that any living thing—man or beast—that touched the holy mountain should be stoned to death. Man's natural lack of purity is for him, as he faces the living and holy God, a vital issue. Even the best of men, such as Moses, when confronted with the divine holiness apart from a saving Mediator, are filled with dread at the prospect of God's near approach. Apart from God's saving work in Christ, every sinful man will call upon the mountains to fall on him in a vain attempt to hide him from the holy wrath of the Lord (Rev. 6:15-17). That is why it is essential that no one should come short of a full and persevering application of the grace of God (v.15).

**Friday, May 10<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 12: 22-24**

The types and shadows of God were delivered to men with terrifying aspect. The substance, which we have in Christ, is even more awesomely glorious. We have come, in Christ, not to a smoking and quaking mountain, but to the very height of heaven's dazzling brightness. The fire, dark gloom, and whirlwind of God on Sinai but threatened the outbreaking of God's consuming glory; the sweet graciousness of the loving Redeemer brings us truly into the presence of God's awesome glory (Jn. 1:14). Thus should we let the fear of God, in whose presence we live and serve, prompt us to holy living by His enabling grace. We spurn the mildness of our Mediator to our greatest peril.

**Saturday, May 11<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 12: 22**

Christ has brought us not to a wild mountain surrounded by typical traces of divine wrath—all of which manifested the wall of separation which the people's sins had made between themselves and God. Jesus brings us to the substance, to the very heart of God and height of His glorious power and dominion. In contrast to Mount Sinai, this verse says four things concerning the place to which we have come by faith in Jesus. We have come to Mount Zion, the city of God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable holy angels. Sinai manifested man's fearful guilt, his moral emptiness, and his just condemnation before a holy God, and manifested the outer traces of God's righteous wrath against sinners. Our Savior does not show us our emptiness and God's fullness of wrath. He makes peace between God and His people, and ushers the redeemed into their rightful possession of the fullness of God's grace on earth and glory in heaven.

#### **Sunday, May 12<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 12: 22**

The contrast in this verse is between Mount Zion and Mount Sinai (vv.18-21). God came upon Mount Sinai for a time, accompanied by terrifying manifestations of His offended holiness and awful power, and there gave His Law which the people had broken and would continue to break. So prohibitive was the fiery purity of God that not even beasts from the lower creation, subjected to futility on account of man's sin (Gen. 3:17-19; Rom. 8:20,21), still less sinful man himself, could touch the mountain of God's visitation. In contrast, Mount Zion is the place of God's gracious and permanent dwelling with His people. On Mount Zion the redeemed find the blessing promises and protecting power of the Lord as their sure and lasting inheritance (Ps. 48:2,11; 74:2; 78:68; 125:1ff). This substance of salvation, far greater than the shadows of Sinai, we should be zealous to possess by God's grace.

#### **Monday, May 13<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 12: 22**

We have come, in Christ, not only to a mountain greatly superior to Sinai, we have also come to the comfort and security of a glorious city in contrast to the wilds where Moses received God's Law. There is beauty and order in the city because the God of beautiful holiness and sovereign authority dwells and reigns therein. The dwelling and reigning of this living God in that celestial city renders it a habitation of peace of the highest order, as the designation, *heavenly Jerusalem*, implies. The name, *Jerusalem* (~÷∏;ªv'Wry>) means *to teach peace*. Our God, by His grace conveyed to us in Christ, teaches us through our living in a state of intimate peace with Him what peace, purity, comfort, and security truly are.

#### **Tuesday, May 14<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 12: 22**

Christ has ushered us not only into the glorious presence of God, but also has dispatched the holy angels attending God to be our servants. No longer do cherubim wield the flaming sword of God to keep us out of Paradise (Gen. 3:24). Rather, the angels are charged to protect us (Ps. 91:11), and are sent to render helping service to us (Heb. 1:14). Not only is our God, who is for us, greater than all wicked men and devils arrayed against us, but greater in power and number are the holy angels of our God, who are committed to securing and serving us.

#### **Wednesday, May 15<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 12: 23**

In v.22, the living God and His heavenly hosts are shown to be the company to whom we have come in Christ. In v.23 we are reminded that we also have come to a redeemed company of men, who by the gentle grace of the Lord have been made great (Ps. 18:35), and who accordingly stand here and hereafter as majestic ones (Ps. 16:3), striving and prevailing as more than conquerors (Rom. 8:37-39).

#### **Thursday, May 16<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 12: 23**

By God's redeeming and reconciling grace in Christ, we are at peace not only with God and His holy angels, we are also at peace with our fellow partakers of salvation. We are part of a universal assembly of all redeemed people who have ever lived, who live now, and who will live in the future. Wicked and

unregenerate men boast that even if they are sent to hell, they will be there with their friends. Yet, sin alienates men from God and each other. Men will be solitary in hell, for there is no company to be had amongst supremely selfish people. The rich man in the Gospel is not with his friends, but alone in his flaming anguish (Lk. 16:24). The redeemed, however, are gathered together into a family whose mutual love and respect will only grow through time and be perfected in eternity (Ps. 107:41).

**Friday, May 17<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 12: 23**

We have come to the church of the first-born who are enrolled in heaven. The significance of the term, *church*, is that it speaks of a company formed not by self-determination, but rather by the effectual calling of the Lord. The church, or ecclesia (evklhsi,al), is the company of ones called out of their sinful bondage, out of the enticements and intimidations of the world and the devil. They are so called by God, on the basis of the work of His Son, the first-born of the new creation. (Rom. 8:29; Col. 1:18; Heb. 1:6; Rev. 1:5). Their calling is certain, being based upon the election of sovereign, divine grace, whereby their redemption is accomplished and applied so that they come to possess their heavenly place for which God has enrolled them.

**Saturday, May 18<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 12: 23**

The redeemed have come not only to the city and church of God, but to God Himself. With the confidence of holy boldness in His gracious, redeeming work on their behalf, they approach the Judge of all men and angels, with full assurance in the justifying work of their Advocate. Indeed, we are more than acquitted of our sins, more than justified and accounted righteous in God's sight by the saving work of Christ. We are both accounted perfect and made perfect by our sanctifying Lord. Our coming to God through Christ entails our having communion with saints being sanctified here on earth, and with saints perfectly sanctified in heaven. How intriguing and thrilling it is for us to contemplate fellowship in which we all are perfected into complete conformity with that righteousness which is now imputed to us.

**Sunday, May 19<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 12: 24**

We come to all of the great and glorious facets mentioned in vv.22,23, when we have saving faith in Christ. However, we do not merely come into company with God, holy angels, and righteous men through Jesus. We come to Jesus Himself. Our Lord is not merely a means by which we are saved. He is salvation and highest blessing personified. Now, by faith, we come to Jesus in the manifold capacity of His person and work. Hereafter we shall see His face and reign in glory with Him forever and ever (Rev. 22:4,5).

**Monday, May 20<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 12: 24**

The Jesus to whom we come by faith is who and what we need above all things. He is a Mediator. He is the only Mediator between God and man, reconciling the offended, holy God with offending, sinful men. He mediates the new covenant, which is as superior to the old covenant of works (so miserably violated by Adam), and to the older administration of the covenant of grace, as a man's body is superior to his shadow. Our Mediator's name is the only name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved (Acts 4:12). Whatever else we seek and attain in our lives, it is nothing compared to our coming to this Mediator (Phil. 3:7).

**Tuesday, May 21<sup>st</sup> - Hebrews 12: 24**

The people of Israel trembled before the awesome spectacle at Mount Sinai. They begged Moses to speak to them on God's behalf, lest they should die (vv.18,19; Ex. 20:19). Moses did stand between the holy God and the sinful people of Israel. However, Moses was not the Mediator who wrought peace between God and man. The great lawgiver of Israel was himself a sinner in need of salvation. We who have come to Jesus by faith have come to One greater than Moses, or any of the prophets, priests, or kings of Israel.

### **Wednesday, May 22<sup>nd</sup> - Hebrews 12: 24**

We have come to One who fulfilled His office of Mediator not by mere negotiation or facilitation of dialogue between the parties involved. Jesus established reconciling peace with God for His people by pouring out His life as an atoning sacrifice. Earthly mediators are usually paid for their services. The Mediator to whom we have come undertook for us a payment of infinite magnitude. He loved us, having given not just of Himself for us; He gave Himself for us (Gal. 2:20).

### **Thursday, May 23<sup>rd</sup> - Hebrews 12: 24**

We have come to the sprinkled blood. This expression tells us that the atoning blood of Jesus has been shed. It further tells us that as the blood of the old types was applied to the mercy seat and to the altar (Lev. 16:14,18), so the reconciling virtue of Christ's death has its primary application to God, pacifying His righteous wrath, before it has its purifying application to us. Our writer tells us that this sprinkled blood speaks better than that of Abel. By this, we should understand that Christ's blood, being the substance of redemption, is infinitely superior to the blood of Abel's typical sacrifice to God. But there is a more fundamental sense in which the sprinkled blood of Jesus speaks better than the blood of Abel. The blood of murdered Abel cried to God from the ground, prompting God to bring justice to bear upon murdering Cain. Far better does the blood of Jesus speak to God on behalf of believing sinners, satisfying divine justice for them and prompting the Father to accept as justified and lovingly adopted sons those so sprinkled by the cleansing blood of His only begotten Son, who was crucified for them.

### **Friday, May 24<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 12: 25**

This verse admonishes us not to take lightly the things mentioned in preceding verses. If we hear and do not apply to ourselves by faith the message of salvation, we not only reject a message, but refuse the Lord who speaks to us through His Word. Our failure to run the race set before us (v.1), and to pursue after peace with men while maintaining purity in our lives (v.14), constitute not only our ignoring the principles of Scripture, but the person of our Savior Himself. It is men's refusal of the living Christ, who appeals to them through His Word to be reconciled to God (2 Cor. 5:20), that lies at the heart of their taking His Word and ordinances lightly.

### **Saturday, May 25<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 12:25**

Scripture offers to us accounts of those who treated the Lord, His Word, and His ordinances with contempt, and paid dearly for it. Nadab and Abihu, two sons of Aaron, offered incense to the Lord adulterated with ingredients of their own devising, and they were struck down dead by the Lord (Lev. 10:1ff). Uzzah showed natural concern but spiritual irreverence for the ark of the Lord when he touched it to keep it from falling from its cart, and he paid for his inconsideration with his life (2 Sam. 6:6,7). A whole generation of those who heeded their fear of the giants of Canaan above the Word of the Lord given at Kadesh-Barnea were sentenced by God to die in the wilderness (Num. 13,14). All of those endured temporal divine judgement because they refused the Lord, who spoke to them in shadows, types, and earthly manifestations of His majesty. We should take the admonitions of the substance of our salvation, namely, the risen and ascended Christ, with utmost, vital seriousness that rises above all lesser concerns.

### **Sunday, May 26<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 12: 26**

The voice of the Lord shook Sinai. In Ps. 29, David ascribes seven (the perfect number) earthly effects to the voice of the Lord (Ps. 29:3-9). However, the ultimate manifestation of the authority and power of God's Word is yet to be. For on the last day, when the trumpet of God sounds, heaven and earth will melt away from the presence of the Lord (2 Pet. 3:10-13; Rev. 20:11). Such an absolute, divine voice of authority and power we should be careful consistently to hear and heed at each moment of every day prior to that great day.

### **Monday, May 27<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 12: 27**

The types and shadows of the ceremonial law could be, and were, shaken by the coming of the living Word. That is why throughout this letter the writer has urged his readers to cleave to Christ, the eternally begotten Son of God. We are further told in this verse that in the last day, all created things will be stirred by the summons of God. Those things not having a vital union with Christ will be cast into the eternal flame. All that is in Christ will stand forever in perfected glory. John tells us that the world and its lusts pass away, but the one who does the will of God abides forever (1 Jn. 2:17). It is, therefore, of critical importance that we stand, serve and build upon the immovable Rock, even Jesus Christ our Lord.

### **Tuesday, May 28<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 12: 28, 29**

The writer concludes that since, by God's precious grace, we have received in Christ a standing in an everlasting kingdom, it is incumbent upon us to be everlastingly thankful to God for this immeasurably wonderful gift. We demonstrate crass ingratitude to God when we allow ourselves to be distracted from Christ by the trinkets of the world or the fading shadows which pointed to the coming of the substance of the salvation. We also fail to serve our own highest and best interests when we become fascinated with things which lack power to save or satisfy us. We may not lose the unshakable kingdom by ingratitude, but we will lose the wood, hay, and straw resulting from our misspent time and energies.

### **Wednesday, May 29<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 28, 29**

The gratitude we should have for the unshakable kingdom we have received by God's grace is not merely a feeling of appropriate thankfulness. It prompts us to offer ourselves in service to God. That service is defined by the Lord's revealed will and empowered by His Holy Spirit. It is most pleasing and acceptable to God (Rom. 12:1,2). Nor do we, by rendering service prompted by gratitude, lose sight either of the gift that inspired our thankfulness or of the divine giver. Hence, our writer tells us that grateful and acceptable service to our Lord is rendered with reverence for the God whom we serve, and awe, as we reflect upon the amazing truth that the King of glory has called us into His marvelous kingdom and empowers us in His service.

### **Thursday, May 30<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 12: 28, 29**

The salvation we have received is gloriously substantial and everlasting. Accordingly, our gratitude and its practical outworking through our service for the Lord should be substantial and ceaseless. The last attitude which our God finds acceptable in response to His infinitely precious gift is one of glib presumption which inspires in us nothing higher than self-absorption and perpetual distraction from the Lord, His gift, and His service. We should, therefore, be very careful and considerate as to how we receive our salvation and render service to the Savior. If we serve from any motive but that of pure gratitude to God for His amazing grace toward us, we shall be serving with impure motives and producing impure fruits which shall be burned away by the consuming holiness of our God. Many who think they serve the Lord acceptably will be shocked to find themselves called workers of iniquity by Christ on the final day (Mt. 7:21-23). Others will be disappointed to find that the works they confidently considered acceptable to God will prove combustible in the fire of His glory (1 Cor. 3:10-15). May our service reflect our deepest gratitude to God for His exceeding abundant gift of salvation.

### **Friday, May 31<sup>st</sup> - Hebrews 12: 28 - 13: 3**

The service we render acceptably to God is gauged most accurately by how we treat our fellow man. If we love and worship our gracious and merciful God, we cannot possibly hate or ignore our brother (1 Jn. 4:7,8,11,20,21). Jesus summed up the ten commandments as our loving God with all our hearts and our neighbor as ourselves (Mt. 22:37-39). The prophets castigated unworthy members of the Church for their sins against God, such as idolatry and profanation of the Sabbath (Is. 2:8; 58:13). They also charged them with sins against their fellow men, calling them to repent and to do justice and show mercy to their

neighbors (Mic. 6:8). Jesus goes so far as to say that how a man treats His people, even the least of them, is indicative of the true attitude that man has toward God. There will be those condemned to hell because they showed their contempt for God by their neglect to feed the hungry and clothe the naked brethren of Jesus (Mt. 25:31-46).

#### **Saturday, June 1<sup>st</sup> - Hebrews 13: 1**

Our faith in God is expressed not only in our grateful worship of and service for the Lord, but also by our love for our fellow believers. The normal and foundational atmosphere of Christian fellowship should be brotherly love. Jesus commanded it (Jn. 15:12), and the Holy Spirit enables us to exercise it (Gal. 5:22). The world perceives that we are disciples of Jesus when it detects that we love one another (Jn. 13:35). Those best running the race set before them by God, fixing their eyes upon Jesus, are the least likely to be blinded to the needs of their brethren, or to the various opportunities available lovingly to serve them.

#### **Sunday, June 2<sup>nd</sup> - Hebrews 13: 2**

A fruit of brotherly love is hospitality. We can be tempted not only by sinful self-centeredness, but also by a hypocritical adherence to the service of the Lord, to neglect this sweet fruit. Remember the Levite and the priest, whose sanctimonious preoccupation led them to fail in this duty in a way that the Samaritan did not (Lk. 10:30-35). Our Lord certainly does not despise the exercise of this humble, domestic duty. In fact, God greatly rewards those who open their homes lovingly to ones in their vicinity as strangers who are away from their own homes. The example of Abraham welcoming the men into the shade of his tent at Mamre in the heat of the day is alluded to here (Gen. 18:1-8). His gracious service was richly rewarded by the three strangers, who were angels of God. They promised what Abraham could never have attained naturally, a son through Sarah. We who were strangers to God, living in a cursed wilderness of a world due to our sin, have been graciously brought into our saving Father's house. We, who are now the sons of our gloriously hospitable heavenly Father, should be like Him, welcoming strangers, and certainly brethren, into our homes and hearts.

#### **Monday, June 3<sup>rd</sup> - Hebrews 13: 3**

This verse imposes upon believers a duty to care for prisoners and the persecuted. As with the duty to show hospitality, this is to be understood as another dimension of brotherly love. The prisoners are ones incarcerated for their faith; the persecuted are ones afflicted on account of their fidelity to Christ. Wicked men may try to bury Christ's people alive in deep dungeons, as in the case of Paul and Silas in Philippi (Acts 16:11ff), or kill them by ruthless persecution, as in the case of Stephen (Acts 7). However, the righteous, who are separated from others and made to be solitary in their sufferings, are not forgotten by the Lord. Nor should they be forgotten by the Lord's people. We are called once again, to demonstrate the costly, inclusive love of the Savior, as we, like Him, go to and caringly identify with our suffering brethren.

#### **Tuesday, June 4<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 13: 4**

Marital honor and fidelity are also aspects of Christian love. But whereas the dimensions of brotherly love specified in vv.2,3 stimulate us to be open and inclusive in our loving care for others, this dimension contains an aspect of holy exclusivity. Marriage should be especially honored amongst believers as a divinely instituted ordinance serving for the greater welfare of the marriage partners and society as a whole. Where men are committed to their wives and children, the worst male vices are curbed and a civilized and tender aspect blossoms in the men. Such caring and responsible men, and their cherished families, are boons to the Church and to society at large. However, while such families are generally inclusive of others, there is an aspect of marriage which is to be guardedly exclusive. In the bonds of holy matrimony, God calls a man and a woman to know each other with such intimacy that may be experienced only between two people, not three or more, in this fallen world. Those who adulterate their marriages do not add anything to the holy and loving bond, but lose much, if not all, of its value. Those who ruin this divine ordinance not only bring misery upon themselves, but become a bane to society, and face judgment from God.

### **Wednesday, June 5<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 13: 4**

In Christ we find that the exclusive love of matrimony, and the inclusive brotherly love, are not contradictory, but rather complementary. Indeed, the exclusive love of marriage is to be guarded and nurtured as the basis from which a proper inclusive and holy love for others will develop. If anyone objects by saying that this rules out those not called to marriage, I respond that there is a sense in which we all are married. For those united together in this life as husband and wife are called to partake of a provisional relationship, enduring through this earthly pilgrimage, and reflecting the marriage of Christ to His Church (Eph. 5:21ff). All of us ought to do all that we can, therefore, to guard and enhance such an institution, whether we are direct participants in it or not. All of us certainly must guard zealously that holy fidelity we have with our heavenly Bridegroom, knowing that we live more happily and serve more fruitfully when we love Him with all of our hearts. Then we shall be enabled, by our heavenly Bridegroom, rightly to love our families, brethren, neighbors, and even our enemies.

### **Thursday, June 6<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 13: 5, 6**

These verses contain negative and positive instruction. We are first told to resist coveting, then to cultivate contentment. With these instructions we move from a consideration of personal relationships (vv.1-4) to that of our acquiring and using material possessions. Our Lord has principled and practical commands for us that touch and should transform every area of our lives. In His eyes, how we manage lifeless things matters almost as much as how we relate to other people. This is so because He is the giver, guide, and sustainer of every aspect of our lives. This does not minimize our personal relationships, but highlights the importance of the stewardship of our possessions. The things of this world are not ours to acquire and use as we see fit. We must use our property for the glory of the One who gives it to us, and for the good of others, especially our brethren in Christ.

### **Friday, June 7<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 13: 5, 6**

Fallen man universally accounts money a great and necessary good. The more money the natural man has, the better and more secure he thinks he is. Yet, the history of the world and numerous accounts in the Word of God, tell us that untold misery, turmoil, and violence have issued from greed and covetousness. Thus, Paul tells us that the love of money is a root of manifold evil (1 Tim. 6:10). Our Lord would have us to be free from this embittering root. He who has loved us immeasurably and poured out His infinitely precious blood for us would not have us idolize that which is but a conventional means for sinful men to exchange the imperfect goods and services of this cursed, perishing world. If we seek more than a competent portion of this world's goods, we risk becoming full of vanity and pride and forgetting the Lord who bought us for a great price (Pr. 30:8,9).

### **Saturday, June 8<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 13: 5, 6**

Jesus teaches us to pray not for an abundance of material things, but rather for our daily bread (Mt. 6:11). Paul tells us to desire no more than food and clothing (1 Tim. 6:8). David tells us that even if riches do increase—as his surely did—we should not set our hearts upon them (Ps. 62:10). Solomon, who perhaps had more material wealth than all of the above, tells us that the one who loves money will find it to be an unsatisfying vanity (Eccl. 5:10). Our Lord and these great men of the faith are not promoting an ascetic philosophy that loves deprivation. Rather, they would free us from the anxiety and distraction resulting from a love of unrighteous mammon, while pointing us to the security and satisfying fullness we have in the Lord our God. Godly contentment is not our diminishing our desires so that we can survive on less. It is, instead, the cultivation of such great desire that we can be happy, not with the trinkets of this poor and perishing world, but only with the loving care and holy communion we have abundantly with the living God.

### **Sunday, June 9<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 13: 5, 6**

Our Lord does not forbid our love of money and give us provision inferior to money. In place of a love for that which can elude our endeavors to obtain it, which can be lost, stolen, and misspent, we are directed to have confidence in the ceaseless love, enduring riches, and almighty provision of our God. It is the glorious Lord of heaven who is our shield and exceeding great reward (Gen. 15:1). He who has the promise of an omnipotent King's perpetual and perfect care, need have no anxiety over whether he will have sufficient money to buy worldly necessities. He who has heavenly manna and the robe of Christ's righteousness, will certainly be able to clothe and feed himself and his family. Our knowing that our God so wonderfully cares for us breeds within us a contentment whether we abound or are abased (Phil. 4:11-13).

**Monday, June 10<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 13: 5, 6**

All of the ethical instructions given in vv.1-6 are based upon the absolute trustworthiness of the Lord. Whether we are exercising charity (vv.1-3), maintaining marital fidelity (v.4), or resisting covetousness and nurturing contentment (vv.5,6), we need the help of our God in order to perform what He commands. We, therefore, must exercise a personal trust in our God, and rely upon His holy and abundant help if we are to have confidence that we shall succeed in our carrying out these divine injunctions. Our fearful self-regard, which frustrates our desires and endeavors to love others, maintain marital purity, and nurture contentment, is vanquished by our trusting our divine helper, who pledges Himself never to leave or forsake us.

**Tuesday, June 11<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 13: 7**

The instructions given in vv.1-6 are not idealistically unattainable. The realistic nature of those exhortations—which encourages our endeavor and discourages a practical cynicism in their attainability—is seen by the fact that there are those in the Church whose faith and practice set an example for us to follow. Therefore, the writer calls upon his readers to remember their leaders, who taught them from God's Word to trust the Lord and to draw upon His divine direction and help in their practice of brotherly love. There may be unfaithful officers in the Church in every age. Yet, there is never a time or place where some living trophies of obedience to God cannot be found as examples for our obedience.

**Wednesday, June 12<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 13: 7**

There is in us all a tendency to forget the living examples of brotherly love who are in our assemblies. Therefore, the writer exhorts us to remember them. Nor are we to remember them vaguely and sentimentally. We are called to a careful consideration of their lives. We are urged to a repeated study (avnaqewrou/ntej) of their course and its finish so that we might run as they ran for Christ's glory.

**Thursday, June 13<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 13: 7, 8**

Our calling is to consider the lives of spiritual leaders who eminently follow the teachings of God's Word. The fruit they bear and the joyful satisfaction they experience as they give themselves to the exercise of brotherly love should encourage us to imitation. However, we are not called to mimic their lives, seeking to replicate their unique service. Rather, we are to imitate their faith—the enabling power that makes them what they are. That faith is to be fixed upon Jesus (12:2), who ever lives and ever enables His people to walk in a manner worthy of their calling. Our Lord Jesus not only gives us instructions in His Word and living examples in His Church to direct and encourage us in godly loving, He is also constantly present to give us His power to enable us in godly loving. Nor is His enabling power temporarily ours. There is permanence in His empowering presence. By our exercise of faith in Him, we are transformed into His gloriously loving likeness (2 Cor. 3:17,18), and what we thusly become endures lastingly.

**Friday, June 14<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 13: 7, 8**

Faith in Jesus will never fail to produce Christlike character in any soul having and exercising that faith. In whatever age, culture, or place on earth such faithful ones may live, they may have certain assurance that their faith will produce for them lives as admirable as those of their spiritual leaders. For faith anchors the soul upon Jesus, whose sanctifying work has the same power today to transform us into lovers of our brethren as it had in the first century to make believers known to the world by their love for one another.

**Saturday, June 15<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 13: 9**

Those leaders whom we are to follow will not lead us into novel teachings that stray from the faith once for all delivered to the saints. Since Jesus is the same in all ages, we should not expect His gospel to have a chameleon-like character, ever changing to suit the fickle tastes of perishing men. The gospel is no slave to men's fashion. Neither is it ossified and antiquated. In Christ, the eternal, which ever endures, and the perfect, which never changes, has broken into our imperfect, changing world. Thus, believers' world-view and life-style should be determined by the eternal truth and perfect grace of God, not the fads of man. The Word of God has a timeless but ever contemporary and relevant character.

**Sunday, June 16<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 13: 9**

The essence of the gospel is the saving grace of God in Christ. It is that grace alone which saves and satisfies our souls. All teaching which distracts us from our gracious Lord and His graciously saving work is false and vain. Specifically, the writer here appears to have in mind teaching that clings to the old shadows of the ceremonial law rather than to the nourishing substance of Christ. Such teaching, though it may claim divine sanction, is strange to God and should be strange to us.

**Monday, June 17<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 13: 10**

Those who would lure the readers of this epistle back to an observance of the sensual elements of the ceremonial law offered sacrifices at their altars, but in so doing disqualified themselves from the only true and efficacious altar. The early Christians were mocked by their pagan and Jewish neighbors because they had no sacred, sensual elements to their worship, except for baptism and the Lord's Supper—both of them bloodless. The Church through the ages has always been tempted, and, in certain quarters has not resisted the temptation, to incorporate sensual elements such as incense, kneeling, genuflecting, etc. into her worship. Our priest, sacrifice, and altar are all Christ Himself, whose shed blood once for all prevails at the heavenly throne to gain us permanent access.

**Tuesday, June 18<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 13: 10, 11**

On the day of atonement, the high priest sacrificed the bull for his own sin offering, and one of the goats for the sin offering of the people (Lev. 16:11, 15). The blood of these sacrifices was applied to the mercy seat and altar, but the bodies were taken out of the camp to be burned (Lev. 16:15,18,19,27). No one, least of all the high priest officiating at the altar, partook of these sacrifices in any way except by faith. Now that Christ, the perfect sacrifice has come, those who cling to the ceremonial altar feed, in a double sense, upon ashes, while we by faith partake of the sweet and nourishing substance of His broken body and shed blood.

**Wednesday, June 19<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 10-13**

The truly effectual altar was only shadowed forth in the tabernacle, and, later, in the temple at Jerusalem. That altar, our writer maintains, was the cross of Jesus upon which He bore the penal sufferings due to His people. The cross, of course, was not in the temple, neither within Jerusalem's walls, but on Golgotha, which was outside the City of Zion. This tells us that Christ accomplished His atoning work apart from those ceremonial shadows to which the faithless cling. Thus, we are exhorted to hold fast to Jesus and His saving work, being united to Him by faith and refusing to be captivated by the sensual shadows of the ceremonial law. We will be mocked and reproached for our determination rightly to worship God in spirit

and truth through Jesus, but it is infinitely better to be with Christ outside the camp of sensual ceremonies, than to be without Him in the company of dead ritualists.

**Thursday, June 20<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 13: 14**

With this verse, the image of the city which has God as its architect and builder returns (Heb. 11:10,16). We leave the camp of religious respectability in which the members feed on ashes and stand in a place destined to be shaken by the hand of God (Heb. 12:27). We enter into the city which has everlastingly enduring foundations laid and built upon by the hand of God. We, by faith in Jesus, are ever emerging from the shadows and entering into the substance of glorious, eternal life.

**Friday, June 21<sup>st</sup> - Hebrews 13: 15, 16**

By the mercy of God, the perfect sacrifice has been offered by Jesus. There now no longer remains need for us to offer sacrificial animals on earthly altars. Those provisional offerings which were divinely appointed served their true purpose by their pointing to Jesus. Now their practice is an abomination to God. We are not called to offer sacrificial shadows that insult the God who has provided His Son for our salvation. Rather, we are to respond to this gracious and glorious gift with gratitude to God and charitable service rendered to our brethren in Christ. With such sacrifices God is ever pleased (Rom. 12:1).

**Saturday, June 22<sup>nd</sup> - Hebrews 13: 15**

The offerings now acceptable to God are the songs, prayers, and service by which we give thankful praise to Him for His saving mercies. We are bound continually to offer our God such praise, because the gift of salvation we have received from Him is infinitely precious and eternally potent. To our God we give all thanks and praise because He has graciously given to us in Christ all that pertains to life and salvation, while storing for us every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places (Eph. 1:3).

**Sunday, June 23<sup>rd</sup> - Hebrews 13: 15, 16**

Our saving God is pleased not only when we love and serve Him with all of our hearts. Such offering of ourselves to God represents our keeping of the first table of the Ten Commandments, or, as Jesus summarized it, the first great commandment. But God has joined another table—another commandment—to the first, namely, that we love one another. These loves, which God has joined together, we may not tear asunder (1 Jn. 4:20,21). Therefore, we must, in our praise of God, never neglect the service of love we owe our brethren. Our gracious, giving God is pleased and glorified when we generously share our possessions and our persons with one another.

**Monday, June 24<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 13: 17**

This verse begins with an exhortation addressed directly to church members and indirectly to church leaders. The verse concludes with instruction given directly to leaders and indirectly to members. The Word of God is addressed to the whole people of God. The directions it gives to one group in the body of Christ should form the basis for expectation and prayerful support for the rest of the body. Thus, we may never rightly ignore my portion of God's Word simply because it does not directly speak to us. The pastoral epistles are full of instruction for pastors, but those epistles also direct the people as to how they should pray for and respond to their pastors. Our God edifies the body of Christ not by His dealing only with one class of members, but rather with all and through all.

**Tuesday, June 25<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 13: 17**

Members of the body of Christ have already in this letter been exhorted to consider the lives of their leaders with the consequence of their imitating the faith of those leaders (v.7). Here Church members are told to obey the directives of their leaders. Professing believers should hear and heed the instructions, admonitions, and imperatives of those whom Christ has placed over them. They are to do what their leaders say, but not begrudgingly. Their attitude is to be one of respectful submission with gratitude that the Great Shepherd of the sheep has appointed under-shepherds to tend His beloved flock (Jn. 21:15-17). Should the sheep sense that their leaders are misleading them, it is implied in this exhortation that the members still respectfully submit to those leaders. It is also gathered from elsewhere in God's Word that members pray for and, if necessary, speak with loving respect to their leaders, asking them to lead in ways warranted by Scripture, and asking the Lord to enable their leaders to be faithful and diligent in their calling. If Church members would devote themselves to praying for their leaders more, and defying them less, there would be greater peace and purity in the Church, resulting for the glory of God and the good of the people of God.

#### **Wednesday, June 26<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 13: 17**

There are choice incentives given in this verse to encourage the people of God in their responsibility to obey and submit to their leaders. The first such incentive is found in the term, *leaders*. They are men charged and equipped to blaze the way of the earthly, pilgrimage of the people of God. They are to set the direction and the pace whereby the Lord's people make progress in their sanctification, and in their communion with the Lord, as well as in their approach to the celestial city. What believer would not want to follow men who were leading them ever nearer to their saving God?

#### **Thursday, June 27<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 13: 17**

The leaders spoken of in this verse are designated *your leaders*. The possessive pronoun, *your*, reminds members of the congregation that those holding office in their assembly do so by the recognition and recommendation of the people. Christian leaders are not imposing tyrants, but servants of the body of Christ, chosen by the Lord who wisely and lovingly gives them as sanctifying gifts to His Church (Eph. 4:11-14). They are accepted and installed into their office by members of the Church (Acts 6:3).

#### **Friday, June 28<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 13: 17**

A further incentive for Church members' obedience to their leaders is found in what the writer says about the leaders' God-given responsibility. They are divinely charged vigilantly and constantly to keep watch over the souls of the members under their care. Such watching is not that of mere spectators, but rather of stewards, tending the flock of the Great Shepherd of the sheep. Their watch-care includes their guarding the people from enticements, deceptions, and intimidations from the world, flesh, and devil. They are also, with loving patience and nurturing instruction, to feed the people the sanctifying Word of truth, and water their planting efforts with much prayer. By the word, *souls*, we should understand that spiritual leaders are to care for the entire person—body, mind, emotions—of each one over whom the Lord has placed them. But special emphasis is laid upon the inner man and his trust in and obedience to the Lord. Such leaders are also held to a standard in their ministry. They must one day give an account, not only for themselves, but also for those whom they led in the Church militant. The account they give is to the Lord, whose grace enables leaders to know and do their duty, and whose omniscience cannot be misled by men's rationalizing excuses for their poor performance of their duty. Church members can and should entrust the care of their souls to such chosen servants of Christ. But they should also pray that their leaders become increasingly determined and enabled by the Lord to fulfill their high calling.

#### **Saturday, June 29<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 13: 17**

A word is given in this verse regarding the attitude which should prompt the service of Church leaders. They are not to be grieved that their duty is so vital and demanding, and that the people are so naturally disinclined to obey them that they must be commanded by the Word of the Lord to render such obedience. Rather, the chief attitude that should characterize true Christian leadership is that of joyful expectation. As

our Lord, for the joy set before Him, endured the cross to gain a bride for Himself who would delight His soul (Heb. 12:2; Is.53:10,11), so those called to prominence in piety and ecclesiastical responsibility should endure whatever frustrations they may encounter in the pursuit of their duty, strengthened by the joy of their anticipating the Lord's commendation of their stewardship and the pleasure He takes now, and will take hereafter in the products of their spiritual instructions, administrations, and prayers. By the Lord's enabling grace, the people who may at times try their leaders in this pilgrimage, will yet be the joy and crown of exultation of those leaders before the Lord of glory (1 Thess. 2:19,20).

#### **Sunday, June 30<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 13: 17**

Church leaders must not grieve over the imperfections of their people and of themselves, or be downcast when they who are leading the flock find themselves special targets of satanic principalities and powers. Rather, leaders are called and enabled by Christ to be more than conquerors in these trying dimensions of their office. They should therefore rejoice, knowing that they are called and equipped to serve for the glory of God and the good of His people. They should serve strengthened by the joy of the Lord—a joy nourished by the knowledge that what Satan intends by his destructive devices, God overrules for His people's highest good. Those leaders who grasp and are sustained by this prevailing sense of joyful privilege, serve to the great profit of those under their care.

#### **Monday, July 1<sup>st</sup> - Hebrews 13: 18**

The writer of this letter has demonstrated throughout it that he has a masterful grasp of theology. He furthermore wrote by inspiration of God's Holy Spirit. The people to whom he wrote, in contrast, were drifting into theological vagueness, error, and practical impotence. Yet, the writer does not despise the prayerful support his spiritually weaker readers could give him. He implores them, instead, to pray for him. By this request he admits his need for their spiritual help and acknowledges his confidence in their rightly applying his teaching and admonition so that they would be better able and more determined to intercede for him at the throne of God's grace. No man in Christ is so perfectly sanctified that he can live and serve without the prayers of others. No man in Christ is so weak in faith and faulty in practice that he cannot render prayerful support for others.

#### **Tuesday, July 2<sup>nd</sup> - Hebrews 13: 18**

The writer declares the purity of his heart and the cleanness of his hands when he refers to his good conscience. Such a declaration is no proud boast, but a humble admission that by God's grace and by the prayers of other believers he has been kept a clean and useable vessel in the Lord's service. This statement would serve to commend him to his readers' prayers. For without those prayers, he admits that he could be overcome by sinful corruption, or fall victim to Satanic attack. The grace and power of God give us a good conscience before God and men. But we cannot rely on that good conscience to be sustained through all tests and trials without the prayerful support of our brethren. The Apostle Paul was certainly thankful to God for his good conscience, but he ever trusted in the continual supply of divine grace, not in any supposed immutability of his clear conscience (1 Cor. 4:3,4).

#### **Wednesday, July 3<sup>rd</sup> - Hebrews 13: 18**

The writer enlists the prayer support of his readers so that his own good conscience would be preserved and so that his actions would be continually honorable. Here the writer gives statement to that high and holy ambition that should motivate every believer. He aspires to live and conduct himself in such a way that he would honor his Lord, and be honored with his heavenly Master's commendation: *Well done, good and faithful servant*. He does not seek success or worldly approval; his desire is for heavenly reward. We should note, further, that there is always a way for us to honor the name of our Savior, and to be honored by Him, in every situation. Whether we are about critical and great business or tending to mundane details, whether we are abounding with success or are abased with trials, we can be, and should pray for each other to be, not only contented but honorably commended by our Lord.

**Thursday, July 4<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 13: 18, 19**

The writer does not simply ask for the prayers of his readers, he urges them to uphold him in their prayers. Those things that are valuable and vital to us we should seek with all of our strength. Our writer shows us how we should rightly value and with persistent passion enlist the prayers of our brethren for us when he not only asks, but also urges his readers to render for him intercessory service.

**Friday, July 5<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 13: 19**

From this verse, we learn that our writer had been previously amongst the recipients of this letter. At the time of his writing he was separated from them, desiring to be restored to them. What prevented his restoration? Was he engaged in pressing pastoral work elsewhere? Was he imprisoned or otherwise thwarted in his desire, as was Paul regarding his longing to see again his beloved Thessalonians (1 Thess. 2:18)? We do not know for certain, although from what is said in v.23 imprisonment appears to be the impediment. What we do know is that in this life believers are salt and light, scattered by the Lord whom they serve wherever they may be. The holy huddle is in heaven. Yet, it is good and right that we desire and ask God for seasons of precious communion with dear brethren from whom we are separated by our service and our sufferings in the Church militant.

**Saturday, July 6<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 13: 18, 19**

We do not know how God answered this prayer for restoration of fellowship. We can be more confident that our Lord granted the prayers of our writer and his readers for the writer's maintenance of a pure heart, good conscience, and honorable service. Whether we receive affirmation or denials from our God in response to our prayers, we may be sure that the divine answers come to us from our Lord's perfect wisdom and love, and are according to His holy and glorious purposes for us. How confidently and contentedly we can live and serve, knowing that whether our requests are granted or denied by our heavenly Father, what we have from Him we have as His perfect answer to our imperfect prayers.

**Sunday, July 7<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 13: 20, 21**

These verses mark the conclusion of this magnificent letter, verses 22-25 serving as a kind of postscript. The letter which began with God speaking to man in His Son, thus ends with a full and rich benediction. The final word our God has for us in any situation and at the close of our earthly pilgrimage is one of blessing and empowering. Let us never doubt that however things may appear to the contrary, our God saves His best wine for us until the end.

**Monday, July 8<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 13: 20**

This benediction designates God as the God of peace. This is not to deny that He is a God of power, justice, or holiness. Rather, it is to emphasize the reality we most frequently and deeply doubt, namely, that God is at peace with us, though we are but vile worms and guilty rebels at our worst, and unprofitable servants at our best. He has not one iota of righteous wrath ignited against us, not because our good deeds have satisfied Him, but because the atoning sacrifice of His Son has assuaged His holy wrath while it has cleansed us thoroughly of our sinful offenses against God. Our sin against the infinite and eternal God not only defiled us and replaced our security and happiness with guilty misery, it also ignited God's holy wrath and thus created a problem of infinite magnitude for God and for us. God Himself rectified this problem, satisfying His offended justice by the penal suffering of Christ in our place. Thus does the Father ever speak to us through His Son, telling us not to fear, but to be at peace before Him, with Him, and in Him.

**Tuesday, July 9<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 13: 20**

Our God is not only a God of peace, but also a God of power. The divine wisdom and power may be so clearly perceived by man in the creation, that man is without excuse for his ignorance of God (Rom. 1:20). Yet, the power of God is supremely manifested in His raising Jesus from the dead. Paul prays that believers would know this power of God. In Eph. 1:18-23, in describing what God has exerted in His raising Jesus from the dead, the apostle exhausts the rich Greek language in which he was writing, there being no more words in that language that he could have used in that passage to convey the notion of power. Our God does not simply speak words of peace to us, He has accomplished and forever secured that peace by the holy and loving exertion of His infinite power.

#### **Wednesday, July 10<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 13: 20**

The peace and power of God are manifested through the incarnation and earthly career of the Son of God. He who was the Lamb of God, destined from eternity to be the atoning sacrifice of His people, is here designated *the great Shepherd of the sheep*. This good Shepherd laid down His life for us (Jn. 10:11), and, by His resurrection, He was restored to us to be forever our guardian, guide and provider. He alone is the good Shepherd. Here He is properly called *the great Shepherd*, for everything about Him is great and glorious. His person and His saving work are great, far greater than the monstrous and enormous magnitude of our sin. His salvation, His intercessions for us, His exaltation, and the glory to which He is leading us, are all great beyond the ability of any mortal mind to conceive or tongue to tell (1 Cor. 2:9).

#### **Thursday, July 11<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 13: 20**

The resurrection of Jesus resulted not from the power of God alone. The divine power to bring up from the dead the Lord Jesus was exerted because of the perfection of the work of our Savior. The death He died was regarded by God as efficacious for the salvation of His people because the life Jesus lived was perfect. It was in the eternal counsels of God determined that the perfect blood of a substitutionary atonement would be shed for sinful man. That saving shedding of blood was therefore promised and typified through the ceremonial law. It was provided in the fullness of time by the death of Jesus. It will be forever efficacious. Thus it is called the blood of the eternal covenant. The gracious, saving promise and provision of God encompasses us for all time and eternity. All that pertains to our peace now and forever flows to us through that blood shed for us.

#### **Friday, July 12<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 13: 20, 21**

The great Shepherd raised from the dead by the God of peace is here called *Jesus, our Lord*. This informs us that the death and resurrection of our Redeemer was not for Himself, but for us. We are the people, the sheep of the pasture of this great Shepherd. He possesses us by virtue of His shed blood applied to us. He reigns over us as our Lord. But we possess Him, too, as our Savior and our Lord. What God has done for the Head of the Church, He has also done for all members of the body of the Church. We have title to every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places and assurance that we shall inherit the earth as well, because He who has been given all authority in heaven and earth (Mt. 28:18-20) is no stranger to us, but is our Lord.

#### **Saturday, July 13<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 13: 20, 21**

We are equipped not by men or even by angels, but by no one less than Almighty God, who regards us pacifically through the saving work of Jesus our Lord. We are equipped not necessarily with lavish material possessions, or impressive natural endowments. Instead, we are equipped with divine grace that is sufficient to enable us in each and every circumstance of our lives to know and to do the good and holy will of our God. We may by faith reckon ourselves divinely equipped for every good work. There is grace to enable us to render honorable service to the glory of God in things great and small. No good work is too hard or sacrificial for us when we are so equipped. Our Lord knows how to equip us for those good works He has designed for us (Eph. 2:10). It follows from this great encouragement, however, that we are not equipped for evil works or for anything that is not in accordance with the will and good pleasure of our

God. Let us not, therefore, pursue evil and vain things for which we have no divine warrant or enabling power to desire or to do.

**Sunday, July 14<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 13: 20, 21**

Part of the peace we have with our God through Jesus our Lord is our peaceful submission to God's will. Our God is not imperious, issuing directives, orders, and commands, and expecting us to summon from our own natural resources the desire and ability to obey. Our Lord works in us the desire and enabling power, not only to offer Him external obedience, but also devoted service from our grateful and loving hearts. Hereby we are enabled outwardly to conform to the Lord's will, while the thankful and loving spirit in which we render our obedience delights our God. It is astonishing for us to realize that we are enabled to bring pleasure to the living God by our walking according to His will. It is appalling for us to realize that we also have the ability to grieve the Holy Spirit of God by our poor obedience or disobedience. Our God is never apathetic about anything we do.

**Monday, July 15<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 13: 20, 21**

All blessing to us comes from God, by His grace, through our Lord Jesus Christ. All glory is ascribed to God through the creating and redeeming work of Jesus. That is why Jesus has a name above every name of all who are in heaven and on earth. When we by faith receive divine grace and serve God by that grace through our Lord Jesus, we please and we also glorify both the Father and the Son, who are co-equal in essence and in glory (Jn. 17:24).

**Tuesday, July 16<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 13: 20, 21**

We have a postscript in vv.22-24, added by the writer to urge his readers to accept and rightly apply to themselves the contents of this great epistle. The contents of this letter, being inspired by God's Holy Spirit, have been written and preserved neither so that we might simply take an intellectual interest in them nor so that we might ignore them. The challenging and gloriously rich and empowering content of this letter has been written for the correction, reproof, and training in righteousness of all its readers in every age.

**Wednesday, July 17<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 13: 22**

The writer urges his readers not only to pray for him (vv.18,19), but also to attend rightly to his communication with them. He moves them to a proper application of the teaching he has set out by his appealing to them as a caring brother, being united with them in the redeemed family of God. He does not resort to commands and threats. His loving and gentle appeal is expressed with intention of disarming his readers from any spirit of offense they may have taken at his words of correction and exhortation. He expresses sympathy with his readers when he acknowledges that his letter is essentially a word of challenge, issued to recall them from their spiritual drifting from Christ. But his are the faithful wounds of a friend and loving brother, intended for their good. Faithful spiritual servants of Christ will spare no effort, great or small, in their endeavor to convey the blessing of God. They, like their Master, will not break a bruised reed or quench a flickering wick, but will gently and patiently nurture the weak and wayward to strength in the Lord.

**Thursday, July 18<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 13: 22**

Our writer refers to his communication as being briefly delivered. In fact, the Letter to the Hebrews is one of the longest and fullest of the New Testament epistles. Yet, when we consider all that the writer could have expressed in this letter—the many other excellencies of the person and work of Jesus which, if written in detail, the world could not contain the volumes written (Jn. 21:25)—it is accurate for this author to style his letter a brief word. There is an economy in Scripture which should prompt us to hang upon every word as being choice and vital for our salvation.

### **Friday, July 19<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 13: 23**

Our writer draws the attention of his readers to an encouraging token and incentive for their repentance and prayerful service. Timothy had been released from an imprisonment, though it appears that the writer himself yet remained imprisoned. But with this notice, the readers of this letter are encouraged not to despise the day of relatively small things, for those small things are pledges of God's merciful and mighty showers of blessing yet to come.

### **Saturday, July 20<sup>th</sup> - Hebrews 13: 23**

It is clear from this verse that the writer of this letter was a co-laborer and close associate with Timothy. This allusion leads some to suppose that the Apostle Paul composed this letter, and he very well may have done so. But it does not necessarily follow that the author was Paul. Timothy co-labored with several prominent servants of Christ. In candor, we should admit that we do not know with certainty who authored this epistle; but the original recipients knew the writer without him ever once having mentioned his name in this letter. We do not need to know the writer's identity so much as we need to know the person and work of Christ about whom and which he writes. It is the Christ of this letter who sets us free indeed, whether we are walking at liberty or sitting in prisons of this world's making.

### **Sunday, July 21<sup>st</sup> - Hebrews 13: 23**

If Timothy moved with dispatch from his imprisonment to visit the recipients of this letter, the writer says that he himself would join Timothy in seeing them. The release of Timothy was thus laden with promise of greater blessing for these believers. Did Timothy hasten to them? Did the writer join them in a glad restoration of fellowship? We do not know if such happy communion was granted to them in time, but there can be no doubt that it has been granted in eternity.

### **Monday, July 22<sup>nd</sup> - Hebrews 13: 24**

Greetings are conveyed to the leaders and members of the church (or churches) originally addressed in this letter. Those greetings were sent not only by the writer, but also by the brethren in Italy, from where the writer wrote, he possibly being imprisoned there. The recipients, for all of their faults and failings, are greeted as saints, or holy ones (tou.j a`gi,ouj). Those having received this word of exhortation may have needed refinement, but they are treated with loving respect as being basically sound brethren in Christ. Likewise, we do well at every appropriate opportunity, to communicate our loving and respectful greetings to our brethren in Christ, whatever struggles they may be having.

### **Tuesday, July 23<sup>rd</sup> - Hebrews 13: 25**

The gospel is that God has graciously accomplished redemption for His people in Christ. The promise of salvation was graciously foreshadowed in the ceremonial law, its substance was provided in Jesus, while the Holy Spirit ever applies it to all believers in every age. The salvation and sanctification of sinful man is first, last, and always a matter of God's sovereign grace. Those made recipients of that grace are rich, even in poverty, are free, even in imprisonments, are more than conquerors in all things; while those without that grace are poor, blind, naked and wretched, however wealthy, accomplished, and secure they fancy themselves to be. With the closing words of this magnificent letter, the writer assures his readers of every age that they who have and cleave to God's final word to man, namely, His Son, Jesus Christ, have the never ceasing grace of God. That divine grace sustains them through all trails, empowers them in all their service, and will bring them at last safely, blamelessly, and with great joy into inconceivable glory.

(The following notes were first published February 1991)

### **Wednesday, July 24th - Proverbs 6: 20,21**

Children do well to heed the advice of godly parents. Young people seek independence from such parental counsel at greatest hazard. Not only do godly fathers and mothers have a deeper and truer understanding of the world, with all of its snares, but parents have divinely given responsibilities and resources for the nurturing of their children. Thus, a child does well to hear and heed the warmly entreating teaching of his mother, as well as the sterner directives of his father. The young one should seek not only outward conformity to such parental instructions, but also the development of heartfelt conviction toward them as well.

### **Thursday, July 25th - Proverbs 6: 22-24**

The godly counsel of parents proves invaluable. It provides direction, security, and wisdom. Indeed, it is asserted to have qualities like those of the Word of God (Ps. 119:105). Even its painful reproofs save, rather than destroy, life. The sober counsel of godly parents serves especially to save young, passionate souls from falling victim to the flattery of seducers. The immature may enjoy the immediate gratification of being seduced, but parental commands cast light farther down the road, revealing that road to be one of destruction and misery. No wonder Paul tells children to obey their parents in the Lord (Eph. 6:1; Col. 3:20). This even applies to adult children who, as v.24 shows, are old enough to commit adultery. Through godly parents, children and young adults receive instruction from their heavenly Father, whose Word has to a large degree become flesh in the lives of their parents.

### **Friday, July 26th - Proverbs 6: 23-29**

Parental prohibitions may seem to be based on dying passion, and perhaps frequently this is the case. Children often rightly reckon that their elders have forgotten what it is like to be driven by hot emotion. But the prohibitions of godly parents are based not on the dying heat of passion, but rather on passion for the Lord which has grown to the intensity of light. That light discloses the monstrous features of unfaithfulness, as it discerns through the surface beauty of an adulteress the ruthless heart of a predator. The light of godly parental counsel also forewarns of inevitable and unavoidable consequences which attend unfaithfulness. Such light provides greater, not lesser pleasures. It teaches us to burn with the pleasures of godly zeal, which, like the fire of the burning bush seen by Moses, burns but does not consume. Adultery is a cheap and consumptive counterfeit of such holy passion.

### **Saturday, July 27th - Proverbs 6: 30-35**

Here differing sins are compared in order to show the supremely despicable nature of adultery. The thief who steals to eat must pay for his crime beyond the point of simple restitution, thus making his thievery stupid. Yet though the cause of his hunger does nothing to mitigate his punishment, that cause does arouse sympathy in others for the thief. Not so with the adulterer, whose lust promotes within him the development of an appetite, the satisfaction of which will not sustain his life, but will destroy it. His desire, being not vital but wanton, begets no sympathy in others either. He deserves, and is seen by others to deserve, virtually infinite punishment. The sin of adultery, with its related sins of disloyalty and betrayal, is thus universally despised.

### **Sunday, July 28th - Proverbs 7: 1-5**

Once again fatherly authority, wisdom, and love combine in an earnest appeal which urges us to prize above all things the godly instruction of those over us in the Lord. Many ties of affection, necessity, and propriety are employed to bind such teaching to our lives. We are to guard and obey these godly communications, not merely from a sense of duty, but increasingly from a well-founded sense of delight. Such commandments are to be treasured and loved, as a dear sister to whom we are naturally related, and as a close friend to whom we freely choose to be related. It would be better for us to lose our eyes than to lessen our apprehension of these commandments (Mt. 5:29). They are not only valuable, but vital, saving

us from poisonously seductive persons, while focusing our attention and affections upon the Lord, who is our life, and upon the family and friends He has given to us truly to enrich our lives.

#### **Monday, July 29th - Proverbs 7: 6-9**

Solomon is about to describe in most useful detail the tactics of godless seduction. But first he calls our attention to the victims of seduction. We see that such victims choose as companions, not strong, principled, godly souls, but rather the weak and impressionable, who will offer no challenge to the reckless course one may elect to follow. The young man seen in this picture lacks not only sense, but literally lacks heart. He is committed to nothing, and so is easily blown off course. Though we call him a victim, we see that he actually chooses to be ensnared. He puts himself in positions and situations where he is likely to be tempted, convincing himself that simply being near a source of seduction is no crime. But inevitably he elects to take deliberate steps into the dwelling of the seductress, selecting the cover of darkness to hide his guilty track.

#### **Tuesday, July 30th - Proverbs 7: 10-15**

Foolish, vacant souls may be intrigued from afar by the inviting reputation of a harlot, and take steps to draw closer, so they think, for harmless amusement. Yet he who would seek such forbidden fare, thinking himself a victor entitled to taste the spoils of his plotting approach, soon discovers that he has been lured by bait, and is himself the victim of overwhelming forces. The evil woman turns to ensnare the young fool stalking her. She overpowers him with her stormy passions, devours him as one prey among countless for which her voracious appetite constantly drives her to search. She feigns affection, even makes an empty profession of religion, and declares him to be the special object of her search. But it is all a lie, poisonous fruit issuing from a devouring heart. The Word of God reveals to us and would have us to consider the cunning heart, not the mesmerizing appearance, of such evil seducers.

#### **Wednesday, July 31st - Proverbs 7: 11,14**

The discerning eye perceives in the inconsistencies of outward appearance evidence of a bad heart. One who professes religion, but who lives in a wild, rebellious manner, betrays his true nature. By the fruit of how people live we know them, and there is always fruit in every life sufficient to enable those with eyes to see to identify the root.

#### **Thursday, August 1st - Proverbs 7: 16-23**

The appeal from this seductress is totally sensual at the expense of spiritual integrity. The fact of her husband being away for some time is presented as a practical assurance that there can be times for indulgence in sin without fear. Yet this raises a moral factor which young ones who are most susceptible to promises of immediate gratification do well to consider. No amount of perfumed promises can justify moral compromise. Such compromise is wrong, being a violation of the laws and regulations which God, who is never away on a long journey, instituted in accordance with His holy perfection and for our good. Additionally, such compromise, simply on a pragmatic level, always leads to bitter pain, not sweet pleasure.

#### **Friday, August 2nd - Proverbs 7: 24-27**

Solomon has, in this instance of adultery, shown the bitter end of sin from its alluring beginning. He has done so as a warning for all who have attained fewer years or less wisdom than himself. We should hear and attend to his testimony, for he has been an eye witness to the devastating effects of moral compromise. Very likely he speaks from his own experience! We should guard our hearts above all, consciously removing our attention from sensual delights and setting our affections on heavenly things (Col. 3:1-4). Only such heavenly mindedness will keep our feet on the straight and narrow. Finally, we are to know that once we enter temptation, we are no match for it. Moral sin has claimed complete victory over countless

hapless souls who let themselves stray within its grasp. The degradation of those souls has been deep, and their defeat has ruined their lives, and has served to bring them to premature death.

#### **Saturday, August 3rd - Proverbs 8: 1-3**

As in 1:20ff, so here we are reminded that the testimony of the Lord, who is Himself the source of all wisdom (Col. 2:2,3), stands in opposition to the allurements of the adulteress. Such divine wisdom does not lurk in dark corners, as do those who wait to seduce others. Instead, wisdom openly cries out, issuing a call for men to enjoy the solid and pure treasure she offers, as opposed to the entrapping tinsel offered by the deceiver. It is true that the wisdom of God is not as sensibly perceptible as the flesh and blood of an adulteress, but this does not mean that divine wisdom is less real and substantial. Heavenly wisdom presents herself as the true lover of our souls, whose graces and gifts not only match, but infinitely surpass all that any sinful seductress could offer.

#### **Sunday, August 4th - Proverbs 8: 1-3**

Wisdom is available with her warnings, holy urgings, and instructions at every critical juncture of life. If we have doubts regarding the way in which we find ourselves, she stands on the heights beside the way, ready to give us the benefit of her higher perspective. She especially stands at vital crossroads in our lives. She plants herself as a living indicator as to which path we should choose. Wisdom is there to testify when we enter a new situation, inviting us into right gates while admonishing us not to pass through such portals as lead to sin and depravity. With such enlightening and empowering wisdom available to us wherever we are, should we not ever be wise and live?

#### **Monday, August 5th - Proverbs 8: 4,5**

Wisdom addresses her call not indiscriminately, as a mechanical loudspeaker, but personally, to men. Angels are not her object, but the fallen, needy sons of Adam are. She offers precisely what such needy souls lack. To those who are impressionable, and so are subject to the tossing of every wind of doctrine, she offers sound judgment and the ability to live with discretion and efficiency resulting from that judgment. To those foolish ones—literally ones who are slow and heavy of heart, having their vision clouded by the flesh—divine wisdom offers that fiery passion and pure light of heart which comes only as things are spiritually discerned (Lk. 24:25,32; 1 Cor. 2:12-16). With such a rich offer, who would remain in dark ignorance?

#### **Tuesday, August 6th - Proverbs 8: 6-11**

Wisdom speaks only true, right, and noble things, being incapable of uttering anything in the least degree base or wicked. Those who perceive and appropriate this wisdom become themselves true, right, and noble, for they are informed and nourished by the mind of Christ. This transforming power of wisdom is what makes it so exceedingly valuable. Apply gold, silver, and jewels to a simpleton or a fool; the result is a rich man who remains a simpleton or fool. However, the wisdom of God transforms the minds and hearts of simpletons and fools, rendering them wisely capable of proving in their own lives what is the good, acceptable, and perfect will of God (Rom. 12:2).

#### **Wednesday, August 7th - Proverbs 8: 12-14**

With wisdom one finds the key to unlock the treasure house of all virtues, for wisdom does not dwell alone. There are countless, valuable facets to her being, and numerous virtuous potencies residing as members of her household. Sound judgment, expansive awareness, discerning action are closely related members of the family, wisdom herself being counsel and soundness of mind, heart, and hand incarnate. She dwells happily with such virtues, and invites us to partake of them all. Yet she cannot abide pride, arrogance, perversion, or any other evil way. Such vices we shall never discover in her dwelling. The more we abide in the wise

fear of the Lord, the more we shall be transformed by these pure and powerful virtues, and the less we shall taste and be tainted by the vices.

**Thursday, August 8th - Proverbs 8: 15,16**

Divine wisdom is the source not only of virtues and practical abilities, she is also the source of power and authority. Therefore, if we would reign in life, let us seek and apply the fear of the Lord and grow in His wisdom. Let us also understand that those who rule over us are instruments in the wisely superintending hand of the Lord (Rom. 13:1-7). To the extent that they maintain and wield power, they form part of His wise plan for us.

**Friday, August 9th - Proverbs 8: 17**

We do not naturally love the truth and wisdom of God, but rather strive to suppress them (Rom. 1:18). Divine wisdom will not yield its treasure to those suppressing it, but only to those who love it and strive diligently to possess it (Jer. 29:13). Such love of wisdom blossoms in us only as the fruit of the gracious love of God for us. We love Him and esteem His wisdom only because He first loved us (1 Jn. 4:19). Yet it is our responsibility, as those having new natures which are being sanctified, to nurture and deepen our love for the wisdom of the Lord, and to pursue its attainment with all due industry. Anything less will fail to make deeper discoveries of the mind of Christ.

**Saturday, August 10th - Proverbs 8: 18-21**

The wisdom of the Lord, besides equipping us with practical knowledge so as to enable us to live efficient and increasingly enriched lives, primarily makes us wise unto salvation. Thus, above riches we have righteousness. No amount of this world's gold and silver could purchase for a man a right relationship with God. Such a relationship is infinitely precious, and it is ours in Christ. To those who love Him and seek Him first, He gives Himself as a treasure great enough to fill the most capacious life, and He gives all manner of other good things in addition (Mt. 6:33). What He gives us is imperishable (1Pet. 1:4) in contrast with the fleeting pleasures and ephemeral trinkets afforded by this world. Those who love and pursue this wisdom will never complain of loss, but rather will testify to their having received greatest gain (Phil. 3:7-14).

**Sunday, August 11th - Proverbs 8: 22-31**

Prior to this passage, we have beheld in the attributes and promises of wisdom the rays of glory emanating from the Sun of Righteousness, who here comes into full view. Christ is revealed to us under the designation of wisdom, just as He is revealed to us in John's prologue under the designation of the Word (Jn. 1:1-5). None of the claims of wisdom can possibly be too exalted, for we see the source of wisdom to be the infinitely exalted Son of God.

**Monday, August 12th - Proverbs 8: 22-31**

Mysteries too glorious and profound for our full comprehension are in this passage revealed. We behold the co-eternal nature Christ has with the Father, the Son being eternally begotten by the Father. We see Christ's participation in creation, the Son being pictured as a master workman. We see the mutual delight obtaining between the Father and Son. We also see the delight the Son of God has in man, the crown of God's creation. We can surely trust with absolute confidence One who is Himself not only prior to all being, but also the very source thereof (Jn. 1:3). We can gratefully confide in One whose disposition toward us is that of joyful love so great as to sustain Him in His descent from His glorious throne to the cursed tree, so that He might have us as His own redeemed bride.

**Tuesday, August 13th - Proverbs 8: 22-31**

Our Savior, having wisely and lovingly planned with the Father, and having powerfully brought into being the created order, sustaining and governing it now by the word of His power (Col. 1:15-17), is preeminently qualified and most lovingly inclined to instruct us in every area of life. Those attending His school are made wiser than the greatest teachers of man's wisdom (Ps. 119:98-100). Let us respect learned scholars, but let us revere the living and loving Son of God, who is the source of all wisdom above the greatest scholars.

**Wednesday, August 14th - Proverbs 8: 30,31**

The deepest mutual delight and love exists eternally between God the Father and His only begotten Son. The reason God created the world and foreordained our redemption is so that we might be taken up into that perfect, holy love and joy. If this assertion sounds unbelievable, read Jn. 17:5,22-26, and ponder the significance.

**Thursday, August 15th - Proverbs 8: 32,33**

All of the blessings of wisdom recounted from the first verse of this chapter are exceedingly considerable. Wisdom conveys such treasures as noble truths (vv.6,7), such powers as discretion (v.12) and authority (vv.15,16), and such possessions as enduring wealth and righteousness (v.18). All of these blessings issue from the living source of wisdom and power, the loving and beloved Son of God. Accordingly, wisdom is commended to us in infinitely high terms, and our blessing, consequently, has no bounds (Rom. 11:33; Eph. 3:17-21). However, for us so to be blessed, we must not neglect this wisdom (Heb. 2:3), but must hear and heed its instruction.

**Friday, August 16th - Proverbs 8: 34**

Although wisdom cries out in all places and circumstances (vv.1-3), she is not to be possessed in all places. The wisdom of God is not promiscuously scattered abroad, easily to be picked up as cheap trash (7:10-13). This verse teaches us that wisdom is contained within familial confines. Wisdom dwells with God, through Christ, by the Holy Spirit, and cannot be enjoyed by any except those who daily watch expectantly and wait patiently for it by faith in Christ.

**Saturday, August 17th - Proverbs 8: 35,36**

Those who watch and wait for wisdom find it. They also find abundant, eternal life and divine favor, because Christ, the source of wisdom, is also the source of our peace with God (Rom. 5:1), and of our eternal life (Jn. 1:4; 5:24; 14:6; 17:3; 20:31). The only alternative to such supreme blessing is the curse of self-inflicted misery. Such woe begins simply by one missing wisdom, perhaps only by slightly misguided aim. But the end is a settled hatred of wisdom, leading to death. Life and the favor of a heavenly Father, or misery and death—there are no other alternatives, and our relationship to Christ makes all the difference.

**Sunday, August 18th - Proverbs 9: 1-6**

Notice the extensive preparations wisdom has made for us. She offers not the perfumed but empty and illicit enticements of the adulteress (7:16ff). Instead, wisdom has patiently assembled provision of highest quality for our security (house), nourishment (food), and holy enjoyment (mixed wine). Not furtively, but openly because innocently, she invites us through her servants to partake of her pure pleasures and sanctifying powers. Far from our being dissipated by the feast to which Christ invites us, we are enriched with solid joys and empowered with most blessed and practical potencies.

**Monday, August 19th - Proverbs 9: 1-6**

When we respond to the effectual calling of Christ, we are most blessedly sustained by the pledge of His glorious provisions (Eph. 1:13,14). But the best is yet to be for us. Jesus patiently is preparing a place (Jn. 14:2), and a feast (Rev. 19:9) for us, the likes of which eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor of which any heart could conceive (1 Cor. 2:9). Here is not empty, sinful enticement, leading to impoverishment, misery, and death. In Christ we have fullest, most holy, most glorious provision, which should form in us sound expectation and sanctified resolve to live in a manner worthy of such a high, happy, and glorious calling.

#### **Tuesday, August 20th - Proverbs 9: 7-9**

The servants of wisdom are sent out to issue general invitations, but they are not to cast pearls before swine. Such discrimination accords with the dictates of our Lord (Mt. 7:6). For a scoffer, who has imprisoned himself within his own cynical mentality, wherein nothing is esteemed but all is subject for tearing down, will only perceive an object for destruction in the gospel, rather than the pearl of great price. On the other hand, one who has been effectually called by the Lord, and who has been transformed into a righteous lover of wisdom, profits from the continued instruction of the Lord. To the one who has, more shall be given. Let us see to it that we are such who rightly esteem the manifold gifts of God. Also let us be careful to be His discriminating servants, giving more in ministry to those who appreciate and profit most from the Christ we are commissioned to proclaim.

#### **Wednesday, August 21st - Proverbs 9: 10-12**

Once more true wisdom is defined as our having a reverential attitude toward the Lord, which serves to prevent our offending Him and to excite our desire to please Him. We were created and placed within the created universe not so that we might seek to know about ourselves and this world, but rather so that we might know the Lord. Our chief end is to know and glorify the Holy One of Israel, and when we live in accordance with this end, submitting everything to it, we find our lives growing happy and long, at least in perspective, if not in actual duration here below. The choice is ours either to live lives of true direction and blessed meaning, or to scoff at higher things and fill our hearts and the world with insults, hatred, and all other manner of misery. The choice is ours, and so are the consequences.

#### **Thursday, August 22nd - Proverbs 9: 13-18**

There is no comparison between wisdom and folly, and yet that does not prevent folly from competing against wisdom. Folly issues an invitation (v.16) which begins just like that carried abroad by wisdom (v.4). However, since folly cannot completely conceal the illicit nature of her allurements, she boisterously admits that her goods are contraband, but boasts them to be superior precisely because they are so (v.17). There may even be a high degree of sincerity in the claim, since foolish boasters are themselves devoid of that understanding which rightly appraises value (v.13). If we judge simply by the sincerity and appealing aspects of an invitation, we shall go down into death. Truth alone saves us.

#### **Friday, August 23rd - Jonah 1: 1,2**

The Book of Jonah is contained within the writings of the twelve Minor Prophets, but is unlike any of the other productions of those prophets. Jonah is written in historical narrative, and contains no prophecies clearly addressed to God's people, but rather only the briefest declaration against the people of Nineveh—a declaration which did not develop, due to the repentance of the Ninevites and the mercy of the Lord. In fact, the focus of Jonah is largely the prophet himself. He is portrayed as being disobedient to his divine calling, and resentful of God's mercy. Considering this unflattering portrayal, we may be led to suppose that someone other than Jonah wrote this short book. Yet, most conservative scholars believe that Jonah was the author of the book bearing his name. If so, we see how candid the grace and inspiration of God make a wayward servant of the Lord. Our God can and does use faulty, sinful men in His service, and we, being like them ourselves, should be grateful that He does.

#### **Saturday, August 24th - Jonah 1: 1,2**

There are incidences of highly unusual divine providence and outright miracle in the Book of Jonah. This has caused more liberal scholars to assert that the book is a moralistic fable. However, Jesus clearly treated Jonah as historical (Mt. 12:39-41; 16:14; Lk. 11:29-32), speaking of the men of Nineveh rising up in the day of resurrection to testify against the Jewish contemporaries of our Redeemer. If Jonah is fable, the resurrection must be fable, which, if it is, we who believe in it are of all men most to be pitied (1 Cor. 15:19). In fact, if men stumble over an account of a man surviving three days in the belly of a large fish, regarding it is impossible, they will also regard as incredible the account of the Son of Man rising from the dead after having spent three days in the tomb. Some men would prefer to limit the Lord and His saving acts to the puny dimensions of their own logical and conceptual powers. Thanks be to God that He does not confine His redemptive deeds to the dimensions of such diminished and darkened human reasoning.

### **Sunday, August 25th - Jonah 1: 1,2**

There are several themes contained in the Book of Jonah. The power of God over nature is seen in the Lord's sovereign use of the storm, the sailors' casting of lots, the large fish, and the plant that sprung up to shade Jonah. The unworthy pride and ungracious attitude of the Jews toward the Gentile world is typified in Jonah's flight from Nineveh, and in his resentful performance of his divine calling to go to Nineveh. The irresistible grace of God, however, is the major theme of this book. It is demonstrated in the Lord's overcoming Jonah's efforts to disobey his divine calling, and especially in the saving response the people of Nineveh had to Jonah's message of doom. All of these themes point us to Christ, in whom believing Jew and Gentile are made one people (Gal. 5:6; Eph. 2:11-22). If an unwilling Jonah could be used of God to bring to great and wicked Nineveh a reprieve from a justly deserved divine judgment, how much more has the willing Son of God brought salvation to the Jew first and also to us Gentiles?

### **Monday, August 26th - Jonah 1: 1,2**

Jonah was a prophet of God who lived and served the Lord during and after the reign of Jeroboam II. The prophetic work of Jonah is mentioned in 2 Ki. 14:25, wherein we learn that he was familiar with God's mercy to an undeserving people. Though Israel was growing more carnal and complacent under an evil king, Jonah prophesied that the Lord would mercifully use Jeroboam to restore political security to Israel (2 Ki. 14:23-29). Israel's great enemies during this time were Syria and Assyria, Nineveh being the capital city of the latter nation. Yet, for God's people, it is never political enemies surrounding them, but their own sins within them that are their worst enemies.

### **Tuesday, August 27th - Jonah 1: 1,2**

The divine call to Jonah was very clear. God had spoken to him before (2 Ki. 14:25), and Jonah could not and did not mistake this calling as coming to him from any source other than his God. The divine call to Jonah was a command. No discretionary power was given to Jonah in this divine order. The divine call was for Jonah to go to Nineveh and testify against it of its wickedness before and consequent judgment from God. Out of reverence and love for God, this prophet should have gone to Nineveh. Out of concern for Israel, calling divine judgment upon her enemies, Jonah should have gone. Jonah had every legitimate and strong incentive to serve the Lord and His people by his going to Nineveh. The calling and cause of Christ are no less clear and compelling to us. Do we act like Jonah?

### **Wednesday, August 28th - Jonah 1: 3**

Despite the clarity of the divine call to Jonah, and contrary to its compelling incentives, the prophet of the Lord acts as no converted person, still less a prophet, should do. Jonah refused to obey his Lord. Instead of his making the land trip toward the northeast to Nineveh, Jonah headed straight northwest by sea from Joppa to Tarshish, a Phoenician port in Spain. Jonah's disobedience was committed in light of God's Word and in the face of the Lord Himself. Indeed, so stupid did the prophet's sinful refusal to obey

God make him that he intended to, and thought he could, flee from the presence of the Lord. Let us take heed. If we refuse the light of God, how great our darkness becomes!

**Thursday, August 29th - Jonah 1: 3**

Instead of his serving his God as a faithful prophet, Jonah acted the part of a fugitive. He *fled* to Tarshish. The prophet had probably never been to Tarshish before. He probably had no friends or relatives there. In fact, Tarshish represented nothing to Jonah except the place farthest removed from his godly duty. But Jonah turned his back not only on his duty, but also on the God who had commanded him to go to Nineveh. Thus, we read in this verse twice that Jonah went away from *the presence of the Lord*. When our sense of godly duty fades, we become obsessed with perverse trifles and act as fugitives trying to flee from our Lord and Savior.

**Friday, August 30th - Jonah 1: 3**

We are not told at this point why Jonah fled from his divinely imposed duty and from his God. We simply behold a faithful prophet transformed instantly into a disobedient fugitive. We, too, may at times find ourselves strongly impelled to flee from our God and the course we know He would have us pursue. We may not know or care why we run from our heavenly Father. But there are reasons for our flight—all of them having to do with our sinful misapprehension, none of them having to do with any defect in the wisdom, love, or power of our God.

**Saturday, August 31st - Jonah 1: 3**

The reason for Jonah's flight from his duty and from his God is found in Jonah 4:2. There Jonah expresses his resentment of God's mercy. Though the prophet of Israel was told to cry against Nineveh, so highly did he regard the mercy of God and its power to triumph over divine judgment (Jas. 2:13), that he fled as far as he could get from Nineveh in order to avoid the risk of his serving to administer divine mercy, rather than doom, to the Ninevites. In this reasoning of Jonah, we see reprehensible sin, but also testimony to the power of God's mercy. Jonah knew that the saving mercy of God lay ready to break through the darkest clouds of the Law's thundering. Do we as rightly regard the gospel as the power of God unto salvation (Rom. 1:16), or do we treat it as something weak and ineffectual, requiring our auxiliary ingenuity to make it presentable to men in our day?

**Sunday, September 1st - Jonah 1: 3**

Jonah did not flee from his duty because he feared that it would be difficult, if not dangerous, for him to cry against the many people of Nineveh in the name of his God. Instead, Jonah rightly reckoned that the mercy of the Lord was so potent that it could break through the convicting announcement of judgment and convert, rather than condemn, the people of Nineveh. The fact that Nineveh was the capital city of Assyria, a nation of rising menace to Israel, made Jonah loath to perform a service which could prove a blessing rather than a curse of the enemies of Israel. It is a shameful truth, typified in Jonah and committed by the Jews at large, that the redeemed people of the Lord can act as hoards of the gospel, rather than spreaders of it. We Gentiles in Christ are no less susceptible to this sin (Rom. 11:19-21), and thus we should guard ourselves against it.

**Monday, September 2nd - Jonah 1: 3**

Jonah reckoned that he could best serve Israel by his flight from the duty God laid on him to go to Nineveh. The soaring pride of this prophet is evident in his thinking his own way was better than God's way. Our private agendas can blind us and lead us out of the path of our duty whereby we best serve and honor our Lord. They also lead us out of our communion with and enjoyment of the blessing of our God. It is in those senses that Jonah fled from the presence of the Lord. But how can he or we flee from the One who is in all places (Ps. 139:7,8)?

#### **Tuesday, September 3rd - Jonah 1: 4**

Jonah could flee for a time from his duty and from the blessing of his communion with his God. Yet he could not escape from the Lord. Our God is inescapable, due not only to His omnipresence, but also due to the fact that the Lord pursues His people. Our God is as the hound of heaven; He is the good Shepherd who leaves the flock to find and restore the wandering sheep (Mt. 18:12). Yet the pursuit of God after His wandering and disobedient children can involve some punishing providences. Thus, for Jonah, the hand of God hurled a furious storm on the sea, which engulfed the ship of Jonah's escape. The storm was not just a warning signal, but a life-threatening power. God can make His presence known in the still small voice, or in the violent tempests. Through which sort of providence is He now speaking to us?

#### **Wednesday, September 4th - Jonah 1: 4**

Our God can bring water from a rock (Ex. 17:6) and He can turn water into a wall (Ex. 14:22). Our Lord can still a storm (Mk. 4:39), and He can stir a storm, as He does here in His pursuit after Jonah. No circumstantial calmness or calamity occurs apart from the sovereign will, authority, and power of our Lord. He can and will move heaven and earth to accomplish His merciful purposes. No storm can harm us when we walk by faith in and obedience to Him; no calm can last when we flee from Him.

#### **Thursday, September 5th - Jonah 1: 4, 5**

God stirred the sea's waves and the sailors' hearts with the aim of arousing Jonah. However, it all had no effect initially upon the disobedient prophet. While the pagan sailors demonstrate their spirituality—however misguided it might have been—Jonah lay asleep in the ship, stupefied by the spiritual dullness that issued from his disobedience to his God. Jonah was not only spiritually hardened, he also made himself oblivious to the physical dangers surrounded him. When men of God adopt their private agendas above the clearly revealed will of God, they land themselves in greatest peril, made many magnitudes more dangerous by their being insensitive to their peril.

#### **Friday, September 6th - Jonah 1: 5**

The sailors were at sea, carrying cargo for profit. But when they perceived that their lives were in jeopardy due to the cargo weighing down the ship amidst the stormy waves, they rightly reckoned that life was more valuable than money. So they jettisoned the cargo. In this they showed a truer sense of priority than did the prophet of God. For he who should have known that it is a terrible thing to fall into the hands of the living God (Heb. 10:31) slept, cradled in his delusion that he had escaped from the Lord. Jonah reposed in carnal security at the very time that he was inescapably in the hands of his awesome Lord. It is the peace of Christ that should rule our hearts, not the false and frail oblivion of a stupefied and presumptuous conscience.

#### **Saturday, September 7th - Jonah 1: 6**

From the general disturbance of the storm, a particular disturbance follows that hits the mark of the Lord's aim. The ship's captain, either observing or learning from the sailors' observation that a single man lay asleep amidst the terror of the storm, approached Jonah and aroused him. Rightly did the captain conclude that Jonah slept, not due to his serene confidence in his God. The captain perceived that Jonah slumbered in stupefaction rather than spirituality. So irrational is unbelief, so inconsistent is disobedience in the Lord's servants, that even unbelievers, sobered by fear, can detect it and upbraid the fleeing faithful for it.

#### **Sunday, September 8th - Jonah 1: 6**

The storm God sent on the sea did not arouse Jonah, but the words of the ship's captain did. That pagan captain wondered at Jonah's insensitivity to their situation, and reproached the prophet for his neglect of his God in such an emergency. The captain commanded that Jonah call upon the God from whom he was seeking to flee. How all things do inform against disobedient servants of the Lord! God can make pagans to be our preachers, or stones, if not storms, to cry out convictingly against us, if we are seeking to escape from the One who loves us, saves us, and puts us in His service. This concert of all things against us when we are disobedient to our Lord is but the dark side of our God's sovereign love, by which He causes all things to work together for our good (Rom. 8:28).

#### **Monday, September 9th - Jonah 1: 6**

Sailors are not known for their gentleness or reverence. Yet even these hardened men, sobered by the storm of God, grope for Him and His merciful help. Their casting themselves upon the possibility of compassion from even an unknown God may seem desperate, but it is far more sensible than is the attempted flight of a prophet from the God he knows. This hope for divine mercy, arising from the hearts of these rough seamen, is a token of the hope in God's mercy that will spring from the hearts of the Ninevites, impelling them not to attempt to run from God, as Jonah was doing, but to turn repentantly toward Him. Our God can convict and convert the hardest sinners when it suits His gracious will.

#### **Tuesday, September 10th - Jonah 1: 7**

The arresting hand of God in this storm becomes more apparent as the focus of the agitated sailors becomes more sharp and particular. They rightly reckoned that someone had offended a deity. This leads them, according to their superstition, to resort to a device of chance. Whether it is the raging storm or the casting of the lot, all things are pointing to and informing against Jonah. It is not that the storm itself had power to humble the hardened seamen, or the lot had power to point out the culprit. These things pointed to Jonah because God had stirred the order of the sea, by which men could usually navigate their course, to a raging chaos, while He brought perfect order and direction out of the random casting of lots. When the hand of God reaches out to arrest His fleeing servant, all things submit to and serve His holy will—even, eventually, His disobedient servant.

#### **Wednesday, September 11th - Jonah 1: 8**

The sailors demand an accounting from Jonah. They rightly assume that he is guilty of some offense, and they evoke a confession from him. The sailors reason that the calamity has a personal and moral basis, and so they ask Jonah on whose account the storm had arisen. They further inquired into his occupation, so as to discover if his was a wicked career that would offend the gods. They also demanded to know Jonah's origin, his country, and his people, perhaps thinking that he was one of a nation of evil doers. Jonah's interrogators rightly knew that something in his person or work was wrong and subject to divine judgment. They had a greater sense of moral rectitude than did the disobedient prophet of Israel. When the sons of light turn from the light, their darkness is greater than that of the sons of darkness.

#### **Thursday, September 12th - Jonah 1: 9, 10**

Jonah's response to his interrogators is not a denial, whereby he asserts his innocence. Yet, neither does Jonah begin with a confession of his sin. Rather, he identifies himself as a Hebrew, thus answering the sailors' last question first. Then Jonah answers a question the sailors did not ask, but should have asked. Jonah tells them that he fears God, who created the earth and sea. He does not claim that he was a prophet or even a servant of God, for in his disobedience he had lost right to such designations. The morally keen perception of those heathen seamen continues to be demonstrated by how they express astonishment over Jonah's confession that he was fleeing from this God. The seamen were dismayed that the Hebrew in their midst was dishonoring and offending such an evidently powerful God by his disobedient flight from Him. Worldly men may not themselves want the Lord, but they marvel and are disquieted when the godly defy their heavenly Father.

### **Friday, September 13th - Jonah 1: 10**

The raging storm was evidence of the omnipotence of the Lord that the sailors were compelled to acknowledge. By this evidence, they were convicted to some extent of their own failure to fear this God whom Jonah feared. The sailors, however, were now awakened from their own carnal complacency and were filled with respect, if not awe, for the Lord. As they were in the grip of God's almighty power, they considered it astonishing that one such as Jonah should attempt to defy this God. No less should we be astonished when we or any of our brethren dishonor the Lord by defiantly disobeying Him.

### **Saturday, September 14th - Jonah 1: 10, 11**

The sailors have discovered the cause of the storm. They have discovered the culprit who has brought their calamity upon them. They know Jonah's guilt because the prophet had confessed it to them. However, their certain knowledge of the cause of their plight gives them no clue as to the cure for it. They are seized with such terrible regard for the God who brought this storm upon them that they dare not risk offending Him further by their taking rash but wrong corrective measures. Hence, they seek instruction from the wayward prophet of the Lord as to what they should do to placate this angry God and appease His awful wrath. Jonah may be disobedient, but he is not devoid of the knowledge of God and of His salvation. The seamen therefore show themselves ready to rely upon Jonah's instruction for the salvation of their lives, if not their immortal souls. A bad Christian can still point those who are not Christians to Christ.

### **Sunday, September 15th - Jonah 1: 11**

This question of the sailors shows their appreciation for moral rectitude. They knew inherently that wrongs had to be put right, that guilty men must be punished, especially those guilty of sinning against their God. Their concept was right, as far as it went. Yet it did not go far enough. They thought merely of their placating an angry God through their punishment of the guilty. Never, apart from God's own disclosure through His saving promises and provision, would any man dream of a righteous and lasting peace made between a holy God and sinful men by God's imputing to and punishing in His only begotten Son the guilt of sinners.

### **Monday, September 16th - Jonah 1: 11, 12**

The sailors asked Jonah what punishment they should inflict upon him for his having offended his God, and Jonah answered them truly and without hesitation. The disobedient prophet was worthy of death. The prophet's declaration that he must be cast to his death in the raging sea is revealing of both God and His servant. Jonah's pronouncing a death sentence upon himself tells us something of the justice of God. It also tells us something about the self-sacrificing willingness of God's servant. The heathen seamen were receiving a vital theological education amidst the terrible tempest that afflicted them. There is much about God, His ways, His servants, and ourselves that we can learn amidst our trials.

### **Tuesday, September 17th - Jonah 1: 12**

Jonah's pronouncement of a death sentence upon himself reveals to us the awful truth about the status of sinners in the hands of a justly wrathful God. Jonah did not murder men or blaspheme God. Instead, he simply disobeyed the word of the Lord. Such disobedience may not seem to us to be a capital crime, yet when men disobey the God of heaven and earth, the sovereign Lord of all, they become guilty of a crime that is sufficiently serious that it will render them deserving not only of death, but also of judgment and hell after death. The soul that sins must die (Ezek. 18:4; Rom. 8:13). Our disobedience against the Lord, in things great and small, warrants our death as it did Jonah's.

### **Wednesday, September 18th - Jonah 1: 12, 13**

People are as reluctant in our day as were these sailors in Jonah's day to accept the fact that those who sin against God are deserving of death. It is the last truth men want to hear, and it is the last truth they will acknowledge. Accordingly, the seamen refuse to take the drastic step of casting Jonah to his death. They retain some hope that they, by their own determined efforts, can save the sinning prophet from the awful judgment of God. Their own furious attempts to row their ship to land, using the power not of the driving gale, but of their own arms, demonstrates the desperate and futile endeavors of all men to secure themselves from accountability to the living and judging God.

#### **Thursday, September 19th - Jonah 1: 13, 14**

The sailors, initially, could not bring themselves to accept the drastic remedy proposed by Jonah. They sought to row to land, there to let the sinning prophet off and, presumably, to wait out the storm. But the storm aroused by God was greater than their ability to save themselves and Jonah. Therefore, they gave up their determination to be their own saviors, and surrendered to the reality of the situation God imposed upon them. They accepted God's terms of salvation: that one man must die for all, or all must perish. With greatest reluctance did they agree to cast Jonah to his death. With great reverence did they call upon the Lord, asking that they who had suffered so greatly because of their unknowingly having had a guilty prophet of God living with them, should be spared greater suffering in consequence of their casting the Lord's servant to his death. They plead that they did what they were about to do, which would otherwise be a crime amongst men and a sin against God, only because they sought to comply with the divine will. The hand of God in the storm and the lot, and judgement of God in the words of Jonah had arrested these hardened men so that they regarded the Lord above all things.

#### **Friday, September 20th - Jonah 1: 15**

The sailors' wrestling against the hand of God concludes with their surrendering to the will of God. They therefore act in accordance with the demands of divine justice given sharpest focus through the words of Jonah. The seaman who had already thrown valuable cargo into the sea, picked up the more precious man made in God's image, who had served as a prophet of the Lord. They threw him into the sea as executioners of the divine judgment against the one who had sinned by his disobedience against his God. Immediately, the storm calmed, indicating that God's wrath was appeased by the sacrifice. Here is a type, foreshadowing for believers the quieting of the terrors of God and of Law, due to the Savior's obedience and blood shed on their behalf.

#### **Saturday, September 21st - Jonah 1: 15, 16**

The pagan sailors began fearfully to regard God in the storm. They were moved to call upon the name of the Lord as they held up Jonah as a sacrifice to God. But they became most reverent when they saw how God's wrath subsided at the offering of the living sacrifice of Jonah. Consequently, they offered further sacrifices to the Lord for their own sins. They sealed their repentance with vows to God. It arouses men when they behold the hand of God stirring up a storm, but, as the disciples of Jesus experienced (Mk. 4:35-41), it fills men with reverential awe when they behold the gracious power of God stilling such storms and giving their troubled hearts peace that passes understanding.

#### **Sunday, September 22nd - Jonah 1: 17**

The sailors were diverted from their profitable destination of Tarshish to have a priceless and apparently lasting encounter with the living God. They had witnessed Jonah's self-sacrifice, God's almighty power, and His holy and just demands. Now they experienced peace. So far as they knew then or thereafter, Jonah was punished for his disobedience with death. But the life of God's erring servant did not end with his plunge into the tempestuous sea. We should recall that God was not so much on a mission to punish Jonah, but rather to pursue him and overtake him with irresistible grace. The Lord would not allow either His man or His mission to fail ultimately. Jonah's refusal to minister God's mercy to Nineveh resulted only in a diversion in which pagan sailors were spiritually awakened by the might and mercy of

God. The experience of those seamen was a token of the massive showers of divine mercy that would descend upon the people of Nineveh through Jonah's ministry. Meanwhile, the prophet who deserved death because of his sin against God is preserved from death by God to be raised up to new life and fruitful service.

#### **Monday, September 23rd - Jonah 1: 17**

The inscrutable wisdom as well as the sovereign power and grace of the Lord are seen in His hurling a storm upon the sea and in His preparing a great fish under the sea. The storm served to arrest Jonah amidst his disobedient flight from his God-given mission. The great fish served to entomb the prophet who was thrown to his supposed death, preserving him and conveying him to land from which he would proceed to accomplish his mission at Nineveh. If our God demonstrates such saving regard for His sinning servant, we should reckon and rely upon the fact that beneath us, at all times—even in the turmoil of our sin—are the everlasting arms and preserving providence of our heavenly Father.

#### **Tuesday, September 24th - Jonah 1: 17**

A man thrown into a raging sea should drown. A man swallowed by a giant fish in the sea should also die. We behold the marvelous preserving power of the Lord in that Jonah was not only by the fish saved from a watery execution, but by his God's hand Jonah was also saved from the fish. A man ingested into a giant fish should die from suffocation. His body should have been disintegrated by the strong digestive juices of the sea creature's stomach. Instead, the fish served as a living tomb in which the Lord preserved His servant from death and corruption (Ps.16:10). The sovereign grace and power of our God can transform seas, giant predators, and all things arrayed against us into servants for our good and His glory (Rom. 8:28).

#### **Wednesday, September 25th - Jonah 1: 17**

God appointed the storm (v.4), the lot (v.7), the sacrifice (v.12), the fish, and Jonah's duration within the fish. Why did God appoint the virtual death and three day entombment of His servant in the sea creature's stomach? The proximate answer is that the Lord orchestrated all of these factors to retrieve His erring prophet and send him to complete his assigned mission. That which God's goodness begins, the arm of His strength completes (Phil. 1:6). Yet, the Lord could have saved His servant in ways other than that of having him entombed in a fish for three days. We learn from Mt. 12:29-44 that the ultimate aim of these divine appointments was that they might serve as a sign of Christ's death, three-day entombment, and resurrection. We may marvel and be sobered and encouraged by God's dealings with Jonah, yet those dealings are but shadows of the substance of our Savior's death and resurrection in which all believers have a vital interest.

#### **Thursday, September 26th - Jonah 1: 17**

The fact that a giant fish should swallow a man whole is not the product of fantasy. Jonah's experience was not unique in the annals of history. C.F. Keil notes in his *Commentary on the Old Testament*, vol. X, p. 398, that in 1758 a sailor fell from his frigate in the Mediterranean and was swallowed by a large shark. The ship's captain, however, ordered a deck gun fired at the shark, and when the cannon ball hit the shark, it vomited up the swallowed sailor who was alive and very little hurt. The miraculous element in the incident with Jonah was his preservation in the stomach of the fish for three days. Those days passed with God preserving Jonah while the fish transported the prophet to land where he, as a virtually resurrected servant of the Lord, would proceed to fulfill his divine commission.

#### **Friday, September 27th - Jonah 2: 1**

When God spoke to Jonah, telling him to go to Nineveh, the prophet did not pray to the Lord but fled to a Tarshish bound ship. When the storm on the sea turned the sailors to their prayers, Jonah slept.

When Jonah was cast from the ship into the sea, presumably to this death, the disobedient prophet uttered no prayer, possibly because he preferred death to his serving as a messenger to Nineveh. But encased within his ichthyic tomb, Jonah prayed to his God. No temple or synagogue ever served to house such profound and sincere prayers of this prophet. In the depth of the sea, in the stomach of a fish, in the darkness of death, Jonah saw the light of God's infinite wisdom and sovereign mercy and power. Like the prodigal in the far country, and like the man excommunicated from the Corinthian church so that he might be taught in the grip of Satan's power not to sin (1 Cor. 5:5), so Jonah came to himself and returned to his God in the greatest depths of his misery. We serve a marvelous God, who can send food to the mouth His prophet by ravens (1 Ki. 17:4-6), and who can bring prayer from the mouth of His erring servant by fish.

#### **Saturday, September 28th - Jonah 2: 1**

Jonah was humbled by the storm, by his discovery and conviction of sin by the sailors, and by his having been cast into the raging sea. Yet, when he found himself delivered from death by the great fish, he perceived afresh for himself the mercy and might of His God. Thus, he prays a prayer essentially of hope, thanksgiving, and praise to the Lord of his salvation. Jonah was not in a swoon or coma for the duration of his three-day stay within the fish. He was never more alive and pleasing to his God than when he hallowed by his prayers that fish's belly, appointed by God to contain and transport Jonah to the land from which he could reach Nineveh, his appointed goal.

#### **Sunday, September 29th - Jonah 2: 2-9**

The words of these verses are largely strands taken from the Psalms and woven into Jonah's prayer. Sentences and phrases can be traced back to Psalms 2, 5, 16, 18, 22, 31, 42, 49, 50, 69, 77, 120, and 142. This informs us that Jonah was a man of Scripture. He was a man who fed himself upon the Word of God. His true and abiding character was not demonstrated in his disobedience, but rather in his prayer which showed that he had digested the Word, and that he lived in and by Scripture. In the day of our deepest trial, what will serve as fuel for our prayers?

#### **Monday, September 30th - Jonah 2: 1, 2**

Jonah entered a ship in an attempt to flee from his duty to the Lord. The sinful disobedience of the prophet resulted in his temporary stupidity, wherein he thought that he could escape from the omnipresent God. In the belly of the fish, Jonah came to himself, turned to God, and saw the light of God's mercy and might. Jonah rightly reckoned that God was in the highest heavens, in the depths of Sheol (Ps. 139:8), and everywhere between. He also rightly saw the sea creature not as an accident, adding an awful complication to his death, but as the saving provision of his God, who would let neither His man nor His mission through that man fail.

#### **Tuesday, October 1st - Jonah 2: 1, 2**

Jonah's disobedience resulted in ever increasing distress for the prophet. Yet, he did not call on the Lord until he reached the extreme depths of his distress. When he found himself caught in the grip of the double death of the sea and the fish in the sea, Jonah determined to use his dying breath to call upon His God. He would never have done this had his faith not re-ignited to remind him that his God was merciful to forgive his sin, and mighty to save him from it and all of its richly deserved and deeply distressing consequences. Our God uses grim tools like affliction and distress to turn His disobedient children to the glory of His grace, filling their erstwhile silent mouths with prayers to and praises of Him.

#### **Wednesday, October 2nd - Jonah 2: 2**

This verse is an introductory overture to Jonah's prayers. In it Jonah relates the essence of his prayerful transaction with God. He cried in his deepest distress, and God heard and answered. Thus, Jonah begins his prayer with an acknowledging testimony that his supplication had been heard by the Lord.

Nothing had changed in Jonah's circumstances to indicate a divine answer to his prayer. He was still in the belly of the fish. Yet, there he began to perceive the Lord's appointment of that fish as a means for his salvation. In that liberating light he rejoiced in the dark belly of the fish. He saw the fish not as his doom but as his deliverance from death at sea, the way Paul came to see his thorn in the flesh as a blessing, not a curse, from God (2 Cor. 12:7-10).

#### **Thursday, October 3rd - Jonah 2: 3**

In the ship amidst the storm, Jonah was stupefied by his sin. This made him oblivious to his danger and ignorant of the hand of God in the storm. In the belly of the fish, the prophet was awakened to the truth that his God had ordained all of his trials. Thus, Jonah does not say that it was the sailors who cast him into the deep, but rather he attributes that action to God. The towering sea swells and crashing waves he sees as God's breakers and billows. In the fish's belly, Jonah repented of his stupefying sin, turning in prayer to the God from whom he had attempted to flee, and he saw his God in everything. When we repent, we see the hand of our God in all things surrounding us, working all things together for our good.

#### **Friday, October 4th - Jonah 2: 4**

God did not leave His servant, but rather it was Jonah who fled from his God. Yet, Jonah says in this verse that he had been expelled from the Lord's sight. Here we should understand that those departing from God can cross a line where the Lord delivers them over to the power of their sin and the bitter misery of the consequences of their sin. Paul writes of this in Rom. 1:24ff, where he speaks of God giving men over to their sins. It is sobering when we realize both that there is such a line and that it is only God, not we, who knows when that line has been crossed. Jonah presumptuously took God's grace for granted when he disobeyed the Lord. Those who take such presumptuous steps away from God may find that they have been confirmed in their alienation from the Lord (Heb. 6:4-8).

#### **Saturday, October 5th - Jonah 2: 4**

Jonah realized that he had come perilously close to, and was well deserving of, a confirmed alienation from God. Yet, the disobedient and unworthy prophet did find grace to be renewed in repentance. By faith, he stopped his flight from his God, and turned to the Lord whom he had failed and offended. He turned to his God with expectation (not glib presumption), that he would find mercy and restoration. Such restoration would be granted not so that Jonah could carry on in his sin, but so that he would return to the worship and service of his God. That is why Jonah mentions the focus of his hope as being the Lord's holy temple. The deliverances from death which the Lord grants us are given with the intention that we live thereafter for the glory of our God.

#### **Sunday, October 6th - Jonah 2: 5, 6**

Jonah describes his plunge into the sea. He was deeply conscious that he was amidst an environment in which he could not survive. Thus, he says not that water encompassed his body, but also his soul. He saw all of creation as covering him as a grave. His deep plunge into the sea led him into a deeper plunge into the prospect of an eternity separated from God, which he well deserved. Therefore, the earth was not seen as his house, but as a prison with bars enclosing him forever. Yet Jonah perceived something even deeper than the dreadful death and eternal separation from his God he so richly deserved. He beheld in the depths of the sea and in the dark night of his soul the hand of his God, with merciful might bringing him out of the pit of hell. What an amazing difference the merciful intervention of our God makes from the dreadful doom we deserve. While we were dead in our trespasses and sins, being by nature children of wrath, deserving the worst God could with perfect justice give us, God contradicted it all with His mercy and great love, making us alive with Christ and raising us up with Him (Eph. 2:1-10).

#### **Monday, October 7th - Jonah 2: 7**

Jonah was not only physically perishing, but he was dying in every sense. Hence, he speaks of his soul fainting within him. All of his powers to continue his disobedient flight from God or even to save himself were dying. Yet, his faith did not fade or fail him. When all of Jonah's being and powers were caught in the helpless grip of death, his faith revived him, setting his focus once more on the living and saving God, the only true object of faith. While we live in pleasant circumstances, we may indulge the delusion that our faith is not the vital potency that we find it to be in the valley of the shadow of death (1 Pet. 1:5; 1 Jn. 5:4).

#### **Tuesday, October 8th - Jonah 2: 7**

In the valley of the shadow of his death, Jonah did not only remember his gracious Lord, but he also cried out to Him in prayer. Sin silences our communication with God, as surely as it severs our communion with Him. It is the surest sign of regeneration in a converted soul, or repentance in a prodigal child of God, that he prays to the Lord. Thus, we find Saul of Tarsus in prayer immediately after his regenerating encounter with Christ on the Damascus road (Acts 9:11). No fish, no sea, no distance, no threats to his life could keep Jonah's prayer from ascending to the throne of God's sovereign grace. Neither could any sin that the disobedient prophet had committed and of which he had repented bar his prayer from the holy heavenly temple of the Lord. By faith, the great and precious promises of God are brought to our remembrance; by prayer we lift our needs to, and cast our burdens upon, the God who cares for us (1 Pet. 5:7).

#### **Wednesday, October 9th - Jonah 2: 8, 9**

In these verses, Jonah contrasts what he was in his disobedience with what he had been restored to by God's grace. Jonah had himself regarded an idol of nationalism. He refused to go to Nineveh because he knew that God would be merciful to those who were Israel's enemies. Such an idol, however admired by men, is false, futile, and faithless. Jonah had experienced its vanity, and he also had fresh experience of the restoring mercy of his saving God. Hence it is with deepest sincerity and gratitude that he, by the mercies of God, offers himself a living sacrifice to the Lord and to His service for His glory (Rom. 12:1,2).

#### **Thursday, October 10th - Jonah 2: 9**

The man who refused to serve the Lord now commits himself to sacrifice to the Lord. What a difference his deliverance from death had wrought in him. He does not begrudgingly or even dutifully offer to sacrifice to the Lord. Instead, his sacrifices issue as the fruit of his gratitude to the Lord for His saving mercy. Jonah further binds himself to his God by vows freely undertaken with holy determination to perform them. He commits himself to such sacrifice and vows not to appease his offended God, but in thanksgiving for the Lord's gracious salvation. Jonah does not think he will save himself by such good, religious deeds, but rather offers them in response to the Lord's saving grace. So should we gratefully offer ourselves as living sacrifices to the God who has saved us from sin, death, and hell.

#### **Friday, October 11th - Jonah 2: 9**

Jonah concludes his prayer with the testimony that salvation is from the Lord. Here the prophet not only acknowledges the Lord as the source of salvation, but also recognizes Him as the sovereign Giver of that salvation. Should the Lord determine to give or to withhold His saving grace from the Ninevites to whom He was sending Jonah, that was a matter of divine prerogative, not of Jonah's desiring or dreading. This divine prerogative should be understood and submitted to by all inheritors of salvation, and most certainly by all heralds of the claims of Christ.

#### **Saturday, October 12th - Jonah 2: 10**

With Jonah's exercise of faith and repentance, as demonstrated in his prayer, the divinely ordained course of his correction was completed. Therefore, in return for Jonah's prayerful words to the

Lord, commanding words were issued by God to the fish, that it should expel Jonah on land. It is not recorded that Jonah prayed specifically for such a deliverance. Rather, his prayer breathes a deep and vital trust in his God respecting the how, when, and where of the deliverance for which he, by faith, hoped (vv.4,9). When we make God's worship and service our business, God will make all the details of our deliverance and preservation His business (Mt. 6:33).

#### **Sunday, October 13th - Jonah 2: 10**

The answer to Jonah's prayer was unceremonious but sufficient. How humbled must Jonah have been when he reflected that, dressed in his obstinate pride, which was acceptable to men but offensive to God, he had stepped onto the Tarshish bound ship, and that here he was compelled to take up the mission he had refused, being launched to that mission by the vomiting convulsions of a fish. The prophet emerged from that fish, no doubt covered with an unimaginably smelly slime that would have been offensive to men, but dressed in a humble gratitude that was a sweet smelling delight to his God. Strange and humbling as this answer to prayer may be, the repentant prophet took no offense at it, but was most grateful for it.

#### **Monday, October 14th - Jonah 3: 1, 2**

The Lord spoke a word of command to the fish, opening the living tomb containing His prophet. The Lord also spoke to Jonah, giving him a repeated commission to go to Nineveh. This reiteration of the commission emphasizes that the will of God shall certainly be done. No reluctance or refusal on the part of God's servant will cause the Lord to change His plans and purposes. Our disobedience to the Word of the Lord will bring humbling calamity and pain to us, but it does nothing to compel our God to change His mind regarding the mission He assigns to us.

#### **Tuesday, October 15th - Jonah 3: 2**

Jonah receives from the Lord a repeated commission, but it is not given as an exact repetition of the words of the original commission. The words of this verse, telling Jonah to proclaim to Nineveh the proclamation God will tell to Jonah, are less definite and explicit than the original divine command for Jonah to cry against Nineveh for her sins (1:2). The wording of this repeated commission calls for more implicit trust and obedience from Jonah than did the first. It was with Jonah as it had been with Abraham when he was told to leave his home in Ur to go to a place the Lord would in due course indicate to him (Gen. 12:1). Those trained by the exercise of their faith, whose hearts are made pure by the purging discipline of the Lord, are capable of rendering quick and unreserved obedience to God with no detailed direction or clear incentive, except the knowledge that they are doing their Lord's will for His glory. The faithful do not concern themselves with the markings of the way so much as with their Shepherd who leads them in His way.

#### **Wednesday, October 16th - Jonah 3: 2, 3**

In response to this second word of the Lord to Jonah, the prophet arose and went to Nineveh. This time he did not hesitate or attempt to flee from his mission, blinded by national zealotry as he had been before. Nor was Jonah daunted by the distance to Nineveh, the size and grandeur of the city, or the great number of its inhabitants to whom he was charged to make proclamation. This quick and faithful obedience of Jonah represents an example of that for which we all should pray for ourselves and our brethren, namely, that our God's will be done on earth with the same fidelity and celerity as it is done in heaven (Mt. 6:10).

#### **Thursday, October 17th - Jonah 3: 3, 4**

The duration of Jonah's entombment in the fish matched the duration of his mission. For three days and nights he suffered for the sin of his refusal to perform his three-day itinerate ministry though Nineveh. An even more sobering correlation between the sins of the Lord's servants and the duration of

their suffering divine chastisement is that of Israel's forty-year wilderness wandering resulting from the forty-day period wherein the faithless spies viewed the promised land with dread rather than delight (Num. 14:34). The longer we disobey our God and dwell in our sin rather than walk by His Spirit, the longer we shall experience His corrective discipline.

#### **Friday, October 18th - Jonah 3: 3, 4**

From his entrance into Nineveh and throughout the first day of his walk through the city, Jonah made faithful and fearless proclamation from the Lord. He was not retiring in his declaration. He was not ashamed or afraid to cry out his message. Nor did Jonah try to soft sell or sugar coat the grim news he heralded. There would have been many plausible reasons tempting a man in Jonah's position to hold back or downplay his awful declaration. In fact, there was no logical necessity or emotional incentive for this foreign prophet, in a minority of one, to pronounce a death sentence upon an entire great city, except that his God commanded it, and that Jonah, having supreme regard for the Lord, knew it would be true, necessary, and vital for him to publish this message. The command of God and the necessity of our publishing the good news of salvation in Christ should impel us no less to proclaim the gospel (Rom. 1:16).

#### **Saturday, October 19th - Jonah 3: 3-4**

Jonah's resurrection from the death of his sea plunge and fish burial was for service to God. Jonah was raised up by God from death and from his prayer so that he might preach to Nineveh by God's direction and power. We should expect to witness great results from such resurrection preaching. We should expect even greater results from the intercessory service our resurrected Lord offers for us (Heb. 7:25).

#### **Sunday, October 20th - Jonah 3: 3, 4**

The proclamation Jonah made has been called the shortest sermon with the greatest results. The content and presentation of his message are striking for what they are not. Jonah employs no humor, no entertainment, no soothing or exciting music—all being elements considered essential by many in our day. The prophet offers no explanation why the city is to be destroyed, nor does he offer mercy or tender appeals that the people be reconciled with God. What Jonah delivers is a straight and unvarnished word from the Lord. This crumb of truth could be by the flesh despised, ridiculed, or considered capable only of inciting despair in its hearers, but by faith it is regarded as a feast of divine mercy.

#### **Monday, October 21st - Jonah 3: 4, 5**

Jonah shot arrows of truth into the ears of the Ninevites. By the direction and enabling power of the Lord, every word struck its intended mark. Not only did the ears of the Ninevites hear the grim message, but their hearts received it as what it truly was, not the word of man, but a warning from God (1 Thess. 2:13). Our prayer should be that our God would make our hearts to be as receptive of every Word that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord (Mt. 4:4).

#### **Tuesday, October 22nd - Jonah 3: 4, 5**

The people of Nineveh heard Jonah's proclamation of doom, but they rightly perceived its source as being the Lord. That is why they soberly received the message of Jonah. They perceived through it the penetrating power and convicting weight of divine authority. But far from their seeking to run or hide from that God who had marked their city for destruction, and far from their denying their accountability to Him or defending themselves while charging Him with unreasonable harshness, they humbled themselves before God, denying themselves and, by their fasting and donning uncomfortable sackcloth, laying themselves in prostrate and utterly vulnerable fashion before Him. The Ninevites throw themselves into God, as Jonah had been thrown into the raging sea. Both Jonah and these repentant Ninevites would find themselves delivered from a justly deserved death by the saving mercy of the Lord. Whether we are living obediently or in sinful

disobedience, our lives and highest welfare never are achieved by our running from God, but always are to be found in our casting ourselves upon the mercy of our Lord.

### **Wednesday, October 23rd - Jonah 3: 5**

The people of Nineveh heard Jonah's words, but they believed God. We may infer from the Ninevites' actions something of what they believed about God. From the fact that they all fasted and put on sackcloth, we should understand that they believed that Jonah's God had power, intention, and right to destroy their city as well as their lives. The divine right so to judge Nineveh is acknowledged in the tokens of repentance—the fasting and sackcloth—they adopted. With these tokens of deprivation, they admitted that they were a sinful people deserving the worse affliction threatening them. The power God had to destroy the entire city is acknowledged by the entire population, from slave to king, joining in repentance. All of them admitted that each deserved God's judgment and that the divine judgment would fall on them every one. The divine intention is acknowledged by quick, decisive, and unreserved manifestation of the repentance. Here is a thorough work of sobering conviction accomplished through the foolishness of one man's preaching in one day.

### **Thursday, October 24th - Jonah 3: 5, 6**

The king of Nineveh was perhaps more worldly and wicked than other kings of the earth at that time. His wickedness led the concert of Ninevite sinfulness that came before the Lord (1:2). Yet, here we see him cast down from his pride and pomp to penitential prostration. He descended from his throne and assumed the position of a guilty and convicted sinner, lying low before the righteous King of kings. He laid aside his comfortable and splendid regal attire to don the outward squalor that more truly reflected his inner corruption and misery. This amazing change was effected by an almighty and gracious cause. The hearts of kings are in the hands of the Lord (Pr. 21:1). God can justly harden the heart of a Pharaoh or graciously melt the heart of the king of Nineveh. Let us learn from this to ask our God graciously to melt the hearts of those we know to be unconverted.

### **Friday, October 25th - Jonah 3: 6, 7**

Nineveh's king, who had led his people in wickedness, now led them in repentance. He not only afflicted himself with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes, but he decreed that his people follow his example. His nobles, who would themselves have enjoyed some degree of independence from the king, being themselves men of worldly position and power, seconded this decree of repentance without reservation. The decree was mortally sobering. A fast of greatest severity was proclaimed. No one was to partake of food or water. If this fast were to last for more than a few days, no one in Nineveh would have survived to see the city destroyed forty days hence. Men can go weeks without food, as Jesus did in His wilderness temptation (Mt. 4:1-11), but only days without water. Here the people of Nineveh judge and practically execute themselves before the Lord, confessing in the most vital way that they knew they were sinners, deserving death and condemnation, being without hope of salvation, except by God's mercy.

### **Saturday, October 26th - Jonah 3: 7, 8**

Some may think that it was excessive for the Ninevites to subject their animals to fasting and afflictively uncomfortable clothing like scratchy sackcloth. They would see in this evidence of darkened superstition, rather than faithful repentance. We observe, however, two things regarding this point: 1) No person's repentance is pure and theologically unmixed with error. Rahab lied to save the Israelite spies (Josh. 2:3-7), and yet her faith is commended in Scripture (Heb. 11:31). Then, 2) God does, in fact, include the lower creation in both the blessing of salvation and the curse upon man's sin. The Lord orders us to let our beasts rest on the Sabbath (Ex. 20:10), and He subjected the whole creation to futility on account of man's sin, from which futility the creation now groans, awaiting the redemption of all of God's people (Gen. 3:17; Rom. 8:19-22). It may surprise many to learn that a deep and apparently excessive repentance more fully accords with our true state before God than does a facile and superficial repentance.

### **Sunday, October 27th - Jonah 3: 7, 8**

We should understand the action of the Ninevites as representing on their part a serious repentance rather than a fawning show or a petulant suicide attempt. We know this because the people do not only deprive their mouths of food and water, but they also employ their mouths in crying earnestly to God in prayer. Their prayers consisted of confession of their evil attitudes and actions, along with expressions of their repentant turning from their sin. Never are the mouths of sinners better employed than when they refrain from indulging their natural appetites and cry to the Lord, acknowledging their need for His saving grace.

### **Monday, October 28th - Jonah 3: 8, 9**

The Ninevites express their conviction and repentance in their self-afflicting practices and in their contrite prayers of confession. They did this before the God whom they were convinced they had offended, admitting His just charges against them, but hoping for His administration of mercy, rather than justice. Jonah had not indicated in his blunt announcement of coming divine judgment that there was any offer or even possibility of the Lord's mercy being granted to the Ninevite sinners. Yet, a repentant faith leads one to become humbly ingenious. The Ninevites perceive in the forty days prior to their destruction a possibility of mercy. They interpret the silent waiting time between Jonah's announcement and God's raining down destruction upon them as a period best employed in their repentance and the sincere amendment of their lives. They rightly see the forty days as a period of grace, in which God allowed them to change and hope for His mercy. Of course, we see that they were absolutely right to spend what may have been their last days denying themselves, repenting of their sins, and crying to God. We do well to spend all of our days so employed.

### **Tuesday, October 29th - Jonah 3: 8, 9**

The Ninevites seem desperately to be grasping at straws. According to Jonah, they had less than six weeks to live. They spent those days not in fevered indulgence of pleasures, but in humiliation and self-mortification. They did so with no assurance that God would note their repentance and relent of His determination to destroy them. The highest assurance of mercy they had was expressed in such words as, *who knows*, and *God may*. In this, they are like the Canaanite woman who cried out to Jesus for her demonized daughter, interpreting the Lord's silences and hard words as containing seeds for hope (Mt. 15:22ff). Why is it that we, unlike that woman and those Ninevites, are so slow and reluctant to rely on our Lord's mercy, especially when we have clear and abundant warrant to do so?

### **Wednesday, October 30th - Jonah 3: 9, 10**

God, who had perceived and determined to judge the wicked thoughts and actions of the people of Nineveh, did not fail or refuse to see and acknowledge the repentance of the people. Their repentant intentions were carried out in sincere and consistent action. Whenever man repents, God relents. Our Lord is slow to anger, but He is quick to grant forgiveness asked of Him by even the worst of sinners. Our Lord makes much of our sins, calling us to account for them; He makes more of our turning from our sins to Him, and quickly changes His curse into blessing.

### **Thursday, October 31st - Jonah 3: 9, 10**

Some have questioned whether the people of Nineveh were truly repentant or simply remorseful. Did they truly forsake their sins and turn with saving faith to the Lord? Did they simply grieve over their doomed lives with an excessive show of sorrow that lasted only until they became convinced that their city was not going to be destroyed? Some say that their highest hope was simply that they not perish. Also, there are no historical records apart from the Book of Jonah that chronicle a massive and lasting conversion of Ninevites to Jehovah. Then, of course, there is the prophecy of Nahum against Nineveh, indicating that the city and its people remained wickedly set against the Lord and His people. In answer to these points we

may note that Rahab at first sought only to be spared from destruction (Josh. 2:13), and there is no doubt about the reality of her faith in the Lord (Heb. 11:31). Regarding history apart from Jonah, we do not have all that has been written, and what secular histories we have are biased against the Lord and His works (Ps. 2:2,3). Concerning Nahum's prophecy against Nineveh, it was written several generations after Jonah, and may, so far as the Ninevites' repentance here recorded is concerned, soberingly show how the sons may degenerate from the faith of their fathers. What should settle this question, however, is how God treats the repentance of these Ninevites. If the King of heaven and Judge of all the earth accepts men's repentance as genuine, should we make less of it than does our God?

#### **Friday, November 1st - Jonah 3: 10**

The genuine character of the repentance of the Ninevites is indicated by the way God accepts it. Theirs was not a mere change of mind and intention, but was carried out in actions. Those who maintain that the people of Nineveh simply acted in contrite fashion, but had no real change of heart, insult the omniscience of the Lord. For our God regards not merely outward behavior, but inner thought and intention when He accepts or rejects the prayers of any person. Nothing less than the changed hearts of the people of Nineveh moved God to change His determination to destroy the city. Nothing less than fruits of their repentant actions, issuing from the roots of their changed hearts prompted God to repent of His intention to judge, and that, in turn, issued the fruit of His sparing action. The Lord ever responds favorably to those who respond in fear to His Word.

#### **Saturday, November 2nd - Jonah 3: 10**

The depth and reality of the Ninevites' repentance may be best judged by how God treated it. In this verse we learn that God treated it as genuine repentance. However, the focus of our concern should not be so much upon the question of the repentance of men as upon the clear reality of the repentance of God. The term translated *relented* in the New American Standard Version or *repented* in the King James Version ( $\sim x, N^{\circ} \hat{a} Y I w$ ) means: to be sorry, to be moved to pity, to have compassion, to repent of one's doings. It is a term not often associated with God, one of whose attributes is His immutability. Yet here in this verse we are told bluntly that the Lord changed His intention and did not accomplish what He declared through Jonah that He would do. This blessed apparent inconsistency is not evidence of divine imperfection, but rather of the Lord's merciful intervention in the doomed state of sinful man. All sinners are under a death sentence, and are without hope except in God's intervening mercy. Thanks be to God that He has mercifully devised a way righteously to save men from His own just wrath.

#### **Sunday, November 3rd - Jonah 3: 10**

We learn deep and precious truths about our God in this verse. Primarily, we learn that He is gracious and compassionate toward men who have sinfully rebelled against Him. Even if the Ninevites did exercise only a temporary faith, the Lord shows Himself ever ready to cause the rain of His temporal blessing to fall on the just and the unjust. But if the faith and repentance of the Ninevites is genuinely saving, not only in time but also in eternity, we learn even more about God's sovereign grace. We see that He is sovereign not only over the sea and the fish, but also over the hearts and minds of men. His saving grace is irresistible, and He exercises it according to His own inscrutable will. If we are among the redeemed of God, it is not because we were likely candidates, born and raised in a land at least nominally Christian. It is entirely due to sovereign, divine grace.

#### **Monday, November 4th - Jonah 3: 10**

This verse also reveals to us that it is the working of God's sovereign power that determines the fruit of a man's ministry. Jonah preached the shortest of sermons. He promised no grace, offered no mercy, and gave no calls and directions for a repentant response from his hearers. Yet, every soul in Nineveh was not only convicted but was saved from the righteous wrath of God. In contrast, Jeremiah was a prophet who labored faithfully for years among God's professing people. He preached full, rich, sermons over the course

of years. He admonished and beseeched the Jews to repent of their sins. He prayed for them, loved them, and pointed them to true salvation in the Lord. Yet, there is no evidence from Scripture that a single soul repented as a result of Jeremiah's ministry. How we should magnify and treasure the workings of the sovereign grace of our Lord.

#### **Tuesday, November 5th - Jonah 3: 10**

It may sound shocking, but it is true that the deeds of the Lord seem not quite to match His declarations. He declares calamity, but then compassionately intervenes the working of His grace to avert it. Even the good things—the great and precious promises of His Word—do not adequately describe His blessed provision. His Word is truth, but it is not as exhaustively wonderful as His works. The secret things, which he reserves from telling us (Dt. 29:29), are too wonderful to be told. When we behold the person and works of our God in glory, we shall echo the words of the queen of Sheba when she beheld Solomon's glory and declared that not the half had been told her. God is not as good as His Word, He is better than it.

#### **Wednesday, November 6th - Jonah 4: 1**

The Lord's relenting in response to the Ninevites' repentance became known, in due course, to Jonah. From what we learn in v.5, where Jonah goes out of Nineveh to wait and see what would happen in the city, we may gather that the Lord intimated to His servant, well in advance of the arrival of the foretold day of destruction, that He would spare the repentant people of Nineveh. To this intimation, Jonah offers a shockingly inappropriate response. While heaven rejoices over the salvation of one sinner—much moreso over more than 120,000 of them (v.11)—Jonah was disappointed, then displeased, and finally he fanned his displeasure into anger. With whom was the prophet angry? Surely his anger burned against the undeserving Ninevites. If God were going to be soft with them, Jonah certainly would not be. But the fires of his petty, sinful anger would do nothing to diminish the abundant living water of divine compassion poured upon the Ninevites. It is soberingly convicting to learn how out of sympathetic accord we, who have tasted the mercy of God, can be with our compassionate Lord and His rejoicing, holy angels. May we be preserved from such disgraceful pettiness.

#### **Thursday, November 7th - Jonah 4: 1**

In his response to the intimation of divine mercy for Nineveh, Jonah lapses again into that spiritual pride that is so odious to the Lord and so contrary to His lovingkindness. In this, Jonah represents the sinful attitude against which Jesus spoke in the parable of the laborers in the vineyard (Mt. 20:1-16), where those who worked all the day were paid the same as those who worked only the last hour. The first group of workers were wickedly envious because the landowner was benevolently generous (Mt. 20:15). Jonah also resembles the unmerciful debtors, who were forgiven astronomical debts, only ruthlessly to exact repayment of the petty debts owed to them (Mt. 18:21-35). Most of all, however, Jonah here resembles the scribes and Pharisees who dragged the woman caught in adultery before Jesus (Jn. 8:1-11). They wanted a sinner to be righteously executed, failing to reckon that if the Judge of all the earth were to have no mercy, then they, too, would perish along with the sinful woman. We are foolish and fiendish if we ever resent the glorious reality that our God is gracious and compassionate.

#### **Friday, November 8th - Jonah 4: 1, 2**

Jonah prayed in anger and hot resentment. What a contrast to his humble and grateful prayer of praise offered to God from the belly of the fish! We are not nearly so blinded to the glories of our God and His salvation when, amidst our dark afflictions, we look by faith for His mercy to be applied to ourselves.

#### **Saturday, November 9th - Jonah 4: 2**

This verse explains to us why Jonah had initially disobeyed God, fleeing toward Tarshish rather than going to Nineveh. The prophet had apparently entered into a debate with the Lord, similar, perhaps, to the one Ananias offered the Lord when He told him to go to restore the sight of the newly converted Saul of Tarsus (Acts 9:10-19). How blind we are, and how much poorer the world and the Church would be, if we prevailed in those debates with our Lord when we demand that He confine His wisdom, grace, and love to the petty dimensions of our desires.

#### **Sunday, November 10th - Jonah 4: 1, 2**

Jonah's anger may well have been directed against the people of Nineveh. However, in v.2 we see that his anger is ultimately against his God. Jonah is actually angry at who God is. The disgruntled prophet recites the fullest covenant description of the Lord, drawn from God's self-disclosure to Moses (Ex. 34:6,7). If Jonah would have the Lord to be other than He is, that would be suicidal for Jonah as well as destructive for the Ninevites. Surely Jonah knew this, and simply was angry that the Lord had extended His mercy to Israel's enemies. Why would those who have tasted the saving compassion of the Lord ever resent those compassions being showered upon other needy sinners? There is nothing more inappropriate for and unbecoming to those saved by grace than when they nurture ungracious and unloving attitudes toward others, and a resentful attitude toward the Lord of love.

#### **Monday, November 11th - Jonah 4: 2**

Jonah speaks of the most precious and glorious attributes of his God as though they were faults. What can drive a man to despise and resent God's grace and compassion, His patience and great lovingkindness, and His merciful forgiveness? Surely it is when one is consumed by his hatred for his enemies and forgets that he, too, is a debtor to divine mercy. Then he views the virtues of his Savior as vices.

#### **Tuesday, November 12th - Jonah 4: 1-3**

These verses record the awful progression of Jonah's sinful attitude. He begins by being displeased at God's relenting concerning His judgment upon Nineveh. That displeasure develops into anger. Finally, it bears the fruit of death. We find Jonah in v.3 asking God to kill him, and declaring that death is better to him than life. Could this monumental petulance, wherein Jonah preferred his own death to his being instrumental in bringing his enemies eternal life, account for his having earlier told the sailors to cast him to this supposed death in the stormy sea? The apostle Paul would have himself to be accursed if that would turn his fellow Jews to the Lord of life (Rom. 9:1-5). Jonah would have himself accursed to keep the Ninevites from having the love and life of the Lord. How awful is graceless, sinful anger! How sad that it is not, alas, a more rare attitude in believers.

#### **Wednesday, November 13th - Jonah 4: 2-4**

Jonah resented the compassion and patience of the Lord, yet he himself immediately, in his sin, becomes the object of divine patience. Rather than God justly judging His irate prophet for his sinful anger, the Lord patiently questioned Jonah's reason for his anger, endeavoring to show His servant the baselessness of his heated displeasure. If we stop to ask ourselves why we are cast down (Ps. 42,43), why we are anxious or fearful (Phil. 4:6,7), or why we lack tender heartedness (Eph. 4:32), we shall discover that we have cause for thanking and praising our saving God, not angrily criticizing Him for His grace.

#### **Thursday, November 14th - Jonah 4: 4, 5**

The patient and gentle question the Lord put to Jonah receives no answer. What answer could the prophet give to justify his sinfully superior attitude that had inflated him into an easy ignition and explosion of anger? But though Jonah cannot justify his ire, he does not concede the issue. He is not ready to confess and repent of his sin. So he rudely departs from the city, and from communion with his God, petulantly to

sit and see if his pouting fit would serve to convince the Lord to revert to His determination to judge Nineveh. Sinful sulking will never cause our heavenly Father to swerve from His gracious purposes. *The anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God* (Jas. 1:20).

#### **Friday, November 15th - Jonah 4: 3,5**

Jonah asks God to kill him, indicating that he had rather die than see the Ninevites loved by God and given life. But when Jonah leaves the city to sulk he demonstrates that he was bluffing with his death wish. He seeks to shelter himself from the hot sun, making himself as comfortable as possible. He who pampers himself is not truly prepared to die, especially in his sin.

#### **Saturday, November 16th - Jonah 4: 5, 6**

Here we see the tender mercies of God applied to the unworthy, sinning Jonah. God loved this sinful man, demonstrating His compassion by the performing of what may have been a minor miracle in His causing a plant to spring up so quickly to shade Jonah. Why should Jonah be angrily resent the compassion of the Lord? Divine loving kindness not only shaded the sulking prophet from the sun's heat, it saved him from the fires of hell. Jonah rejoiced in the plant's shading him, yet he resented the Lord's shielding the Ninevites from the destroying fire of His wrath.

#### **Sunday, November 17th - Jonah 4: 6, 7**

The Lord did not blast the shading plant with direct words of cursing, the way Jesus cursed the unfruitful fig tree (Mt. 21:19-21). Instead, God directed a hidden, humble creature to do His will. That worm struck the plant at a vital point, the way Jonah's sin was eating at his heart, out of which flowed the issues of life. These divine steps—the questioning of Jonah's cause for anger (v.4), the growing of the plant, and its withering after the worm's attack—all are ordained and orchestrated by the wisdom, power, and love of God. Each step should arrest Jonah's sin, and all of them together will serve to show how glorious is God's saving compassion, and how sinfully small is the man who resents that compassion. This process is calculated patiently to cool Jonah's anger and to pacify him toward and to reconcile him with His gracious God and all who are made partakers of that grace.

#### **Monday, November 18th - Jonah 4: 6-8**

From tender words of sweetest and most kind reasonableness (v.4), the Lord proceeds to speak to Jonah through works that grow increasingly painful for the prophet. Thus, we read of God not only removing the pleasant shade from Jonah, but adding a dry, blasting wind and baking sun to Jonah's surroundings. These measures, too, demonstrate the Lord's compassion. They are designed to bring back to his right mind the prodigal prophet, who wandered from his God on sea as he was doing again on land, wastefully despising the lovingkindness of his God. The sons of God, even in their sinful wanderings, are ever surrounded by the compassion of their heavenly Father, though at times that divine compassion is administered in the form of painful chastisements.

#### **Tuesday, November 19th - Jonah 4: 8, 9**

Sin makes our hearts hard, our heads stupid, and our bodies soft. Accordingly, we find Jonah crying out for death simply because the hot sun and dry wind made him uncomfortable. The more one is in sin, the less disappointment and suffering he can endure. The more one is in sin, the greater stock he puts in trifles that serve for his physical comforts. Therefore, Jonah declares in response to God's repeated questioning of his anger that he has cause to be angry, even to the point of death, for which he begged. This towering anger and despair is all because of the withering of a plant which Jonah's sin had reduced him to viewing as his sole blessing, shield, and comfort. How poor, petty, and desperate sin makes even the best of men who harbor rather than mortify it.

### **Wednesday, November 20th - Jonah 4: 10**

The Lord continues tenderly and patiently to instruct Jonah, showing him that the divine denials issued to Jonah's will are full of grace and glory. In this verse, the Lord begins to lead Jonah into reasoning from lesser to greater. The pouting prophet had compassion on a common plant in which he had no propriety. That plant was not of his making, nor did it offer any fruit except for the shade that gave Jonah minimal and temporary comfort. Is such compassion reasonable? The appreciative pleasure taken even from that plant was reasonable. But if such small compassions are reasonable, what of greater compassions?

### **Thursday, November 21st - Jonah 4: 10, 11**

God has propriety over all things as their Creator and Sustainer. He had compassion on the many people of Nineveh, who were in the dark misery of their sin. He also had compassion on the lower creatures, like the animals. Was the Lord's compassion upon those more than 120,000 persons unreasonable and faulty? If Jonah could delight in a plant, had not God every right to magnify the glory of His grace in His saving a people by His irresistible grace, sanctifying them by His power, and transforming them into trophies and treasures of His redeeming mercy for His eternal pleasure and glory? There is, of course, only one right answer to this question, and those knowing and accepting it are filled with grateful rejoicing, not sinful resentment.

### **Friday, November 22nd - Jonah 4: 10, 11**

The Book of Jonah begins with a command of God and ends with a question from God. It begins with the declaration of divine curse upon a wicked people, and ends with the Lord's compassion embracing those people. There are many questions contained in the concluding question put to Jonah and to all readers of this portion of Scripture. Did Jonah repent of his sinful resentment? Would the Jews, whom Jonah represented, repent of their sinful resentment of the divine compassion incarnate in Christ, who came to save the Jew first, but also the Gentiles? Would the Jews ever accept the Gentiles into the one Church of God (cf., Rom.11)? Will we resist the temptation to resent God's mercy being showered upon our enemies? These and similar questions we do well prayerfully to ponder in light of God's Word and under the gracious influence of His Holy Spirit.

### *The Letter to the Philippians*

### **Saturday, November 23rd - Philippians 1: 1, 2**

Philippi was, at the time of Paul's writing this letter, an important city located in southeastern Macedonia, near the coastline of the Aegean Sea. It was founded in the fourth century B.C., and was named after Philip II of Macedonia, who was the father of Alexander the Great. Once it was conquered by Rome, in the second century B.C., it modeled itself after Rome in every important way. The majority of the inhabitants of Philippi were prosperous and content under Roman rule. There would have been no evidence to an observer of the scene there at the time of Paul's first visit to the city that Philippi would provide fertile soil for the planting of a church of the Lord Jesus Christ. Yet, the boundaries of the saving mercy of God were not to be confined to Judea. The power of the gospel for salvation spread to Philippi, for the gospel transcends all nationalities and cultures. No ground is too hard for the regenerating Holy Spirit to penetrate.

### **Sunday, November 24th - Philippians 1: 1, 2**

We read of the gospel's coming to Philippi in Acts 16. After the sharp disagreement between Paul and Barnabas over the matter of their readmitting Mark to their missionary team, and after their subsequent separation, Paul resumed his mission work with Silas (Acts 15:36-41). Timothy was added to the team at Derbe and Lystra (Acts 16:1). This small band of missionaries visited churches previously planted in order to strengthen them. They found themselves forbidden by the Holy Spirit to evangelize in Asia and Bithynia

(Acts 16:6,7). At Troas, the divine reason for what must have seemed to Paul and company as perplexing prohibitions became clear. Paul received one night a vision of a Macedonian man beckoning them for help (Acts 16:9). Thus, the apostle and his little team concluded that God had called them to cross the Aegean Sea to Macedonia in order to give the highest and most lasting form of help to the people there, namely, the proclamation of salvation through Christ. Through the dark and perplexing events of missionary disagreement, divine disallowance, and then summoning through the vision given to Paul, God was working His holy, wise, and loving will to plant seeds of eternal life in the spiritually dead city of Philippi.

#### **Monday, November 25th - Philippians 1: 1, 2**

In his writing to the Philippians, Paul was addressing a church that had a most unassuming, if not unpromising, beginning. Upon his arrival in Philippi, Paul could find no synagogue in which to present the claims of Christ, as was his custom. So lacking was the city in spiritual character that the apostle was obliged to go outside of the city gate to find a place where people gathered to pray. There he found some women from whom he did not withhold the Word of life (Acts 16:13,14). The Lord used His Word proclaimed through His apostle to convert one woman, Lydia, and her household. Thus, the first foundational member of the Philippian church was set upon the chief corner stone of Jesus Christ. From such tiny beginnings grew a church of exemplary character. If our God is in a work, we must learn not to despise the day of small things.

#### **Tuesday, November 26th - Philippians 1: 1, 2**

This letter to the Philippians is one of the prison epistles, so called because Paul wrote them while he was in prison. The apostle's imprisonment, whether it was in Ephesus (55A.D.) or Rome (63 A.D.), was not his first confinement for the sake of the gospel. After Paul had been instrumental in liberating Lydia and her household from the dominion of sin, he was instrumental in releasing a slave girl from her demon possession (Acts 16:16-18). The masters of the slave girl, who had profited from her demonic divination, repaid Paul by having him, along with Silas, beaten by the Philippian magistrate and thrown into jail (Acts 16:19-24). This dark and painful event did not discourage Paul and Silas, who prayed and sang praises to God from the inner prison. Their trust in God was soon vindicated by an earthquake, which not only opened the jail, but also occasioned the jailer's heart being opened to Christ. Thusly did opposition to the gospel serve to beget converts to Christ. The Philippian jailer and his family, therefore, became the second tier of living stones in the church at Philippi.

#### **Wednesday, November 27th - Philippians 1: 1, 2**

The theme of the letter to the Philippians is joy in and through suffering. Paul's own sufferings upon his arrival in Philippi proved to be fruitful in bringing the jailer and his family to salvation. From this seminal demonstration and the reinforcement of this letter, the Philippians and believers reading this letter is every age, are informed that their saving God can raise life out of death, give peace amidst tribulation, and provide joy unspeakable through sorrows.

#### **Thursday, November 28th - Philippians 1: 1, 2**

The purpose of this letter was Paul's rendering thanks to the Philippians for their support, and, particularly, for a gift they had sent to him in his imprisonment (1:5; 4:10, 14-18). Those who had received eternal treasure from the apostle did not fail to share with him material tokens of their loving gratitude. Paul also wrote to inform the Philippians of his circumstances (1:12ff), as he knew that they would have been lovingly concerned about him. The saving work of Christ graciously applied to Paul and, through him, to these Philippians, resulted in a loving and lasting reciprocity between them.

### **Friday, November 29th - Philippians 1: 1, 2**

Paul did not write to a perfect church at Philippi. Thus, we find him warning against false teachers in the third chapter, and dealing with apparent strife between some of the members of the church (4:2). But Paul's letter would serve to correct such defects in the Philippian fellowship, and in countless other imperfect fellowships through the ages. The apostle encourages them and us to persevere in the grace and love of the Lord. He encourages them and us to endure suffering by our grasping the triumph of God in Christ whereby we are made more than conquerors. In each of the four chapters of this epistle, Paul refers to joy in the midst of suffering as the heritage of those who attain the crown of life through the cross of death.

### **Saturday, November 30th - Philippians 1: 1**

Paul opens this letter by designating himself and Timothy as being bond servants of Christ Jesus. Whether Paul was walking about freely or clamped into stocks in a dungeon, he was ever a slave of Christ, and that blessed bondage to the Lord of life and love and glorious triumph made him ever free indeed. Even in his imprisonment, Paul was aware of two empowering truths: 1) that Christ, not man, was the Master of his circumstances, and 2) that even in prison he still was free and able to serve Christ and His Church. Similarly, if the Son of God has set us free, we too are free indeed to serve our redeeming Master.

### **Sunday, December 1st - Philippians 1: 1**

Paul addresses this letter to all the saints in Philippi. Many besides Lydia and the jailer had been added to the Lord's spiritual edifice in that Macedonian city. Order and spiritual authority had developed, as we can see from Paul's reference to the overseers, or elders, and deacons. The gospel seeds, planted amidst powerful and painful opposition, had germinated and grown to bear much fruit. Who but our God can say what fruit will grow from our faithful, through at times greatly opposed, efforts to share Christ with others?

### **Monday, December 2nd - Philippians 1: 1**

Those to whom Paul wrote had been infinitely promoted from citizens of Philippi to saints in Christ Jesus. Every Christian lives in two worlds. Paul was in man's prison, but he remained a fruitful servant of Christ. The Philippians dwelt in Philippi, but lived, moved, and had their being in Christ. The Colossians resided in Colossae, but were bidden to focus their affections in heaven, their true home (Col. 3:1-4). Peter writes to scattered aliens who are chosen in Christ (1 Pet. 1:1,2). John was banished to Patmos, but he lived there in the Spirit (Rev. 1:9,10). Though we are in the world, we are not of this world, but of an infinitely higher and more glorious world.

### **Tuesday, December 3rd - Philippians 1: 2**

As he usually does in his apostolic epistles, Paul begins with a benediction. His invoking the blessing of God upon the Philippians, however, is no mere custom. Paul actually confers the gracious, unmerited divine favor and its resultant peace upon the readers of this letter. Men seek circumstantial tranquility and personal security and serenity, usually by their own works or as gifts from other men. The only true and lasting peace for man, however, issues from the saving work of God in Christ. The comforting and empowering truths Paul will detail in this letter come from the source of the Lord's grace and serve to nurture the peace that those reconciled to God through Christ enjoy.

### **Wednesday, December 4th - Philippians 1: 3-5**

Paul follows his benediction with prayer. Specifically in these verses the apostle tells not so much *what* he prays for the Philippians as *how* he prays for them. The foundational attitude for Paul's prayers for the members of the church at Philippi is one of thanksgiving to God. This was so because God had blessed the ministering labors of Paul with precious, living fruit. Each believer at Philippi was a trophy of the Lord's

saving grace, and, as such, each one called for expressions of gratitude to the Lord from the apostle who had been privileged to be the instrument of their being raised from death to life in Jesus.

#### **Thursday, December 5th - Philippians 1: 3-5**

Paul not only expressed gratitude to God in his prayers for the Philippians, but he also offered his prayers with joy. Two streams fed the apostle's thanksgiving and joy. In the first place, he was grateful and joyful that God had crowned his preaching labors with the fruit of regenerate lives. Then, Paul drew cause for gratitude and rejoicing in the very act of his prayers, whereby he continued to contribute to the Philippians' growth in grace, as he asked and God answered his prayers for their sanctification. If we understood better to whom, for whom, and for what we pray, we should have greater cause for thanksgiving and joy. Paul rightly reckoned that the God who had so marvelously blessed his preaching would never fail to crown his prayers with glorious answers above what he asked or thought.

#### **Friday, December 6th - Philippians 1: 3-5**

Paul's prayers for the Philippians were characterized by gratitude and joy. They were also characterized by constancy. He was *always* offering prayer for his beloved Philippians. In whatever condition and need they were, the apostle gratefully exercised the amazing privilege of calling down from highest heaven the rich and empowering blessings of God for His children in the faith. It is no accident that Paul's constant prayers for the Philippians should have resulted in their constancy in Christ. They were not occasional or complacent Christians, nor were they passive spectators of the spiritual warfare of the saints. They were active participants in the cause of Christ, and as such they were both sustained by and sustaining objects of Paul's constant prayers for them.

#### **Saturday, December 7th - Philippians 1: 6**

The confidence which inspired Paul's consistent, thankful, and joyful prayers for the Philippians did not issue from the performance of the saints at Philippi, but from the faithfulness of God. The members of the Philippian church would have had their ups and downs as do all believers. However, Paul's confidence rested not upon their uneven spiritual performance, but rather upon the precious promises and almighty potencies of the Lord. It was ultimately neither Paul who began the saving work in the lives of these believers, nor was it they themselves who initiated it. They were what they were by the saving grace of God. Accordingly, Paul rightly reckoned that God, who does nothing by half-measures, would not begin a good work in the Philippians only to let it die out in course of time. Instead, the saving work the perfect God of heaven begins by His grace, He perfects by the arm of His strength for His own glory. Here is the basis for confidence, indeed, for our brethren in Christ as well as for ourselves.

#### **Sunday, December 8th - Philippians 1: 6**

By the application of His saving grace, the Lord begins a good work in the hearts and lives of believers. It is a work that remains good throughout the earthly pilgrimage of each and every Christian. At times, it may appear to us that our God is not working in or for us at all (Ps. 13:1). There even come times when we cannot help but feel that our God is working against us (Job. 19:11). The enduring truth is, however, that our God is ever at work in us (Phil. 2:13) and for us (Rom. 8:28). The perfectly glorious goodness of the work He does in conforming us to the image of His Son is not always evident, because it is not yet perfected in this period of refining. However, it will be lastingly evident in the day of Christ's coming, when our sanctification will be complete (1 Cor. 15:51-53; 1 Pet. 1:6-9).

#### **Monday, December 9th - Philippians 1: 7**

Paul expresses further the cause for his gratitude, joy, and confidence. He has seen and blessedly received benefit from the Philippians' new life in Christ. They had demonstrated their loving fidelity to Christ and to Christ's servant by their supporting stand with Paul in his trials and triumphs for Christ. Such loving loyalty in those demonstrating it can only result from their having partaken of and persevered in the enabling grace of the Lord. The Philippians thusly endeared themselves to the apostle further by their graceful loyalty to and labors with him. Unconditional love of benevolence, where others are loved in spite of their unloveliness, is a beautiful thing. Love of complacency, where others are loved because of their gracious loveliness, is even more beautiful.

#### **Tuesday, December 10th - Philippians 1: 7, 8**

Paul was no flatterer. He did not make professions of his loving appreciation for these Philippians simply as an encouraging and affirming device to make them feel better. Instead, the apostle found within his heart the deepest and most sincere respect and love for the dear saints to whom he wrote. He testifies to the genuine character of his love when he calls God as witness to the truth of his loving professions. How wonderful that the gospel fills our hearts not with transient sentiment, but with a substantial and ever deepening love for our brethren.

#### **Wednesday, December 11th - Philippians 1: 9-11**

From his telling of the attitude in which he prays for the Philippians, Paul proceeds to inform them regarding *what* he prays for them. There is nothing trite or trivial in this or in any other prayer we find recorded in Scripture. Though we may ask God for things great and small, it betrays a spiritual immaturity and superficiality in us if we are ever praying for things material and physical to the neglect of things spiritual and enduring.

#### **Thursday, December 12th - Philippians 1: 9**

The primary thing Paul prayed for the Philippians was for their growth in love. He did not pray that they would have and exercise love in gradually increasing measure, but rather that their love would abound more and more. The love for which he prayed was not mere sentiment, but the holy and sacrificial love to which Jesus calls all of His disciples (Jn. 15:12,13). For any believer to grow in such love, he must grow in his apprehension of the love that God has for him (1 Jn. 4:19). Paul prays similarly for the Ephesians, asking that they might know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge (Eph. 1:17-19). It is only by our discerning this divine love for us that our hearts, having been broken by sin, are healed and filled with love for others.

#### **Friday, December 13th - Philippians 1: 9, 10**

The true, holy love that Paul prayed to be given by God to his beloved Philippians, was a love based not upon vague feelings or intense passions, but rather upon real knowledge and all discernment. The apostle apparently intends by *real knowledge* that his readers should have a true grasp of the nature and depth of the love of God. By *all discernment*, it appears that Paul prays for believers to discern the administration of God's love for them even in situations where the divine love is not so evident. Only when we are rooted and grounded in our grasp of this unchangeable and immeasurable divine love, can we love others rightly and effectively. Our knowledge of the love of God purifies our motives, so that we are sincere and blameless in our love for others. It also enables us to distinguish the best and highest way we can exercise our love for others, truly helping them thereby, rather than harming them by an impure, unholy indulgence.

#### **Saturday, December 14th - Philippians 1: 9-11**

The love for which Paul prays is a holy love. Those having a discerning knowledge of it become pure and blameless by their possession and exercise of it. Through such love, God perfects us until the eternal day of Christ's coming and consummating all things (compare v.6 with v.10). Such love is a fruit of God's Holy

Spirit (Gal. 5:22), and thus issues from those living, by faith, in a right relationship with God. The Lord, who in love predestines men to salvation (Eph. 1:4-6), is the One who imputes righteousness to the elect through Jesus Christ. Thus, as the One who is author, accomplisher, and applier of salvation, God is praised by men who receive the Lord's saving love. Thus, Paul prays for the good of the saints and the glory of God. Likewise should we ever pray.

#### **Sunday, December 15th - Philippians 1: 9-11**

The good work which God began in the Philippians (v.6), whereby they were made partakers of the Lord's saving grace (v.7), is perfected in glory and to the glory of God (v.11). This saving work of God, initiated by His grace and perfected by His power, does not reduce men to being merely passive recipients of the divine blessing. God works to perfect His saving action through the prayers of His people. That is why Paul prays as he does. In the working out of his salvation, he knows that God is at work in him, prompting him to will and to do the Lord's good pleasure (Phil. 2:12,13). Our knowing this should encourage us and lead us to esteem more highly the work of prayer, whether the prayers are offered for us or by us.

#### **Monday, December 16th - Philippians 1: 12-14**

From his praying for their growth in an informed love, Paul moves on to inform the Philippians regarding his own circumstances. It is from what Paul writes in these verses that we learn he was in prison when he wrote to the Philippians. We might expect to find an imprisoned believer doubting God's love for him, and regretting that his confinement impeded his service for the Lord. However, Paul's attitude was far from such doubts and regrets. He writes to remove the minds of the Philippians far from similar doubts and regrets. The truth is that Paul's imprisonment promoted, rather than impeded, the advancement of the gospel. Our God ever uses all things, even and especially adversity against His servants, to work for the good of His people and for His own glory.

#### **Tuesday, December 17th - Philippians 1: 12-14**

Paul's circumstances were more abasing than abounding. He was abased by his imprisonment (literally, his bonds). Yet, as Paul later in this letter testifies, he had learned the secret of being content in all circumstances (Phil. 4:11-13). That liberating, encouraging, and empowering secret, the apostle here begins to share with his readers. His imprisonment was in Christ. Paul was where he was because of his stand for Christ, and in that valley of the shadow of that death he did not fear, because Christ was with him. A man languishing in prison is not unusual; a man standing as more than a conqueror and serving joyfully the One for the sake of whose name he was imprisoned, is a marvel of divine grace.

#### **Wednesday, December 18th - Philippians 1: 12-14**

Paul knew that he was in Christ, and thus he was in the fortress of almighty security, even in his prison. The confidence and victorious nobility with which he faced his affliction was something that spoke volumes of theology to those aware of the apostle's situation. The praetorian guard—Roman soldiers who had responsibility to guard prisoners in imperial custody—were at that time far removed from the means of grace and from living testimony to Christ. But Paul realized that by the sovereign grace of God, his own a living testimony was brought to them through his imprisonment. Thus, seeds of eternal life in Christ were being sown through this cross of imprisonment. The gospel tends more effectively to cut its path of advance against the world's adversity rather than with its affirmation.

#### **Thursday, December 19th - Philippians 1: 12-14**

It was not only the praetorian guard, but many others as well who saw the light of God's sustaining grace shining through Paul in his valley of the shadow of death. These people were led to give glory to Paul's heavenly Father, and no doubt a considerable number of them eventually became his brethren in Christ. Meanwhile, Paul's example of trusting the Lord, and his resulting fortitude, emboldened those already his

brethren fearlessly to proclaim Christ. There is nothing like a true martyr, testifying that to live is Christ and to die is gain, to break the choking charm of threatened suffering and death. Paul's triumphant life in Christ in the midst of his living entombment showed to the saints of God that suffering and death were defeated foes, and the brethren hastened to declare that great news abroad.

#### **Friday, December 20th - Philippians 1: 14**

It would seem logical to think that Paul's imprisonment for Christ would have a chilling and impeding effect upon the testimony of other believers. We might expect believers to be reticent to proclaim the name that had landed an apostle who proclaimed it in such serious trouble. But, instead, Paul's sufferings emboldened other believers. This was so because, in the wise, sovereign providence of God, Paul was led to experience a worst case scenario and triumph in it. His triumphant stand amidst adversity demonstrated to the world—and certainly to the more perceptive saints of God—that Satan's power resides more in threat and illusion than in fact. Through Paul's example, others could face their fear and dread of suffering, and, like Moses grabbing the threatening serpent by the tail and transforming it into his helping staff (Ex. 4:1-5), they would turn threats of suffering into servants for the glory of God and good of His people.

#### **Saturday, December 21st - Philippians 1: 12-14**

Paul had triumphed in prison when he first went to Philippi, singing praises and offering prayer to God. The result was advancement of the gospel. Now, in another prison, the apostle was again being nourished not on debilitating, bitter regrets and fears, but rather on the invigorating hidden manna of Christ. Other believers saw this and determined to stand and even, if necessary, to suffer for such an empowering Savior. How does our testimony, amidst our sufferings, affect our brethren?

#### **Sunday, December 22nd - Philippians 1: 15-18**

Cynics might say that Paul idealizes and overestimates the progress the gospel was making as a result of his imprisonment. They would point to some of those emboldened by Paul's situation, and rightly declare with derision that they preached Christ from less than sincere motives. Paul was neither naive nor ignorant respecting the mixed motives of those preaching Christ in response to his imprisonment for Christ. He grants that tares were growing amongst the wheat. But whatever the motives of the many who proclaimed Christ, Paul rejoices that the name he loved and sought to declare above all was being spread abroad. The mercy of God we have received in Christ should make us similarly merciful and generous toward those who, even seeking to spite us, inadvertently serve Christ.

#### **Monday, December 23rd - Philippians 1: 15**

It is a sobering truth that not all who profess Christ truly possess Christ. Our Lord warns us in the Sermon on the Mount that many in the light of the last day will be found to have served Christ from false motives, saying, *Lord, Lord*, while working in His name from unprincipled and lawless motives (Mt. 7:21-23). It is equally sobering when we realize that some who actually do have saving faith in the Savior can serve Him from motives of envy and produce the fruit of strife from such impure service. Perhaps there were some who, being envious of Paul's authority, took the occasion of his imprisonment to preach Christ, so that they might fill the supposed leadership void created by the apostle's incarceration. It is, alas, all too possible and actual that people serve the Savior from self-regarding motives. Let us guard ourselves from such sinful endeavor by our adopting the attitude of John the Baptist, who declared regarding Jesus: *He must increase, but I must decrease* (Jn. 3:30).

#### **Tuesday, December 24th - Philippians 1: 15, 16**

Motive in ministry is all-significant. In Paul's day, as well as in our own day, men may preach Christ with a view to self-aggrandizement. However, such tares and their malicious ministry must not distract us from the wheat growing in the kingdom of God. Thus, Paul remarks that while some preached Christ with envious motive, others proclaimed Him from good will. The Lord always reserves unto Himself true and faithful servants, even if in some seasons they may be reduced to a remnant, covered by the grand campaigns of carnal professors. The Lord knows, honors, uses, and blesses those who are His own faithful servants. We do well to look for and to profit from them.

#### **Wednesday, December 25th - Philippians 1: 15-17**

Paul realistically acknowledges that some preachers of Christ are selfish and sinfully envious of other servants of the Lord who rightly have a high and truly fruitful standing. He also notes that other preachers serve from pure and loving motives. It is the latter with whom Paul is primarily concerned. The envious may push their way to an apparent prominence, but those who fight their way to such first place will find themselves relegated to last place in the end. Thus, Paul first elaborates on the good motives of the group latterly mentioned in v.15. He says they were serving out of love. Their loving affections were set not on themselves, but on Christ, who had lovingly given Himself for them. Their love extended to Paul, as well, who was suffering for his faithfully having proclaimed Jesus to them and to others. Their love also extended to those to whom they preached the Savior, compassionately offering to them the only Person and work whereby they could be saved. There could be no doubt that such loving servants were themselves deeply satisfied as they so exercised their love and that their service pleased and honored the Savior, while it blessed many others. How can envy begin to compare with all of that?

#### **Thursday, December 26th - Philippians 1: 15-17**

The object of those preaching Christ from envy was Paul's diminishment. Their selfish ambition prompted them to endeavor their advancement at the price of the apostle's abasement. Sinful envy never enables one to conceive of a holy and loving exaltation that issues from one humbling himself and regarding others as being more important than himself. The envious think only to promote themselves by their stepping on others while they are down. Those seeking to attain the higher seats, reserved for those to whom the Lord of righteous rewards would give them, shall eventually find themselves demoted to the low place suited for their small hearts (Lk. 14:8,9).

#### **Friday, December 27th - Philippians 1: 17, 18**

The selfish and envious servants of Christ sought not only to turn the apostle's imprisonment to their own advantage—gaining a following for themselves while Paul was, so they reckoned, out of commission—but they also sought to demoralize Paul, who would learn of their advancement at his expense. Far from the apostle being distressed by their impure and loveless motives, he delighted in the fact that they proclaimed Christ. Their intentions he submitted to God for His divine disposal, while he rejoiced over their actions, which served to promote the gospel. Our God can and does sinlessly use even the sin of men to glorify Himself and to do good for His people. We maintain the trusting composure of our souls when we consider the wise and holy sovereignty of our heavenly Master, overruling the impure motives of those who intend us harm.

#### **Saturday, December 28th - Philippians 1: 18-20**

Paul rejoices that Christ was proclaimed, even by those who were envious of the apostle. Paul rejoices because Christ was being glorified by the proclamation of His name. He also rejoiced because sinners were being drawn to salvation through the proclamation of Christ. Finally, Paul rejoiced in the belief that the propagation of the gospel would serve for his own deliverance. The advancement of the gospel does not take place at the price of Paul's personal loss. All men gain infinitely when the Savior's name is spread abroad.

### **Sunday, December 29th - Philippians 1: 19**

Paul expresses confidence that God would cause all things—including what some men intended for his injury—to work together for his salvation. Not all men, however, intended Paul harm. His beloved Philippians he knew would be praying for him, and the apostle was secure in his reliance upon their prayers. The petitions of his brethren would serve to call to Paul's assistance nothing less than the sustaining provision of the Spirit of the Lord Jesus. That divine provision was a crowing victory attained through the apparent defeat of the cross. Paul's vital dwelling in Christ, his sympathetic and strongly helping High Priest, made him to be not a victim of his circumstances, but a victor over them.

### **Monday, December 30th - Philippians 1: 19**

This verse indicates that for which we should ever pray for our brethren, especially when they are under the burden of trials. We should not hasten to pray for their release from affliction. Rather we should cry to God for the provision of the Spirit of the Savior, who accomplished His victorious work not by His avoiding the cross, but by His bearing it according to the will of His Father (Mt. 26:39).

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Paul knows that all things would be orchestrated by God for his salvation (eivj swthri,an). That salvation may or may not have entailed the apostle's deliverance from prison. What he did know without doubt was that however men sought to heap humiliation and shame upon him, the Lord would ultimately vindicate His servant, not allowing him to remain under a cloud of shame. The rule of the kingdom of God is that the glory to be revealed in us will render all shame and suffering we have borne in Christ to be of no account (Rom. 8:18). We do well to meditate upon this fortifying truth when we are deemed to be shamefully defeated by the world. One day, all believers will shine with such glory that their enemies will cry for the mountains to fall on them to cover their shameful discomfiture resulting from their having despised such awesome and glorious servants of the Lamb of God.

### **Wednesday, January 1st - Philippians 1: 20**

Not only does Paul rejoice that Christ is proclaimed by friend and foe, he also is confident that in his own case, whether he lives or dies, Christ will be exalted. The prayers of the saints and the provision of Jesus are the roots from which the apostle draws such confidence. Paul knew that God would answer the many prayers offered for him, and do so above what the believers in Philippi could ask or think. He further drew comfort from the knowledge that nothing could separate him from the love of God in Christ and that nothing could truly diminish his good or God's glory being manifested through Paul's life and service. With this true and empowering focus, Paul rightly reckoned that no prison could bind him, and no threat overwhelm him.

### **Thursday, January 2nd - Philippians 1: 20, 21**

Paul's only concern and his unshakable confidence were that Christ be exalted through his situation. He was certain that his Lord would be glorified through whatever transpired in his circumstances, because he knew the Lord to be sovereign over all circumstances. Thus, Paul knew that all things would serve for the glory of Christ and for the apostle's own good. Paul knew himself to be in Christ in a position wherein he could neither be defeated nor destroyed. As Christ is sovereign over life and death, He knows how to accomplish His own glory and His servants' good through either. We need fear nothing when we know that our loving Lord presses all things into such service for Himself and for His people.

### **Friday, January 3rd - Philippians 1: 20, 21**

Paul speaks in most confident and triumphant terms in v. 20. He has earnest expectation and hope that, far from his suffering shame, he will stand with abundant boldness for the glory of Christ, whether he lives or dies. This hope and expectation is reasonably grounded, as v. 21 indicates. For to the apostle, Christ gains glory and leads the trophies of His grace to victory in life and in death. Paul had seen this, for example, in the case of Stephen's death, at which the martyr deacon, being full of the Holy Spirit, saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at God's right hand (Acts 7:55-60). Never had Paul seen a man die so triumphantly. Thus, Paul reckoned that for him to live would be continued service for Christ, while for him to die would be his gaining personal transformation unto perfection and enjoyment of the nearer presence of his Lord.

### **Saturday, January 4th - Philippians 1: 21**

Not only was Paul, by virtue of his being in Christ, in a situation wherein he could not lose, but every believer in Christ is so triumphantly situated. If we live, we live as new creatures in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 2:20), being empowered by His indwelling Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:9), and having Christ as our sympathetic High Priest, ever living to intercede for us (Heb. 7:25). We serve for Christ's glory, protected by His armor (Eph. 6:10ff), and directed and nourished by His Word. If we die, we, like the repentant thief on the cross, shall be with Christ in paradise. Thus, we are in Christ more than conquerors in life and death (Rom. 8:37-39).

### **Sunday, January 5th - Philippians 1: 21, 22**

Paul contemplates life for Christ or death ushering him into the inconceivably blessed nearer presence of Christ. What has brought the apostle to this examination of these ultimate matters? It was his suffering the trial of an imprisonment that may have been a prelude to his execution. When the crises are most severe, the dangers mortal, and the darkness its blackest, it is comforting for believers to know that Christ uses even those most grim tools to serve for His glory and for the good of His people.

#### **Monday, January 6th - Philippians 1: 22-24**

When a man faces the prospect of his death, he realizes that he is mortal and that his life will not go on forever. The believer, however, neither lives nor dies for himself, but for, with, and by Christ (Rom. 14:7,8). Therefore, Paul examines the ultimate alternatives facing him. He does so not as a passive victim, but as though he could exercise volition in the choice taken. He is not proudly claiming that whether he lived or died was in his power to choose, but rather he is indicating the wonderful realization that he found incentives of divine grace in either alternative. How secure and happy is the state of the believer when he knows that come what may, even if it be something dreadful, he dwells in the loving and powerful care of Christ, who was dead but now is triumphantly alive forevermore (Rev. 1:17,18).

#### **Tuesday, January 7th - Philippians 1:22-24**

Paul confesses that he is hard pressed as to whether he should contemplate the prospect of his living for Christ or his dying to be with Christ. The precious, saving grace of God makes either alternative attractive. The victory Christ achieved over death makes that eventuality appear as it is, namely, the last enemy, now defanged of its sting and pressed into serving as the portal through which the believer passes into the nearer presence of the Lord (1 Cor. 15:51-58). The ordinances of God's grace, the intercessory prayers of the ascended Christ, the indwelling comfort of the Holy Spirit, the fortifying fellowship and delightful love of the brethren—all make the believer's living to be a taste of heaven on earth. Whether a given believer realizes it or not, he is ever encompassed by the great and precious blessings of the Lord.

#### **Wednesday, January 8th - Philippians 1: 22-24**

The apostle has considered and herein expresses his alternating desires. His personal desire is to die, thereby gaining the blessing of his being in the nearer presence of the Savior who loved him and gave Himself for him (Gal. 2:20). He rightly anticipates his departure from this world as his breaking up of camp (avnalu/sai) at the termination of his pilgrimage and his arrival at home. Here we have no continuing city, but only that which is provisional and passing (Heb. 13:14; 1 Jn. 2:17). Here we are on pilgrimage, pressing on to the celestial city of God's design and making (Heb. 11:8-10, 13-16). It is wonderful to know that the experience towards which all believers are headed is not the end of all joys, but the exodus from all pains and the beginning of all truly solid joys and lasting pleasures (1 Pet. 1:3-5).

#### **Thursday, January 9th - Philippians 1: 22-24**

The alternative to Paul's personal desire for the great gain he would attain by his death, was the apostle's pastoral desire to live and serve for the further blessing of the members of the Church militant. Paul confesses that to him these were almost equally desirable blessings. By his sharing this marvelous perspective with the Philippians and with all the subsequent readers of this letter, the apostle is used by God to open believers' eyes so that we might see that greater is our God with His blessings who is for us than anything in life or death, heaven or hell that could be against us.

#### **Friday, January 10th - Philippians 1: 24-26**

In v.22, Paul declares that he did not know which desire to prefer—his living to minister Christ to believers like his beloved Philippians, or his dying and gaining Christ's nearer presence. However, the apostle soon concludes that he yet has fruitful service to render to the Philippians in this life. Thus, he arrives at a settled conviction, saying in v.25 that as he is convinced that the Philippians remain in need of his ministry, he

knows that he will be spared to serve for their progress in the faith. Regarding the work God had called Paul to do, the apostle could not yet declare: *It is finished*. From this, Paul rightly senses that he and, indeed, every servant of Christ is immortal in this world until his work is completed.

#### **Saturday, January 11th - Philippians 1: 24-26**

Paul was convinced that he would live and serve further for the progress of the Philippians in the faith, and for the fruit of that progress, namely, their joy and confidence in Christ. The apostle reckoned that with Christ restoring to him his liberty, the believers to whom he ministered would see in Paul a token of the Lord's resurrection power, and they would have deepened and strengthened confidence in the preserving and delivering power of Christ. Paul's release would be a living testimony that our God is a God of deliverances, to whom belongs escapes from death (Ps. 68:20).

#### **Sunday, January 12th - Philippians 1: 27**

As soon as Paul is convinced that he will live on and serve believers, such as the Philippians, he presses on in that service, exhorting his readers as to how they should live in Christ. Paul urges the Philippians to live worthy lives, which is to say lives of godliness that are consistent with one's profession to have received the good news of salvation in Christ. He directs them not to be distracted by or fearful of persecution and suffering. In these exhortations, Paul is not insensitive to or unsympathetic with his readers' pains. Rather, as the apostle had found the Lord's sustaining grace in the trial of his imprisonment, he encourages the Philippians to find and to appropriate the same divine grace in their lives.

#### **Monday, January 13th - Philippians 1: 27**

The apostle exhorts his readers to conduct themselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. By this he means that their actions should reflect their justified status and their heavenly citizenship. They should be merciful, as those who had received the saving mercy of God; be loving, as the beloved of God; and devote themselves to serving others, as those saved by the atoning sufferings of the Servant of the Lord. If our performance does not match our profession, it casts doubt upon the reality of our possession of salvation.

#### **Tuesday, January 14th - Philippians 1: 27**

Paul further exhorts the Philippians to maintain a unified consensus amongst themselves. By his call for them to stand firm in one spirit, the apostle means that they are to share a common animating and fortifying principle that would inform and guide all of their practice. That principle, by implication, is the truth of God as it is revealed in Scripture. They are to embrace with all their souls the faith, and endeavor with all of their energy to declare it abroad as the good news that it is. Only upon the firm foundation of the faith once delivered to the saints can the living stones of the Church stand and be built up together.

#### **Wednesday, January 15th - Philippians 1: 27**

The work of the Church is one work. It is nothing other than a process of our digesting and declaring the faith of the gospel. We are to strive together in the work, rather than our being at odds over it. We are to cooperate lovingly with one another in the cause of Christ, and not compete against each other. The Puritan, Thomas Manton, likened love to the cement of the Church, and Charles Spurgeon, commenting upon this image remarks: "O for more of this sacred cement.... Professors seem to be piled together like a load of bricks, without life, love, or living truth to unite them.... Critics pick out from between the stones the mortar, of which there is little enough already; but loving hearts fill up the cracks, and do their best to keep the structure whole." (*Flowers from a Puritan's Garden*, p. 145).

#### **Thursday, January 16th - Philippians 1: 28**

There should not be divisions in the Church. However, when an assembly of the Lord's people do stand united and serve together harmoniously, then their distinction from the world can arouse worldly opposition. Therefore, Paul gives an exhortation for believers to have fortitude amidst opposition. The Lord's loving people should not be surprised that the world hates them. The hatred of the wicked should be expected from the righteous, whose Lord the wicked crucified (Jn. 15:18). The hatred of the wicked is not a warning alarm for believers, but rather is a sign of God's blessing upon them (Mt. 5:10-12). Meanwhile, those who maliciously touch the Lord's children, are surely working their own destruction from the Lord, who will see to it that the violence of the wicked will come down upon their own heads (Ps. 7:16).

#### **Friday, January 17th - Philippians 1: 28, 29**

The attacks suffered by the people of God from their enemies do not occur apart from the holy ordaining of the Lord. Therefore, Paul would have his readers lift their consideration above their sufferings to a contemplation of the sovereign hand of God sinlessly overruling their afflictions. The believer's suffering for Christ is not to be seen as an alarming indication of the failure of God's wisdom, love, or power. Nor is such suffering indicative of the believer being punished. Rather, God grants to us the privilege of sharing in the fellowship of Christ's sufferings (Phil. 3:10) which sufferings, however painful, produce for us an eternal weight of glory (2 Cor. 4:17,18).

#### **Saturday, January 18th - Philippians 1: 29, 30**

We do not suffer in or for Christ as helpless victims. Instead, we suffer as soldiers engaged in combat, not against flesh and blood, but against evil principalities and powers. In this combat, we shall ever, only, and always be led by God to victory as super-conquerors (Rom. 8:37; 1 Cor. 15:57).

#### **Sunday, January 19th - Philippians 1: 29, 30**

The conflict of soul that a believer experiences when he suffers the opposition of wicked men and devils is a common experience of those in Christ. It strengthens the communion believers share with their Savior who suffered for them. It also forges a holy comradeship between believers who encourage each other by their mutual example of godly endurance of wicked opposition. Paul therefore lifts the sufferings of the Philippians to the level and significance of his own sufferings, for together they suffer for the Savior who will comfort them with abundantly surpassing glory (2 Cor. 1:5-7).

#### **Monday, January 20th - Philippians 2: 1, 2**

In these verses, Paul returns to the theme of unity upon which he touched in 1:27. Here he reinforces the exhortation that believers should be of one mind. He does not strengthen his urging by mere repetition, but instead elaborates on the manifold provision God has made for His people to be bound together by truth in love. This spiritual unity is not something believers manufacture, but is rather something they receive from the Lord and maintain by his grace (Eph. 4:3).

#### **Tuesday, January 21st - Philippians 2: 1, 2**

There are four *ifs* in v.2. There should be unity in any assembly of God's people, *if* they appropriate by faith all that God has provided for them in Christ. The Lord has provided richly for His people's possession and preservation of the loving bond that holds them together in Christ. If division and discord are found in a church, it is not due to any failure of divine provision, but results from believers' failure rightly to appropriate the rich and empowering manifold grace of the Lord.

#### **Wednesday, January 22nd - Philippians 2: 1, 2**

The manifold provision God has made for the unity of His people is set out largely, though not exhaustively, in v.1 By encouragement in Christ, Paul intends the affirmation and comfort the Holy Spirit provides as He guides believers into the treasury of truth that is in Jesus. The word, *encouragement*, can also be translated, *persuasion* (para,klhsij), thus implying the authority and power Christ has by His Word and Spirit to enlighten, direct, transform, and empower the minds of His people. If our minds are set upon the mercies of God in Christ, they will be transformed from their self preoccupation to their commitment to abide in those loving bonds between believers that reflect the holy and perfect love obtaining amongst the three Persons of our triune God.