

January 2008

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Saturday, January 26 th - Proverbs 12: 27

The lazy soul never roasts his prey, because due to his self-indulgent sloth he never bestirs himself to the degree required to catch his prey. He lives on foolish and vain hopes that things in life will automatically come to him. Diligence, in contrast, is a precious possession enabling one to conceive and achieve ever higher aims. A man possessing diligence has the key to possessing all things.

Sunday, January 27 th - Proverbs 12: 28

Eternal life lies at the end of the way of the righteous. Meantime, abundant life is enjoyed in that way. The Lord feeds us on His truth, guides us by His wisdom, empowers us with His Spirit, comforts us with His loving presence—all of which the wicked do not have. This narrow way leads progressively away from every form of death. Yet, even death, which sinful men rightly fear, the righteous find to be but a portal to paradise. All deaths, for those in Christ, lead to glorious resurrections.

Monday, January 28 th - Proverbs 13: 1

A wise child, especially a son, who may feel more of a natural hankering to be on his own, recognizes and submits to authority, especially when it is lovingly administered through the family. His wisdom consists in his humbly realizing his need for instruction, correction, and discipline, as well as in his recognizing that his father's chastisements come upon him for his good, not his harm, issuing not from tyrannical caprice, but from godly authority and fatherly love. The scoffer, despising such a humble and submissive attitude, casts off rebuke, seeing it as unwarranted, unnecessary, and irksome. In doing so he would cast from himself rightful authority and the protection and provision of fatherly love, dooming himself to waywardness, misery, and loneliness.

Tuesday, January 29 th - Proverbs 13: 2,3

A man in Christ bears the fruit of the Spirit in his life (Gal. 5:22,23). Out of the good treasure of his godly character he brings forth good words, which in turn, bear more good fruit for him to enjoy. He guards his words, so as not needlessly to offend, thus avoiding worlds of trouble. When he must speak truth which does offend, he does so with wisdom and authority which keep his enemies at bay. But the treacherous heart has an appetite for violence. Such wicked souls desire to promote themselves by casting down others. Their evil communication returns upon their own heads ultimately, and great is their ruin.

Wednesday, January 30 th - Proverbs 13: 4

Not only is the outward condition of the sluggard miserably impoverished (12:24,27), but his soul has an appetite with increasing hunger for the things he does not have. Yet even his deepened cravings do not arouse him to exertion. He fondly thinks that his appetite will work like gravity, growing great enough to attract objects of his desire. But it is not so. The diligent is not only enriched outwardly by his investments of energy, but his soul is satisfied with his accomplishments. His soul is also enlarged due to this filling, giving him not a craving for what he does not possess, but a capacity for what he shall, by his diligence, attain and enjoy.

Thursday, January 31 st - Proverbs 13: 5

The words and deeds of the wicked spread a literal stench throughout society. The wicked produce foul and shameful fruits from their foul hearts. It may not be their intention to do so, for wickedness loves to wear the cloak of respectability, but the offensive odor of an evil heart penetrates the most charming attire. The righteous hate falsehood and seek to mortify it at its root, namely, in their own hearts. Thus a sweet fragrance is spread abroad by those so crucifying the flesh and nurturing the fruit of the Spirit.

Friday, February 1 st - Proverbs 13: 6

The righteousness of Christ, being sanctifyingly imparted to believers, guards them in their walk, keeping them in the way of the Lord and out of sin's byways. Believers keep to the good and blameless way because of their growing inner conviction. The unredeemed sinner acts in accordance with his fallen nature, and has no place to go but down into disappointment, death, and condemnation. Let us thus prize and cultivate righteousness.

Saturday, February 2 nd - Proverbs 13: 7,8

There may be contrast or continuity or both in v.7. That verse may read: There is one who pretends to be rich, but has nothing; who impoverishes himself, but has great wealth. If we take it that way, the phenomenon of confused values is presented, wherein a person places too high value on material things and outward appearances, projecting an image of himself being materially better off than he truly is—all to the neglect of true riches in Christ, with spiritual impoverishment resulting. If the verse presents a contrast, we are warned not to envy the materially rich or seek to appear rich ourselves. Great fortune can often constitute an enticing target for thieves and selfish manipulators, thus drawing the rich man into worlds of care and concern from which the poor man is blessedly free. When Hezekiah showed the material riches of his treasury to the Babylonian envoys, such carnal folly on his part stimulated their lust to have those riches. His concentration on spiritual riches and his cultivation of humility would have been more a safeguard for himself and his nation than an enticement to the wicked (2 Kings 20:12-19).

Sunday, February 3 rd - Proverbs 13: 9

The wicked have a lamp which is the product of man's labor and artistry, and which can produce light...until its source of fuel is exhausted. Here is a reminder that for all of the so-called good works of the unsaved, their lives grow duller each day as they draw ever nearer to darkness, death, and hell. The righteous have light shining through them, which light has its infinite source in the Lord. Their lives grow brighter each day, until they shine perfectly in His glory and with His glory in them (Rom. 8:18).

Monday, February 4 th - Proverbs 13: 10,11

Presumption is based not on an accurate perception of facts and responsibilities, but rather on the strength of perverse desires. Thus the presumptuous refuse to receive wise counsel, which may alert them to faults in the object of their desire, and which also makes clear the responsible way of obtaining goals through honest and hard labor gradually but surely attaining its aim. The presumptuous man simply feels that the strength of his desire imputes worth to the objects of his longing, and justifies the employment of evasive, manipulative, and fraudulent measures in the attainment of those objects. But such objects, even if attained, do not satisfy. Things received through easy and wayward means are usually easily lost. Hence, the presumptuous know only strife and frustration, not the security and satisfaction which the humble, patient, diligent man of integrity enjoys from the fruit of his labors.

Tuesday, February 5 th - Proverbs 13: 12

The hope of glory and all lesser hopes may seem at times to be in perpetually distant prospect. Consequently we grow weak, and groan as though life is going out of us (Rom. 8:24-26). But when such hopes are realized, our hearts will be satisfied with living fruit drawn from an inexhaustible source. Thus all sickness, weakness, and pain will be removed, and ever increasing vitality and joy will take their place (Rev. 21:3,4; 22:1-5).

Wednesday, February 6 th - Proverbs 13: 13-18

These verses consider from several angles the practical fruits which grow from one's attitude to the will and ways of God. He who respects and reverently obeys God's Word will be blessed in manifold degree. He will both receive and give wise teaching which will save himself and others from deadly snares. He will enjoy felicity and favor. The difficulties in his life arise not because of his failure and disobedience, as in the case of the wicked, lazy, treacherous fool, whose persistent defiance of godly standards renders him his own worst enemy; rather the righteous man respects and welcomes the difficult challenges in his life as reproving and refining instruments in the hand of his Lord, designed to purify his heart, soul, strength, and mind, thus leading to the enjoyment of glorious honor.

Thursday, February 7 th - Proverbs 13: 19,20

The attainment of desires generally brings at least initial sweetness to the souls of good and evil persons alike. However, for the wicked fool, such sweetness quickly turns to

bitter disappointment. This is so due to the fact that the evil he craves, while it promises lasting delight, can only provide temporary pleasure as sugar coating for permanent pain. Still the fool craves evil, pursuing it in company with other fools, whose companionship proves destructive for all involved. The desire of the wise and righteous soul, however, is good. The Lord accordingly gives good things to those hungering for them (Mt. 5:6; 6:33; Lk. 11:9-13). Those whose godly desires are fulfilled can testify to no disappointment, but rather to growing and deepening delight with the provision of the Lord. They delight further to be with other godly and wise souls, who promote the process of sanctification.

Friday, February 8th - Proverbs 13: 21,22

Sin destroys character and transforms even advantageous circumstances into consuming adversity. The godly person grows rich and strong in character, and often in circumstantial blessings as well. He thus enjoys a life of abundance which overflows to bless others, and which provides an inheritance for his children after his death. Even if the wicked manage to prosper in terms of intellectual, practical, and aesthetic gifts, and perhaps also material possessions, such prospering profits neither themselves nor their children. The heavenly Father of the righteous will see to it that His children eventually inherit not only such stolen and abused gifts that the wicked have taken, but also the whole earth (Mt. 5:5).

Saturday, February 9th - Proverbs 13: 23

This verse, as translated in the New American Standard Version, draws our attention to the fact that men's injustice towards their fellows serves to impede the development of potential in others, thus rendering them perpetually poor. How wonderful it will be when all such sinful impediments are removed by the Lord! But the verse may also be translated so as to indicate that a man's own lack of judgment keeps him from developing his own potential. He thinks he lacks the materials to succeed, when really it is his own sinful neglect, distraction, and indolence which conspire against his exploiting to advantage what material he does have. Finally, the verse may also be commenting upon the blessing of the Lord, which enables the humble poor to produce abundantly from the field which, if attained by injustice, would be cursed by God so as to yield nothing. We may truly say that the heart of a field's owner determines the harvest. Read Haggai 1:5-11.

Sunday, February 10th - Proverbs 13: 24

We must not confuse an indulgent sentimentality with love. Those who do so, intent on sparing their children all pain, and who proceed on the basis of that confusion, serve deeply to harm their children. Damage is never done when sinful manifestations are consistently corrected, even, if need be, with loving and judicious applications of pain. But great harm results when sin is allowed to corrupt and weaken our children's character, not to mention their confidence in the Lord, who neither spared His only begotten Son from the cross, nor who spares us from His loving chastisements which are designed for our lasting good.

Monday, February 11 th - Proverbs 13: 25

Compare the righteous satisfaction of the Apostle Paul as delineated in Philippians 4:11-13, with the wicked want of Haman found in Esther 5:9-13.

Tuesday, February 12 th - Proverbs 14: 1-3

A wise woman serves ever in constructive ways. She is a blessing to her husband and her family. She works diligently to transform a house into a warm, loving home. She manages all things well. The foolish woman destroys the peace and security of her family in every sense. Her hands waste resources, and her mouth utters things which always require correction (v.3). Men, of course, are also capable of bringing such blessing or curse upon their families. Yet here we learn that even the weaker vessel can destroy herself and her home despite the faithful diligence of her husband. The key to men or women serving for blessing rather than cursing lies with their attitude towards the Lord (v.2). Those fearing the Lord are upright in attitude and action, and serve to build up others and all things for which they are responsible. Those despising God are twisted in themselves, and they tend to twist all they touch.

Wednesday, February 13 th - Proverbs 14: 4

The tools of any trade require some degree of maintenance. When one is unwilling to invest the time and trouble involved in such maintenance, he may wish himself to be without tools, and may seek to justify his wish by pretending to adopt the simplicity of spirituality. Yet God works through means properly maintained. For us to seek freedom from our tools and their requisite care, is to run the risk of our hearing words of divine rebuke, due to our failure to apply ourselves to the right use of the means the Lord has provided for us to bear fruit for His glory (Mt. 25:14-30).

Thursday, February 14 th - Proverbs 14: 5

A faithful soul is a principled soul. Thus the will is determined to seek, respect, and tell only truth. No enticement or intimidation will incline such a one to lie. Yet a false heart breeds and broadcasts nothing but lies. Not only can the false heart be successfully bought, sold, teased or threatened, but it spews forth its fabrications even without such inducements. Let us then seek and determine by God's grace to be faithful.

Friday, February 15 th - Proverbs 14: 6

The way to attain wisdom is to mortify, rather than exercise, a spirit of proud cynicism. Scoffers, recognizing no authority above themselves, exclude themselves from receiving wisdom, which comes only from the highest authority. But the one who humbly stands under the Lord, revering Him and gratefully receiving His gifts, learns and grows with relative ease and increasing enjoyment.

Saturday, February 16 th - Proverbs 14: 7-9

Fools make bad company which corrupts morals. They know neither themselves nor the Lord nor His holy will, which they continually and heedlessly disobey. They desire to have no such knowledge. Thus when they speak and act, they do so according to their deluded and defiant natures. For one continually to be exposed to such evil communications is to hazard being personally infected by folly. If we were consistently to inhale the noxious fumes such irreverent folly belches forth, we would surely have our spiritual and intellectual senses dulled to the point where we fail to make vital distinctions and decisions. Once a man reveals himself to be a fool, he deserves no audience from us, and if we do grant him a hearing, it serves not for his benefit, but rather, however unintended, for our harm.

Sunday, February 17 th - Proverbs 14: 11

Even substantial things such as a house, if it is built and maintained by the wicked, will not last. Notice, it does not simply disintegrate as though poorly built, which is often the case with the products of the wicked; it is destroyed by the hand of God, who will not suffer the unrighteous indefinitely to prosper (Ps. 73:1-20). Meanwhile, the apparently flimsy tents of the righteous protect them through their pilgrimage to the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God (Heb. 11:9,10). The promises of God may seem as mere tents when compared to the tangible products of this world. But God's provision is sure, exceeding our apprehension of His promise, and enduring eternally, while the things of this world fade until they are finally consumed at the return of our Lord (2 Pet. 3:10).

Monday, February 18 th - Proverbs 14: 12

Every man is entitled to have his opinion. However, it is not our opinions which determine the issues of life, but rather the truth and power and will of the Lord. To know the living God and His liberating truth is to have security and freedom from all threats, even death. To be alienated from God, living on self-delusion, whether crude or respectable, is to be living a lie which leads inexorably to death.

Tuesday, February 19 th - Proverbs 14: 13,14

One's outer appearance and temporary condition need not necessarily reflect the true state of his heart or the end of his way. Even victorious believers carry within themselves the pain caused by the residue of their sin nature, not to mention the inherent pain of living in a fallen world. We may enjoy seasons of laughter, but sorrow will come upon us so long as we are in this life. Some may grow impatient with or bitter towards the Lord that this should be so. Their impatience may lead them to backslide in attitude long before they do so in action. Yet as they turn from the Lord to their supposed sources of happiness, they find deeper gloom which fills them and threatens to erase even the remaining streaks of bright joy. The good soul stays on pilgrimage with the Good Shepherd. There will be laughter and sorrow in the way, but there is constant assurance

that the Leader and Lover of his soul is directing and empowering him to go ever onward, to where all tears are forever wiped away.

Wednesday, February 20 th - Proverbs 14: 15-18

The devil loves ignorance and credulity, for then he may do his dirty work undetected. The naive are his easy targets. If they do not mature in spiritual matters, learning to exercise holy discrimination as the Holy Spirit directs (1 Jn. 4:1ff), they will inherit folly, being tossed about by every wind of doctrine, having no solid convictions. Nor will this be a matter merely of doctrine. Those preferring a vague, superficial, non-critical faith, fail to be themselves subdued by the power of God's truth, and hence become either quick-tempered fools or malicious schemers. They become rash and reckless, posing danger to themselves and others. But spiritually mature people love the truth and have a cautious respect for evil. They keep an eye on the enemy, not due to any attraction to him and his ways, but so that they might identify and avoid his snares. Such holy caution never fails to crown the life with security and conviction based on facts, not misleading feelings.

Thursday, February 21 st - Proverbs 14: 19

Evil men may prosper for a season, but they eventually will be obliged to bow not only before Christ (Phil. 2:10,11), but also before the Savior's children. Haman would hang Mordecai, but God ordained it that the villain should honor the virtuous Jew (Esther 5:11-6:12). Let us then resist temptations to concede to or conspire with evil, armed with the sure knowledge that all evil is destined to be the doormat of the righteous.

Friday, February 22 nd - Proverbs 14: 20,21,31

Here we are told how things are: People tend to despise the poor, who can give them nothing, while they love the rich, whom they believe have the means and the will to give them something. Such discrimination is not like the spiritual sort which is commended in vv. 15,16, but is rather sinful. God deploras such personal favoritism, since it proceeds from evil motives (Jas. 2:1-4). Not only do those indulging in it fail to secure desired preferment from the rich (many of whom became rich by selfish hoarding, unrighteous dealings, and oppression), but they never experience the happy contentment which comes from the loving and God-honoring imitation of a heavenly Father, who delights to be gracious to poor, needy souls.

Saturday, February 23 rd - Proverbs 14: 22-24

One plans to do good. One plots to do evil. The former results in blessing for others, which blessing always in some form returns to the one implementing good purposes. The latter harms others, but especially the perpetrator himself. Then there are those who would plan perpetually. They believe that talking about work is the same as doing it. Good plans lead through productive labor to profit, while the only fruit borne of unceasing chatter is poverty.

Sunday, February 24 th - Proverbs 14: 25

Even good men can find themselves in trouble, such as when they become targets for the malice of evil plotters (v.22), or the negligence and oppression of the rich (v.20). Accordingly, their lives may be in jeopardy due to contrived appearances. It is then that those confirmed in their cowardice, greed, or laziness—whose motivation is pragmatic rather than principled—will speak according to their natures which twist the truth. Thus they serve to betray the truth and those standing on the truth, which truth may lie hidden beneath appearances. Yet the one who speaks the truth, because he has highest regard for and gratitude toward the One who is the truth (Jn. 14:6), brings the enlightening power of veracity to clouded situations, liberating the good man from a mendacious thrall.

Monday, February 25 th - Proverbs 14: 26,27

The fear of the Lord is not a craven dread of punishment, but rather a holy, reverential attitude which affords highest respect to the Lord and His revealed will. Such holy fear saves us from wandering into snares which not only cause us annoyance, but which also lead to death in manifold forms. Such fear is a fountain, welling up within us to strengthen and refresh, so that we, and those, such as family members, who are dependent upon us, flourish in unmolested security and happiness.

February 2008

Tues, February 26 th - Genesis 47: 8, 9

Pharaoh found Jacob's great age to be a marvel. However, Jacob puts the matter of longevity into the proper perspective of eternity, saying more about the quality of his life than about its length. The believer has an inheritance of such glorious quality as to make the longest life lived in this world to seem brief and far from desirable. Jacob, in his own way, is saying what Paul said when the apostle declared that for the believer to die is gain (Phil. 1:21).

Wednesday, February 27 th - Genesis 47: 8, 9

The first thing Jacob says about his life is that it has been for him entirely a sojourn. By this, as the writer of the Hebrews epistle makes clear, Jacob is not referring to his alienation from Ur, the land that his grandfather left in order to come into Canaan. If Jacob regarded Ur as his home, he was free to return there at any time. However, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob all looked with expectation to their heavenly inheritance, the city of God that is too vast, pure, perfect, and glorious for this world to contain (Heb. 11:8-10, 14-16). Those without faith regard this finite, fallen, and cursed world to be their true home, and long to cling to it for as many years as possible. The saints of God have an infinitely better inheritance that makes them to be strangers living in, but not being of, this fallen and cursed world.

Thursday, February 28 th - Genesis 47: 8, 9

Although Pharaoh marveled over Jacob's great age, the patriarch makes clear that he regards his years to be few. At 130 years of age, Jacob's life was comparatively shorter than the lives of Abraham (175 years) or Isaac (180 years). Yet, it was not the few decades that Jacob's forefathers had lived beyond his current age that made his life seem short. It was more the fact that when one has an eternal perspective, the longest life seems but momentary (2 Cor. 4:17).

Friday, February 29 th - Genesis 47: 8, 9

Jacob not only represents his 130 years of life as being few, he further characterizes those years as having been full of evil and unpleasant things. This may seem a gloomy and ungrateful representation that Jacob gives of his life. Yet, it accords with what Paul says about the afflictions that characterize believers' lives, (Phil 1:29,30) and about the persecutions that the godly continuously suffer (2 Tim. 3:12), as well as with what Jesus says about our having tribulation in the world (Jn. 16:33). On what was possibly the best day of our Lord's earthly life, being the day He shone with glory on the Mount of Transfiguration, He was there discussing His death with Moses and Elijah. Until we stand blameless before the Lord with great and lasting joy on the final day, we shall find that all of our earthly joys are laced with sorrows (Ps. 16:11; Jude 24). It is a mercy that our years of affliction and tribulation are fewer rather than more numerous.

Saturday, March 1 st - Genesis 47: 9, 10

Far from Jacob's life being inferior to that which the king of Egypt had lived, the truth is that Jacob possessed an infinitely greater inheritance than Pharaoh. The sufferings of Jacob—his flight from Esau, his having been cheated by Laban, his loss of his beloved Rachel, his loss of his beloved Joseph, his having endured the burden of anguish and embarrassment of his other sons being deceivers and murderers of the men of Shechem, as well as their being the ones who had sold Joseph into slavery—were not worthy to be compared with the glory for which he was bound (Rom. 8:18). It was in fact Jacob who was the one infinitely richer than Pharaoh, and out of that richness the patriarch blesses the king of Egypt. Jacob was blessed by Pharaoh's land and food, yet the patriarch held out to the earthly king the promise of eternal life through the grace of the living God of glory.

Sunday, March 2 nd - Genesis 47: 10-12

Jacob blessed Pharaoh with spiritual offerings that may or may not have been accepted by the king of Egypt. Perhaps we shall find this Pharaoh to be a fellow-citizen with the redeemed in the glorious city of God. Pharaoh, in response to Jacob's blessing, poured upon the patriarch and his family considerable earthly blessings. Joseph administered the king's order to settle Jacob and his family in the best of the land of Egypt, which, we are told, was in the land of Rameses. This order for the covenant family to dwell in Rameses did not countermand the permission Pharaoh had already given for Jacob to settle in Goshen (v.6), for scholars reckon that Goshen was either near or a district contained within the area known as Rameses. The critical thing for us to note in Jacob's settlement is that Goshen was near to where Joseph lived (Gen. 45:10), and the nearness of the covenant family to Joseph better served their highest good than could any earthly excellence of the land of Goshen. The nearness of our God to us is our good, and we therefore do well to cleave to Him as our refuge and reward (Ps. 73:28).

Monday, March 3 rd - Genesis 47: 11, 12

Joseph did not only provide land in which to settle Jacob and his entire family, but he also provided his father and brethren directly with food. The land itself, however good it may have been, could not have sustained the lives of the covenant people due to the conditions of the prevailing famine that prevented the land from producing food. Accordingly, the covenant people were clearly and entirely dependant upon Joseph, their kinsman who redeemed their lives from death, who was mediator between them and Pharaoh for their good, and who provided for them all as each had need. This earthly mediator who provided so wisely, lovingly, and abundantly for his family, clearly points us to our heavenly Mediator who perfectly provides for us according to the bounty of the glory of His grace (Phil. 4:19).

Tuesday, March 4 th - Genesis 47: 12, 13

In vv.13ff we are given a brief but meaningful account of how Joseph administered life to a dying people. We are reminded of the severity of the famine, and yet in vv.12,13 we are clearly shown how great a contrast there was between Israel's maintenance and the world's misery. While Joseph, the instrumental savior of his people, provided food for every member of his family—from his father down to the youngest child—many in Canaan and Egypt languished. Our Savior always supplies all of our needs (Phil. 4:19), even though at times the manna He provides may be hidden, not from but for those who have and exercise faith (Rev. 2:17).

Wednesday, March 5 th - Genesis 47: 13

It was not unusual for Canaan and other countries at that time to experience a short-fall in food production. Abraham left Canaan during a previous famine (Gen. 12:10ff), as did Isaac (Gen. 26:1ff), and as would Elimelech and Naomi in the days of the Judges (Ruth 1:1ff). Egypt, on the other hand, was consistently a land of bountiful food production, and thus supplied her own people as well as exported her surplus to other lands. Yet in this famine, even Egypt is made to feel the pangs of hunger. John Calvin writes that, it is not for those who cultivate fertile lands to trust in their abundance: rather let them acknowledge that a large supply of provision does not so much spring from the bowels of the earth, as it distils, or rather flows down from heaven, by the secret blessing of God (Genesis, p. 406).

Thursday, March 6 th - Genesis 47: 14-19

This passage briefly describes the increasingly costly nature of the famine for the people of Egypt. They would be driven first to spend all of their money, then to give up their possessions, and finally to exchange their lands and their personal freedom for enough food to keep them alive. We may wonder whether it was right for Joseph to exact such a high price for the food he sold to the people. Yet, Joseph did not cause the famine, but he was rather a savior from it. By his wise and faithful trusting in the warning Word of God, he had managed to gather a supply of food to be sold to those Egyptians whose money, possessions, property, and personal freedom could not have kept them alive had there been no supply of food for them to purchase. We should also note that Joseph neither set the prices for nor took the profits from the sale of food. The king of Egypt alone was enriched by the selling of this food. Dark divine providences can seem very unjust until we recall that all of us sinners, who have defied the God of all provision, richly deserve to be deprived of all we have and all we are.

Friday, March 7 th - Genesis 47: 14

The first thing the starving people gave for food was their money. There is nothing like desperate hunger to break the spell that unrighteous mammon can have upon people. Hungry men cannot eat their cash but will gladly trade it for nourishing food. So severe and prolonged was the famine that virtually all of the money of at least Egypt's ordinary people was spent. It is a remarkable testimony to Joseph's godly integrity that he is said to have brought all of the money into Pharaoh's treasury. Surely in the crushing hubbub

of the multitudes paying for their food, a man in Joseph's exalted position could have pocketed much of the money for himself. Yet, he who had resisted the private advances of Potiphar's wife, being fortified in his resistance by his fear of the Lord (Gen. 39:9), shows the same godly resistance to the temptation to siphon off for himself any of Pharaoh's money. A man's clear conscience before God is his most priceless possession.

Saturday, March 8 th - Genesis 47: 15, 16

Money is a means of exchange created by men for the purchase of goods and services. The famine in Egypt was so severe and prolonged that the money of the Egyptians was exhausted before the famine ended. When the starving Egyptians cried to Joseph for help, he agreed to accept their livestock in exchange for food. No man, no nation, and no alliance of nations can create enough wealth to sustain life when the God of creation withholds His hand of provision. Isaiah prophesies men throwing away their useless silver and gold in the day of God's judgment (Is. 2:20-22), while John prophesies that in the final day men not only will hide in caves, but also will cry out for the rocks and mountains to fall on them and hide them from the terror of the Lord (Rev. 6:15-17). If men will part with all of their money to ease a temporal judgment of God, they should surely be willing to give up the whole world, in order to save their souls from God's eternal judgment. Yet, sinners cling to their trinkets while neglecting the treasure of God's free salvation.

Sunday, March 9 th - Genesis 47: 16, 17

The wonder is that the Egyptians had any livestock to give in exchange for the food they purchased from Joseph. Surely their animals were themselves also near starvation due to the famine. Yet, Joseph accepts those animal mouths to feed in exchange for food for the men who had owned them. If we wonder why the Egyptians did not slaughter and eat their livestock, the answer would appear to be that most Egyptians at that time were vegetarians, but even more so that Joseph must have offered them much more grain to feed them than the shrunken meat on their livestock could have provided even if the people had chosen to eat their animals. So we see God's special grace to Israel, whose people ate as each had need at no cost, in contrast to God's common grace to the world, where men get more than they deserve but at great cost to themselves.

Monday, March 10 th - Genesis 47: 18, 19

As the famine continued, the food the Egyptians had obtained with their money and livestock ran out. They were accordingly reduced to offering all that they had remaining, namely, their properties and their persons in exchange for more food. We see from this how readily reduced people become when the common grace of God is for a time suspended in their lives. So desperate for the staff of life were the Egyptians that they would part with all they had and all they were for it, while the people of God received ample provision at no cost. If this great and vital difference seems to us to be unfair, we need but consider how the unbelieving Egyptians had for all of their lives taken the common grace of the one true God for granted while they devoted themselves to false

gods. In contrast, the sons of Jacob, however imperfectly they did it, were seeking God's kingdom and finding that the Lord graciously added to them even their daily bread (Mt. 6:33).

Tuesday, March 11 th - Genesis 47: 20

We may wonder if it was gracious or even right for Joseph to exact all the property, possessions, and even personal liberty that the Egyptians had as the price for the food they so desperately needed. Scripture indicates to us in this verse as well as in v.14 that Joseph was but administering the distribution of food and receiving payment for it for the sake and possibly under the orders of Pharaoh. Also, Joseph served even these Egyptians as a savior from the famine, a fact they themselves gratefully acknowledge in v.25. At times the providential arrangements of our Lord can seem harsh and unfair to us, yet we do well to remember that He is ever and always our Savior from all that would truly consume and destroy us.

Wednesday, March 12 th - Genesis 47: 20

This verse indicates to us that Joseph was truly a gracious savior of the Egyptians and a faithful administrator of his responsibilities for the benefit of Pharaoh. It also speaks to us of the attitude of the Egyptians that served to make them partakers of the temporal salvation Joseph offered to them. The Egyptians humbled themselves and willingly gave all they had and all they were to Joseph for Pharaoh's benefit. They were acutely conscious of their great need and Joseph's possession of the one thing they rightly deemed necessary. They were willing to sell all for this pearl of great price. Much more should we who rightly perceive our eternal need, and Jesus as the one thing necessary to save us eternally, devote ourselves to Him with trusting obedience at any cost.

Thursday, March 13 th - Genesis 47: 21

The Egyptians, by their having given all they had and all they were to Joseph for Pharaoh, recognized in most practical terms the absolute propriety that Joseph, as Pharaoh's administrator, had over them. In this verse we begin to see how wisely and mercifully Joseph exercised this proprietary responsibility. He relocated the people from their lands into districts around the great cities that were located along the Nile River. In doing so, Joseph demonstrates that far from his being a profiteer who exploited the people's need, he was a generous provider for the people. He sold them food and resettled them in better lands than were the lands they had given to him for the food. Things always go better for people who recognize the sovereignty of the King of kings and yield all they are and have to Him. Such people will find the King of glory ever to be a generous giver, who leads them to give up inferior things only to receive from Him things far superior.

Friday, March 14 th - Genesis 47: 22

Joseph did not purchase for Pharaoh the lands of the Egyptian priests. We are told in this verse why this was so. The priests were supported by an allotment from Pharaoh that obviously included food so that they were not driven by need to sell their land. Scripture appears carefully to make clear to us that these priests were supported by Pharaoh's subsidy and not by Joseph's special regard. The king of Egypt did well to make the welfare of priests a paramount concern in his kingdom, even during days of great material stress. In this we see how innately religious men are, leaving them without excuse for their dwelling in their sin (Rom. 1:18-25). Yet Pharaoh failed to maintain godliness in his kingdom, as his priests rendered services to false gods. Still, if the king of Egypt would bear cost in support of false priests, much more freely and generously should the people of God support the ministers of the Word of the one true and living God (1 Cor. 9:1-14).

Saturday, March 15 th - Genesis 47: 23

Joseph in these verses reminds the Egyptians of the fact that they had delivered their lands and their persons into Pharaoh's hand. The result of their having so entirely given themselves to their king was that they received better lands, nearer the Nile and its supply of water. They also received seed for the planting of crops that promised to preserve their lives and those of their descendants. Joseph had apparently wisely reserved this seed until the people were resettled on more arable land where the seed could be fruitfully sown rather than wasted on the poorer lands from which the people had been brought. Here Joseph shows himself to be like his Lord, the Good Shepherd, who leads His people out of defective and impoverishing circumstances and brings them into green pastures and refreshing waters (Ps. 23).

Sunday, March 16 th - Genesis 47: 24

In return for the more fertile lands and replenishing seed Joseph had administered to the Egyptians from Pharaoh's stores, a tax of one fifth of the produce harvested by the Egyptians was levied upon them to be paid to Pharaoh. The Egyptians gladly and gratefully paid this amount, regarding themselves as blessed in their having the four fifths upon which to subsist. More generous is the Lord who accepts but a tenth of the increase of His people, not as a tax, but as an offering for the support and advancement of His kingdom in this world. Our gladness and gratitude should far exceed that of these happily taxed Egyptians.

Monday, March 17 th - Genesis 47: 25

This verse records for us the Egyptians' view of the administration of Joseph whereby they had given up all they had and were to Pharaoh in order to receive food, lands, and seed to sustain them. The Egyptians with apparent thankfulness and joy declare not that Joseph had exploited them but rather that he had saved their lives. What the people had given up—their money, livestock, property, and freedom—had been rendered by the famine uselessly and hopelessly ineffectual to save them. Joseph had served mercifully and wisely to interpose between the divine judgment of the famine and the people. The

result was that they who had perceived that they had been doomed to die recognized even more clearly that they had been mercifully saved by the servant of the Lord. We who have been saved to the uttermost by the free grace of God in Christ have infinitely greater reason to rejoice in the wisdom, power, and love of our saving God.

Tuesday, March 18 th - Genesis 47: 26

So wise, fair, and vital were the arrangements Joseph made during his administration of affairs throughout the critical time of the famine that those arrangements became law in Egypt, abiding at least until the days of Moses, who was the writer of Genesis. More enduring, and for eternally valid reasons, is every word of Scripture that forever abides and remains in force (Mt. 5:18; Lk. 16:17).

Wednesday, March 19 th - Genesis: 47: 27, 28

From v.27 to the end of this chapter we are given a brief summary of Jacob's living in Egypt. The dying of the patriarch will receive a much fuller treatment in chapters 48 and 49. We are told in v.27 where Jacob and his posterity sojourned. They were in Egypt, but more particularly, they dwelt in the region of Goshen that had been entirely devoted to them. Hence, we see the covenant family living in but not really being of Egypt, as we are to live in but not be of the world (Jn. 17:15-18). We also note that at this point the descendants of Jacob take on as a people the name of Israel that had been given to their father by God (Gen. 32:28; 35:10). As Jacob by faith had wrestled and prevailed with God, so his children in the land of Egypt were becoming ones who similarly were learning to live and prevail by faith in the Lord.

Thursday, March 20 th - Genesis 47: 27, 28

The lives of the people of Israel in Egypt were not ones of bare survival. They flourished in every way. While the Egyptians sold their property to Pharaoh, the sons of Israel acquired property. We also read that the Covenant people grew numerically in the land of their sojourning. From a company of 70 souls (Gen. 46:27), the Israelites grew to be a numerous and prosperous people. They did not attain these things by their own merit or working but rather received them by the blessing of their Lord, which blessing alone makes His people rich and joyful even in a foreign and godless land (Prov. 10:22).

Friday, March 21 st - Genesis 47: 27, 28

We are told in v.28 that Jacob lived for 17 years in Egypt. His life there extended to more years than he had expected. When he first saw Joseph, Jacob was ready to die (Gen. 46:30), and at his interview with Pharaoh, Jacob spoke as though his life was near its end (Gen. 47:9). Yet, the Lord preserved the patriarch for 17 years, a duration that equaled the years that Jacob had enjoyed his life with Joseph prior to Joseph's brothers having sold him into slavery. Matthew Henry observes in his commentary that as Jacob had nourished Joseph for 17 years, so Joseph nourished his father in Egypt for the same number of years. There is a fitting and blessed order to the providence of the Lord. Our

God measures our days not according to our expectation or natural stamina, but according to His wise, holy, and loving purposes for us and for those whom we love and serve in the Lord.

Saturday, March 22 nd - Genesis 47: 29-31

These verses tell us of Jacob's preparation for his death. Although he had by faith wrestled with and prevailed over the angel of the Lord, Jacob's faith could not save him from death. However, he could and did die in faith, as the writer of the Hebrews epistle informs us (Heb. 11:13,21). The last service that faith provides for the believer is to enable him to look beyond death to the glory of eternal life in company with just men made perfect. Once faith has performed that service, the saints of God are no longer believers but rather beholders of the face of their Redeemer in glory (Rev. 22:4).

Sunday, March 23 rd - Genesis 47: 29

Jacob saw his death approaching. Those who believe the things that God tells us in His Word will usually see those things approaching and be able to make due preparation for them. Regarding our own death, we are in Scripture told by Moses to ask the Lord to teach us to number our days and apply ourselves to that wisdom that is the fear of the Lord (Ps. 90:12). As Jacob saw his days drawing to their end, he also beheld the provision of the Lord in his son, Joseph, who had saved him and his family from famine, and who had caused them to prosper in Egypt. Jacob could have trusted no one more than Joseph to understand, respect, and faithfully carry out his instructions regarding his burial. We, too, must look to our eternal Savior to carry us safely through death to eternal life.

Monday, March 24 th - Genesis 47: 29, 30

In the same form of intimate token and pledge by which Abraham had obligated his servant to find a godly wife for his son Isaac (Gen. 24:2-4), the grandson of Abraham now obligates his most faithful son to bury him out of Egypt and in the Promised Land. By this request, Jacob renounces the plenty and prosperity he had enjoyed in Egypt. He even respectfully renounces the place where his favorite son had been virtually resurrected and where Jacob and Joseph had been reunited. He renounced Egypt because of its godlessness. He fixed his certain hope upon a greater resurrection and reunion with his own fathers in the glory of eternity and the nearer presence of God. The Promised Land where Jacob owned no land and where he had suffered so much in his long life was, with all of its afflictions, the provision of God that served as a token of the sure and living hope of eternal life in glory. To this hope Jacob by his death and burial would testify to the glory of God and for the instruction and edification of God's people.

Tuesday, March 25 th - Genesis 47: 30, 31

Joseph, though he was an exalted ruler in Egypt, binds himself to serve his dying father by fulfilling all that Jacob asked of him. First, Joseph agreed to do as Jacob had asked

him to do. He agreed readily and heartily, having a clear understanding of and deep respect for all that Jacob was asking of him. Next, he secured his promise with an oath. By an oath—which is a promise to men that is solemnized by their calling upon God to witness and sanction it—men more surely bind themselves to performance of holy duties to which they have committed themselves. We do well to swear more, not less than we now may do (Ps. 132:1,2).

Wednesday, March 26 th - Genesis 47: 31

After Joseph swore, Jacob bowed himself before the Lord in worship. As he surveyed his life past and his eternal life to come he saw nothing but cause to praise his God. Jacob had suffered his brother Esau's murderous anger, his uncle Laban's cheating, his sons' murdering of the Shechemites and their tearing Joseph from him. He had dwelt his life as a sojourner, living in tents, and spent his last days in godless Egypt. Yet, he by faith saw cause to praise the Lord who had designed and ordained all the events of his life for his good, and had sworn to give him eternal life in glory with his fathers, children, and all who, like him, lived and died by faith in the true Savior. If we are sons of Jacob, we too have cause ever, only, and always to praise our Lord.

March 2008

Thursday, March 27th – Genesis 48: 1

The dying of Jacob fills chapters 48 and 49. We might well wonder why Scripture devotes such detailed attention to the death of the patriarch. The answer is that Jacob had so much blessing to give to his descendants in his dying days. The Word of God tells us that the deaths of the godly are precious in the Lord's sight (Ps. 116:15). In their gain through death we have a token and sure prophecy of our gain that should comfort and encourage us to number our days and to live in wise, loving, and grateful devotion to our Lord (Ps. 90:12). It is no wonder, then, that the Bible not only tells us that the heart of the wise is in the house of mourning (Eccl. 7:4), but also sets our hearts and minds there in its full accounts of the fruitful deaths of God's saints. This is so especially in the saving account of the death of our Savior, which is recorded at length in the four Gospels and commemorated in the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 11:26).

Friday, March 28th - Genesis 48: 1

This verse begins by telling us how Joseph received and responded to the report of his father's sickness. The son who had been exalted as a ruler in Egypt does not excuse himself from spending time with his infirm father by saying that he was too busy with pressing affairs of state. Instead, he hastens to see his failing father. This visit was prompted by more than natural love and sympathy; Joseph was also prompted by the holy and loving determination to honor his father. We also are told that Joseph brought his two living sons to see his dying father. We are not told specifically why he did so, but we do know that between Jacob and Joseph there was ever a holy, loving concert to have and to share with others the blessings of God. While the dying patriarch was surely comforted by this visit from his favorite son and his grandsons, it is Joseph and his sons who are far more greatly blessed by the father who was greatly enriched by his faith in the living God.

Saturday, March 29th - Genesis 48: 2-4

In these verses we find that although Jacob is dying, yet he concerns himself with the glory of God and the good of others. Accordingly, he prepares himself to deliver his legacy to his sons. His is not the legacy that worldlings leave to their children, such as money and possessions. Instead, Jacob confers infinitely rich and eternal blessings upon his descendants. What does it matter if our children gain the whole world and have none of the spiritual blessings that we should leave to them?

Sunday, March 30th - Genesis 48: 2-4

The first thing that Jacob did when he was told that Joseph had come to him was to gather his failing strength in order to perform his final and greatest service for the blessing of his sons. Here grace in the old patriarch is seen to triumph over his natural infirmities. Although he is old and physically failing, Jacob gains new strength and mounts up with wings like an eagle (Is. 40:31), first to honor Joseph and his sons, then to honor the rest of his sons through his prophecy delivered to them in chapter 49. If we regard only the weakness and wounds of our outer man, we shall grow discouraged and fall as helpless and useless victims to our natural infirmities. Yet, if we by faith regard

our God and His faithful dealings with us and ours, we shall be fountains of blessing for our brethren and descendants, even and especially in our weaknesses (Rom. 4:18-21; 2 Cor. 4:7, 10-18).

Monday, March 31st - Genesis 48: 2-4

This interview between Jacob and Joseph is no sentimental affair, but rather is a time of solemn and highly significant transaction. It is most significant that Joseph is the one of all of Jacob's sons who is before him with his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim. For Joseph came to Jacob prepared to receive the double blessing of the birthright. Such a blessing belonged to the first-born son. Although Joseph was almost the youngest son of Jacob, had Laban not tricked Jacob into marrying Leah, Joseph would actually have been his first-born son. Hence, we see in this transaction not only that the younger ascends above his older brothers, but also that in the final reckoning God makes right all that men sinfully have made wrong.

Tuesday, April 1st - Genesis 48: 2-4

In vv. 3,4, Jacob begins to speak to Joseph not about his pains but about the promises and blessings of his God. Here in the valley of the shadow of death, Jacob sees more clearly than he did in the brightness of Pharaoh's court that his life was not bad and unpleasant (Gen. 47:9), but good and rich in divine blessing. While it was true that Jacob's life had been full of trial, testing, and afflictions, the higher and prevailing truth was that his Almighty God had caused all of those things to work for his good and for the good of his descendants. Therefore, the first words out of Jacob's mouth were not words of complaint about his hard lot, but rather words of grateful testimony that Almighty God had graciously, faithfully, and fully blessed him in magnificent fashion. Do we see the blessing of God in our lives and show it and seek to share it with our children?

Wednesday, April 2nd - Genesis 48: 2-4

Did the mighty blessing of the Lord manifest itself by giving to Jacob lands and riches and honor among men? No, Jacob rather defines his blessing in terms of his having divine promises, not in terms of his actual possession. God had promised Jacob the land of Canaan, but Jacob was dying in Egypt. God had promised Jacob a vast number of descendants, yet Jacob and his family numbered about 70 people at this point. Had the divine promise failed or was it misleading? John Calvin remarks on this: What, therefore, did it profit Joseph to be constituted, by an imaginary title, Lord of that land in which the donor of it was scarcely permitted to drink the very water he had dug for with great labor, and from which he was, at length, expelled by famine? But it hence appears with what firm faith the holy fathers relied upon the Word of the Lord, seeing they chose rather to depend upon His lips, than to possess a fixed habitation in the land. Jacob is dying in exile in Egypt; and meanwhile, calls away the governor of Egypt from his dignity into exile, that he may be well and happy. (Commentary on Genesis, p. 424).

Thursday, April 3rd - Genesis 3, 4

Jacob, who had by faith tasted the sweet and strong blessing of the Lord, who had fed more substantially upon the promises of God than he had upon the grain of Canaan or Egypt, was appreciative of his situation in Egypt but was not intoxicated by it. He rightly

saw Egypt as God's provisional blessing, while he regarded Canaan as the more sure earthly token of the eternal heavenly blessing of God. To that higher blessing Jacob calls Joseph and all who are by faith in the Lord descendants of Israel. If we rightly regard the truth that we have been blessed by our God in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places (Eph. 1:3), we shall not complain as we die but rather shall be grateful for such a glorious and living inheritance that is our gain through death (Phil. 1: 21; 1 Pet. 1:3-9).

Friday, April 4th - Genesis 48: 5, 6

In these verses Jacob is doing two distinct but inseparable things of great importance and significance. He first adopts Joseph's sons as his own. By this act, Jacob makes the sons of Joseph, who had been born in Egypt, to be more intimately engaged with the covenant sons of Israel. The dying patriarch hereby serves to draw the interest and affections of these boys away from the rich and comfortable life they had known all of their days in Egypt. At the same time, he makes them to be full members of God's covenant people and heirs of the incomparable blessings of the Lord. Hence we learn that a dying saint is more inclined and better able to convey to his children more enduring and glorious blessings than could a living Pharaoh give to them.

Saturday, April 5th - Genesis 48: 5, 6

The second thing that Jacob is doing in these verses is giving to Joseph the double portion of the birthright. Although Joseph's name is not reckoned in the listings of the tribes of Israel, the fact is that Jacob's favorite son has not been cut out of the covenant people, but rather Joseph has received a double portion in Israel through his sons. For Jacob not only adopts Joseph's sons, but by his doing so he makes them each to be tribal heads, ranking equally with Joseph's brothers. Thus, Ephraim and Manasseh, who were exalted in Egypt as Joseph's sons, are even more highly exalted in Israel as Jacob's sons. Their exaltation was due to their relation to Joseph, and they were regarded by Israel to be acceptable to him and to his other sons as was his beloved son, Joseph. Similarly, we have been accepted by our heavenly Father in His beloved Son (Eph. 1:6).

Sunday, April 6th - Genesis 48: 7

Jacob recalls how he had left Paddan-aram by the direction of God, in order to return to Canaan. As he had obeyed God and left the land of his marriages and of the birth of all of his children (except Benjamin) in order to return with his family to the Promised Land, so Joseph should now be willing to devote his sons, and those sons should be willing to devote themselves, to leave Egypt to go to Canaan when the Lord called them to do so. When that time did come—hundreds of years later—Joseph would be returned to the Promised Land in a coffin, and his sons would go to Canaan through their descendants.

Monday, April 7th - Genesis 48: 7

Jacob also mentions the death of his beloved wife, Rachel, and his consequent great sorrow. By this notice there is blessing for Jacob as well as for his sons. The blessing for Jacob was that his separation from his beloved Rachel was nearly over. He was conscious of his death being the gain of his gathering together with all of his loved ones

who had already passed through the portal to eternal life (Gen. 49:29). Therefore, his own tears from that great sorrow would soon be dried. There is also blessing alluded to in the place of Rachel's death, though neither Jacob nor his sons at that time knew it. She had died on the way to Ephrath, which is Bethlehem, the site of the birth of the Savior, great David's greater Son. Whether we live or die, if we are headed toward the Savior, we are blessed more than we may realize amidst all the cost and trials along that way.

Tuesday, April 8th - Genesis 48: 8, 9

In the opening verses of chapter 48, Jacob has been dealing directly with his favorite son, Joseph. The solemn transactions of the dying patriarch also had great and lasting effect upon Joseph's first two sons. By those transactions, Jacob was disengaging Joseph and his sons from the exalted life and pleasures they had known in Egypt, and charging them to cleave to the Lord and His gracious and glorious blessing. In vv.8-22, Jacob focuses his blessing directly upon the two sons of Joseph in ratification of his adoption of those sons and in confirmation of the double portion of the birthright that Jacob gives to Joseph in his sons. Great and precious riches flow from faith to faith at the death of a faithful saint.

Wednesday, April 9th - Genesis 48: 8-10

The infirmity of Jacob is noted in v.10 where we are told that his eyesight was very poor. But his faith had not failed him, as is evident by Scripture referring to him once again as Israel. His eyes enabled him to see two other persons with Joseph, and Israel inquires as to their identity. The word of Joseph indicates them to be his sons whom Israel had just adopted as his own. Israel accepted the true word of Joseph in order rightly to bless his sons, contrary to the way in which Jacob had sinfully exploited his own father's failed eyesight in order to snatch the double blessing so many years prior to this time.

Thursday, April 10th - Genesis 48: 8-10

Israel could not at this time see his two newly adopted sons, but he could and did embrace them. His solemn adoption of Joseph's sons was no mere legal or dutiful obligation but was rather motivated by deep and warm love. In v.11 Israel expresses his profound gratitude and gives testimony to the glory of God when he says that the Lord had allowed him to see not only Joseph but also his two sons. God had given back to Jacob the favorite son he for so many years thought he had lost, and had allowed the patriarch to see, no doubt before his eyes dimmed, his son's sons. Our Lord always gives to us far more than we deserve or expect. The giving of our God even exceeds the high expectations of our faith.

Friday, April 11th – Genesis 48: 9, 11

It is evident that both Joseph and his father were men of faith who saw God in all events of their lives. These godly men also rightly gave to the Lord grateful praise for all that He had done for them. We perceive this when Joseph refers in v.9 to his sons not as my sons only, but rather as my sons, whom God has given me here. In v.11, Israel credits God as the One who gave to him the privilege of seeing both Joseph and his sons.

Men of faith see the Lord increasingly in all circumstances of their lives, working all things together for their good (Rom. 8:28).

Saturday, April 12th - Genesis 48: 9, 12, 13

In v.9, Israel indicated his intention to bless Joseph's sons. Although the faithful die with little if any of this world's goods to pass on to their children, nevertheless, they die heavily laden with rich spiritual blessings to confer upon their children. Joseph demonstrates how highly he valued this spiritual legacy when he prepares himself and his sons to receive it. Here gospel blessing is transmitted from faith to faith, for it is ever by faith and through faith that we perceive, receive, and give any lasting and truly precious blessing.

Sunday, April 13th - Genesis 48: 11, 12

When Israel expressed his gratitude to God for his being enabled by the Lord to see the faces of Joseph and his sons, the father of those sons takes steps to provide more for his father than the mere sight of those sons. Joseph yields Ephraim and Manasseh up to his father, not only so that Israel might embrace them, but especially so that the patriarch might bless them further than he had already done by his having adopted them and assigned them shares in Canaan equal to those of Joseph's brothers. In respectful gratitude, therefore, Joseph bows, thus yielding himself as well as his sons to his father in honor and loving devotion. Did such giving to Israel in this way represent loss for Joseph and his sons? No greater gain can be had than when we respect and lovingly devote ourselves to godly fathers in the faith who serve to confer upon us increasingly great blessing.

Monday, April 14th - Genesis 48: 13

This verse gives notice of how Joseph prepared his sons to receive their blessing from Israel. In accordance with natural custom, Joseph aligns his sons so that Israel's right hand—the hand of power and thus greater blessing—would rest upon Manasseh, who was the older, while the patriarch's left hand would be upon the younger Ephraim. By this, Joseph shows his respect for natural order. Such respect at this point may have issued from Joseph's humility in that he does not presume to contradict the natural order without express warrant from the Lord. Unless we perceive the Lord's special grace that at times contradicts natural order, we do well to respect that which is right in the sight of all men (Rom. 12:17).

Tuesday, April 15th - Genesis 48: 14

That which Joseph had prepared in accordance with natural order Israel contradicts by the dictate of the sovereign grace of the Lord. By crossing his hands, Israel placed his right hand, indicating fuller blessing, upon Ephraim, the younger, while still conveying a full and precious blessing to Manasseh. This act of Israel's was not an automatic contradiction of the natural order; still less did it result from accident. Rather, Israel, with clear spiritual insight and by a special divine intimation, was making a correction that resulted from his apprehension of the prerogative of the Lord. Israel's natural eyes may have been weak but the eyes of his heart were strong enough to enable him to see clearly

the sovereign operations of God. Such spiritual vision is the only vision that is truly necessary.

Wednesday, April 16th - Genesis 48: 14

The hands of Israel were but sensual indicators of the blessing of God that was singular in essence but diverse in its measure. By the seemingly insignificant gesture of the crossing of an old, blind, dying man's hands we are taught the very significant truth that the strength of God comes upon His people best through weakness, even and especially the weakness of death (Christ's death and ours in Him). We also are taught that there are diverse measures of blessing in the kingdom of God (Mt. 5:19; 18:1-4). Those more greatly blessed receive their fuller measure of blessing not by their merit but by the mercy of God's ordaining (Mk. 10:40). But even those receiving a less full measure of blessing have cause to praise God at the threshold of whose house is infinitely greater blessing than could be had on the highest earthly throne (Ps. 84:10).

Thursday, April 17th - Genesis 48: 15, 16

From the placing of Israel's hands, we are brought to the pronouncement of his lips of the glorious source and gracious content of the blessing that he here conveyed to his sons. Both of Israel's newly adopted sons receive essentially the same blessing through Israel and through their father, Joseph, upon whom the blessing was pronounced in the persons of his sons. Through the words of this blessing, we learn that although he gave his sons up to his father for adoption, Joseph lost nothing but gained immeasurably by such giving. May we learn from this to give up ourselves and all that we hold dear to our blessing God.

Friday, April 18th - Genesis 48: 15

The blessing of Israel begins with the God of Israel, the source of all blessing. The covenant grace of God is alluded to when Israel refers to the Lord as the God of Abraham and Isaac. It was with Abraham that God entered into a covenant to be his God and the God of his descendants (Gen. 17:1-14). The dynamic nature of the Lord's covenant is signified by Israel referring to his fathers walking before this gracious, covenant God. It was the Lord who gave them new life and who called and enabled them to pursue a pilgrimage out of sin and into righteousness and out of the world and into heaven's glory. Although Joseph's sons would live all of their lives in Egypt, the blessing of this God made them to be not of Egypt but of the glorious heaven of the Lord. We, too, are called to be in but not of this world.

Saturday, April 19th - Genesis: 48: 15

Israel invokes the Lord who is not only the covenant God but also the caring God. He refers to the Lord as, the God who has been my shepherd all my life to this day. When Jacob schemed against Esau and fled from his murderous anger, when he was tricked by Laban, when he was deprived of Joseph and deceived by his other sons, when he declared in wailing bitterness, all these things are against me, and testified to Pharaoh that the days of his life had been bitter (Gen. 42:36; 47:9), he did not perceive God as his Shepherd. But now at his death Israel sees and testifies that the Lord had been with him and for him throughout all of his life, even to and through the point of his death. Israel therefore calls

for the same kind of blessing to encompass Ephraim and Manasseh as well as all of his descendants who should know by faith that the Lord would be their good Shepherd as well.

Sunday, April 20th - Genesis 48: 15, 16

In v.15 Israel invokes the blessing of the covenant and caring God. The completeness and extensiveness of the Lord's blessing is noted when Israel testifies that the Lord had cared for him, causing all things to work together for his good, all the days of his life. In v.16 the patriarch testifies further that all of the blessing he had received came to him mediated through the angel of the Lord. That unique angel of the Lord had loved him and would in the fullness of time redeem him by laying down His life for him. Israel had received tokens of that eternal redemption in all of the deliverances from earthly trials that the angel had wrought for him. This unique angel or servant of the Lord, is, of course, none other than our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the Servant of the Lord (Isa. 42:1-9; 52:13-53:12), and the good Shepherd (Ps. 23: Jn. 10:11-18) who promises ever to be with us throughout our entire lives, just as He, prior to His incarnation, had been with Israel.

Monday, April 21st - Genesis 48: 15, 16

Israel says something very significant and practical about the character of the redemption of the angel of the Lord when, in the first part of v.16, he says that his redemption had been from all evil. Christ does not spare His people pains that, like Paul's thorn in the flesh, are used by God to work for His people's good (2 Cor. 12:7-10; 1 Pet. 1:6-9). Our Lord ensures that our pains will serve for our gain and He at the same time prevents any evil from inflicting true injury upon us. Our Redeemer is compassionately committed to delivering us from all evil of sin. He is not committed to delivering ease and comfort to us, when these things can often be gates through which much evil enters our lives to the injury of our souls. Christ's prayers are for our lasting holiness, not our passing happiness (Jn. 17:17). We do well to see and submit to His loving and wise priority.

Tuesday, April 22nd - Genesis 48: 15, 16

In v.16, Israel moves from the divine source and holy, compassionate, and extensively complete character of the blessing he had perpetually received from his God to the character and content of the blessing he here invokes upon Joseph's sons. When in v.15 Israel referred to the Lord as the God of his fathers, he implicitly testified to the eternity of the covenant blessing of God. Abraham and Isaac continued to walk with God even after their deaths because the Lord is not the God of the dead but of the living (Mk. 12:27). In addition, the patriarch calls upon God to bless his adopted sons by having his name to be upon them. That name represents the great change from Jacob, the supplanter, to Israel, the one who by faith strives and prevails with God. This blessing has come upon all who are justified by faith in Christ, who are the true Israel of God (Rom. 2:28,29; 9:6-13).

Wednesday, April 23rd - Genesis 48: 15, 16

Israel blesses his adopted sons with the promise and prophecy of numerical abundance of descendants. This blessing can be seen in terms of physical fulfillment

when in Numbers 1 and 26 we read of the numbers in their tribes being tens of thousands. However, in terms of spiritual blessing there are no doubt countless multitudes of faithful descendants who have issued from Ephraim and Manasseh. Heaven alone will reveal the full count, as it will reveal the great fullness of all the blessings of our God that have come to us through Christ.

Thursday, April 24th - Genesis 48: 17, 18

While Israel is dispensing blessing, Joseph is growing in displeasure. Israel's favorite and most faithful son reveals that his eyes were dimmer at this point than were those of his blind father. Joseph thought that the defect in Israel's eyesight had resulted in a defect of his application of the blessing. In an attempt to make matters better, Joseph almost makes them worse. He tries by the arm of flesh to rectify the defect he thought he saw in this blessing. But Joseph is actually showing too much regard for the natural order that divine grace often overrules, as it had done with Jacob and Esau as well as with Joseph and his older brothers. Joseph also had too much regard for natural impediments such as Israel's physical blindness. Finally, Joseph had too little regard for the precious and prevailing power of faith which had been his own guiding light throughout his dark trials in Egypt. Joseph is showing here his own need to be re-engaged to walk by faith in divine promises and not by sight in the natural powers of Egypt.

Friday, April 25th - Genesis 48: 19, 20

Israel exercises tender but prevailing power in stirring Joseph's sluggish faith. In the reiterated words, I know, I know, Israel makes clear that he was acting not in ignorance resulting from his poor eyesight, but rather in knowledge resulting from a pure heart that saw his God (Mt. 5:8). In God's light he saw true light by which to serve for the blessing of others (Ps. 36:9). Too often we think that we see better than our God who sees all, and that we know better than our Lord who knows all.

Saturday, April 26th - Genesis 48: 19, 20

Although Joseph is here acting by natural sight rather than by faith, Israel does not roughly upbraid him but tenderly addresses him as my son. This is a word of most gentle and loving rebuke that serves to recall Joseph from the blinding worldly glories of Egypt to the seeing world of dependence upon his heavenly Father whom his earthly father was serving. Regarding the two sons here blessed, neither would be a loser, for both received the same blessing. But the difference of the preferment of the younger opens our eyes to the glory of God's grace and to the truth that salvation and assignment of blessing in the Kingdom of God is not by human merit or might but by the mercy of our loving heavenly Father.

April 2007

Sunday, April 27th – Genesis 48: 21, 22

In v. 21, Israel again addresses Joseph directly (cf. v.15). We see from this that although Joseph's sons were favored, he himself was not forgotten in the blessing of his father. When one in the covenant family of faith is exalted it is not at the expense of others. That is why when one in the body of Christ has cause to rejoice, we should all rejoice, not only with that one but also for ourselves, reckoning that the God of all blessing never forgets to bless all of His people with every spiritual blessing in Christ (Rom. 12:15; Eph. 1:3).

Monday, April 28th - Genesis 48: 21, 22

Israel prefaces his blessing upon Joseph with a notice of his own mortality: Behold, I am about to die. Because Israel is here dying in faith (Heb. 11:21), he sees far beyond his own death and apprehends the distant but certain fruition of the gracious purposes of God in the lives of his descendants. The fulfillment of these prophecies would come centuries after the deaths of Joseph and of his sons and of brothers. Therefore, although death is here acknowledged by the patriarch and his descendants that last enemy is regarded by those men of faith as being of little significance in view of the great and precious promises of the Lord. In his work, *On the Incarnation*, Athanasius rightly wrote: All disciples of Christ despise death; they take the offense against it and, instead of fearing it, by sign of the cross and by faith in Christ trample on it as on something dead (v.27). So did Abraham regard the weakness his own body, that was as good as dead, as being inconsequential in comparison with the power of God who had promised him a son (Rom. 4:19-20). So should all in Christ regard themselves as more than conquerors in all of their lives and in their deaths (Rom. 8:37-39).

Tuesday, April 29th - Genesis 48: 21, 22

Israel would die but the God of Israel would live on and be with His people in order to bless them. God would be with the descendants of Israel for every day of the course of the coming centuries of their affliction in Egypt, and the Lord would be with them to lead them out of the house of their bondage and into the land of His promise at His perfect time. We should draw our comfort from the knowledge that Christ has promised to be with us at all times and in all circumstances through all of time and eternity (Mt. 28:20). If our Lord is with us in that way, who or what can prevail against us (Rom. 8:31ff)?

Wednesday, April 30th - Genesis 48: 21, 22

Israel, who by faith firmly grasped the promises of God, prophesies that while the Lord would be with His people in Egypt, He would not confine them to perpetual living in that godless land amongst its oppressive people. The Lord would bring them back to the land that their fathers had possessed and lived in by faith. There they would live as their fathers had lived, not focusing upon their lack of perfect or perpetual possession of Canaan, but rather upon the heavenly city of God that Canaan foreshadowed (Heb. 11:13-16). The essence of their promise is also ours, namely, that our Lord will be with us in this world of our sometimes painful pilgrimage, but that He will also bring us to the glorious home of our heavenly Father where we truly belong (Jn. 14:2, 3).

Thursday, May 1st - Genesis 48: 22

Joseph did not lose his sons when Israel adopted them, but rather he gained through them a double portion in the inheritance that would eternally out-live and out-shine the worldly glories of Egypt. We, too, receive an abundant portion in the kingdom of God, not through our sons, but through the Son of God.

Friday, May 2nd - Genesis 48: 22

Israel refers to the land that he here apportions among his sons as that which he with his weapons of war had wrested from the Amorite. We read in Gen. 33:18,19 of Jacob having bought a piece of land from the Shechemites, but Scripture gives us no account of Jacob having battled against the Amorite inhabitants of Canaan. Yet, he who wrestled with God may well have fought with and prevailed over men in Canaan. The point is that although the inheritance of the saints comes to them by God's grace, they are not passive and inactive in their receiving and possessing of the divine gift. Joshua and his generation certainly waged a campaign of conquest of the Promised Land. We are to work out the gift of salvation we have received from God, guarding our gains and waging spiritual warfare in our growth in grace.

Saturday, May 3rd - Genesis 49: 1

In this penultimate chapter of Genesis the dying patriarch, Jacob, prophesies regarding his living sons. Jacob's eyes may be blind to the faces of men, but because he is dying in faith as he had lived, he can see the face of God and in that divine light he sees and tells his sons of their God-ordained fortunes. This prophetic ministry here performed by Jacob contains some painful truths for his sons. Yet, the godly father does not spare them such pains, knowing that he would be speaking the truth for their ultimate profit, and for the edification of all the faithful descendants of Jacob who would read his words through all succeeding generations. Similarly would Moses prophesy regarding the tribes of Israel. Read of that prophecy in Deuteronomy 33 and compare it with Jacob's prophecy in this chapter.

Sunday, May 4th - Genesis 49: 1, 2

Although Jacob was soon to leave this world, he not only clearly perceived the events of his day, but also foresaw events that would shape the lives of his sons in this world for many years beyond his exodus from it. Therefore, he summoned them to gather in his presence, not so that he might give them a sentimental farewell, but so that he might minister the truth of God for their good. Jacob issues a formal call for his sons to gather, as was fitting in view of the treasure of truth he was to bequeath to them. He designates them as sons of Jacob, reminding them by the use of his old name (meaning, supplanter) that he and they were naturally sinners. Yet he also calls them to listen to Israel, their father. By his use of the name God had given to him (meaning, he who strives with God), he encouraged them with the truth that he and his sons were men saved by faith in the merciful blessing of God. We who are in Christ are such sons who naturally are undeserving of the least of God's blessings, but who by the mercy of God have been made possessors and partakers of the greatest divine blessings.

Monday, May 5th - Genesis 49: 3, 4

These verses record Jacob's prophecy concerning Reuben. The natural priority of Reuben over his brothers is acknowledged when Jacob calls him his first-born. His natural endowments are alluded to when he is designated my might and the beginning of my strength. His potential for further advancement is noted when he is said to be preeminent in dignity and...power. This son who possessed a rich combination of natural advantages is then shown to be demoted due to his sin. No matter how promising our natural endowments and attainments may be, if we are dominated by sin we shall be abased rather than exalted. This is so not only due to the corrupting power of sin, but especially because there is a heavenly Father of the covenant people who calls to account all who abuse their powers in unholy endeavor rather than use them to God's glory. Let us profit by faithful, holy living.

Tuesday, May 6th - Genesis 49: 3, 4

Reuben's natural position and powers had potential to exalt him. Yet, his uncontrollable passions led him to gain the momentary pleasure of sin at the cost of an enduring pain of the loss of his preeminence. All who, like Reuben, fail to deny themselves for the Lord's sake will gain nothing, but they will lose many things of great value. Our wisdom and profit lie in our seeing this painful lesson wrought out in Reuben's life and our consequently determining by God's grace not to sin as he did. This lesson was well learned and practiced by Joseph when he resisted Potiphar's wife. Compare Gen. 35:22 with Gen. 39:7-13.

Wednesday, May 7th - Genesis 49: 3, 4

Reuben's passions were strong but because they were unholy they made him relationally dysfunctional. His lust drove him to join himself to one from whom God would have him remain separated. His love was weak, making him a feeble helper for Joseph, resulting in a separation from his godly younger brother (Gen. 37:21,22,29). In the days of Joshua the tribe of Reuben ultimately separated from the other tribes of Israel when the Reubenites settled east of the Jordan while most of the other tribes entered Canaan (Num. 32:1ff; Josh. 4:12,13; 13:7,8). Lust unites people superficially and temporarily, while love's bond is stronger and more enduring than anything in life or death.

Thursday, May 8th - Genesis 49: 3, 4

At the time when Reuben had committed his sin, Jacob knew of it but did nothing about it (Gen. 35:22). Now, decades later, when Jacob is at death's door, the old sin is recalled. The passage of time may seem to remove sin, but it only dulls the sinner's memory of his sin while doing nothing to remove the guilt, corruption, and bitter consequences of his sin. We make a grave error when we equate a father's patience with his being propitiated. Certainly with our heavenly Father we do well to regard His patience as an opportunity for our confession of and repentance from sin, not as a signal for our indulgence in it (Rom. 2:4).

Friday, May 9th - Genesis 49: 3, 4

The sin of Reuben was serious in itself, being a form of sexual impurity that was not only forbidden in God's moral law, but that was also rare even among unbelievers (1 Cor. 5:1). It was also serious in terms of the persons it affected, namely, a first-born son sinning against his own father and one of his father's wives. Yet, as serious as this sin was, we perceive grace in this prophecy. Reuben would merely be demoted in time, not disowned for eternity by either his earthly father or his heavenly Father. The bandage of God's grace is always larger than the wound of our sin (Rom. 5:20).

Saturday, May 10th - Genesis 49: 5-7

Reuben sinfully united himself to one from whom he should have remained separated by the boundaries of holy propriety. In vv.5-7 we find two of Reuben's brothers united not only legitimately by blood relation, but also sinfully by their shedding of the blood of others. The sinful confederacy of Simeon and Levi is therefore cursed by Jacob. The next two brothers after Reuben united in their sinful deceit and murder of the men of Shechem (Gen. 34:13-17,24,25). Consequently, they are united in their being cursed by their father. Blessed are those who do not walk in the cursed counsel of such wicked men (Ps. 1:1).

Sunday, May 11th – Genesis 49: 5-7

Reuben had an unholy passion for forbidden intimacy with a woman, while his brothers, Simeon and Levi, had an unholy passion for the sinful murdering of men. This cursed pair used their tools not for legitimate purposes, such as when Abraham used his sword to rescue Lot (Gen. 14:10-16). They used their tongues not to speak truth in love, but to deceive and disable the men of Shechem. Their sinful attitudes and actions brought dishonor and difficulty upon their father and family (Gen. 34:30). Therefore, Jacob disavows their attitudes and actions. Their union in sin therefore separated them from their righteous father. Unholy alliances will sever holy unions as nothing else can do, while the sinful wrath of man fails utterly to accomplish the righteousness of God (Jas. 1:20).

Monday, May 12th - Genesis 49: 5-7

Israel deeply disavows the sinful counsel and murderous deeds of Simeon and Levi. He will not allow his soul—his deepest essence—to enter into their sinful council of murder, nor is his glory or that of his God enhanced by their plotting assembly. He is deeply repulsed by their sinful attitudes because they broke out in massive murders and selfish pillaging. Israel's humility and wise realism is seen in his recognition that even his righteous soul would be corrupted by his close company with these two wicked sons. We do well to hate sin, even if it is in our own sons. God certainly hated sin even when it was imputed to His beloved Son.

Tuesday, May 13th - Genesis 49: 5-7

In v. 7 the curse of Israel falls upon his sinful sons. Yet, there is grace laced within this curse. As with Reuben's sin, so with that of Simeon and Levi we see that old sins still stain those who committed them and who allowed time to be the inadequate fig-leaf to cover but not to cleanse their sin. Yet also as with Reuben, the father here demotes but does not disown his sinful sons. He curses their anger and holds himself apart from their

sin, yet he keeps them as his sons and retains them as members of the covenant people of Israel. Godly discipline may seem like hatred, but it is really an administration of holy, healing love.

Wednesday, May 14th - Genesis 49: 5-7

The temporal punishment Simeon and Levi would receive would be that their descendants would be scattered throughout the Promised Land. For the tribe of Simeon, this meant their dwelling in the southern extremity of Israel's territory, on poor land and away from contact with all tribes but Judah. There was grace in that one connection, however, as Messiah would arise from the tribe of Judah (vv.10ff). As for Levi's descendants, they would have no territory but would be priests scattered throughout Israel. They would have cities given to them from all of the other tribes, and their cities would be cities of refuge for the manslayer (Num. 35:2ff). They would not have land as their inheritance, but rather the Lord would be their inheritance (Josh. 13:33), and they would serve in the temple and assist the priests and share in the sacrificial services (Josh 13:14). Thus would the sinful slaughtering of the father be transformed into sanctifying substitutionary slaughter and the provision of merciful refuge through the ministry of the sons. Therefore with Levi especially, we have demonstrated on a vast scale over centuries of time that where sin increases, grace abounds all the more.

Thursday, May 15th - Genesis 49: 5-7

In these verses, God through Israel is cursing sinful anger, not righteous anger. We find examples of sinful anger in Moses when he struck the rock and cursed the people of Israel at Meribah (Num. 20:2-13), in Peter when he struck with his sword the ear of the high priest's slave (Jn. 18:10,11), in those who are angry toward their brothers without reason (Mt. 5:22), and in those who manifest the deeds of the flesh (Gal. 5:20ff). Righteous anger is displayed by Phinehas, Aaron's grandson, who killed the Israelite and the Midianite woman who had brought God's curse upon Israel (Num 25:1-9), and by Jesus cleansing the temple (Jn. 2:13-17). The difference is that self-willed passion is sin to be cursed while holy zeal is a virtue to be blessed. May we have only the latter and never the former.

Friday, May 16th - Genesis 49: 8-12

The chief blessing naturally belonged to the first-born Reuben. He lost that blessing due to his sin. But the blessings of God do not cease to exist when men sinfully forfeit them. When the divine blessing is removed from one, it is conferred upon another. The chief blessing forfeited by Reuben was therefore given to Judah. Upon this fourth son of Jacob and upon his tribe this blessing would remain until the Lion of Judah would come to reign over and, as the Lamb of God, to die for His people. Those of us who are Gentiles have similarly been blessed by the Jews' refusal to accept their Messiah. But, as the Apostle Paul writes, if their rejection be the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead? (Rom. 11:15).

Saturday, May 17th - Genesis 49: 8

The first component of this manifold blessing upon Judah is his being praised by his brothers. This fourth son of Jacob's through Leah was given a name that means praise (Gen. 29:35). He would live up to his name, not due to his natural endowments or attainments, but due to the gracious blessing of God. Through his tribe would come Jesus, great Judah's greater Son, whom all men, angels, and creatures will praise forever.

Sunday, May 18th - Genesis 49: 8

In addition to praise from his brothers, Judah would attain victory over his enemies. This prophecy informs us that Judah would have enemies. Although Judah would be made praiseworthy, due ultimately to the coming of Messiah from the royal tribe of Judah, many would rise up in opposition to this patriarch and his tribe. Yet, Judah would prevail over them all, whether they would be enemies from Egypt, Midian, Moab, Philistia, Assyria, Babylon, or enemies from the rebellious ten northern tribes. Judah would stand triumphant over all, until the coming of the Lion of Judah to reign so triumphantly that all of His enemies would cry for the rocks of the mountains to fall on them and hide them from His wrath (Rev. 6:12-17). We who are united by faith to the Lion of Judah are made more than conquerors in Him (Rom. 8:35-39).

Monday, May 19th - Genesis: 49: 8

Judah would also receive fraternal homage. Those who would follow the lead of this tribe would prosper and bow gratefully to Judah's effective leadership. We find this taking place in the first chapter of Judges, where Judah leads the continued conquest of the Promised Land. We find this when Israel submitted to King David of Judah. We find it ultimately when men praise and give homage to Jesus, who was descended from the tribe of Judah (Mt. 1:1-17). All true spiritual sons of Jacob gratefully give homage to the shadow and the substance of the Christ who saves them.

Tuesday, May 20th - Genesis 49: 9

Israel foretells that Judah and his descendants would have the regal and prevailing power of a lion. As a lion that perceives, pursues, and kills its prey, and feeds satisfyingly upon it in the undisturbed security of its own power, so the kings of Judah would prevail in the exercise of their sovereign authority so long as they remained faithful to the Lord. The King of kings from the tribe of Judah similarly sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high when He had prevailingly accomplished the salvation of His people (Heb. 1:3).

Wednesday, May 21st - Genesis 49: 10

The prophecy of Israel in this verse sharpens its focus so that the blessings and powers of the tribe of Judah are seen to be concentrated in the Lion of Judah. To our surprise and wonder we learn that the image of the kingly and conquering lion transforms into the image of a human king who rules perpetually. The name given to this king is Shiloh, a Messianic title meaning, to whom it belongs, thus indicating that Christ is the only rightful and perpetual King of His people. The term Shiloh is also closely related to the Hebrew word, Shalom, meaning peace. Hence, the Lion of the tribe of Judah is God incarnate, the Son of God who came as Jesus, the Lamb of God, to take away the sin of His people. Read Revelation 5:5,6 to see this same transformation from lion to lamb. It

is by the Lamb of God slain for our sins that the Lion of Judah accomplishes our deliverance from the dominion of sin and establishes peace between God and all those redeemed by this Lamb. Those so redeemed render grateful and perpetual obedience to their redeeming Lord.

Thursday, May 22nd - Genesis 49: 11, 12

Israel's prophecy proceeds from the person of Shiloh to the results of His saving work and sovereign rule. The Messiah is shown to be the source of abundant milk and wine. All of the nourishing and life-sustaining necessities are contained in the image of milk. Christ is the source of our daily bread that sustains our bodies, and He is the source of all that sustains our souls, such as propitiation, justification, and sanctification. All of the joy-inspiring blessings are contained in the image of wine, such as the loving adoption of God and our rich and glorious inheritance in heaven. Both of these images are shown to flow from Christ in abundance. Nor is the wine considered a mere luxury, for it is mentioned first and is shown to be abundantly enjoyed by the Messiah and dispensed by Him. It was for the joy set before Him that Christ endured the agonies of the cross (Heb. 12:2). This joy of the Lord has been, is now, and always will be the sustaining strength of His people (Neh. 8:10).

Friday, May 23rd - Genesis 49: 13-21

None of the six sons that are mentioned in vv.13-21 were as sinfully notorious as were Reuben, Simeon, and Levi, nor were any of them as noble as Judah. Between the greatest and least in the kingdom of God is the majority of those redeemed by Christ who have their share and place among the covenant people. These sons have different mothers but the same father, Israel. They were listed in Gen. 30 in order of their birth. However, that order is changed here in Gen. 49. Many who are naturally first will be last in the kingdom of God's grace. We can also trace out the developing fortunes of these sons when we compare what is foretold of them here by Israel with what Moses declares concerning them in Deut. 33. The Church of God is a rich and varied tapestry of diverse characters forged into a loving and beautiful unity by the saving grace of the Lord.

Saturday, May 24th - Genesis 49: 13

Zebulun was the sixth son born to Leah after she had borne Issachar. Here Zebulun is listed ahead of his older brother. His name means honor, as his mother had declared...now my husband will honor me, because I have borne him six sons. (Gen. 30:20). The unloved wife of Jacob produced the patriarch's worst sons (Reuben, Simeon, and Levi) as well as his son destined for highest greatness (Judah), and two sons between these extremes. All that is prophesied of Zebulun is his place of dwelling. His tribe would be settled with part of its western border on the Mediterranean Sea. In Josh. 19:11 (KJV) we learn that the portion of land assigned to Zebulun by lot did reach to the sea. Thus we have Israel's prophecy and its fulfillment in Joshua's day perfectly fitting. Through this prophecy, inspired by the Lord and confirmed by the Lord's determination of the lot, the descendants of Zebulun would have no doubt that the Lord had assigned them their territory, small in land area though it was (see a Bible map of the tribes' territories). Whenever the Lord assigns our portion, we can say with David, Thou dost

support my lot. The lines have fallen to me in pleasant places; indeed, my heritage is beautiful to me. (Ps. 16:5,6).

Sunday, May 25th - Genesis 49: 14, 15

Issachar, Leah's fifth son, is likened to a firm or strong donkey, which was a beast of burden. Yet, it is his restful contentment that precedes his labors, and he is pictured as working productively from the refreshing foundation of that rest. The reference to his becoming a slave engaged in forced labor has led some to conclude the allusion to rest and pleasantness in these verses as being indicative of the tendency to sensuality and indolence among the members of this tribe. Yet, in Deut. 33:18,19, the tribe of Issachar is pictured as being diligent in worship and productive at work. Tola, a man of Issachar, saved Israel from her oppressing enemies and judged the covenant nation for 23 years (Jud. 10:1,2). The best and most fruitful service is rendered from one's vital experience of the peace of the Lord's grace and the rest that all who are burdened find in Christ (Mt. 11:28-30; Heb. 4:11).

Monday, May 26th - Genesis 49: 16-21

These verses deal with four of Jacob's sons born to him by the maids of his wives, Leah and Rachel. To Rachel's maid, Bilhah, were born Dan and Naphtali, while to Leah's maid, Zilpah, were born Gad and Asher. Bilhah had both of her sons before Zilpah had hers. Yet in this listing they are set in order of Bilhah's first-born, then Zilpah's two sons in order of their birth, and finally Bilhah's second-born son. The significance of this re-arranged order may not be known by anyone but the Lord until the final day when we know even as we are known. What we can see and know now is that our Lord's redeeming grace is such that it incorporates sinners and the children resulting from sinful actions into His covenant people. Such is the power of the Lord's gracious love and just accomplishment of redemption that no one is too tainted by original or actual sin to be beyond the reach of salvation and adoption into the family of God.

May 2008

Tuesday, May 27th – Genesis 49: 16, 17

Verses 16, 17 speak of Dan and prophecy that his tribe will be judges among the people of Israel. The most notable judge from Dan's tribe was Samson (Jud. 13:1-5,24). In the arrangement of the tribes of Israel when they camped, Dan is the standard-bearing leader of the three north-side tribes (Num. 2:25-31). We should note the enabling grace and exalting power of God when we see how the descendants of Dan, the son of a concubine, participate in the covenant nation of Israel not only as full members but also as leaders of God's covenant people. Likewise for us, the Lord's grace incorporates us fully into the church and by the gifts and calling of His Holy Spirit we serve in ways far beyond our natural endowments or merits.

Wednesday, May 28th - Genesis 49: 16, 17

The tribe of Dan is likened to a serpent in v.17. This could be a note of censure for a tendency toward cowardly cunning in that tribe. However, as godly judges are guided by godly wisdom, we should probably understand this analogy in a more positive way, as when our Lord tells His disciples to be wise as serpents but harmless as doves (Mt. 10:16). By its shrewd ways, a small snake can overthrow a large horse and its rider. By their dependence upon the truth of God, the Danites would have great effectiveness against the enemies of Israel. We also can have such effectiveness if we ask our God for wisdom and use it for His glory (Jas. 1:5).

Thursday, May 29th - Genesis 49: 18

At this point Jacob inserts in his prophetic blessing of his sons an exclamation of his patient dependence upon the Lord for his own salvation. The placement of this exclamation at this point has puzzled many. To some, it appears more fitting that it should have been put after the reference to Shiloh (vv.10-12). Yet, it makes sense that immediately after the prophetic words regarding the judging and wisdom of the tribe of Dan there should be a clear expression of the patriarch's waiting for the salvation of the Lord. Even the godly wisdom and judgment of the faithful are not the foundation but rather the imperfect fruits of salvation that adorn and bless the Church in this life. Therefore, this verse makes a distinction between the instrumental lamps of salvation and the perfect and effective light of salvation. We may edifyingly use the former but we can only rightly depend fully upon the latter.

Friday, May 30th - Genesis 49: 18

It may seem curious that the aged Jacob, who is about to die, should speak of his patiently waiting for salvation of the Lord. However, although he has clear assurance that he is about to appear personally in the nearer presence of the Lord and of the souls of just men made perfect, yet he knows and he testifies that the perfect consummation of divine salvation does not come until the day of final judgment when the dead are raised and the redeemed receive their spiritual bodies and reign in glory with Christ forever. Until that day, even the souls of those in heaven with the Lord must wait for the full salvation of the Lord (Rom. 8:22-25; Rev. 6:9-11).

Saturday, May 31st - Genesis 49: 19

Gad is foreseen to be a tribe vulnerable to the raids of Israel's enemies. As a consequence, the men of Gad would be required to raid in return those who would raid them so that the Gadites could recover what the raiders had stolen from them. This brief prophecy probably refers to the exposed position Gad would have, along with the tribe of Reuben and the half-tribe of Manasseh, east of the Jordan in and after the days of Joshua (Josh. 1:12-15). The men of Gad desired that territory because it appeared to them to be more suitable for their livestock than any of the land within Canaan proper (Num. 32). Yet, here they are forewarned of the thorns that would surround the roses upon which alone they focused. Whenever we think that we can choose more wisely than our God, we shall live to regret the payment of a bitter price for our folly.

Sunday, June 1st - Genesis 49: 20

The name, Asher, means bliss and felicity. Bountiful food of a quality fit for kings is here promised to this tribe. We cannot find in Scripture any clear reference to the fulfillment of this prophecy, but the silence of God's Word on this point does not indicate any failure of this gracious promise. Whereas Gad would suffer raids (v.19), Asher is promised comfortable living. Our Lord teaches us all to ask Him for our daily bread (Mt. 6:11), but he reserves the sovereign right to give earthly comfort and a larger portion of worldly provision to one of His children, while ordaining that another should feed on adversity. All of our Lord's giving is gracious and for our good. If we hunger and thirst for righteousness, we shall be satisfied whether we abound or are abased (Mt. 5:6; Phil. 4:11-13).

Monday, June 2nd - Genesis 49: 21

Of Naphtali Jacob prophesies in short but sweet and beautiful words. This tribe is likened to a doe that has not been slain but rather released by hunters. The reason for this release is found not in the mercy or sentimentality of the hunters, but rather in their being persuaded by the sweetly reasonable words that the members of this tribe would characteristically speak. Barak, who served the judge Deborah, was of this tribe. He defeated Sisera with his 900 iron chariots using only foot soldiers, all because he believed the beautiful words of the Lord (Jud. 4:6,7,14,15). We can neither hear nor speak more beautiful nor powerfully prevailing words than those of our Lord.

Tuesday, June 3rd – Genesis 49: 22-27

As the Lord always saves His best wine for last, so Jacob, being inspired by God here at the time of his death, reserves the best wine of his prophetic blessing for his two favorite sons. Joseph and Benjamin, though they come last in their reception of blessing from their father, are placed first in terms of the plentiful and precious quality of their blessing. These two sons were the fruit of the purest loving intention of Jacob, as they were borne to him by Rachel, the only wife Jacob really wanted and the one he loved most. Although these two sons were the ones specifically loved by their father, they were afflicted by their brothers and by men of the world. Yet, the father's love will not fail to find its true mark in the end. So, too, we who are the beloved of God in Christ, though we face tribulation in the world and opposition from false and less faithful brethren, will

find our Father's glorious blessing to be far beyond all comparison with our sufferings (Rom. 8:18).

Wednesday, June 4th - Genesis 49: 22

Joseph is declared to be abundantly fruitful. As a tree growing to great height, he is said to overcome the limiting nature of walls that would enclose him, towering above them with branches that extend above and beyond them. The towering height of the tree and its great luxuriance of foliage result from the spring of water that feeds it. This verse is both descriptive of the person of Joseph and is also prophetic with respect to the two tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh that would issue from him. The walls of his brothers' jealousy and hatred, as well as the many walls of Joseph's afflictions in Egypt threatened to enclose and imprison him in dejection and despair. Yet, he overcame all of these obstacles, towering above them and triumphing over them. The key to his exalted standing was his drawing his encouraging hope and enabling power from the Lord by faith. We, too, become firmly planted and fruitful ones who overcome all things arrayed against us when we by faith trust in and rely upon the Lord in all circumstances (Ps. 1:1-3).

Thursday, June 5th - Genesis 49: 23

In v.22 the towering and triumphant character of Joseph's person is noted. Here in v.23 Jacob speaks of the persecution he suffered as well as the preservation he experienced in his tribulations. His brothers, as well as Potiphar's wife and Potiphar himself, are likened to archers who aimed to destroy him. They persecuted him precisely because of his strong faith in the Lord, and we are warned in Scripture that all who desire to live the sort of godly life he lived will also be persecuted (2 Tim. 3:12). Persecutions and afflictions are not a sign of one's unrighteousness and the curse of God, as Job's friends wrongly supposed, but such persecutions indicate wicked arrows shot at the righteous and, paradoxically, the blessing of God upon His afflicted people (Job 2:3; Mt. 5:10-12). Joseph's persecutions were the dung that fertilized his growth in grace and godliness.

Friday, June 6th - Genesis 49: 23, 24

In v.23, Joseph's persecutions are represented in the image of attacking archers. In v.24, we are told of Joseph's preservation from all evil amid the hail of deadly missiles fired at him by his brothers and by his enemies in Egypt. The first part of v.24 shows Joseph standing firm as he towers above his persecutors. He was circumstantially wounded by their persecutions, but he avoided the fatal wounds that would have resulted not from their shots but rather from his own sins. Although the archers shot at him with the aim of killing him, their arrows merely harassed him. Such harassment served only to strengthen Joseph in his faith in the Lord. Hence, his bow was drawn by his strong arms, and was ready not feebly to annoy, but effectively to ward off all that came against him to destroy him. We, too, are by God's grace enabled to stand strong in the Lord (Eph. 6:10ff).

Saturday, June 7th - Genesis 49: 23, 24

The source of Joseph's enduring power is identified in the second half of v.24. He was strong in the Lord and in the strength of Almighty God. Hence, we learn that Joseph endured and triumphed over his deadly trials not by his own merit or might, but rather by the enabling and prevailing power of the Lord. We also note that Joseph's trust in the Lord's almighty power did not lead him to be a man of sluggish and passively presumptuous disposition. Rather, he is pictured as a strong, bold, and prevailing warrior. Our trust in our Lord's strength inclines and enables us to grow strong as we work out our salvation by the enabling grace and power of the Lord who works in and through us (Phil. 2:12,13).

Sunday, June 8th - Genesis 49: 24

This verse not only identifies the sources of Joseph's enduring power, it also expresses three prominent and significant things about the Almighty God in whom Joseph trusted and by whom he triumphed over all of his foes. The first thing said of the Lord is that He is the Mighty One of Jacob. The sinful supplanter, Jacob, was empowered by God's grace to prevail with God through his faithful wrestling with the Lord (Gen. 32:24-30). Similarly, Joseph was empowered to prevail over all things because he, too, cleaved by faith to the Lord and would not let the Lord go until He blessed him. Such precious faith is ours, too.

Monday, June 9th - Genesis 49: 24

The second designation Jacob uses for the God who empowered him and his son Joseph is the Shepherd. Jacob had previously referred to the Lord as the One who had been his Shepherd all of his life (Gen. 48:15). Now the patriarch declares God to be the supreme Shepherd who protects and provides for His people in a way that will ever keep them from all evil (Gen. 48:16). Because of his trust in and obedience to the ultimate Shepherd, Joseph was made to be an instrumental shepherd to his family. He was not only a survivor by his faith in the Good Shepherd, but he became a saving shepherd to his father and brothers through that faith. May we become such instruments of protection and provision to others as a consequence of our faithful union with Christ, our Good Shepherd.

Tuesday, June 10th - Genesis 49: 24

The third designation Jacob uses to describe the Lord in His relation to Joseph is the Stone of Israel. This image brings to our attention the solid and immovable foundation that the Lord is to His people. Those who build their lives upon this foundation become themselves immovable, despite the storms (Lk. 6:47-49) or even the demons of hell (Mt. 16:16-18) that come against them.

Wednesday, June 11th – Genesis 49: 25, 26

In these verses, Jacob opens the abundant fountain of the infinite and eternal blessing of God. The divine blessings that Joseph already possessed and that Jacob alluded to in vv.22-24, as great as they were, are shown to be but tokens of the fullness of divine blessings that here are conveyed to Joseph. Such tokens of blessing are ours in Christ now through the ministry of His Holy Spirit who has been given to us as the pledge of the inconceivable fullness of every spiritual blessing that we have in heaven (Eph. 1:3,13,14).

Thursday, June 12th - Genesis 49: 25

In this verse, the infinite and eternal God is shown to be the source of Joseph's blessing. The help Joseph had received and would hereafter receive from the Lord is without limit. The power of God is almighty; the blessings He showers upon His people are as high as heaven, as deep as the oceans, and as warm and intimately satisfying as the nourishing love of one's mother. In all of the blessings of creation, whether those blessings issue from the sublime heights or the inscrutable depths or the tenderly familiar, they come to us from the sovereign and saving hand of the Lord. We believers are in Christ more secure and richly blessed than we can perceive, think, or imagine.

Friday, June 13th - Genesis 49: 25

If God is for us, everything in creation is allied with us and orchestrated by the hand of the Lord for our blessing. The vast expanse of the universe, the remote and hidden depths of the seas, and the nurture of human companionship and love, are all by our God made to work together for our good (Rom. 8:28).

Saturday, June 14th - Genesis 49: 25, 26

In v.25, the limitless magnitude of the blessings of God is set before us. In v.26, the progressive application of those infinite and eternal divine blessings is acknowledged. The blessings of Jacob upon Joseph are declared to be greater than the blessings that Isaac had conveyed to Jacob, or than Abraham had conveyed to Isaac. This is so because in the divine economy of the accomplishment and application of redemption, the closer in time the people of God lived to the coming of Christ, the clearer and more complete was the Scriptural record of the person and work of the Savior. How greatly blessed are we who have, in addition to the various portions of divine revelation contained in the Old Testament, the final and full revelation of God is His Son (Heb. 1:1-4).

Sunday, June 15th - Genesis 49: 26

The blessings of God invoked here upon Joseph and his descendants are not only infinite in their extent, they are also eternal in their duration. They exceed the height of the earth's summits and they endure beyond the time of the seemingly everlasting majesty of earth's mountains. Heaven and earth will pass away, but not one of the infinite and eternal blessings of the Lord will so much as fade in the slightest degree.

Monday, June 16th - Genesis 49: 26

The vast, precious, abundant and eternal blessings of God are not scattered to the winds but are concentrated as a crown and placed with deliberate divine intention upon the head of Joseph. It is this crown so strongly grasped by Joseph's exemplary faith and so sovereignly bestowed by the Lord's grace that distinguishes Joseph from his brothers and exalts him above them. They, too, were crowned with saving divine grace, but the trials of Joseph's humiliation, the glory of his exaltation, and the graciousness of his forgiving his brothers' heinous sins against him and his mercifully saving them—all serve to manifest the crown of salvation most clearly and fully set upon Joseph. His crown of salvation betokens and foreshadows the helmet of salvation that not only protects but also adorns the heads of all who are in Christ.

Tuesday, June 17th - Genesis 49: 27

Benjamin, the youngest son of Jacob and the only full brother of Joseph, receives his prophetic blessing in this verse. As Judah was likened to a lion, Issachar to a donkey, and Naphtali to a doe, so here Benjamin is likened to a wolf. In particular, he is likened to a hungry wolf, whose appetite leads him to succeed in securing the prey that will feed him. This prey is, however, divided between Benjamin and another. In the future development of the nation of Israel it becomes evident that Jacob here is prophesying Benjamin's faithfulness to Judah when the ten northern tribes rebelled against the legitimate king of Judah. Therefore, Benjamin's hunger and thirst for righteousness led to the satisfaction of that tribe's sharing the blessings of God's approbation upon the kings and kingdom that pointed to Christ, the King of kings.

Wednesday, June 18th - Genesis 49: 27

Benjamin was close to his brother, Joseph, who not only saved him with the rest of his brothers, but who also lavished preferential treatment upon him. In later years, the tribe of Benjamin remained faithful to Judah, the tribe from whom Messiah would come. Such faithfulness to these shadows of salvation, and to the substance of salvation to whom they point, is the key to Benjamin's victories and prosperity. Scripture records for us several wise and victorious sons of Benjamin: Ehud the judge (Jud. 3:15); Saul the king—at least for a time (1 Sam. 9:1,2); Esther and Mordecai (Esther 2:5-7); and Paul the apostle (Phil 3:4,5). All who follow the faithfulness of Benjamin will devour the prey and divide the spoil.

Thursday, June 19th - Genesis: 49: 28

The sinner Jacob had lived to be transformed by the Lord into the saint Israel. As a man possessing saving faith, Israel lived to receive the blessings of the living God and to pass them on to his sons. The blessing of the numerical growth of the families of his sons is anticipated in this verse by the reference to the tribes of Israel. They were to grow not only as a numerically great people but also as a greatly blessed people. The form of much of what Jacob said to his sons in this chapter is prophecy. Yet this verse emphasizes the point that such prophetic revelation from God through Israel would serve to bless the people of Israel. As they experienced the fulfillment of these prophetic words, their trust and confidence in the Lord as well as their gratitude to the Lord would grow. They would increasingly perceive the Lord's grace, love, wisdom, and justice as He portioned out His blessing to each son and each tribe according to what would be appropriate for their highest good. Our God continues to pour His blessing upon us according to the measure of His sovereign grace, infallible wisdom, and holy love.

Friday, June 20th - Genesis 49: 29-32

In these verses we have the account of Jacob charging his sons with respect to how they were to deal with his mortal remains after his death. As Jacob had lived in faith, so he now dies in faith (Heb. 11:13). Therefore we may find instruction and comfort from the Lord as we study how this faithful man glorified God in his dying as he had done in his living. We, too, are called and equipped to live and die as more than conquerors in Christ to the glory of our saving God.

Saturday, June 21st - Genesis 49: 29

Behold how a faithful man views his own death. Jacob does not lament and cry out that he was leaving his sons and being torn from the delights of life in this world and from the delicacies of Egypt. He does not even say that he was dying, as he had done in Gen. 48:21. Instead, he testifies to his faith in the promises and power of his redeeming and resurrecting God when he declares that he was about to be gathered to his people. Death may separate us from those who remain living in this world, but at the same time it reunites us with those of the family of faith who have died before us. For the Christian, to die is great gain (Phil. 1:21).

Sunday, June 22nd - Genesis 49: 29

Jacob anticipates his death as a grand reunion with his people. Death for him, while it was the last enemy, was something that would not separate him from the love of God in Christ (Rom. 8:38,39). Therefore, he rightly apprehended that he would be, at the moment of his death, not thrust into a dark, strange, and terrifying condition, but rather be gathered by the God whom he had by faith known, loved, and served throughout his life and gathered to a people he regarded as his own. When the believer dies, he leaves the world of strangers, shadows, and suffering to enter into the world of his true, loving family and to dwell with them in eternal light, love, and delight. For the Christian, to die is great gain (Phil. 1:21).

Monday, June 23rd - Genesis 49: 29

Who are those to whom Jacob was gathered at his death? The patriarch refers to them as my people. We might naturally take this to refer to his natural relatives who had predeceased him, and this would be true but not exhaustively so. The people to whom Jacob refers are all who during their lives had shared with him like precious faith in the Lord. Blood may be thicker than water, but spirit is thicker than both.

Tuesday, June 24th - Genesis 49: 29

Jacob anticipates not a mere reunion with those believers he had known in his life. Rather, he rejoices in the thought of his being gathered together with all who had lived and died in faith. He would have fellowship with his father, Isaac, his mother, Rebekah, his wives, Rachel and Leah, his grandparents, Abraham and Sarah—all in the incredible wonder of their souls and relationships being made perfect (Heb. 12:23). He would also have fellowship with Noah, Seth, Adam and Eve, and many others whom he had heard of only by oral tradition or never heard of at all, and there would be only a perfect, loving, and holy familiarity between Jacob and all of those made to be his people by the saving grace and perfecting power of God. For the Christian, to die is no death but is a passing into eternal life (Jn. 5:24), and into the great gain and glorious joy of his true home (Jn. 14:1-3) and of his true family (Jn. 17:20-26).

Wednesday, June 25th - Genesis 49: 29-32

After revealing to his sons (and to us) the view his faith gave to him of his death, Jacob gives instructions for the burial of his mortal remains. The faithful patriarch's joyful anticipation of his glorious translation from this world does not make him heedless

of the respect he should have for the body that his God had made and for the world in which his God had promised to accomplish redemption for His people through the incarnation, perfect life, and redeeming death of Christ. Accordingly, Jacob charges his sons to bury him with the mortal remains of his faithful fathers in the Promised Land that betokened the eternal celestial city. As his soul would soon be gathered to his people, so he would have his body to be committed to the earth in proximity to the mortal remains of his fathers in the sure and certain hope of their resurrection together on the final day. Faith prompts us to regard the unseen, eternal realities above all things (2 Cor. 4:16-18), but it also prompts us to have due respect for our bodies which our God will raise from the dead (Jn. 5:24-29; Rom. 8:11).

Thursday, June 26th - Genesis 49: 33

The believer is immortal until his work on earth is finished. Thus, Jesus declared at His death: It is finished (Jn. 19:30), as did His Apostle Paul (2 Tim. 4:7). Jacob was not killed by Esau's murderous hatred, nor by the rigors of his flight from Esau, nor from the famine in Canaan. Nothing killed him, but he drew up his feet upon which he had limped after his having wrestled with God, and he breathed his last breath of air in this world of shadows and suffering, and thereafter experienced the fruition of his faithful expectation to be gathered to his people. And with his death he fulfilled his final prophecy that pertained to his own great and glorious gain that he possessed as he passed through the portal of death and entered life eternal and unspeakably glorious and joyful. For the Christian, the experience of death will result in similar great and eternal gain (Phil. 1:21).

June 2008

Friday, June 27th – Genesis 49: 33

Jacob died but he spent his last living energies looking ahead to the fullness of salvation (Gen. 49:18). He saw and took a vital interest in the future affairs not only of his own personal salvation but also of the kingdom of God at large. His vision and vital interest extended to the affairs of the Church on earth, as he blessed his sons and their descendants, and to the affairs of the Church in heaven, as he anticipated being gathered to his people already dwelling in the nearer presence of the Lord. The true perspective of the believer's life is vastly expansive. There is far more to his life and vital interests than can be contained and wrought out within the narrow confines of the few years of his pilgrimage in this cursed world.

Saturday, June 28th - Genesis 50: 1

In the closing verses of chapter 49, Scripture gives us a consideration of Jacob's death from the perspective of the dying patriarch. In the opening verses of chapter 50, the Word of God gives to us a view of Jacob's death from the perspective of his living sons. For Jacob, his death was a matter of his great gain; for his sons, it was a matter of their great grief. Yet, they do not grieve as those who have no hope. Through the death and resurrection of the Savior, death, for His people, is not a permanent detaching of the dead from the living, but has been reduced to a mere delaying of their joyous reunion forever in glory.

Sunday, June 29th - Genesis 50: 1

Although all of Jacob's sons mourned his death, it was Joseph who most deeply wept for his departed father. Joseph had been specially loved by his father (Gen. 37:3), and he, in return, had the deepest filial love for his father. The tears of Joseph were most precious tokens of his love, as were the tears of the penitent woman who washed the feet of Jesus with her tears (Lk. 7:36-48). The pain of Jacob's separation from Joseph was deepened and sharpened for the son who had already tasted more than two decades of separation during his slavery and imprisonment in Egypt. But Joseph's tears were also tokens of his hope in and gratitude to the Lord who had given to him such a faithful father, who had bound them together in holy love, and who wisely and lovingly had gathered his father to a glorious reunion with his people in the Church triumphant. Although the Lord will wipe away such tears, it is due to His gracious, wise, holy, and loving dealings with His people that such tears well up to be wiped away at the right time.

Monday, June 30th - Genesis 50: 1

There is such a thing as godly sorrow. The Lord's redeeming grace and sanctifying operations in His people do not make them stoically indifferent to grief and mourning. It is precisely the saving work of our God in Christ that makes the water of our tears come from our otherwise stony hearts. Our reconciliation to and love for each other in Christ makes us deeply to delight in each other and deeply to sorrow when we are parted, even for brief periods. Jesus wept at Lazarus' tomb even though He knew that He would shortly thereafter call His beloved friend from death to life.

Tuesday, July 1st - Genesis 50: 1

In addition to Joseph weeping over his father, he also fell upon Jacob's face and kissed him. The kiss is a tactile token of love. Joseph spoke no words to Jacob because the soul of the patriarch had departed. But the physical remains of Jacob were still with his sons and were accordingly regarded by them with tender, loving respect. It is a Gnostic conception that the body is a despised cage imprisoning the soul. The Christian conception of the body regards it as the good work of the creating God as well as an essential aspect of our being. We should therefore show proper, loving respect for the bodies of the living and the dead.

Wednesday, July 2nd - Genesis 50: 1

That Joseph should be the son of Jacob leading in the demonstration of loving respect for his deceased father indicates to us that the special bond between the father and his most beloved son endured beyond and was stronger than death. As Jacob had shown his loving honor for Joseph by giving him a royal coat (Gen. 37:3), so Joseph covered his father in his old age with choice provision in Egypt and at his death with tears and kisses that betokened the profoundly loving honor and respect in which this choicest son held his father who was a champion of faith.

Thursday, July 3rd – Genesis 50: 2, 3

These verses inform us that Joseph had his father's body embalmed. The embalming of the dead was a technological development found only in Egypt at that time. It was part of the false religion of the Egyptians wherein elaborate provisions were made to direct and enable the dead kings and nobles to make their way to the world they believed existed beyond this one. Joseph did not accept Egypt's superstitious religion but rather made use of the technology of embalming to preserve his father's remains to facilitate his transporting them to the Promised Land in fulfillment of the promise he had made to Jacob to do so (Gen. 49:29-32). We should note in this an aspect of the wise foresight and loving ordaining of the Lord. Had Jacob died in any land outside of Canaan other than Egypt, his body could not have been embalmed and so rendered easily transportable without undergoing offensive decay. The wise and loving provision of our God encompasses great dispensations and small details.

Friday, July 4th - Genesis 50: 2, 3

What are we to make of the Egyptians weeping over the death of Jacob? Was their lamentation a duteous performance? Was it an excessive grief without hope? It seems in light of the high esteem in which the Egyptians held Joseph because of his wise and loving administrations by which he had saved their lives during the famine, that sincere gratitude for Joseph and his family and true sympathy for Joseph's loss prompted their weeping over Jacob's death. When people love and serve the Lord, they captivate others to follow the example of their appropriate and loving demonstrations of joys and sorrows.

Saturday, July 5th - Genesis 50: 4-6

The sorrowful passion that Joseph experienced issued from his godly love for his father. Yet Joseph did not allow this passion of sorrow for the dead to sweep him into

disregard of or presumption toward the living. Hence, Joseph does not simply depart from Egypt with his father's corpse, being swept by a supposed irresistible tide of anguish that justified anything he felt he should do. Even in his sorrow, it was not his feelings but rather his faith that served to direct Joseph's actions. Thus we find him not sobbing out demands that Pharaoh should let him return to Canaan, but rather he requests his leave from Egypt's king. Pharaoh was Joseph's superior, and Joseph was keenly attuned to the duty God's moral law laid upon him to honor his superiors. If we trust and follow the Lord in one area of our lives, our course will not lead us to offend God's law in any other area of our lives.

Sunday, July 6th - Genesis 50: 4-6

Part of the reason that Joseph could be guided by godly principle rather than by his passions was that he wisely waited until the 70-day period of mourning was past before he spoke to Pharaoh. Hot tears and cool thinking do not go well together. Time may not heal all wounds but all wounds do require time to heal. When our hearts are sore with grief we are not in the best position to bear the full load of our responsibilities. Accordingly, Joseph waits until he is sufficiently healed from his grief before he endeavors rightly to fulfill the promise he had made to his father to take his mortal remains back to Canaan. The happy results vindicate the wisdom of Joseph having waited to make his case to Pharaoh.

Monday, July 7th - Genesis 50: 4-6

Although Pharaoh had exalted Joseph to be ruler over all in Egypt except over Pharaoh himself, the son of Jacob demonstrates his humility in the way he approaches the king of Egypt. Joseph does not directly intrude upon Pharaoh but communicates with him through the members of his household. In this way, the issue of Joseph's request could be considered by Pharaoh without the personal pressure of Joseph's presence. It is characteristic of the spiritually mature soul that he makes no pressing demands upon his God or his superiors under God, but rather that he presents humble requests, trusting in the wisdom, love, and power of God to give him what he asks if it should serve for the Lord's glory and man's good.

Tuesday, July 8th – Genesis 50: 5

Joseph makes clear in this verse the reason upon which he bases his request to Pharaoh. He does not mention personal desire, but tells how his request is based upon his sense of loving duty to his father. Accordingly, Joseph indicates that his request in no way indicates disregard for Pharaoh. When Joseph pledges that he would return after burying his father, and resume his responsible ruling over Egypt, he makes clear that he is committed to his fulfilling the promise he had made to Jacob without forsaking the responsibilities that were his under Pharaoh. We are called by our heavenly Father to love and serve Him without failing to love, respect, and serve others.

Wednesday, July 9th - Genesis 50: 5, 6

Pharaoh answers Joseph in terms that were beyond what he had asked. We perceive this when we note that while the king of Egypt grants permission for Joseph to bury his father in Canaan, he says nothing about Joseph being obliged to return to Egypt.

Ultimately, this open allowance resulted from Joseph's trust not in Pharaoh's generosity but in God's grace. If we would trust our God more, and treat others—even those who do not know Him—with more respectful consideration, we should not be surprised to find ourselves treated more considerately by men.

Thursday, July 10th - Genesis 50: 5, 6

These verses speak well to us of Joseph and of Pharaoh. They show us Joseph determined to keep his loving promise not by force of demand or rebellious deeds, but through a humble, respectful request and a determination to minimize the cost to Pharaoh. In return, Pharaoh readily grants more than Joseph had asked. This Pharaoh clearly had high regard for the practical wisdom and the loving grace that Joseph had demonstrated for the decades of his service in Egypt. Accordingly, he was willing to let this treasured Hebrew leave Egypt to bury his dead father, trusting in his word that he would return to resume his civic duties once this domestic duty was complete. Contrast the actions of this Pharaoh with a future king of Egypt who would not let Israel go in order that they might worship the living God, their heavenly Father (Ex. 5:1-4). Under both Pharaohs, the godly were enabled to perform their God-given service; but under the first, Egypt's king and people prospered, while under the second, the Egyptians and their king were plagued and punished. Let the godly know and the godless note that blessing abounds for the Church and the state only when both submit to and serve the Lord.

Friday, July 11th – Genesis 50: 7-9

These verses indicate to us the great respect shown to Jacob's memory by the Egyptians among whom he had lived the last 17 years of his life. In v.7 we learn that Pharaoh not only gave Joseph permission to go to Canaan and there to bury his father, but that Egypt's king sent the cream of his family's and nation's crop to accompany Joseph and to honor Jacob. Those who do not understand the compelling force of love may cynically think this great Egyptian contingency served to ensure that Joseph would return from Canaan. Yet there is not a hint that Pharaoh sent these noble representatives from any motive other than that of most sincere and loving regard for Joseph. As men can trust God, so they can trust the godly to keep their word. And as men who truly know God delight to honor and serve Him sacrificially, so men who are privileged to know such godly ones as Joseph delight to lavish costly tokens of respect upon them.

Saturday, July 12th - Genesis 50: 7-9

The households of Jacob's sons are united in the funeral procession of their father. They who had envied Joseph's special status in their household here are united with him and willingly follow his lead as they together pass through this valley of the shadow of death. Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his godly ones (Ps. 116:15), and those most perceptive of the bitter sweetness of this sobering providence find their sinful remnants most mortified and their heavenly-mindedness most quickened. We do well to live our lives by numbering our days in view of the certainty of our death and the death of all others we know (Ps.90:12).

Sunday, July 13th - Genesis 50: 7-9

Scripture notes that the children and livestock of Jacob's sons remained in Egypt. The little ones and living possessions were not retained in Egypt as hostages to ensure Joseph's return. Rather, it is clear from the wording of v.8 that Joseph and his brothers chose to leave in Egypt those of diminished capacity for grief and for the rigors of the journey. Their choice indicates their realistic and loving consideration for the weakness of their children, as well as their confidence in the caring disposition of their Egyptian neighbors, and, above all, their trust in and reliance upon the Lord for His superintending care. We do well to make all of our decisions and dispositions of our affairs on the basis of such trust in the Lord.

Monday, July 14th - Genesis 50: 10-14

These verses tell us not simply of the arrival of the funeral procession in Canaan, but especially of the great chorus of lamentation that arose as the funeral approached its completion. This great mourning that Joseph led for the perfect number of days revealed the mourners' consciousness of their great loss. It would have been a testimony of shameful ingratitude on the part of these sons of Jacob and the accompanying Egyptians had they failed to sense with profound grief the magnitude of their loss of a man who had wrestled with God and prevailed.

Tuesday, July 15th - Genesis 50: 11

The great and moving mourning of the Egyptians in particular was observed by and so deeply impressed the inhabitants of Canaan that they changed the name of the place of this mourning. No longer was it called Goren ha-atad (the threshing floor of Atad), indicating a processing place for satisfying food. This event caused the Canaanites to rename the place Abel-mizraim (mourning of the Egyptians), indicating a place of the shedding of bitter tears. Yet, there is no indication that the Canaanites themselves joined in this mourning. They had the privilege of Jacob dwelling in their midst for most of his life and apparently remained ignorant of his greatness. The godless have the righteous dwelling among them and are content to remain ignorant of such treasures until the day of glory reveals how costly their ignorance will forever be to them.

Wednesday, July 16th - Genesis 50: 12, 13

Jacob's sons fulfilled the charge he gave them to bury him in a very specific place in the Promised Land. They were led in their conveying their dead father to Canaan by Jacob's great and godly son, Joseph. Yet, this completed mission of loving devotion and filial giving of honor was but a foreshadowing of Jacob's greater son, the Lord Jesus, conveying him with glorified body and perfected immortal soul to the eternal glory of the heavenly Canaan. Not only would Jacob be so borne to heaven, but all true sons of Israel have the same sure hope.

Thursday, July 17th - Genesis 50: 14

This verse informs us that Joseph was true to his word. As he had led his brothers and the Egyptians out of Egypt and into Canaan for his father's burial, so when he fulfilled his promise to his deceased father he then returned to Egypt with the whole funeral company in fulfillment of his promise to Pharaoh. Yet Joseph and his brothers returned to Egypt with a strong and enduring cord binding them to Canaan as a result of

their father's burial there. And although they themselves never returned to Canaan, they clearly kept the hope of the Promised Land alive in their hearts and nurtured it in the hearts of their descendants so that centuries later, when God through Moses led the people of Israel out of Egypt, there was no doubt or debate over the land into which He would lead them. Nor do we doubt the final destination of our living hope in Christ (Jn. 14:1-3; 17:15-26; Rev. 22:1-5).

Friday, July 18th - Genesis 50: 15

After their father's death, the brothers of Joseph experienced a revival of their old fears. Their fears were based on things that were true and things that were false. What was true was that they had wronged Joseph and did deserve to be justly recompensed for their wrong. What was false was their supposition that their father, Jacob, had been shielding them from their just recompense. It was also false that Joseph had feigned the forgiveness he had rendered them. Far from Joseph holding a grudge against them, he regarded them graciously and lovingly because he himself had been graciously regarded by the Lord who interposes His mercy between what His children deserve and what He lovingly delivers to them. The more we apprehend the Lord's grace toward us, the less fearful and more secure, grateful and trusting we shall be. Our God is neither honored nor pleased when we nurture our guilty fears rather than feed upon His grace.

Saturday, July 19th - Genesis: 50: 16, 17

The wicked flee when no man pursues them (Prov. 28:1). Against the imagined grudge that Joseph bore toward his brothers, those brothers appear in these verses to fabricate a charge from their deceased father whom they imagined to have been their shield against Joseph. We believe the brothers of Joseph here to be resorting to desperate and unnecessary lying, because if Jacob had sensed the need for such reconciliation between Joseph and his brothers, the patriarch would certainly have addressed this matter when he was alive. Joseph wept when he discerned his brothers' needless fears and fabrication. The godly and gracious Joseph wept over their slowness to believe in the goodness of God and their sure reconciliation and security in Him and in the certainty of the Lord's love for them through Joseph. He surely wept also over the way their guilty fears prompted them to dishonor their dead father by their lie, as well as to distrust and dishonor their living, loving brother, and above all, their gracious heavenly Father. How greatly our guilty fears grieve our gracious God!

Sunday, July 20th - Genesis 50: 18

Though old fears fill Joseph's brothers, their actions are mixed with new faith. They come to Joseph, rather than seeking to hide from him. They apparently drop their lie in this verse, speaking and appealing directly to Joseph, whose weeping had stripped them of their fabrication as God's compassion for our first parents stripped them of their self-fashioned fig leaves. And as God clothed our first parents in animal skins, pointing to their cleansing via the shedding of the blood of a substitute sacrifice, so now Joseph's brothers have their fears and concocted devices removed and don themselves with humility and hope in the sure mercy of God and of God's servant, Joseph, whose servants they offer to be. Faith prompts those having it to humble themselves and seek mercy from God and the godly.

Monday, July 21st - Genesis 50: 18-20

Imperfect faith leads these brothers to the source of perfect mercy. Joseph in v.19 humbly admits that he is not the ultimate source of avenging justice or of saving grace. God alone is that source. Yet, those who seek his saving mercy, thinking that they will have to settle for it in the low terms of servitude, will find that they receive it in the highest terms of their being saved and greatly beloved children of God and reconciled together with all others who seek the Lord's mercy.

Tuesday, July 22nd - Genesis 50: 20

This is the key verse for Joseph's life and for our understanding his unwavering trust in the Lord and his unceasing mercy for men, including, not least, his own brothers. Such trust in and reliance upon the gracious and effective sovereignty of the Lord is the true and practical perspective in the light of which Joseph considered (and we should consider) all things. In all things, Joseph rightly reckoned that he was secure in the absolute sovereignty, the immeasurable love, the infallible wisdom, and the almighty power of his God, who rules over all things—even sinlessly overruling the sins of men—for the good of His people (Rom. 8:28). Such trust in such a God preserves the faithful from all harm and fills them with patient and gracious understanding of those who, however they may try to hurt them, serve only to help them.

Wednesday, July 23rd - Genesis 50: 20, 21

Those trusting in the salvation of the living and sovereign God bear no grudge against and pose no threat to any man. They who have been saved by the love of God in Christ become themselves instruments and conduits of saving mercy. Accordingly, Joseph vanquishes the guilty fears of his brothers and pledges to them that he would continue to be their servant, providing all necessary and pleasant things for them and for their children. We, who are spiritual children of Israel, still feed our souls on the light and comfort that Joseph provides for us through the Scriptural account of his life.

Thursday, July 24th - Genesis 50: 22-26

With these verses we come to the end of the Book of Genesis—the end of the Book of Beginnings. We are first told of the blessed life that Joseph and his brothers and their descendants enjoyed in Egypt. Peace and security was theirs, just as Joseph had promised to provide for them all. Joseph lived 110 years, meaning that he lived more than 50 years after the death of Jacob and always acted toward his brothers with loving grace and generous provision. The focus in these closing verses is definitely upon the covenant family who were in Egypt but not of Egypt. The touching note in v.23 of Joseph's great-grandsons being born on his knees indicates how he did not let his courtly duties take undue priority over his family life. In the words of John Calvin, Joseph: ...gradually took his leave of the treasures of the court...lest earthly dignity separate him from the kingdom of God....Joseph during 60 years, employed all his efforts to bring himself and his children into a state of submission, lest his earthly greatness should alienate them from the little flock of the Lord.

Friday, July 25th - Genesis 50: 24, 25

Here Joseph announces his death to his brothers, some of the older ones at this point likely having preceded him in death. Once again, Joseph makes clear to them that he had been but the instrument of God's care for them, while the Lord Himself was the source of that care. Joseph also testifies of sin and salvation to his brothers and to all who read God's Word. Of sin he testifies when he declares that death, the wages of sin, was upon him. But sin and death would not have the final word. Joseph twice declares that although he was about to die, God ever lived and would surely be faithful to His gracious covenant promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Specifically, Joseph reminds them of God's promise to return them to the Promised Land (Gen. 15: 12-21). Thus, at his death, Joseph does his greatest service to his brothers by fixing their faith upon the Lord who would and did care for them in Egypt, through times of their abounding and being abased, and who would and did care for them when He brought them out of Egypt, through their wilderness wanderings, and into the Promised Land. We can all trust such a gracious and giving God, who cares for us to the point of His Son's death and our eternal life.

Saturday, July 26th - Genesis 50: 25, 26

Joseph, as his father had done, also testified to the resurrecting power of God over death when he charged his brothers and their descendants to carry his bones out of Egypt and into the Promised Land. This they did under Moses (Ex. 13:19) and Joshua (Josh. 24:32). This charge Joseph gave by commendable faith (Heb. 11:22), as he looked through his death to the shadow of his eternal life as symbolized by Canaan, and to its substance of the heavenly city. Genesis ends on the somber note of this great man's death and placement in a coffin in Egypt. The world was changed greatly since God had made it very good and placed man in a garden with a promise of eternal life. This change came due to the first man's sin. But sin and death did not and will not have the last words. For the light that shines in this darkness is composed of the gracious promise and coming provision of God's salvation through Christ. Therefore, Joseph died in faith fixed upon this sovereign, graciously saving Lord, and he has served to show us how to live and die in faith, as we look for and cry out in certain expectation words we find at the end of the last book of the Bible: Come, Lord Jesus (Rev. 22:20). Amen.

July 2007

The Letter of James

Sunday, July 27th – James 1: 1

The Reformer, Martin Luther, was not fond of the letter of James. He called it an epistle of straw, largely because of the stress it lays upon the necessity of good works in the life of the believer. To Luther, such teaching muted the clarion cry of Scripture that sinners are justified before God by faith alone. Yet, James is not a letter contrary to but rather complementary with the great doctrine of justification by faith. In this letter we have teaching on the practical outworking of justification as the sweet, precious, and potent fruits of good works issue from the root of one's justifying faith. James is not alone in teaching his readers about the place of good works in the lives of believers. Paul, the apostolic champion of salvation by grace through faith alone (Eph. 2:4-9), hastens to add to his teaching that the justified are created in Christ for good works (Eph. 2:10), and that they are to work out their salvation through the Lord who works within them (Phil. 2:12,13). James urges us to do this very thing, working out the treasures of our new life in Christ, not in empty words, but in works of godly performance by the enabling of the Lord. We have been set free from the bondage of our sins in order that we might sweetly and satisfyingly serve for God's glory and for the good of others, including ourselves.

Monday, July 28th - James 1: 1

The author of this epistle gives his name in this opening verse. There are as many as four different men named James who appear elsewhere in the New Testament. One was the son of Zebedee and brother of John (Mt. 4:21). However, that James was put to death by Herod very soon after Christ's resurrection (Acts 12:2). Another James is referred to as the son of Alphaeus (Lk. 6:15), or James the younger (Mk. 15:40), and is not considered by most scholars to be the author of this letter. Nor is the James who was the father of Judas (not Iscariot) considered to be the author of this epistle (Lk. 6:16). That leaves James, the brother of Jesus (Mt. 13:55; Gal. 1:19), who became bishop of the church at Jerusalem (Acts 21:17,18). Yet, James does not mention his close natural relation to the Lord, nor his prominent position in the Jerusalem church. Rather, he commends himself to his readers as a bond-servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ. His highest position of most fruitful service was his lying low at the foot of the cross and of the sovereign throne of heaven. That is our highest position as well.

Tuesday, July 29th - James 1: 1

The author of this letter was the natural brother of Jesus. Yet he does not rely on this fact as a basis for his authority in writing this epistle. That is because one's natural endowments and attainments are of no spiritual advantage in true Christian service. James had demonstrated the uselessness of his natural relation to Jesus when he gave unbelieving advice to the Lord (Jn. 7:3-5), and also when he even regarded the Savior as being insane (Mk. 3:21). Only when he came to have a new nature and a spiritual relationship with Jesus was James of any usefulness to God and to man. By his trusting obedience to the will of the Lord, James became a brother to Jesus in the only sense that

matters (Mk. 3:31-35). May it be so that by such faith in Jesus, we also prove to be brethren of the Lord.

Wednesday, July 30th - James 1: 1

The author of this epistle designates himself a slave (dou/loj) of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ. For one to be a slave of a sinful man would be a degrading and miserable condition. Yet, no higher and more noble status, no position of greater authority and power or liberation and joy can be had than for one to be a willing and grateful slave to the sovereign God of heaven and earth and to His Son, the Lord Jesus, who is the loving and merciful Redeemer.

Thursday, July 31st - James 1: 1

This slave of the living God and loving Redeemer is writing by the prompting and inspired impulse of God's Holy Spirit. Therefore, the instructions he gives to his readers are not to be considered as the fallible opinions and suggestions of a finite and sinful man, but rather as the infallible, sanctifying, and comforting Word of the only wise God who is the Savior of His people and Lover of their souls. As a slave must follow his master's orders completely, so James is serving his divine Master with utter fidelity so that his communication to his readers is the very Word and transforming breath of God (2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:19-21).

Friday, August 1st - James 1: 1

James refers to the readers of this letter as the twelve tribes. He clearly is not intending by this designation the old Jewish nation, whose citizens remained largely hostile to Christ and His gospel. Rather, James is writing to the new, spiritual Israel, whose members had been circumcised in heart by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 2:28,29). This new society issued from and contained the true descendants of Israel and his sons. They may have seemed to the world and even to themselves to be scattered, disorganized, and vulnerable, but in reality they were the beloved family of God's covenant, organized and set in order by the directives and power of God, as the original twelve tribes were when they camped in an arrangement assigned to them by the Lord that served for their mutual fellowship and security (Num. 2). As the Church was so organized then, so it shall be progressively organized throughout time and perfectly organized in glory (Rev. 21:10-27).

Saturday, August 2nd - James 1: 1

The new covenant people of God consisted of converted Jews who had been scattered by such things as the command of the Roman Emperor Claudius that they should leave Rome (Acts 18:2), as well as the persecuting Gentiles, from whom believers, both Jewish and Gentile, fled (Acts 8:1). They were a people who were hated by the world, yet they were chosen, precious, and beloved by God, as demonstrated by His inspiring James to write them this precious and practical letter. Peter refers to such believers as those who reside in the world as scattered aliens, but who are chosen, enriched, and empowered by God (1 Pet. 1:1-9).

Sunday, August 3rd – James 1: 2, 3

After his brief but significant introduction, James proceeds to deliver the practical teaching that characterizes this letter. From what he says in v.2, we should understand that painful trials and afflictions weighed heavily upon the scattered believers to whom he was writing. James does not deny or downplay the painful reality of such trials. In fact, by the word he uses to describe their trials, we must suppose them to have formed painful burdens to his readers that tempted them to despair. The Greek word translated trials (*peirasmoi/j*) may also be translated temptations or enticements to sin. James counters this temptation to despair with a call for the pressured believers to consider their trials a cause for joy. Only by faith could such trials be regarded as harbingers of joy. While faith does not deny the fact of suffering, neither does it deny the facts of redemption that transform trials into instruments of sanctification. As the eyes of Elisha's servant were opened to see not only the Syrian soldiers threatening the prophet and his servant but also the hosts of the Lord (2 Ki. 6:15-17), so James urges his readers to see the superintending grace, love, and power of the Lord beyond their manifold trials.

Monday, August 4th - James 1: 2, 3

The call to consider is a call for one to think about the facts—all of the facts—of one's situation. In v.2 it is specifically a call to consider not only one's sometimes painful circumstances, but also the wisdom, grace, and power of the Lord, who causes all things to work together for the good of His people (Rom. 8:28). By faith we can move from a consideration of the possibility that God may be in the fiery furnace with us for our good, to the certain knowledge (v.3) that the Lord is for us, having ordained even our afflictions for our good, and that He is with us, transforming temptations that are intended for evil into tests that refine us and result in our good. It is as we see and accept the certainty of this sanctifying goal of our trials that we rise from despair to joy.

Tuesday, August 5th - James 1: 2, 3

The precious fruit issuing from trials that are ordained and superintended by our God is endurance. Such endurance enables the believer to bear any load, to triumph over any challenge, to be more than a conqueror in tribulation, deprivation, even death (Rom. 8:35-39). The Puritan pastor Thomas Manton remarks on this when he writes: A Christian is a bird that can sing in winter as well as in spring; he can live in the fire, like Moses' bush; [he can] burn, and not be consumed... (Commentary on James, p.23). Such endurance leads on to hope that never disappoints us (Rom. 5:3-5).

Wednesday, August 6th – James 1: 2, 3

We do well to note that we have cause to rejoice in our trials when we encounter them. This implies that we are not to seek troubles or to court trials. Rather, we are to know that when in the course of our faithful Christian living we suffer afflictions such as ill health or accidental injury or endure persecution for Christ's sake, we are to understand that although such trials can seem haphazard pitfalls into which we have fallen, they are really encounters ordained by our Lord for His glory and our good. Scripture is full of encouraging examples of how our God uses such painful encounters for our sanctification and blessing, a classic example being the Genesis account of the trials and triumphs of Joseph.

Thursday, August 7th - James 1: 2-4

We are to rejoice not only when we encounter trials that are short, easy to bear, and quickly and clearly reveal to us that they are serving for our good. We are to rejoice in various trials. When men persecute us for Christ's sake, we know from our Lord's beatitude that we should count ourselves blessed (Mt. 5:10-12). Yet, it is all kinds of trials in which we are to consider the joyful issue eventually but certainly to come. Job suffered loss of property, livestock, children, alienation from his wife, painful and loathsome physical affliction, and his being tortured by his friends, seemingly for no reason. Yet, Scripture makes clear to us that Job suffered for his righteousness (Job 1:8) and that the final issue from his afflictions was his greater blessing (Job 42:10-17) and usefulness in the Lord's service (Job 42:7-9). James presents us with the encouraging truth that all sorts of trials come upon us for our growth in grace, knowledge, purity, blessedness, and usefulness, and because this is always so for all Christians we should all rejoice in all trials.

Friday, August 8th – James 1: 2-4

The process outlined in these verses is as follows: 1) all trials test our faith; 2) such testing produces an enduring trust and submission within us; 3) such faithful endurance produces perfect work of all kinds in us. When we understand and apply the truth of this teaching to ourselves, we are saved from bitter complaining and frustrated sorrow and experience, instead, grateful joy that should make us sing praises to our Lord in the dark dungeons of our afflictions, just as Paul and Silas sang praises to God during the dark night of their Philippian imprisonment.

Saturday, August 9th - James 1: 2-4

Faith enables us to consider our temptations (v.2) that come upon us by Satan's evil intent, as tests (v.3) ordained by our God to refine and strengthen our faith. Those most mature in faith understand and submit to this process, as one would endure the pain of physical training in a gymnasium to strengthen one's muscles (Heb. 5:14). The final product of our enduring such tests is that we are perfected in Christ-like character, complete in our equipping for service, and lack nothing that we could rightly need or desire for fruitful and satisfying Christian living. Read about this process and its blessed results in Romans 5:1-5; Galatians 5:22-26; and 1 Peter 4:12-14.

Sunday, August 10th - James 1: 5-8

James appears to jump to another topic when he speaks of wisdom in v.5. However, there is a connection between our considering trials to be a cause for joy and our having wisdom. The connection is that wisdom is required for us to understand the true cause we have to rejoice in our trials. The wisdom to which James refers is defined in Scripture as the fear of the Lord (Prov. 1:7). It is the attitude of reverent trust in and obedience to the Lord in all things while, at the same time, refusing to rely on our own finite and fallible understanding (Prov. 3:5,6). Thusly, we have the living God to be the Guide and Guardian of our lives.

Monday, August 11th – James 1: 5

This verse explicitly acknowledges that some people lack wisdom. It also implicitly acknowledges that true wisdom, which is defined as the fear of the Lord, is lacking in all people naturally. Such wisdom is not inherent in anyone, for the Bible teaches us that the heart of all children is bound up in foolishness (Prov. 22:15). All people must acquire godly wisdom, either through the training of godly parents, or by their coming, through the agency of other believers, under the sound and power of the gospel that makes them wise unto salvation (2 Tim. 3:15). James, therefore, speaks to all of his readers who either have godly wisdom while seeking to grow in that wisdom, or who sense that they lack it largely if not entirely. The encouraging thing to us all is that such wisdom is ours for the asking.

Tuesday, August 12th - James 1: 5

If we lack godly wisdom whereby we may perceive the cause we have to rejoice in our trials, we are told simply and sincerely to ask God to supply what we lack. The fact that such wisdom is a priceless treasure and precious power that enables us to look for and perceive the hand of our God working for our good at all times and in all circumstances should be enough to encourage us to seek it at all costs. However, the additional fact that our God, who is the source of all wisdom (Rom. 11:33), gives this treasure to us as a blessing of His free grace, should remove all disinclination on our part to ask, seek, and knock for it with eagerness and grateful certainty that our God is more determined to give it to us above the measure of our asking than we are to ask Him for it.

Wednesday, August 13th - James 1: 5, 6

It is a characteristic of James carefully to define the various elements that compose the qualities or actions that he impresses upon his readers. For example, he does not simply refer to faith, but specifies that genuine faith produces godly works (Jas. 2:14-26). Here James has exhorted us to ask God for wisdom, but he goes on to specify the attitude that should prompt genuine and effectual asking. We must not only ask but must do so in faith, believing that our God can and will answer above what we ask or think. Any other kind of asking would be lacking the humble but sure expectation that is based upon one's belief in God's faithfulness, holy love, and almighty power. Such mistrustful asking would be an insult rather than an honor to our heavenly Father.

Thursday, August 14th - James 1: 6

James further specifies how we are to ask God for wisdom when he tells us not only positively that we must ask in faith but negatively that we cannot ask in doubt. The Greek word used for doubting in this verse is a participle meaning literally one who judges through (ο` diakrino,menoj). The word can be used in a positive sense of differentiating factors and making a correct judgment thereby. However, the word can also mean to hesitate, to waiver, or to dispute. It is in this latter sense that James uses the word, and the moral and spiritual inappropriateness of such doubting is evident when we consider the character of the One whom we doubt. Our God has never in all of His dealings with all of His people through all of history given cause for any believer to dispute or hesitate in trusting His wisdom, love, and power. Thus, it is not enough that

we believe, but we must also ask God to help vanquish our unbelief when we ask Him for wisdom (Mk. 9:24).

Friday, August 15th - James 1: 6

When James tells us to ask God in faith and to ask Him without doubting, he is telling us that we should never withhold our judgment regarding the Lord's faithful and lavish lovingkindness until we perceive the divine faithfulness through the working out of events. We are too inclined to think that prejudice is always a vice, but when we maintain a holy and reasonable prejudice by which we always trust our God before He ever acts through events to vindicate our trust, we are practicing a virtue that both glorifies God and effects much good for ourselves.

Saturday, August 16th - James 1: 6, 7

James does not forbid our doubting by his prohibiting word alone, but also by his teaching us the unhappy results of such doubting. The first result of our doubting the Lord is our instability. The one doubting the ever faithful living God is, and so long as he doubts, ever will remain as wildly changeable as is the storm-tossed sea. The wicked, who always doubt God, are ever pictured in Scripture as being in flight or on the prowl (Prov. 28:1; 1 Pet. 5:8), while the righteous are likened to firmly planted trees or well founded buildings (Ps. 1:3; Eph. 2:19-22). Such instability makes us vulnerable to the deceitful scheming of wicked men and devils (Eph. 4:14). Doubts regarding God ever prove sorry and sinister counselors.

Sunday, August 17th - James 1: 6, 7

Another result of our doubting the Lord when we ask Him for wisdom is personal poverty. The doubter may as well save his breath and come to terms with his impoverished lack of wisdom. For James tells us that the doubter will not receive anything from the Lord. Nothing is too good or lavish for the Lord to give to the one who asks in humble faith; anything is too good for the Lord to give to the proud doubter, who grieves and dishonors the Lord by his doubting.

Monday, August 18th - James 1: 7, 8

James exposes the root of a person's doubt with its impoverishing destabilization when he writes that the doubter is double-minded (di,yucoj). Faith integrates our souls and makes us single-minded (Phil. 2:2). God's saving grace with its instrumental faith gives us both the call and the enabling to love the Lord with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength (Mk. 12:30). Such faith unites us to an integrated God whose promises to us in Christ are always yes and amen (2 Cor. 1:20). The doubter is fractured, not integrated. He is plagued by the ever mutually contradicting call of two masters—one calling him to believe and rejoice, the other telling him to deny and distrust God and accept the resulting state of his perpetual indecisiveness, frustration, defeat, and depression.

Tuesday, August 19th – James 1: 9-11

James passes from his consideration of the double-minded man and his misery to a consideration of the blessedness of the one who is single-minded. In this consideration, the extremes of circumstantial difference between faithful believers are dealt with in

order to show how both representatives of those extremes of rich and poor (and by implication all who are between those extremes) set their minds entirely upon their positions in Christ and not upon their circumstantial conditions. The lasting riches we have in Christ outshine any shadows of earthly differences that may for a time exist between brothers who are together destined for heaven.

Wednesday, August 20th - James 1: 9

The single-minded poor believer is taught to focus not on his lowly condition and temporal poverty but on his exalted status and immeasurable riches in Christ. Here we should note that there are and always will be poor people in the body of Christ (Mt. 26:11). The gospel does not promise material prosperity to all, nor does it produce a communistic egalitarian state among believers. What the gospel does promise and deliver is something better than material wealth, something that enables us to rise above the worst and the best worldly conditions. So the believing poor man concentrates not upon his destitution, but upon his being a beloved brother with people of all conditions who are together made rich in Christ (2 Cor. 8:9). He does not focus upon his apparent lack but rather upon the fact that he has been blessed with every spiritual blessing by God in Christ (Eph. 1:3).

Thursday, August 21st - James 1: 9

The poor brother's material poverty is a matter not of shame to him, but is a matter of holy indifference. For by his single-minded faith fixed on the abounding grace and glorious blessings of God in Christ he is more than content to be abased or to abound, for his blessedness resides not in his worldly condition but in Christ who indwells him (Phil. 4:11-13). Thus, the poor man glories and boasts in Christ, who was made poor so that he might be made rich with the glorious riches of the Son of God (2 Cor. 8:9).

Friday, August 22nd - James 1: 9

Regarding the cause that the poor brother has to glory in his exalted position in Christ, Thomas Manton well remarks in his commentary on James (p.64):... all the comforts of Christianity are such as riddles and contradictions to the flesh: poverty is preferment; servants are freeman... A Christian's life is full of mysteries: poor, and yet rich; base, and yet exalted; shut out of the world, and yet admitted into the company of saints and angels; slighted, yet dear to God; the world's dirt, and God's jewels. It is not only the rich believer but also his poor brother who have been raised up from the deadness of their sins and made alive to sit together with Christ in the heavenly places (Eph. 2:4-6).

Saturday, August 23rd - James 1: 10

As the notice James takes of the poor brother indicates that there will always be poor brethren in the Church, so the notice he takes of the rich man alerts us to the fact that there will always be some in the Church who are materially wealthy. The gospel is indifferent toward whether a person has many or few material possessions. That is because the eternally enduring and glorious blessings that are ours in Christ outshine and reduce to near insignificance any difference between the amounts of worldly trinkets that brethren in Christ may possess.

Sunday, August 24th - James 1: 10, 11

As the poor are not to focus on the reduced quantity of their worldly possessions, so the rich are not to focus on the abundance of their worldly wealth. Both concentrations signify a focus upon inconsequential trinkets. Both the poor and the rich are therefore directed to look beyond their worldly estates to the rich reality of who they are and what they have in Christ. In these practical terms, James is serving as God's instrument to open the eyes of the hearts of these brethren to the knowledge of the hope of the Lord's calling and riches of His glorious inheritance, and the surpassing greatness of His power (Eph. 1:18,19).

Monday, August 25th - James 1: 10, 11

To the extent that the rich man is to consider his riches, he should contemplate their limited quality rather than the delusive charm of their great quantity. While the possession of riches can remove the necessity for one to delay or deny himself the purchase of goods and services, money can only buy so much, and not really very much that is of true importance. Money cannot buy friendship or love, and it certainly cannot buy an extension of life, as the rich fool discovered who built bigger barns to contain his fortune (Lk. 12:15-21). Money cannot make a fool wise, nor can it make a vicious man kind. Money certainly cannot buy a sinner justification before God or gain him access to eternal life in heaven, as we learn from what Jesus taught in the story about the rich man and Lazarus (Lk. 16:19-31). What does it profit a man to have all the world's riches and lose his soul?

Tuesday, August 26th - James 1: 10, 11

The rich believer is to focus not on his transitory, relatively insignificant riches, but rather he is to glory in his humiliation. What James has written about the true uselessness of riches as pertaining to the things of true importance in life and death, should have a sobering and humbling effect upon the rich, making him realize that his riches are useless to save his life or sanctify his soul. Such sobering humiliation should have the salutary effect of prompting the rich believer to consider the saving and truly exalting humiliation of Christ (Isa. 53: 2 Cor. 8:9; Phil. 2:5-11). Thus, James directs both rich and poor and all who are between them in Christ to look to the cross of the Savior, and there find the wisdom of God that confounds the wise of the world and gives cause to those possessing the divine wisdom to count it all joy even when they encounter trials, knowing that as God raised Christ from his humiliating death to the supreme height of glory, so He will lift all who look to Him in faith from the defects and limitations of their worldly conditions.

August 2008

Wednesday, August 27th – James 1: 9-11

For Christians, their lives and contentment, their security and peace, their joy, blessedness, and usefulness never depend upon their lack or abundance of finances, but rather upon the purity and power of their faith (v.6). Unlike material fortunes, which can elude the poor and be lost by the rich, faith is a precious gift of God that grows the more it is exercised by those who have received it. The more we trust the Lord, the more trustworthy we find Him to be, and so in turn we find it ever more easy and natural to trust Him increasingly.

Thursday, August 28th - James 1: 12

In vv.12-18 James leads us into a further consideration of the whole process of trial that is endured by faith. In v.2, James exhorted his readers to consider all kinds of trials to be cause for them to rejoice. In vv. 3,4, he explained how such trials produce endurance, which then produces strong, pure, and capable Christian character. Now in v.12 the blessedness of those who endure by faith their trials is shown to be fuller than the production of one's Christ-like character. That blessedness additionally consists of the believer's receiving a crown of life from the Lord. Far greater, higher, and more glorious things are being accomplished for our eternal good and glory through our faithfully enduring life's afflictions than we may realize. Our possession of the eternal weight of glory that such trials produce will fully and finally convince us of this (Rom. 8:18; 2 Cor. 4:17,18).

Friday, August 29th - James 1: 12

In v.3, James wrote that faith, when rightly exercised, produces endurance, while in v.4 he wrote about the perfect result that issues from such endurance. Now in v.12 he specifies a major component of that perfection that is the fruit of the believer's faithful endurance of trials. That component is a crown of life that is fitting for those who have grown by their sanctification to have Christ-like character. Thus we find that believers have not only a subjective incentive for the exercise of their faith, namely, the pleasures and powers of the development of their godly character, but also an objective incentive, namely, the reward of their reigning together with Christ in eternal glory (Rev. 22:4,5).

Saturday, August 30th - James 1: 12

The endurance mentioned in v.3 has the same root word as does the word translated perseveres in v.12. The word literally means to remain under some sort of load or pressure. In this instance, the load is a course of manifold trials. But the weight and pressure of such trails is here by James given the counter-weight of the believer's glorious inheritance. When its promise becomes possession for us, we shall fully perceive that blessed counter-weight to be incomparably greater than all that we have suffered in this life (Rom. 8:18). Meanwhile, prior to our possession of this glorious reward, faith feeds on the certainty of this blessed promise so that while we are pressed down by the weight of our trials, we are borne up by the greater counter-weight of glory that is being produced for us through our bearing of momentary, light affliction (2 Cor. 4:16-18).

Sunday, August 31st - James 1: 12

We move from the promise to the possession of the crown of life once we have been approved. This approval comes from the Lord who tests and assesses not our puny and imperfect good works, making them to be the basis for our salvation, but rather our adherence to and inseparable union with Christ by faith. The genuine faith that God gives to His children by His grace (Eph. 2:8,9) will pass all tests and make those who possess it able to stand before God in the final day blameless and with great joy (Jude 24).

Monday, September 1st - James 1: 12

There is much of great and consoling significance contained in the expression the crown of life. It speaks not of the dead and dying hopes that are all that this world offers to people. Instead, it speaks of a living hope (1 Pet. 1:3) that has eternal duration and glorious and abundantly blessed quality. The term crown, signifies not only that we now endure our trials as more than conquerors (Rom. 8:35-37), but also that the final fruition of our trials is our reigning with Christ forever in glory (Rev. 1:6; 22:4,5). Now we are triumphing soldiers; then we shall be co-reigning with our sovereign Lord.

Tuesday, September 2nd - James 1: 12

The crown of life is received, not earned. This speaks to us of the reality that salvation—from the counsels of eternity to the conferring of glorious blessing upon the elect in eternity—is a matter of divine grace, not human merit. The fact that we receive this crown from the Lord speaks to us of the infinite bounty, eternal glory, holy authority, and almighty power of the God who gives us this crown. Our God gives to us a great salvation according to His precious grace. He also gives us an inheritance, the greatness and splendor of which is commensurate not with our poor deserving or feeble desires but rather is according to the infinitely precious and enduring riches of His glory (Eph. 3:16).

Wednesday, September 3rd – James 1: 12

The Lord of grace and glory promises the crown of life. He promises it to those who love Him. James is not saying that we are saved by love instead of faith. He is, instead, characteristically discriminating between genuine and counterfeit faith when he makes the fruit of the former to be love. Saving faith works itself out by love (Gal. 5:6). True faith is no grim power by which we grasp the Savior as one would cling to a rough rope suspending him above a chasm. Faith apprehends the love of God demonstrated in the Savior's person and work (Rom. 5:8). The faithful love God because they know and gratefully rejoice in the truth that He first loved them. If faith without works is dead (Jas. 2:17), it is also true that faith without love is dead and kills all hope one might have of being blessed by God.

Thursday, September 4th - James 1: 12

This verse in sum teaches us that the test we must pass is a test of our faith and love. Jesus speaks about the blessing those who love God and man receive when He tells us that those who feed the hungry, house the stranger, clothe the naked, and visit the sick for Christ's sake are invited by God to enter into the kingdom He has prepared for them from

the foundation of the world (Mt. 25:34-36). Peter teaches us that the testing of our faith results in stronger faith, greater love, and an inexpressible joy that is full of glory (1 Pet. 1:6-9). Paul teaches us that God causes all things to work together for the good of those who love the Lord (Rom. 8:28). Jesus and these apostles teaching the same thing that James is teaching in this verse, namely, that the faith that cleaves to Christ cleaves to love and produces loving works, while saving the faithful from their sins and securing for them an exalted standing in the kingdom of God's eternal glory.

Friday, September 5th - James 1: 13-18

In v. 12, the blessed goal and glorious end of the course of divine testing of the faithful is expressed. In vv.13-18, James explains something about the character and necessity of the testing process itself. He does this to give us understanding that will produce in us confidence to submit to the testing course, knowing that God is in sinless and sovereign control of it, and that He is superintending it for our good.

Saturday, September 6th – James 1: 13

This verse makes clear to us that the instrumental source of our temptations is not God. James does not simply deny that God tempts us, but he also denies that God tempts anyone, including sinful men and devils. He further reveals to us why God does not tempt anyone, telling us that because our holy God is Himself incapable of being tempted, He is blessedly and infinitely removed from the slightest tendency to do something as sinister and ultimately self-defeating as to tempt others. The tempter made his first appearance in the world in the deceptively humble guise of a snake, and, while he succeeded in tempting our first parents, all that it earned him was divine cursing (Gen. 3:14,15). The supreme authority and almighty power, the holy purity and love, as well as the infallible wisdom of our God—all together combine to make it utterly impossible and ridiculously unnecessary that He should practice the slightest degree of deception or temptation.

Sunday, September 7th - James 1: 13

We need to be told clearly that God does not tempt us, for it is a propensity deeply ingrained in us to blame the Lord for the temptations to which we fall. Our first father, Adam, insinuated that God had been responsible for his temptation and sin when he sought to account for his sin by saying to God: The woman whom Thou gavest to be with me, she gave me from the tree, and I ate. (Gen. 3:12). Instead of His tempting us, our God teaches us to pray that He sovereignly and effectively prevent us from encountering temptation (Mt. 6:13).

Monday, September 8th – James 1: 13

The Greek participle translated in this verse, is tempted, has the same root as the nouns translated trials in v.2 and trial in v.12. The implication that is so vital and practical for us to perceive is that our Lord is sovereign over all things and as such He ordains all that we encounter and experience. This includes our temptations. Yet, it is not the divine intention that we fall to our temptations, but rather that we grow strong in our faith by resisting them. We do this best when we regard all things that the satanic tempter designs for our fall as divinely ordained trials that serve to strengthen our faithful

standing. Thus it is with us as it was with Peter, whom Satan demanded to sift, but whose faith ultimately did not fail due to the prayers of Jesus (Lk. 22:31,32). Our God does not tempt us, but He does sinlessly ordain that we encounter Satan's temptations for our growth in sanctification, as we resist those temptations and thereby transform them into trials that strengthen and purify our faith and our characters (Jas. 4:7; 1 Pet. 5:8-11).

Tuesday, September 9th - James 1: 14, 15

After James has made clear to us that God does not tempt us to sin but tries us to further our sanctification (v.12), he proceeds to teach us in these verses how the power of temptation lies within ourselves and not in the temptation. This understanding of the true dynamic of temptation and sin is vital for us to have. It teaches us that while Satan can incite us to sin he cannot compel us to sin. The grievous truth is that we are, due to the remnants of our sin, supremely temptable. Thus, we learn that the effective way for us to deal with temptation is to resist the tempting devil firmly by faith, and to mortify all in us that is enticed by temptations to sin. These remnants of our sin are like the grave clothes of Lazarus. They are to be removed by our mortifying them and replaced by the clothing of Christ's righteousness (Rom. 6:1-3; 13:14).

Wednesday, September 10th - James 1: 14, 15

James uses the copulation illustration in these verses to teach us the humbling truth that there is no such thing as spiritual rape, but rather that with a temptation to sin we are as a woman willing to receive the amorous embraces of her forbidden lover. The dregs of our sin prompt us not to mortify sinful desires but to inflame them into lustful passion and thereby to conceive within ourselves the determination to bring sin forth into action that never issues in life but only issues in death because it never issues from holy love.

Thursday, September 11th – James 1: 16-18

In vv. 14,15, we learned the bad news that we sin because we are sinners with an appetite for the things that God forbids. As such, we are our own worst enemies and are entirely responsible for all of our sins. This bad news is grievous but necessary for us to know. The good news is given to us in vv.16-18, and it is news that is even more vital and necessary for us to know. Although we are sinners who conceive actual sins and kill ourselves thereby, God graciously delivers us from the dominion of our sin nature and from the guilt and corruption of our actual sins. This He does as a free gift of His saving grace. This good news of what God has done obliterates all of the bad news of what we naturally are and of what we have done. We have earned eternal death; but God gives us eternal life.

Friday, September 12th - James 1: 16-18

James exhorts his readers not to be deceived. That about which we could be deceived has been explained in vv.13-15. The truth is that God is not the author of sin, as Satan, the liar and murderer would have us to believe. Instead, God is the author of salvation. The tempter will always make malicious insinuations regarding the goodness, power, and love of our God, as he did with our first parents in Gen. 3:1-5. Our calling is to resist the tempter and stand unwaveringly in the truth that our God is ever, only, and always the good and gracious Savior of sinners.

Saturday, September 13th - James 1: 17, 18

Our God is no tempter or subtle taker from man, but rather is the only true giver of all that is good, right, and blessing to man. The Lord gives to His people the supreme gift of salvation, and with that gift all blessings as well (Eph. 1:3). Not only does He give an immeasurably great quantity of gifts, but the quality of His gifts is indicated by the word perfect in v.17. His perfect gifts are also perfecting powers and adornments for His people's sanctification and highest and everlasting good (Rom. 8:28).

Sunday, September 14th - James 1: 17, 18

The good things of which James writes in v.17 are not treasures that are accidentally discovered by the Lord's people, but are infinitely precious blessings that are bestowed upon His children with the motivation of perfect, holy love, as well as the consideration of infallible divine wisdom. Nor should we limit these good things to positive blessings only. They extend even to divine privations, for that which our God withholds from us, or delays giving to us, is ever and only for our good.

Monday, September 15th - James 1: 17, 18

The good and perfect gifts bestowed upon us come from the only source of goodness and perfection. Such gifts come down to us not only from the perfection and glory of heaven, but specifically from the glorious God of heaven who bestows them upon us as an administration of His wise sovereignty and as pledges and fruits of His fatherly love for us.

Tuesday, September 16th - James 1: 17, 18

When James writes that our giving God is the Father of lights, we should understand him to mean that our God is the ultimate source of all manifestations of the glorious splendor and enabling utility of light that issues through such instruments as the sun, the stars, and the lamps of man's making. He is further the Father of all mental brightness that is found in varying degrees in men, as well as being the source of all spiritual glory that grows to fullest intensity in His children.

Wednesday, September 17th - James 1: 17, 18

The perfection and unchangeable nature of the good things our heavenly Father bestows upon us are indicated by James telling us that with our giving God, there is no variation or moving shadows. The variable nature of all instrumental lights is evident. The distant stars and planets, as well as the sun and moon, ever change their positions, due to earth's rotation and orbit around the sun. The sun emits light of varying intensity, according to its position above the horizon and atmospheric conditions. Man-made instruments of light shine by human design with varying brilliance and duration. The Father of light is a God who ever shines with infinite and eternal glory that cannot be dimmed or obscured. Nor are there any shadowy aspects to His being. As Thomas Manton well remarks: This is the sun that doth not set or rise, cannot be overcast or eclipsed. (Commentary on James, p.110). When we are not deceived, but rather have the eyes of our hearts opened by faith, we perceive the glory of the Lord and find our peace, security, blessing, joy, and usefulness in the healing and sanctifying light of that glory.

Thursday, September 18th - James 1: 18

The greatest gift that God bestows upon His people is their regeneration in Christ. The Lord gives this greatest gift according to the free exercise of His sovereign will. He was not compelled to save any sinners, but acted freely and lovingly to elect unto salvation some sinners in Christ (Eph. 1:4). Therefore, we who are in Christ should know that we have been made new creatures and are now justified before God not by our doing or deserving, but by the Lord's saving and sovereign compassion. We who have failed utterly to obey His holy law have become the beloved objects of His saving grace and are what we are now by the exercise of His sovereign, holy, and loving will, and are therefore protected and provided for by His absolute authority and almighty power.

Friday, September 19th – James 1: 18

Our God has regenerated us by the Word of His truth contained in Scripture. Therefore, we who have been brought into new, holy life and a new status of being justified before and adopted by God by the instrumentality of His Word, should absorb ourselves increasingly in the enlightening wisdom and liberating truth and empowering love of God that are richly provided for us in the Word of our Lord. Nothing keeps us more resistant to temptations than does our knowledge of, love for, trust in, and obedience to God's Word. The first Adam failed here and fell; the Second Adam cleaved to God's Word and stood and served to save all of God's chosen people (Mt. 4:4,7,10).

Saturday, September 20th - James 1: 18

The Lord has regenerated His people by His grace and for His glory. As the first fruits of Israel's harvests were consecrated to the Lord (Ex. 23:19), so James teaches believers to regard themselves as new creatures in Christ, having the fruit of God's Holy Spirit developing in their lives, and being given spiritual gifts—all so that they might live and serve for the glory of their saving God while finding their highest satisfaction, pleasure, and joy as they glorify the Lord.

Sunday, September 21st - James 1: 19, 20

The first sentence of v.19 serves as a bridge between what James has written in previous verses and what he writes after this verse. He reminds his readers of what they know: that God is not the author of temptation, but rather the author of salvation; that the power of temptation lies within themselves through their lusts; and that God has graciously bestowed His salvation upon them. They know all of this by their experience of regeneration, but James writes so that they (and we) might grasp these things with understanding, live more conscious and consistent lives of faith. We all have in Christ more than we know and we must come to know the number and nature of our spiritual possessions if we are rightly going to embrace and experience their power.

Monday, September 22nd - James 1: 19, 20

From our knowing the truths James has explained in previous verses, we are encouraged to embrace those truths through a process that begins with our hearing them. Specifically, we are to be quick, or ready, to hear the true and liberating teachings of God's Word. Jesus warns us to be careful how we hear God's Word (Lk. 8:18). He gave

this warning immediately after He gave the parable of the sower and its interpretation to His disciples (Lk. 8:5-15). Therefore, if we are going to grasp effectively our spiritual treasures, we must listen to God's Word while resisting the devil's contemptuous insinuations (Lk. 8:12); we must be not mere hearers but also ready doers of the Word (Lk. 8:13); we must resist all that would distract us from hearing and doing the Word (Lk. 8:14); and we must listen with a receptive and grateful humility as well as with a determination strongly and perseveringly to grasp the Word and bear its sweet and sanctified fruits in our lives (Lk. 8:15). How we hear is nearly as essential as what we hear.

Tuesday, September 23rd - James 1: 19, 20

In these verses, James urges us to practice a humble reception and assimilation of truth, with careful and lovingly considerate expressions of speech and demonstrations of godly actions issuing from our assimilation of truth. The priority, of course, is our reception of the Word of truth (v.18). As sinners, we naturally lack the truth or even a desire to know or practice truth. The natural man, however, assumes that he knows the truth and that he is right in his understanding and in his performance. Such conceit prompts the natural man to make rash and wrong decisions and to maintain them with an aggressive insistence that results from a contempt and even hatred for all that would contradict his erroneous certainty. Such sinful anger results from a man's reliance upon his own understanding while he refuses humbly to trust in the Lord (Prov. 3:5,6). Obviously, such anger does not effect anything remotely near to the sweetly reasonable and beneficent righteousness of God. As Solomon wrote: Every prudent man acts with [acquired] knowledge, but a fool displays folly (Prov. 13:16).

Wednesday, September 24th - James 1: 19, 20

We should be slow to speak and slow to anger. The impulse that prompts us rashly and uncritically to assume that we are right and that we will have right cause to be angry with all who refuse to agree with us is a godless impulse that we must mortify. We need, instead, to be more ready to hear the Word of God (Prov. 1:7, 20-23) and the godly wisdom of others (Prov. 15:22), than to spew forth our own folly. Since words, once spoken, cannot be taken back, we should take the time to be sure that our ignorance is replaced by knowledge and our sinful anger replaced by holy love before we give expression to our thoughts (Eph. 4:15). Let us, therefore, be sure we know the truth and can speak it in love, or remain silent.

Thursday, September 25th - James 1: 19, 20

We are to be slow to anger. The word translated anger in these verses does not mean heated passion, but rather a deliberate, settled, even purportedly principled indignation. When God asked Jonah if he had cause to be angry, the bitter prophet answered: I do well to be angry (Jon. 4:9), for he nurtured a settled and implacable prejudice and hatred against the Assyrians. The Pharisees maintained a similar adamant self-righteousness that made them burn with hatred against the merciful Savior. It is not only quick anger that we must mortify, but also the deep and extensive roots of self-love that make us hold others in contempt.

Friday, September 26th - James 1: 19, 20

Those who would turn the gospel into a club with which they batter their enemies cannot and do not work out the righteousness of God. This is so not only because their heated bitterness and ballistic bombast are utterly inconsistent with the Holy Spirit and His sweet and pacific fruit, but also because such angry ones almost always use their aggressive thrusts to cover some personal sin in their own lives. Consider how angry David would kill a man for taking another man's sheep, while David himself was guilty of taking another man's wife and life (2 Sam. 12:1-7). The righteousness of our Lord is wrought through us not by our angry speaking but by our crucified living.

September 2008

Saturday, September 27th – James 1: 21

In this verse, James gives us a positive and a negative imperative. Negatively, he tells us to mortify residual sin in our lives; positively, he tells us humbly to receive the sanctifying teaching of God's Word. With the word, therefore, he indicates to us that he is summarizing and applying all that has preceded this verse, especially the truth he expressed in vv.19,20 about the anger of man failing to achieve the righteousness of God. The sweep of this first chapter begins with teaching on the proper perspective in which believers should regard their trials, and ends with a directive for believers to serve others and to cultivate personal purity. Thus, the orientation shifts from personal suffering to personal service, and the critical point where such a shift takes place is reached when we mortify our residual sin and feed upon the Word that directs and empowers us to love the Lord and our neighbors.

Sunday, September 28th - James 1: 21

We are to put off the remnants of our old, crucified sin nature. Positively, we are to receive the Word of God. Before we consider more closely the precise wording James uses to express these imperatives, we do well to note the intended connection between them and the verses that precede them. In vv.19,20, we are exhorted to resist the impulse to nurture and vent sinful anger. James connects the imperatives of v.21 with this exhortation by his use of the word therefore at the beginning of v.21. This connection should alert us to the truth that it is the residue of our sin that prompts us to manifest rash and unrighteous anger. Our residual sin is the root and anger is the bitter fruit. If we mortify these remnants of our sin, we shall find ourselves to be less impassioned with anger and more principled and lovingly patient in our dealings with others.

Monday, September 29th - James 1: 21

The negative imperative in this verse begins with a call for us to put off or lay aside our sin. This imagery of our removing an external garment should alert us to the relative ease with which we can deal decisively with the remaining power and presence of sin in our lives. There is no contradiction between this simple and effective dealing with our sin and the teaching about the captivating power of sin of which Paul writes in Rom. 7:14-25. The solution to the apparent contradiction is found in Heb. 12:1, where we are told to lay aside sin, as though it were a matter as easy as discarding an unwanted garment. But Heb. 12:1 goes on to speak of sin as something that easily entangles us. The entire thought is that at our first discovery of sin, we can most easily and effectively mortify it. However, if we hesitate to deal quickly and radically with sin in our lives, we become easily entangled in its defiling and debilitating power. Sin can be nipped in the bud, but when allowed to grow it must be cut out with many deep and painful incisions.

Tuesday, September 30th - James 1: 21

The negative imperative does not speak only about the initial ease with which we can mortify sin in our lives but goes on to give us a practical understanding of the sin with which we are called decisively to deal. First, we learn the extent to which we are to put aside sin in our lives when James writes that we are to put it all aside. No sin, however

seemingly insignificant, is to be tolerated in our lives. Then James alerts us to the vile character of sin when he calls it filthiness and wickedness. No one would be content to exterminate some of the rodents that have invaded his home. Sin, when shown to us in its truest colors, is more repulsive than crawling creatures swarming throughout our homes. Again, the ease with which such repulsive sin can be removed from our lives is indicated further by James speaking of it as what remains of wickedness. By our regeneration, the dominion of sin has been broken in us and we have but to deal with its dregs. Even when sin's remnants assume their most enslaving power, as Paul describes in Rom. 7:23, such sin is still but an aggravating corpse—a body of death—from which Christ sets us free whenever we call upon him (Rom. 7:25).

Wednesday, October 1st - James 1: 21

The positive imperative in this verse sets out what is necessary for the completion of our laying aside the sin that so easily can entangle us if we do not quickly and ruthlessly deal with it. It is not enough for the demon-possessed house to be swept clean. Christ must inhabit the house, by His Word and Spirit, lest seven worse demons come to occupy the dwelling vacated by the one demon that was cast out (Mt. 12:43-45).

Thursday, October 2nd - James 1: 21

In place of the sin we put aside we are to receive the Word of God. How we receive this divine treasure is vital. We are not to receive it in a spirit of superiority, or cynical doubt, or begrudging compulsion, or apathetic indifference. Instead, we are humbly to receive the Word. Such humility includes our hold on self-reliance being broken, and our hearts being filled with joyful gratitude and profound respect for what God conveys to us through Scripture.

Friday, October 3rd – James 1: 21

In humility we are to receive the Word of God. Our new natures in Christ have vital power to put aside sin as something alien and repulsive that no longer belongs to us or in us. Our new natures not only hate sin but they also hunger for the nourishment of God's Word. That nourishment we receive, not as something alien to us, but as that one heavenly and empowering treasure on earth that transforms us into the highest perfection of our new and true selves in Christ. James speaks of the Word being implanted within us, which is similar to what Peter says about our having been born again through the living and imperishable seed of the Word of God (1 Pet. 1:23). Thus, when we receive the Word preached (1 Pet. 1:25), we are receiving no externally imposed alien force, but rather the source of both the initiation and the sustaining of our new natures in Christ.

Saturday, October 4th - James 1: 21

We are to receive the Word that has already implanted new life in us and that is the source for sustaining the growth of our new natures in Christ. James reminds us of the supreme importance, absolute necessity, and paramount blessing of our so receiving the Word of God when he tells us that the Word is God's chosen instrument both to initiate and to complete the salvation of our essential selves, namely, our immortal souls. Through the Word, God speaks to us and breathes upon us the breath of eternal life (2 Tim. 3:16). Through the Word we are convicted of our sin and are called to conversion

to Christ. Through the Word we are healed, fed, enlightened, liberated, and sanctified in the truth. This precious and potently saving divine revelation should be the most desirable thing for us to receive, while the filthy remnants of our wickedness should be to us the most loathsome thing which we delight to put aside.

Sunday, October 5th - James 1: 22

In v.21 we receive two rich and practical imperatives, telling us to lay aside our sin and to receive the Word of God through which Christ saves us definitively and progressively unto the perfection of our conformity to His likeness. In v.22, James advances his consideration of these imperatives by giving us another imperative. If we really have by faith put aside our sin and humbly received the saving Word of God, we shall not stop at merely receiving the Word, but we shall press on to be obedient to the Word we have received. True and right reception of the whole counsel of God changes our thoughts, emotions, words, and deeds, for the Word is the power of God unto salvation (Rom. 1:16). Those truly saved by the mercies of God will not let sin reign over them (Rom. 6:12), but will be transformed in mind, heart, and body to know and do the will of God (Rom. 12:1,2; Phil. 2:12,13).

Monday, October 6th – James 1: 22

If we do not put aside our residual sin, we shall find ourselves tempted and falling to the temptation to suppress the truth in unrighteousness (Rom. 1:18). Self-delusion is not the same as sincere doing of the will of God. When our sin entangles us, we convince ourselves that our pious intentions are all that God can reasonably expect from us. Yet our Lord, who not only promised us redemption, but also provided it through the active and passive obedience of His Son, calls and graciously enables us not only to intend, but also to do His holy will and good pleasure (Phil. 2:13).

Tuesday, October 7th - James 1: 22

Those who are mere hearers and not doers of the Word delude themselves with the thought that their hearing is all that God expects and requires. In this, their delusion extends only to themselves, not to others, and certainly not to God. The complete circuit that James sets before us is that we should hear the Word and receive it (v.21) and do it. Anything less than this complete circuit and full fruition of faith manifests at best a faulty faith, and at worst a counterfeit faith.

Wednesday, October 8th – James 1: 23-25

In these verses, James draws the contrast between the man who merely hears God's Word and the one who effectually does the Word of the Lord. By this illustration we can examine ourselves and determine whether we are prone to be hearers or doers of the Word. As none of us is a perfect doer of the Word, we do well honestly and rigorously to identify in ourselves those tendencies we have merely to listen to Scripture read and expounded, rather than to meditate upon it and to work out its blessed teaching in our lives. It is a sobering thing for us to realize that James is writing to believers, and that believers can and do fail to be doers of the Word. Yet, it is encouraging for us to realize that our God has inspired James to write these things not to condemn us, but lovingly to correct us.

Thursday, October 9th - James 1: 23, 24

In these verses, the hearer of the Word is illustrated. Each detail is significant in itself, but the true significance of those details is most evident when they are compared with the details in the illustration of the doer of the Word. The first detail in the illustration of the hearer of the Word is that he is focused upon himself. He is self-oriented, instead of being God-oriented. For him it is not his glorifying of God that is primary, but rather the enjoyment he expects to receive from God. This man approaches Scripture superficially, viewing its profound truths as though they were simply addressing ways in which he could make minor adjustments to his outward appearance. To the extent that the hearer is interested in anything beyond superficialities, it is not because he is vitally concerned with the transformation of his mind and heart into the likeness of Christ, but cares only to facilitate the feeding of his carnal passions.

Friday, October 10th - James 1: 23, 24

The hearer of the Word approaches the Word as though it were a mirror to reflect his outer features and thus allow him to refine his appearance. He does not approach Scripture as what it truly is: the mind and soul transforming breath of God (2 Tim. 3:16), the manifestation of the infallible wisdom of God (1 Cor. 1:18-25) and the immeasurable, holy love of God (Eph. 3:14-19). While Scripture does reveal a man to himself, it does so by disclosing to him his true thoughts and intentions in the perfect light of the glory of God (Heb. 4:12; Ps. 36:9). The hearer of the Word cares more about his outward appearance than he does about his inner essence. The doer of the Word considers himself in the light of Scripture, but he looks beyond himself to the saving God of Scripture (Rom. 4:18-21), and seeks to know and do God's will in loving gratitude for his gracious, loving salvation.

Saturday, October 11th – James 1: 23, 24

The mere hearer of the Word approaches the Word as a mirror in which he sees only his outer appearance. Because a mirror can give only an outer reflection of a man, it gives the man no true reflection of his inner character. Nor does a mirror give one any lasting impression, even of his physical appearance. When a man turns from a mirror, his image leaves his mind. The Word of God is much more than a mirror, but those who merely hear the Word treat it as a mirror and thus derive no true or lasting benefit from it.

Sunday, October 12th - James 1: 25

In this verse, James illustrates the doer of the Word in contrast to the hearer. The first contrasted detail given in this illustration is the radical way the focus of the doer differs from that of the hearer of God's Word. The hearer looks at himself. He is self-centered and self-absorbed. The doer of the Word looks beyond himself to the living God who has revealed Himself and His will in His Word. Nor does the doer glance at the Word superficially and passingly, merely to catch a glimpse of himself. The doer looks intently at Scripture, seeking to know its teaching, to understand its principles, but especially to see in it the grace, glory, truth, love, wisdom, and power of the God of Scripture.

Monday, October 13th - James 1: 25

The doer of the Word sees Scripture as the perfect law. He perceives its perfection because he perceives its infallible testimony to the perfect God of heaven and earth. He perceives the Word as law because he rightly regards it to be the standard and directing force of his life. Yet, the doer also sees the Word as the law of liberty. The truth of Scripture enlightens, sanctifies, and sets him free. The Christ to whom all Scripture testifies, is rightly seen by the doer of the Word as the Lover of his soul, the demonstration of the Father's love, and the One who sets him free from sin's bondage and fills him with grateful delight in which he lovingly regards and serves God and others. The doer of the Word has prayed for God to open his eyes to show him wonderful things in the Word (Ps. 119:18), and the Lord wonderfully hears and answers such prayer.

Tuesday, October 14th - James 1: 25

The hearer of the Word looks merely for a reflection of himself in Scripture, and gains but a transient glimpse of himself. The doer of the Word looks intently at the Word, focusing upon the God of Scripture and His saving grace, sanctifying truth, and holy will as revealed in Scripture. Therefore, the doer perceives the Word rightly and commits himself to practice its directives with an attitude of loving trust in and gratitude to the God of the Word. The doer is not a forgetful and empty, self-deluded soul, but is rather an effectual performer of what God commands in His Word. The doer of the Word lives a life of fruitfulness that is glorifying to God, beneficial to others, and deeply satisfying to himself.

Wednesday, October 15th - James 1: 25

The hearer of the Word is concerned only with his own outward appearance. The doer of the Word is concerned with the God who made him and redeemed him, not only outwardly appearing to do so, but with eternal, holy, divine love, actually having done so. Accordingly, the doer of the Word is concerned with having his mind transformed, his soul sanctified, and his character totally conformed to the image of God by the Word, so that in attitude and action he might live actually—not apparently—for God's glory and for the good of others.

Thursday, October 16th - James 1: 26, 27

James mentioned in v.25 the perfect law of liberty upon which the doer of God's Word intently concentrates. In vv.26,27, we are given two examples of the blessed fruit that issues from the lives of those who are effectual doers of the Word of the Lord. The first is an example of self-control and the second is an example of loving, sacrificial service. Both examples are aspects of the fruit of God's Holy Spirit that flourishes in the lives of those who have put aside the remnants of their sin with its unholy passions (Gal. 5:22-24).

Friday, October 17th - James 1: 26

The perfect law of liberty mentioned in v.25 gives the doer of that law freedom from the guilt and dominion of sin as well as freedom to love and serve God and man. It does not give license for one's indulgence of sinful attitudes and actions. The perfect law of liberty gives one the desire and enabling power to practice self-control (Gal. 5:23) so

that the doer of that law increasingly thinks and speaks the truth in love. Therefore, James addresses this matter of self-control in v.26. As a man thinks in his heart, so is he (Prov. 23:7), and as a man is, so he communicates himself. James tells us that we can test our souls by what we say.

Saturday, October 18th - James 1: 26

If a man is a mere hearer of God's Word, and not an effectual doer of the Word, he deludes himself with the thought that he is a Christian who is pleasing to the Lord (v.22). The hearer will also speak a language that manifests whether his religion is a matter of self-deceit or genuine piety. The language of Zion is the truth spoken in love (Eph. 4:15). Anything other than such lovingly edifying speech reveals a counterfeit, and hence worthless, religion.

Sunday, October 19th – James 1: 26

The bridling of the tongue alludes to one not thoughtlessly spewing forth whatever thought comes into his mind, but instead bringing all of one's thoughts and resulting speech captive to the holy and loving Spirit of the Savior. That is why James writes not only of the tongue, but also of the heart in this verse. As our souls become more sanctified by the grace, truth, and love of the Lord, so we become more gracious, true, and loving in our hearts, with the result that we will be charitable and lovingly considerate in our dealings with others. The man whose heart and mind are full of Christ will restrain any thought or feeling unworthy of Christ and give expression accordingly to Christ-like ideas and sentiments.

Monday, October 20th - James 1: 26, 27

In v.26 we learn that the truly religious person will submit his heart and tongue to the truth and love of God in Christ. The truly religious person will strive to let no unwholesome, unedifying word come from his mouth (Eph. 4:29). What will come from his mouth will be gracious and wisely beneficial speech (Col. 4:6). The truly religious person will also convey the truth and love of the Lord through his works as well as through his words. Therefore, James further qualifies true religion in v.27 by giving examples of gracious and compassionate service rendered to those in most pressing need. Those truly talking the talk of Jesus will be walking the walk of our loving Savior as well.

Tuesday, October 21st - James 1: 27

James defines true religion as that which is determined by God to be pure and undefiled. The purity refers to sound doctrine and sanctified practice. It further refers to holy and loving devotion to Christ. Undefiled religion is that which is without the contamination of the world, flesh, or devil. Such religion will open one's eyes to the needs of others, and open one's hands to help and lovingly to embrace others.

Wednesday, October 22nd - James 1: 27

When James uses the term, religion, he is referring to the external fruits that issue from the root of one's faith in God through Christ. These externals can be distinguished but never separated from the root of faith. Therefore, James speaks of the religious

man's heart in v.26, and in v.27 he writes of that man's religious deeds being performed from a heart that is grateful to God for His saving mercy, and that loves others as God in Christ has loved him. But as we are to love our neighbor as we love ourselves, James concludes this thought with a word about personal care for one's own soul. True religion prompts us to put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh (Rom. 13:14). If we do not sanctify ourselves in the truth (Jn. 17:17-19), we can hardly expect to speak and serve for God's glory and for the good of men.

Thursday, October 23rd - James 2: 1-4

The process for a believer's true growth in the grace and knowledge of the Lord was set out by James in 1:21-27. Negatively, residual sin must be mortified and, positively, the Word is to be heard, received, and obeyed. Examples of charitable deeds that flow from right application of doctrine were given in v.27. Yet from the opening verses of this second chapter we are led to suppose that the believers to whom James was originally writing were not all practicing such pure and undefiled religion. Apparently, the scattered saints to whom James was writing were not all lovingly focused on the needy, but rather were fawning over the rich and powerful while frowning upon the poor. As a faithful minister of the Word, James writes not to condemn the believers for their defective practice, but to correct them (and us). There will always be faulty faith and practice in any fellowship, but God is faithful and loving to correct his erring children.

Friday, October 24th - James 2: 1-4

The problem James addresses in vv.1-13 is that of discrimination in the scattered fellowships of the believers to whom he was writing. Some of the recipients of this letter were actually practicing such sinful discrimination while others were being warned against taking up the practice. James does not condemn all discrimination. It is right and necessary for believers to exercise discernment and to draw right distinctions between good and evil, loving the former and hating the latter (Rom. 12:9). What James does condemn is the practice of personal favoritism, or, literally, face-regarding, wherein at least some of James' readers were viewing people coming into their fellowship and receiving them not on the basis of who they were and what they needed, but rather on the basis of what they had and what they appeared to be able to give. Those who profess to have faith in the God of love, who regard not outward appearance but rather the heart, should not act so lovelessly and with such superficial self-regard toward others.

Saturday, October 25th - James 2: 1-4

The example James uses to warn against the practice of personal favoritism is the differing reception believers give to rich and poor visitors in their churches. If a rich and a poor man both enter our fellowship, our regard for them should be much deeper and more spiritual than the natural impulse to perceive their differing outward appearances and welcome the one while shunning the other. If the rich man is regarded highly for his fine clothing and rich adornment and is honored and preferred accordingly, while the poor man is lowly esteemed for his dirty and ragged appearance, we are guilty of sinful favoritism. Why should we want the rich near us (...sit here...) and the poor man to be far from us (...stand over there...), when the rich man may be a thief and an oppressor of others, while the poor man may be a loving servant of others? Face-regarders are

inclined to make serious errors in judgment, while those who see all men as sinners in need of the clothing of Christ's righteousness and lovingly seek to minister to that vital need, more accurately discern and rightly deal with other people.

Sunday, October 26th - James 2: 1-4

It is ridiculous that a rich man should be idolized and given honors and comforts. Why should he who has so much be given more? Similarly, it is rude and loveless to treat the poor man with contempt, as though he who is already so miserable should have his misery confirmed and increased by his being reduced to subservience. Such inappropriate treatments result from wrong judgments, and James makes clear that such wrong judgments result from evil, self-regarding motives. One's deferring to the rich is usually done in hopes of one's receiving some reward from the rich. The poor are usually treated with contempt because people expect to receive nothing from the poor man. But what if the rich man is a criminal and the poor man is one who has lovingly given his worldly goods to others? Those judging by outward appearances will be blind and ignorant to these more substantial considerations, for those truths will be suppressed by unrighteous self-regard. Those who are clothed in Christ's righteousness should envy no man's fine apparel; those made rich with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places should not fail to be lovingly generous and gracious to those who are poor, blind, wretched, and naked because they are without Christ

October 2008

Monday, October 27th – James 2: 5

The personal favoritism (or face-regarding) for which James is admonishing his readers will be shown in vv.5-11 to be a most grievous sin of highest magnitude. Yet, James writes not to condemn but to correct his readers. Therefore, he addresses them as: my beloved brethren. The loving fraternal tie that binds all of God's redeemed people together is urged as the reality that should prevail over all thoughts of personal favoritism in the body of Christ. How can any believer rightly despise any whom God has loved and adopted through the costly sacrifice of His Son? Whether our brethren are poor in terms of material possession or poor in the performance of their loving duties, as were some to whom James was writing, they yet remain our beloved brethren whom we should regard with holy charity and, when necessary, loving correction.

Tuesday, October 28th - James 2: 5

James has condemned the practice of sinful discrimination in any Christian fellowship. Such discrimination is sinful because it is based upon evil, self-regarding reasonings (v.4) that lead us to flatter those people who are outwardly successful while flattening those who are outwardly deprived. There is, however, a holy discrimination that should be observed in Christian fellowships, one based upon the distinctions that the precious, saving grace of God has made in the lives of believers, blessedly distinguishing them from those dead in sin.. In this verse, James is not despising believers who may be rich so much as he is showing how God has exalted believers who are poor. The rich of this world despise and oppress the poor; yet God has compassionately regarded the poor and exalted them to equal spiritual status with other believers, be they rich or poor. God has delighted especially to exalt the poor to the honor of the glory of His grace. Thus, in the economy of redemption, not many who are naturally wise, mighty, or noble are called to salvation (1 Cor. 1:26-29). But whatever a man may lack before his effectual calling by God in Christ, he more than gains by his being in Christ (1 Cor. 1:30). Therefore, our boast should ever be in the Lord and in His gracious working in the lives of ourselves and our brethren, regardless of any differences in natural endowments or attainments or possessions that may exist among members of the body of Christ (1 Cor. 1:31).

Wednesday, October 29th - James 2: 5

Whatever the poor of this world may lack in terms of material possessions, they have infinitely rich compensation in Christ. God has made them to be rich in faith. Because faith unites one savingly to Christ and every spiritual blessing in Him, it is more precious than all of the gold in this world (1 Pet. 1:6-9). Faith opens our eyes to the hope of God's calling, to the riches of the glory of the Lord's inheritance in the saints, and to the surpassing greatness of the divine power toward believers (Eph. 1:18,19). Those who possess faith in God through Christ know that God is for them as their loving, heavenly Father, and that they are made to be more than conquerors in all things through the loving power of their saving God (Rom. 8:31ff). No one in his right mind or heart could despise any person so enriched and empowered by faith.

Thursday, October 30th - James 2: 5

The poor of this world who have been chosen by God are rich in faith in this life. Such faith opens the eyes of their hearts to see the reality and luxuriate in the blessed security of the holy love, almighty power, and infallible wisdom of God. The wealth of the poor in Christ also extends beyond this life. They are, by their being in Christ, heirs of the eternal and glorious kingdom of God. Only those who are themselves poor, blind, naked, and wretched would despise ones who are so rich and empowered in this life and gloriously entitled in the next, just because such ones lack a few of this world's perishing trinkets.

Friday, October 31st - James 2: 5

If we despise and discriminate against the poor who are believers in Christ, we show loveless contempt for those who are our brethren, who have been elected by God from eternity to receive salvation, who are rich in faith now and who will inherit the eternal kingdom of God's glory, and, finally, who love God because they know and have gratefully accepted the wondrous truth that He has first loved them. We should love and cherish, rather than hold in contempt, those whom God has so loved and who love our heavenly Father.

Saturday, November 1st - James 2: 5, 6

Those whom God has so lovingly chosen, honored, and enriched with every spiritual blessing in Christ, we should love and honor if we are truly children of God. We fail to reflect our Father's gracious and exalting likeness when we treat our brethren in Christ, who happen to be poor in this life, with dishonor and contempt. We should be like Jesus, who ever and only did that which He saw His Father doing (Jn. 5:19).

Sunday, November 2nd - James 2: 6, 7

The absurdly self-defeating tendency of a Christian's showing favoritism to the rich while despising the poor is mentioned in these verses. In v.5, James appealed to his readers to understand how such favoritism was contrary to the loving, electing, and enriching working of God in the lives of poor believers. In vv.6,7, James points out that such favoritism works only to empower the rich who have tended not to be charitable toward others, but rather have oppressed and impoverished the very ones who would be inclined to fawn over them. Worse than that, the rich, being intoxicated and puffed up with arrogance due to their idolatrous devotion to unrighteous mammon, tend to speak with blasphemous contempt for the God of saving grace who gave His infinitely precious and beloved Son to be the Savior of those impoverished by their sin but effectually called by God to inherit eternal life and glory. Friendship with such worldlings is enmity with the God of our salvation.

Monday, November 3rd - James 2: 8

James places in contrast to the evil motives he mentioned in v.4 the royal law of love. Literally, the royal law of love could be translated the law of our King, for it is our loving, redeeming God, the glorious King of heaven and earth, who commands us to love Him with all of our being and to love others as we love ourselves. This law of love, therefore, issues from the highest source of sovereign authority. It also issues from our gracious heavenly King who has first loved us with holy and sacrificial love. This loving

King not only commands, but also inclines us to will and enables us to do this command, resulting in His good pleasure, as well as the good pleasure of those whom we love and even of ourselves as well (Phil. 2:12,13).

Tuesday, November 4th - James 2: 8

When we are progressively fulfilling the royal law of love, we are obeying the command of God given to us clearly in Scripture. We do well to obey all of God's Word, but especially we do well to obey the Great Commandment to love God and man, as such sincere obedience is the highest fruition of the saving and sanctifying love God has for us in Christ. We also do well in relation to our neighbors whom we love. For as we love others, we enrich them with a power that transforms them even as the loving mercies of God transform us into His likeness (Rom. 12:1,2). The love of God does not discover loveliness in us, but rather deposits and develops it in us. Likewise, we may not find the brother who is poor in natural endowments, attainments, and possessions to be lovely to us, but when we—like God and according to His command and example and by His enabling power—love our poor brother, such love enriches him as does his faith (v.5), and causes the loveliness of gratitude, joy, and holy devotion to blossom in his life.

Wednesday, November 5th - James 2: 9

In this verse, James returns our consideration from the precious blessings that abound when we fulfill the royal law of love to the cost and cursing that result from our sinful partiality. Regarding the action of such partiality, James rightly tells us that we are committing sin. Such sinning is contrary to the will of our heavenly King as His will is revealed in His holy Word. Therefore, we are also convicted or found to be guilty of transgressing the law of love that God has clearly expressed and commanded in His Word. It grieves the poor brother when we show contempt for him; it is gravely costly to us when we do so, as it brings upon us guilt, shame, corruption, and misery.

Thursday, November 6th – James 2: 9-11

James informs us of the extent of our transgression in vv.10,11. Sinful partiality may seem to us to be a relatively minor sin, but, in fact, because the Moral Law of God is a coherent and inseparable whole, when we sin against one Commandment, we sin against all. The coherence of the Moral Law is based upon the integrity of the Lord who has revealed to us His Law. Whenever we sin against the Law of God, we sin against the God of that Law, as v.11 makes clear.

Friday, November 7th - James 2: 11

Sinful favoritism in the body of Christ is no slight matter, but is mortally serious. James does not select adultery and murder randomly from the Ten Commandments. Rude treatment of a brother in Christ is the bud from which the bitter fruit of murder blossoms and ripens. Spiritual adultery, wherein we separate ourselves from our loving God and join ourselves to a loveless idol, must precede our murdering our brother (1 Jn. 4:20,21).

Saturday, November 8th – James 2: 12, 13

James concludes his rebuke of the sin of personal favoritism in the body of Christ by calling upon his readers to repent of the sin of their essentially having dealt murderously with their brethren. We are called upon to communicate ourselves to others in a spirit of vital awareness that we shall be judged by what James calls the law of liberty. By this he means that we, who are all transgressors of the Law of God, have received infinite and saving mercy by God in Christ. That mercy has set us free from the bondage, guilt, and corruption of our sins. We who had an infinite burden of debt to God's justice have had that debt paid by the merciful death of Christ, who regarded us in the poverty of our sin and enriched us with His imputed righteousness (2 Cor. 5:21; 8:9). Accordingly, we who are under the standard of such loving divine mercy ought to act with loving mercy toward our brethren, endeavoring to free them from their burdens (Gal. 6:2).

Sunday, November 9th - James 2: 12, 13

When we fail to demonstrate mercy toward others, we grieve our God who has shown infinitely costly mercy toward us. Nothing can be more inconsistent with the saving divine mercy we have received than for us to be merciless toward our brethren. Nothing can be more dangerous for the merciless one, either. Jesus Himself warned us that if we do not show mercy toward others, neither will God show mercy toward us (Mk. 11:26). If we seek to rationalize our merciless treatment of others by saying that they justly deserve to be ignored or roughly treated by us, we should not be surprised to find the standard of divine justice, not mercy, being applied to us by God (Mt. 25:31-46).

Monday, November 10th - James 2: 13

As God's holy and loving mercy triumphed over His just judgment of sinners through the atoning mediation of Christ, so we who have received such mercy ought to let a merciful regard for our brethren triumph over the judgmental thoughts or feelings we may have toward them. We who have received infinite mercy from God ought to be willing and certainly are able to manifest an ever increasing measure of mercy toward others. Furthermore, if our God, who has been directly and personally offended by all of our sin, can cause His mercy to triumph over His just judgment that we so richly deserve, should we not be able to treat mercifully our poor brethren, whose poverty is no offense against us personally and may not necessarily result from any sin or fault of their own?

Tuesday, November 11th 3 James 2: 13

God's holy mercy has triumphed over His righteous judgment so that for those in Christ there is now no condemnation, Christ having borne the divine condemnation that believers deserve. By faith we receive such triumphant mercy, and by faith we should be gratefully and joyfully determined to manifest mercy toward others. When we focus by faith upon our merciful Redeemer, and less upon our selfish desires or the perceived defects in others, then we, too, shall delight to let our loving mercy triumph over our harsh judgment of others.

Wednesday, November 12th - James 2: 14

James opened this letter by encouraging his readers to exercise faith as they worked out their salvation amidst many trials (Jas. 1:1-21). He went on to exhort his readers to exercise genuine faith, namely, a faith that works itself out by love, and he admonished

them to stop using a counterfeit faith that prompted them to seek relief from trials by their fawning over the rich while despising the poor (Jas. 1:22-2:13). Now in the second half of this second chapter, James deals with the relationship between faith and works in general. This relationship is at the root of the specific matters James has already addressed in this letter. A right understanding and acceptance of this relationship is essential for believers in any age or place rightly to work out their salvation not only with respect to their treatment of the poor in their fellowships, but also with respect to how they relate to all of their brethren at all times. Therefore, James examines the root of faith and the fruit of good works so that his readers would be stimulated to bring forth sweet fruit in keeping with their saving faith, or else discover that their lack of such fruit indicates no saving root and that such a discovery would lead them to ask, seek, and knock for saving faith.

Thursday, November 13th - James 2: 14

James has already defined faith as one's receiving Christ as He is manifested in Scripture (Jas. 1:21); he has also defined good works as the outward expression of that faith (Jas. 1:22). The relation of saving faith to good works is that faith is the root and works are the blessed fruits of faith. Jesus commands those who have faith in Him to produce such good works: If you love Me, you will keep My commandments. (Jn. 14:15). The Holy Spirit prompts and empowers believers to obey Christ's commandments. Those who do not produce good works in conformity with Christ's commandments have strong cause to suspect that their so-called faith is counterfeit.

Friday, November 14th - James 2: 14

Faith without works is not faith at all. It is therefore useless in such vital areas as blessing others, glorifying God, and saving the one having a counterfeit faith. Without faith we are without Jesus, and without Him we can do nothing (Jn. 15:5), but with Christ we can do all things (Phil. 4:13).

Saturday, November 15th - James 2: 14

Just because a man professes that he has faith does not necessarily mean that he possesses faith. Our performance of good works in an attitude of cheerful thanksgiving to God for the amazing work of salvation He has accomplished for and applied to us indicates that we do actually possess a faith that saves us and prompts us to serve others usefully.

Sunday, November 16th - James 2: 14

The lack of good works in a person's life calls into question the usefulness and reality of the faith he says he possesses. True faith is truly useful in its uniting us to the Savior and prompting us to do good works which God has prepared for us to perform throughout our earthly pilgrimage for His glory and for the good of others (Eph. 2:10). False faith breeds a useless and false assurance that will be shattered when Christ declares in the last day that He never knew those possessing such counterfeit faith and performing imitations of good works (Mt. 7:15-23).

Monday, November 17th - James 2: 15, 16

In these verses, James gives an example of the useless works that the person having a false faith performs. A brother having obvious physical and pressing needs such as food and clothing is given nothing any more substantial than words and wishes that do nothing but mock and increase the bitterness of the hungry man's needs. Such treatment of a needy soul is infinitely removed from the Savior who is the object of true faith, and who came to us in our poverty, nakedness, hunger, and wretchedness, not merely with words, but essentially to accomplish the infinitely costly and blessedly substantial work of our redemption whereby we would be fed the heavenly manna of His incarnation, drink the refreshing provision of His atoning death, and be clothed in His perfect righteousness.

Tuesday, November 18th - James 2: 17

James has already indicated that faith without good works is useless and does not save (v.14), and that it does not serve to bless but rather to embitter others who are in substantial need (vv.15,16). Now James tells us that such faith is dead. It is not as though one's lack of good works kills his faith, although the performance of good works does strengthen assurance and lead us increasingly to treasure and to walk and serve by such useful, saving faith. Instead, the lack of the fruit of good works in one's life indicates that the root of such so-called faith is not the life-supplying instrument by which sinners are united to the Savior, but rather the empty presumption of the natural man who remains dead in his trespasses and sins.

Wednesday, November 19th – James 2: 18, 19

From his having designated as dead a professed faith that is void of good works, James carries on to say further that such a faith is demonic. The man who claims that his faith without works is as good as the faith of the man who produces good works is shown that in reality he is not in company with brethren whose faith vitally unites them to Christ and produces in them Christ-like service (Phil. 2:1-13). Those having faith without good works have the kind of faith that devils have, who have no doubt in God's existence, but who also never seek to serve for God's glory or for man's good.

Thursday, November 20th - James 2: 18, 19

The man who merely professes faith without living a life of faithful performance of good works firmly believes that his mental acknowledgment of God and intellectual apprehension of the teachings of God's Word are all that comprise saving faith. In this he fails to realize that Satan and his demons have a far better intellectual grasp of theology than he has. And yet, for all of their theological knowledge, the devils do not love God but are in dread of Him; they do not love men but hate them. Such attitudes invariably characterize the faith that is no more than mental assent to objective truths about God.

Friday, November 21st - James 2: 20

With this verse, James concludes his critique of faith without works with an appeal for any of his readers who have such faith to recognize about their false faith what he had written of it in v.14, namely, that it is useless. One's failure to recognize the uselessness of counterfeit faith betrays one's perverse refusal to acknowledge truth and a wicked folly that will ultimately be condemned by the God who has not merely promised

salvation but also has provided it through the costly accomplishments of His beloved and only-begotten Son. False faith is not just useless to those in need of practical help from the profession believer. It is ultimately useless to the one possessing it in the most critical need that he has. False faith is useless to save those who rely upon it.

Saturday, November 22nd - James 2: 21-26

In this passage, James develops further the relationship between faith and works. He dealt with that relationship in principle in previous verses. Now he reinforces his teaching with two personal examples that demonstrate how saving faith works itself out in deeds of loving devotion and commitment to the God of salvation. Thus the teaching is shown through living examples in whom the teaching was clearly incarnate, and this is done with the intention of making it incarnate in us.

Sunday, November 23rd - James 2: 21

The question posed in this verse is in a form that shows an expectation of a positive answer. Abraham, the father of all of the faithful, was justified by his works, especially that of his having offered to sacrifice his only son, Isaac. But this interrogative assertion may seem contrary to what is recorded in Gen. 15:4-6, where decades before Abraham offered up Isaac, Scripture records that the patriarch was justified by his belief in the Lord who had promised him a son. In fact, Paul uses this passage to make an assertion that appears to be contradictory of what James says in this verse. In Rom. 4:2,3, Paul reasons that Abraham was not justified by his works because in Gen. 15:6 we are told plainly that he was justified by his faith in the Lord alone. What James writes in this verse does not contradict what Paul teaches about justification by faith alone. The point James is making is that genuine faith will prompt and empower those possessing it to do good works that serve as verifying fruits of a justifying faith. It is true that our good works do not save us, but it is also true that saving faith will always work itself out in love.

Monday, November 24th - James 2: 21, 22

Abraham was clearly justified by his faith in the Lord apart from any works. The patriarch grew to be fully assured that what God had promised him regarding the birth of a son, He was able to perform, and it was this belief alone that was reckoned to him as righteousness (Rom. 4:21,22). However, years later when the Lord told Abraham to sacrifice his beloved only son, and the patriarch fully committed himself to do so, he was performing a good work of costly obedience to God that brilliantly reflected God's giving of His Son as a redeeming sacrifice for sinners. This good work verified and confirmed the genuine nature of Abraham's justifying faith, as the angel of the Lord Himself remarked in Gen. 22:12:...for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me. Additionally, at the time of Abraham's offering of Isaac, God confirmed His promise of salvation to the patriarch and his descendants because Abraham had so obeyed the mysterious and painfully costly directive of the Lord (Gen. 22:16-18). We are justified by faith without works but those who are justified will do good works in obedience to the God of their salvation, thus adoring and confirming the reality of their faith and the certainty of their justification.

Tuesday, November 25th - James 2: 23

The righteousness that God imputed to Abraham through the patriarch's faith is fulfilled by the impartation of righteous character that produces righteous works and nurtures more holy and intimate communion between the justified Abraham and his justifying God.

Wednesday, November 26th - James 2: 23, 24

When Abraham believed that God could and would give him a son, though at the time of the promise the patriarch's body was as good as dead, such faith in God justified Abraham. Years afterward, when Abraham was tested further to believe that God could and would raise his beloved son from the dead (Heb. 11:17-19), the outworking of that faith was not a patient trust in God's promise but a productive work in obedience to God's Word that was impelled by a grateful love for God, that aimed at the glory of God, and that was empowered by the Holy Spirit of God. Such works are the fruition of a faith that truly justifies a man whether through his patient waiting for God to provide what He promises or through the productive working out of his salvation by the direction and empowering of the Lord.

November 2007

The following revised notes were first published in April 1991

Thursday, November 27th - Proverbs 12: 28

Eternal life lies at the end of the way of the righteous. Meantime, abundant life is enjoyed in that way. The Lord feeds us His truth, guides us by His wisdom, empowers us with His Spirit, and comforts us with His loving presence—all of which the wicked do not have. This narrow way leads progressively away from every form of death. Daily deaths for the righteous lead to sanctification, while final death for them proves to be a portal to paradise. All deaths, for those in Christ, lead to glorious resurrections.

Friday, November 28th - Proverbs 13: 1

A wise child, especially a son, who may feel more of a natural hankering to be on his own, recognizes and submits to authority, especially when it is lovingly administered through the family. His wisdom consists in his humbly realizing his need for instruction, correction, and discipline, as well as in his recognizing that his father's chastisements come upon him for his good, not his harm, issuing not from tyrannical caprice, but from godly authority and paternal love. The scoffer, despising such a humble and submissive attitude, casts off rebuke, seeing it as unwarranted, unnecessary, and irksome. In doing so he removes himself from rightful authority and the protection and provision of fatherly love, dooming himself to waywardness, misery, and loneliness.

Saturday, November 29th - Proverbs 13: 2,3

A man in Christ bears the fruit of the Spirit in his life (Gal. 5:22,23). Out of the good treasure of his godly character he brings forth good words, which in turn bear more good fruit for him and others to enjoy. He guards his words, so as not needlessly to offend, thus avoiding worlds of trouble. When he must speak truth which does offend, he does so with wisdom and authority which keep his enemies at bay, and with love that heals as well as wounds his friends. But the treacherous heart has an appetite for violence. Such wicked souls desire to promote themselves by casting down others. Their evil communications return upon their own heads ultimately, and their ruin is great.

Sunday, November 30th - Proverbs 13: 4

Not only is the outward condition of the sluggard miserably impoverished (12:24,27), but his soul has an appetite with increasing hunger for the things he does not have. Yet even his deepened cravings do not arouse him to exertion. He fondly thinks that his appetite will work like gravity, growing great enough to attract objects of his desire. But it is not so. In contrast, the diligent is not only enriched outwardly by his investments of energy, but his soul is satisfied with the accomplishments of such investing. His soul is also enlarged due to this filling, giving him not a craving for what he does not possess, but a capacity for what he shall, by his diligence, attain and enjoy.

Monday, December 1st - Proverbs 13: 5

The words and deeds of the wicked spread a literal stench throughout society. They produce foul and shameful fruits from their foul hearts. It may not be their

intention to do so, for wickedness loves to wear the cloak of respectability, but the offensive odor of an evil heart penetrates the most charming attire. In contrast, the righteous hate falsehood and seek to mortify it at its root, namely, in their own hearts. A sweet fragrance is spread abroad by those so crucifying the flesh and nurturing the fruit of the Spirit.

Tuesday, December 2nd - Proverbs 13: 6

The righteousness of Christ, being imparted to believers, guards them in their walk, keeping them in the way of the Lord and out of sin's bypaths. Accordingly, we keep to the good and blameless way because of growing inner conviction. The unredeemed sinner acts in accordance with his fallen nature, and has no place to go but down into disappointment, death, and condemnation. Let us therefore thus prize and cultivate righteousness.

Wednesday, December 3rd - Proverbs 13: 7,8

There may be contrast or continuity or both in v.7. That verse may read: There is one who pretends to be rich, but has nothing; who impoverishes himself, but has great wealth. If we take it that way, the phenomenon of confused values is presented, wherein a person places too high value on material things and outward appearances, projecting an image of himself being materially better off than he truly is—all to the neglect of true riches in Christ, with spiritual impoverishment resulting. If the verse presents a contrast, we are warned not to envy the materially rich or seek to appear rich ourselves. Both vv.7,8 teach that great fortune can often constitute an enticing target for thieves and selfish manipulators, thus drawing the rich man into worlds of care and concern from which the poor man is blessedly free. When Hezekiah showed the riches of his treasury to the Babylonian envoys, such carnal folly on his part stimulated their lust to have those riches, whereas his concentration on spiritual riches and his cultivation of the seeming impoverishment of humility would have been a precious safeguard (2 Kings 20:12-19).

Thursday, December 4th - Proverbs 13: 9

The wicked have a lamp which is the product of man's labor and artistry, and which can produce light temporarily...until its source of fuel is exhausted. Here is a reminder that for all of the so-called good works of the unsaved, their lives grow duller each day as they draw ever nearer to darkness, death, and hell. But the righteous have a light shining through them, which light has its infinite source in the Lord. Their lives grow brighter each day, until they shine perfectly in His glory and with His glory in them (Rom. 8:18).

Friday, December 5th - Proverbs 13: 10,11

Presumption is based not on an accurate perception of facts and responsibilities, but rather on the strength of perverse desires. Therefore, the presumptuous refuse to receive wise counsel, which may alert them to faults in the object of their desire, and which also makes clear the responsible way of obtaining goals through honest and hard labor gradually but surely attaining its aim. The presumptuous man simply feels that the strength of his desire imputes worth to the objects of his longing, and justifies the employment of evasive, manipulative, and fraudulent measures in the attainment of those

objects. But such objects, even if attained, do not satisfy. Things received through easy and wayward means are usually easily lost. Hence, the presumptuous know only strife and frustration, not the security and satisfaction which the humble, patient, diligent man of integrity enjoys from the fruit of his godly and diligent labors.

Saturday, December 6th - Proverbs 13: 12

The hope of glory and all lesser hopes may seem at times to be in perpetually distant prospect. Consequently we grow weak, and groan as though life is going out of us (Rom. 8:24-26). But when such hopes are realized, our hearts will be revived and satisfied with living fruit drawn from an inexhaustible source. For the believer, all sickness, weakness, and pain ultimately will be removed, and ever increasing vitality and joy will take their place (Rev. 21:3,4; 22:1-5).

Sunday, December 7th - Proverbs 13: 13-18

These verses consider from several angles the practical fruits which grow from one's attitude to the will and ways of God. He who respects and reverently obeys God's Word will be blessed in manifold ways and increasing degree. He will both receive and give wise teaching which will save himself and others from deadly snares. He will enjoy felicity and favor. The difficulties in his life arise not because of his failure and disobedience, as in the case of the wicked, lazy, treacherous fool, whose persistent defiance of godly standards renders him his own worst enemy; instead, the righteous man respects and welcomes the difficult challenges in his life as reproofing and refining instruments in the hand of his Lord, designed to purify his heart, soul, strength, and mind, thus leading to the enjoyment of glorious honor.

Monday, December 8th - Proverbs 13: 19,20

The attainment of desires generally brings at least initial sweetness to the souls of good and evil persons alike. However, for the wicked fool, such sweetness quickly turns to bitter disappointment. This is so due to the fact that the evil he craves, while it promises lasting delight, can only provide temporary pleasure as sugar coating for bitter and permanent pain. Still the fool craves evil, pursuing it in company with other fools, whose companionship proves destructive for all involved. But the desire of the wise and righteous soul is good. The Lord accordingly gives good things to those hungering for them (Mt. 5:6; 6:33; Lk. 11:9-13). Those whose godly desires are fulfilled can testify to no disappointment, but rather to growing and deepening delight with the provision of the Lord. They delight further to be with other godly and wise souls, who stimulate and encourage them in the process of sanctification.

Tuesday, December 9th - Proverbs 13: 21,22

Sin destroys character and transforms even advantageous circumstances into consuming adversity. The godly person grows rich and strong in character, and often in circumstantial blessings as well. He therefore enjoys a life of abundance which overflows to bless others throughout his life, and which provides an inheritance for his children after his death. Even if the wicked man manages to prosper in terms of intellectual, practical, and aesthetic gifts, and perhaps also material possessions, such prospering profits neither himself nor his children. The heavenly Father of the righteous

will see to it that His children eventually inherit not only such stolen and abused gifts, but also the whole earth (Mt. 5:5).

Wednesday, December 10th - Proverbs 13: 23

This verse, as translated in the New American Standard Version, draws our attention to the fact that men's injustice toward their fellows serves to impede the development of potential in others, thus rendering them perpetually poor. How wonderful it will be when all such sinful impediments are removed by the Lord! But the verse may also be translated so as to indicate that a man's own lack of judgment keeps him from developing his own potential. He thinks he lacks the materials to succeed, when really it is his own sinful neglect, distraction, and indolence which conspire against his exploiting to advantage what resources he does have. Finally, the verse may also be commenting upon the blessing of the Lord, which enables the humble poor to produce an abundance from the same field which, if attained by injustice, would be cursed by God so as to yield nothing. We may truly say that the heart of a field's owner determines the harvest. Read Haggai 1:5-11 in this connection.

Thursday, December 11th - Proverbs 13: 24

We must not confuse an indulgent sentimentality with love. Those who do so, intent on sparing their children all pain, and who proceed on the basis of that confusion, serve to harm their children greatly. Damage is never done when sinful manifestations are consistently and lovingly corrected, even, if need be, with loving and judicious applications of pain. But great harm results when sin is allowed to corrupt and weaken our children's characters as well as their confidence in the Lord, who neither spared His only begotten Son from the cross, nor who spares us from His loving chastisements which are designed for our lasting good.

Friday, December 12th - Proverbs 13: 25

Compare the righteous satisfaction of the Apostle Paul as delineated in Philippians 4:11-13, with the wicked want of Haman found in Esther 5:9-13.

Saturday, December 13th - Proverbs 14: 1-3

A wise woman serves ever in constructive ways. She is a blessing to her husband and to her family. She works diligently to transform a house into a warm, loving home. She manages all things well. The foolish woman destroys the peace and security of her family in every sense. Her hands waste resources, and her mouth utters things which always require correction (v.3). Men, of course, are also capable of bringing such blessing or curse upon their families. Yet here we learn that even the weaker vessel can destroy herself and her home despite the faithful diligence of her husband. The key to men or women serving for blessing rather than curse lies with their attitude toward the Lord (v.2). Those fearing the Lord are upright in attitude and action, and serve to build up others and all those things for which they are responsible. Those despising God are twisted in themselves, and they tend to twist all they touch.

Sunday, December 14th - Proverbs 14: 4

The tools of any trade require some degree of maintenance. When one is unwilling to invest the time and trouble involved in such maintenance, he may wish himself to be without tools, and may seek to justify his wish by pretending to adopt the simplicity of spirituality. Yet God works through means properly maintained. For us to seek freedom from our tools and their requisite care, is to run the risk of our hearing words of divine rebuke, due to our failure to apply ourselves to the right use of the means the Lord has provided for us to bear fruit for His glory (Mt. 25:14-30).

Monday, December 15th - Proverbs 14: 5

A faithful soul is a principled soul. Therefore, the will of the faithful is determined to seek, respect, and tell only truth. No enticement or intimidation will incline such a one to lie. Yet a false heart breeds and broadcasts nothing but lies. Not only can the false heart be successfully bought, sold, teased or threatened, but it spews forth its fabrications even without such inducements. Let us then seek and determine by God's grace to be faithful.

Tuesday, December 16th - Proverbs 14: 6

The way to attain wisdom is to mortify, rather than exercise, a spirit of proud cynicism. Scoffers, recognizing no authority above themselves, exclude themselves from receiving wisdom, which comes only from the highest authority. But the one who humbly stands under the Lord, revering Him and gratefully receiving His gifts, learns and grows with relative ease and increasing enjoyment.

Wednesday, December 17th - Proverbs 14: 7-9

Fools make bad company which corrupts good morals. They know neither themselves nor the Lord nor His holy will, which they continually and heedlessly disobey. They desire to have no such knowledge. Hence, when they speak and act, they do so according to their deluded and defiant natures. For one continually to be exposed to such evil communications is to hazard being personally infected by folly. If we were uncritically (or even critically) consistently to inhale the noxious fumes such irreverent folly belches forth, we would surely have our spiritual and intellectual senses dulled to the point where we fail to make vital distinctions and decisions. Once a man reveals himself to be a fool, he deserves no audience from us, and if we do grant him a hearing, it serves not for his benefit, but rather, however unintended, for our harm.

Thursday, December 18th - Proverbs 14: 11

Even that which seems substantial, such as a house, if it is built and maintained by the wicked, will not last. Notice, it does not simply disintegrate as though poorly built, which is often the case with the products of the wicked; it is destroyed by the hand of God, who will not suffer the unrighteous indefinitely to prosper (Ps. 73:1-20). Meanwhile, the apparently flimsy tents of the righteous protect them in time and serve them on their way to the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God (Heb. 11:9,10). The promises of God may seem as mere tents when compared to the tangible products of this world. But God's provision is sure, exceeding our apprehension of His promise, and enduring eternally, while the things of this world fade until they are finally consumed at the return of our Lord (2 Pet. 3:10).

Friday, December 19th - Proverbs 14: 12

Every man is entitled to have his opinion. However, it is not our opinions which determine the issues of life, but rather the truth and power and will of the Lord. To know the living God and His liberating truth is to have security and freedom from all threats, even death. To be alienated from God, living on self-delusion, whether crude or respectable, is to be living a lie which leads inexorably to death, judgment, and hell.

Saturday, December 20th - Proverbs 14: 13,14

One's outer appearance and temporary condition need not necessarily reflect the true state of his heart or the end of his way. Even victorious believers carry within themselves the pain caused by the residue of their sin nature, not to mention the inherent pain of living in a fallen world. We may enjoy seasons of laughter, but sorrow will come upon us so long as we are in this life. Some may grow impatient with or bitter toward the Lord because this is so. Their impatience may lead them to backslide in attitude long before they do in action. Yet as they turn from the Lord to their supposed sources of happiness, they find deeper gloom which fills them and threatens to erase even the remaining streaks of bright joy. The good soul stays on pilgrimage with the Good Shepherd. There will be laughter and sorrow in that way, but there is constant assurance that the Leader and Lover of his soul is directing and empowering him to go ever onward, to where all tears are forever wiped away.

Sunday, December 21st - Proverbs 14: 15-18

The devil loves ignorance and credulity, for then he may do his dirty work undetected. The naive are his easy targets. If they do not mature in spiritual matters, learning to exercise holy discrimination as the Holy Spirit directs (1 Jn. 4:1ff), they will inherit folly, being tossed about by every wind of doctrine, having no solid convictions. Nor will this be a matter merely of doctrine. Those preferring a vague, superficial, non-critical faith, fail to be subdued by the power of God's truth, and hence become either quick-tempered fools or malicious schemers. They become rash and reckless, posing danger to themselves and others. But spiritually mature people love the truth and have a cautious respect for evil. They keep an eye on the enemy, not due to any attraction to him and his ways, but so that they might identify and avoid his snares. Such holy caution never fails to crown one's life with security and conviction based on facts, not misleading feelings.

Monday, December 22nd - Proverbs 14: 19

Evil men may prosper for a season, but they eventually will be obliged to bow not only before Christ (Phil. 2:10,11), but also before the Savior's children. Haman would hang Mordecai, but God ordained it that the villain should honor the virtuous Jew (Esther 5:11-6:12). Let us then resist temptations to concede to or conspire with evil, armed with the sure knowledge that all evil is destined to be the doormat of the righteous.

Tuesday, December 23rd - Proverbs 14: 20,21,31

Here we are told how things are: People tend to despise the poor, who can give them nothing, while they love the rich, whom they believe have the means and the will to

give them something. Such discrimination is not like the spiritual sort which is commended in vv. 15,16, but is sinful. God deplores such personal favoritism, since it proceeds from evil motives (Jas. 2:1-4). Not only do those indulging in it fail to secure desired preferment from the rich (many of whom became rich by selfish hoarding, unrighteous dealings, and oppression), but they never experience the happy contentment which comes from the loving and God-honoring imitation of a heavenly Father, who delights to be gracious and giving to poor, needy souls.

Wednesday, December 24th - Proverbs 14: 22-24

One plans to do good; another plots to do evil. The former results in blessing for others, which blessing always in some form returns to the one implementing good purposes. The latter harms others, but especially the perpetrator himself. Then there are those who would plan perpetually. They believe that talking about work is the same as doing it. Good plans lead through productive labor to profit, while the only fruit borne of unceasing chatter is the bitter fruit of poverty.

Thursday, December 25th - Proverbs 14: 25

Even good men can find themselves in trouble, such as when they become targets for the malice of evil plotters (v.22), or the negligence and oppression of the rich (v.20). Accordingly, their lives may be in jeopardy due to contrived appearances. It is then that those confirmed in their cowardice, greed, or laziness—whose motivation is pragmatic rather than principled—will speak according to their natures which twist the truth. Consequently, they serve to betray the truth and those standing on the truth, which truth may lie hidden beneath appearances. Yet the one who speaks the truth, because he has highest regard for and gratitude toward the One who is the truth (Jn. 14:6), brings the enlightening power of veracity to clouded situations, liberating the good man from a mendacious thrall.

Friday, December 26th - Proverbs 14: 26,27

The fear of the Lord is not a craven dread of punishment, but rather a holy, reverential attitude which affords highest respect to the Lord and His revealed will. Such holy fear saves us from wandering into snares which not only cause us annoyance, but which also lead to death in manifold forms. Such godly fear is a fountain, welling up within us to strengthen and refresh, so that we, and those who are dependent upon us, flourish in unmolested security and holy happiness.

December 2008

Saturday, December 27th - James 2: 23, 24

In v. 23, James acknowledges that Abraham was justified by his faith in God. The verse from the Old Testament that James cites makes plain that the patriarch did no works, and was justified on the basis of that faith alone (Gen. 15:6). Yet, in v.24, James brings works into consideration, referring back to his mention in v. 21 of Abraham's having offered up Isaac as a sacrifice to God. James is not contradicting the acknowledgement in v.23 that a man is justified by faith alone. What he is doing is distinguishing counterfeit from genuine faith. The fruitlessness of a faith that brings forth no good works indicates that such faith is mere mental assent that is devoid of grateful trust in and obedience to the Lord. Such fruitless faith is useless (v.20), whereas the faith that leads those possessing it to adorn their profession with godly performance of good works from grateful hearts is alone genuine and justifying faith.

Sunday, December 28th - James 23, 24

Those who have true, justifying faith are regarded as friends of God. As such the Lord regarded Abraham. Those who are at peace with God are also on increasingly friendly, confiding, intimate, and devoted terms with the Lord. Such friends of God count it a delight, an honor, and a privilege to serve the Lord by His grace and for His glory. They are like the five-talent man in the parable (Mt. 25:14-30), who happily accepted his master's provision and disposed of it wisely for his master's glory, receiving in the end his master's commendation. Those who are not friends of God are like the one-talent man. They view the Lord of grace as a harsh task-master and determine to do nothing by His grace and for His glory.

Monday, December 29th - James 2: 25

James uses the testimony of two witnesses to establish the truth of what he is teaching regarding the fact that saving faith produces good works. From Abraham's example of offering his son Isaac as a sacrifice, James moves our consideration to Rahab's service of saving the lives of the men Joshua had sent to spy out Jericho (Josh. 2). The glory of good works inspired by faith is no less renowned when those works are produced by a Canaanite woman than when they issue from the great patriarch of the covenant people. Rahab was a weaker vessel, a member of a people devoted to destruction, and an openly sinful harlot. Yet, when her faith shines through her works, they are by James characterized as being manifested in the same way as the works of the father of faith were manifested.

Tuesday, December 30th - James 2: 25

James distinguishes Rahab's faith from her falsehood. The account in Joshua 2 makes clear that she lied to her own people regarding the whereabouts of the Hebrew spies she was harboring (Josh. 2:3-6). Neither James nor the writer of the Hebrews epistle commend her deception, but rather her deed of welcoming the spies (Heb. 11:31). The way she welcomed the reconnoitering representatives of the people of God was by her apprehending and submitting to the Lord's choice of His people and the divine guidance, protection, and provision afforded them (Josh. 2:8-11). She also welcomed

them by expressing her desire to be saved along with them (Josh. 2:12,13). Accordingly, the fruit of her work of welcoming the spies manifested the reality of her faith in the Lord, just as Abraham's faith in the promise of the Lord proved to be genuine when he performed the work of costly sacrifice after Isaac had been given to him in fulfillment of the divine promise.

Wednesday, December 31st - James 2: 25

Rahab was justified in the same way as Abraham had been justified—namely, by a faith that produced good works of devoted trust in and obedience to the Lord. Such faith is glorious in itself and glorifying in its effects. Its justifying glory is indicated by the way that Scripture makes little of the sinful lying and other faults and failures of either Abraham or Rahab, while making much of their faith. They are presented as though they were blameless. The glorious effects of their faith also may be seen from the way that both Abraham and Rahab are recorded in Scripture as being in the genealogy of Jesus (Mt. 1:1-6). True saving faith not only justifies those who have it, but glorifies them in and through their good works, which works in turn lead men to glorify God who gives such faith (Mt. 5:16).

Thursday, January 1st - James 2: 26

There is an alternative to our possessing a faith that justifies us and glorifies both those who have received it and the God who gives it. That alternative is death. Without such faith men are dead in their trespasses and sin (Eph. 2:1-7). Through the illustration of the body being dead when it is separated from its spirit, James concludes his treatment of the relation between faith and good works by indicating that while faith and works can be distinguished, they cannot be separated, for it is of the essence of faith that it unites those who were dead in sin to the Lord of life, who lives and works for His own glory and for the good of men.

Friday, January 2nd - James 3: 1, 2

In chapter 3, James writes about the use and abuse of our power of speech. He had touched upon this in 1:19, where he called upon us to be more ready to hear and learn than to speak and express ourselves. His return to this theme is not an abrupt change from what he has been teaching about the relation between faith and works. For the use of words is a type of work that issues from the root either of faith or sinful unbelief. Jesus tells us that it is by our fruits that we can be known for what we truly are (Mt. 7:15-20). If the fruits of our words and works are not godly, we have cause to suspect an ungodly root of sinful unbelief motivating us.

Saturday, January 3rd - James 3: 1, 2

James opens this third chapter by cautioning his readers against any tendency they might have to leap uncritically into the teaching mode and office. He bases his warning upon the fact that we all stumble in many ways and in no way more so than in our penchant to pervert our speech. Talk can be cheap. It is easier for a man to profess his love than it is for him to perform loving deeds. Many may be tempted to become teachers by the allure of substituting discourse for deeds. Also, men may be drawn to teaching by their fascination with the honor and authority of the office. Jesus discouraged men from

using the term Rabbi, which means, my teacher (Mt. 32:7,8)) for these and other reasons. Therefore, most of us do well not to consider ourselves capable and competent teachers, but rather we should all see ourselves as needy learners and we should accordingly with humility and hunger be like Mary who sat at Jesus' feet, hanging on His every word (Lk. 10:38-42).

Sunday, January 4th - James 3: 1, 2

Once again in this letter we note how James addresses his readers as my brethren. In fact, this marks the seventh time he has used the fraternal designation (cf., Jas. 1:2,16,19; 2:1,5,14). He will employ it four more times after this current reference in v.1 (Jas. 3:10,12; 5:12,19). James uses this fraternal term to demonstrate the important and comforting truth that when he admonishes or rebukes his readers, he does so not with loveless censoriousness but rather with loving correction that invites his readers to increasing conformity to the character of Christ and to the will of God. It is remarkable that the man who was the natural brother of Jesus should address his readers as brethren more frequently than any other New Testament writer. Surely, this indicates that James rightly regarded the spiritual fraternal bond he had with Jesus and with other believers in Jesus as far superior to the natural fraternal bond he had with our Lord.

Monday, January 5th - James 3: 1, 2

While we who believe in Christ are brethren beloved of God and of all others who are in Christ, yet we are called to diverse functions in the body of Christ. Read Rom. 12:1-8 and 1 Cor. 12: 4-31 for fuller treatment of the various gifts and callings with which God blesses His Church. The wise, holy, and loving reason why our God does not call all to be teachers in the body of Christ is that there is an enriching fullness in the variety of gifts that He has to confer upon His people for their mutual edification, comfort, and enjoyment. Teaching is but one such gift.

Tuesday, January 6th - James 3: 1, 2

It is true that not all believers are called by God to be formal and regular teachers of the Word. However, there is a sense in which as all believers grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord, they should be teachers by their gracious and loving works, as well as by the instruction they may have occasion properly to give to others, such as their own children. The writer of the Hebrews epistle speaks of his readers' failure to be teachers in this general sense (Heb. 5:12), and it is not this general sense of teaching that James here is proscribing.

Wednesday, January 7th - James 3: 1, 2

While James warns most believers not to become formal and regular teachers of the Word, he also acknowledges that the Lord calls some to that office (Eph. 4:11). Clearly, James includes himself in this teaching office when he says of teachers not that they will incur stricter judgment, but rather that we shall incur such judgment. It is a measure of our Lord's gracious enabling when those who know they are not adequate perfectly to teach the treasures of divine truth (2 Cor. 2:16), nevertheless, respond to the divine calling in their lives by committing themselves to teach God's Word.

Thursday, January 8th - James 3: 1, 2

James includes himself not only with teachers who will incur stricter judgment, but also with those who stumble in many ways. It is clear that when he writes, we all stumble, and then goes on to speak of a perfect man who does not stumble, that he is not claiming that he or any other teacher of God's Word is perfect. Perfection is not required of teachers, but faithfulness to God and His Word is required. We do not nourish our souls by our partaking of the earthen vessels, but rather by our feeding upon the treasure of divine truth they contain and convey to us.

Friday, January 9th - James 3: 1, 2

In v.2, James is not saying that perfection is attainable by some and required of all teachers. Instead, he is indicating that by God's grace faithful teachers of His Word are enabled to be relatively less imperfect in their expressions. This results from their more regular, deep, and constant handling of the Word. It is a fruit of their divinely assigned work more than a prerequisite for their entering into that work. It may well be true that pastor/teachers are among the least perfect of men, but that by God's grace they are given a double dose of the Word (when they prepare it and when they preach it), for their own blessing as well as for the blessing of the flocks they serve.

Saturday, January 10th - James 3: 1, 2

James concentrates in v.2 upon a teacher's speech for the obvious reason that a teacher expresses his message through what he says and how he says it. Perhaps not so obvious is the way that James connects thinking, speaking, and doing. He writes that the perfect man will issue perfect words and be capable of regulating his actions in accordance with righteousness. From all that James writes in vv.3-12 it is clear that no one except the Lord Jesus is such a perfect man. Yet, our progress toward such perfection should be the aim of all believers and especially of those called to preach and teach the whole counsel of God. That being the case, it is vital that we understand—whether we teach or are taught God's Word—that pure teaching results from a pure heart and mind, and leads to pure actions. Impure teaching and unrighteous actions issue from impure hearts and imperfect minds. Hence, our prayers should aim for the inner man more than his outward ministry.

Sunday, January 11th - James 3: 1, 2

Men aspire to be teachers of God's Word from different motives. Some aspire to the office because they sense God's calling and respond as did Isaiah who cried: Here am I, send me. (Isa. 6:8). Others, however, seek the office with an eye to the honor of the position and the applause of men, especially those who want their ears tickled with teaching that is more entertaining than edifying (2 Tim. 4:3). James encourages the former and at the same time discourages the latter when he shifts the focus from the pleasant glow of rewards to the penetrating and searching light of God's judgment. Only those whose unclean lips have been touched by the cleansing fire from the altar of heaven dare accept the awesome responsibility of rightly handling the treasure of God's truth.

Monday, January 12th - James 3: 1-3

From the specific matter of the prohibition against an uncritical proliferation of teachers in the Church, James moves to a general consideration of the difficult necessity of all believers maintaining godly, loving, and edifying conversation. His use of the images of bridle (v.2) and bit (v.3) speak to us of the need for self-control in our speech. Such control objectively is provided by the true and loving teaching of God's Word. By our immersing ourselves in Scripture, we are taught how to think and speak the truth in love. Subjectively, we intend and actually do express ourselves truly and lovingly. Such blessed self-control is part of the fruit of God's Holy Spirit in our lives (Gal. 5:22,23). The Word and Spirit of God inform and empower us not to live careless, inconsiderate, and loveless lives, but rather to welcome and submit to the truth and love of God reigning over us, in us, and through our thoughts, words, and deeds.

Tuesday, January 13th - James 3: 3-5

These verses speak to us of the power of our words. James sketches three images to illustrate for us the truth that small but critical components can affect the working of the greater things of which they are a part. He illustrates this truth to counter any claim that the tongue, being such a small part of the body, surely cannot perform anything of great significance. The truth is that as small bits can steer large horses, as small rudders steer great ships, and as tiny sparks ignite immense forest fires, so our tongues can express thoughts and intentions that can edify others or tear them down. While sticks and stones may break bones, words injuriously spoken can break hearts and lives. Positively, when we speak truth in love, our little tongues serve instrumentally to comfort, heal, and edify others.

Wednesday, January 14th - James 3: 5, 6

James concentrates on the third image of the spark causing the forest fire because it is most apt in illustrating the raging and destructive power our speech can have when it is not true and loving. In v.5, the consuming and destructive force of godless speech is likened to a spark's power to ignite a forest fire. In v.6 the true source of this destructive power is shown when James writes that a man's speech is one of the main outlets for his impure, sinful heart. Here James is following the teaching of Jesus when He said that it is not what goes into a man but what comes out of him that defiles him (Mt. 15:11). Jesus, in fact, gives a more lurid list of sins that fill the hearts and mouths of men; sins such as murders, adulteries, thefts, and slanders (Mt. 15:19). Even we who are believers have within ourselves the remnants of such sins that can injure, entice, and corrupt others when those sins find an outlet through our heedless conversation. Paul, therefore, tells us to let no unwholesome word proceed from our mouths, but to speak only gracious words of edification (Eph. 4:29). We all do well more carefully, prayerfully, and lovingly to weigh our words before we give expression to them.

Thursday, January 15th - James 3: 6

When James writes that our tongues are set on fire by hell, he alerts us to the sobering reality that it is not only our thoughts that Satan targets, but also our words that express our thoughts. We do well to recall the massively malignant power of the tempting words Satan expressed through the serpent in the garden (Gen. 3:1,4,5) or the satanic speech

Peter gave when he sought to prevent Jesus from going to the cross (Mt. 16:22,23). Once again, James teaches us that we all should be quick to hear and slow to speak (Jas. 1:19).

Friday, January 16th - James 3: 7, 8

In these verses, James brings us to the sobering realization that our sinful, corrupting speech is untamable by mere human effort. First, he reminds us in v.7 of the residue of fallen man's dominion over the earth as demonstrated by man's power to train—or at least control to some extent—the lower creatures of the earth. Yet no man has ever so mastered himself as to exercise perfect control over his own words. This phenomenon that is strongly asserted in v.8 is the result of man's sin and fall from original righteousness. It is not just the tongues of a Hitler or a Stalin that have unleashed enormous powers of destruction in the world. James makes clear that even in believers there is an unbounded desire to talk, but that unless the talk is regulated by God's Holy Word and Spirit, it will poison all who hear it. Our trusting dependence must be upon One higher and purer than ourselves and our desires if we are to speak edifying truth in love.

Saturday, January 17th - James 3: 9-12

If we begin to conclude from the strong and grim expressions James uses in vv.6,8 that he is referring to the wicked speech of unbelievers, what he writes in vv.9-12 should humble us with the realization that all he writes applies to those who have been regenerated in Christ. In short, what James alerts us to in vv.9-12 is that the speech of the best Christian tends to be a mixture of holy blessing and sinful cursing. No believer is ever in this life fully removed from being like Peter, who confessed that Jesus was the Christ, then spoke words of infernal counsel to his Lord and still later denied Him with curses.

Sunday, January 18th - James 3: 9, 10

James is addressing all Christians in these verses, including himself. We all, to some extent, use our powers of expression to bless God while at the same time cursing men made by Him and in His likeness. The Apostle John identifies the same tendency when he writes that those who profess love for God while hating their brethren are liars who seek to honor God with their lips while their hearts are far from Him (1 Jn. 4:20). The Apostle Paul also considers this tendency toward inconsistent living that includes speech in Rom. 7, where he writes of his mind joyfully concurring with the law of God while the members of his body are made to be prisoners of the law of sin (Rom. 7:22, 23). We do well to recognize the necessity we have to make humble cries to our God for pure hearts and holy speech as a preventative to our making confident yet contemptuous declarations to men.

Monday, January 19th - James 3: 9, 10

The indicting words of these verses convict us all of playing, to some extent, the hypocrite who praises God but also pounds with condemning speech men whom God has loved and redeemed. Yet, we detect words of grace as James refers to us once again as my brethren. Though we are convicted by our God for our inconsistent speech, we are not condemned by Him or cast out of the holy and loving family into which He has

brought us by His adoption. There are also words of hope when James writes that our inconsistency ought not to be. Through the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit in our lives such things increasingly will diminish, until we stand in the final day before our Lord being blameless and full of joy (Rom. 7:24,25; Jude 24).

Tuesday, January 20th - James 3: 9-12

The mixture of loving and hating words that we speak is shown to be unspiritual in vv.9,10. Such speech is inconsistent with our being children of our heavenly Father and brethren together in Christ. In vv.11,12, James informs us that our mixed words are also unnatural. Thomas Manton writes: Nature abhors hypocrisy and double-dealing; contrary effects from the same causes are monstrous... (Commentary on James, p. 298). But such is the unnatural condition that characterizes all believers, as a war between the law of righteousness and the law of sin and death rages within each and every believer (Rom. 7:13-25).

Wednesday, January 21st - James 14: 15-18

The mixture of loving blessing and hateful cursing ought not to be, but it is so. Yet that very mixture is a pledge of the pure, loving heart and holy conversation that is to come for the believer. For the natural state of man is one in which he purely and consistently thinks, speaks, and acts sinfully. The natural man is dead in sin until God regenerates him in Christ and causes His Holy Spirit to dwell in him. Our new nature in Christ desires truly to bless God and man, but those holy desires are not consistent and the doing does not always measure up even to such inconsistent desires. But our occasional and increasingly consistent blessing of God and man is a world away from what we were when we consistently hated both God and man. Therefore, in hope we should determine to grow in grace until the day of glory when we shall be perfectly and perpetually transformed into ones who are holy, true, and loving in our every thought, word, and action.

Thursday, January 22nd - James 3: 13

With this verse, it appears that James abruptly changes his subject. Yet, what he has to say about wisdom in vv.13-18 is related to what he has previously written. Teaching in particular and conversation in general issue from sources deeper than our mere mechanical production of sound. Those deeper sources are either wisdom or folly. The man devoted to and filled with folly will speak perverse and injurious words, while the man devoted to and filled with godly wisdom will speak words of truth and love that serve to edify those hearing them. However, James makes clear to us that godly wisdom is more than mental cleverness. Godly wisdom is rooted in the Lord and is expressed in good behavior and gentle, loving deeds of kindness to others. Godly wisdom prompts and equips us to speak words and perform works that glorify God and bless men.

Friday, January 23rd - James 3: 13-15

In these verses, James contrasts true and false wisdom. True wisdom is expressed in a spirit of humility, loving gentleness, and patience. Such a wise spirit prompts one to conceive of and accomplish good deeds that glorify God and bless man. False wisdom inspires harsh pride and divisively destructive behavior. That wisdom that begins with

the fear of the Lord blossoms in our Christ-like desire and determination to love, serve, and honor others, regarding them as more important than ourselves (Phil. 2:1-4). When we find ourselves driven by bitter jealousy and selfish ambition by which we seek to exalt ourselves, contrary to the truth that God is opposed to the proud, we should realize that we are acting not from heavenly but rather from earthly wisdom, and we are guided not by the fear of the Lord but rather by the flattery of the devil. We should nurture heavenly wisdom while mortifying that which is earthly and demonic.

Saturday, January 24th - James 3: 14

It is vital that we understand what is meant by James when he writes of bitter jealousy, selfish ambition, and arrogance. Bitter jealousy is not a holy zeal for God's glory and man's good, but rather our unholy zeal for selfish gain at the cost of others' loss. Such jealousy embitters those having it, whether they fail or succeed in attaining their desires. If the jealous soul fails to attain his desire, he will be embittered against everyone and everything that frustrates his desire. If he attains his desire, he is embittered to discover that his ill-gotten gain does nothing to satisfy his growing hunger to have more and to be more highly exalted above others.

Sunday, January 25th - James 3: 14-16

Selfish ambition mentioned in v.14 should be translated strife. Such ambition ignites envy and jealousy in those having it, and envy, in turn, leads to strife, disorder, and all sorts of evil actions and consequences. Thomas Manton aptly observes: The first instances we have of sin are Adam's pride and Cain's envy....The whole world, though otherwise empty of men, could not contain two brothers when one was envied. Pride gave us the first merit of death, and envy the first instance of it. (Commentary on James, p. 309).

Monday, January 26th - James 3: 14-16

Those who are jealous, ambitious, and arrogant may affect what appears to be a sort of wisdom, but it is really nothing more than a carnal cunning that deceives and destroys. Such cunning comes not from God's Holy Spirit but instead comes from the devil, who is the father of all liars and murders. Who in his right heart and mind would want such so-called wisdom?