

January 2013

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Monday, January 27th - Proverbs 25: 8-10

Christian forbearance is a virtue based on wisdom and love. We may think we have a case against someone, but the Word of God instructs us to consider well its merits before we prosecute matters. Ill-considered prosecution will lead to our defeat and shame. Once we have decided that an infraction has occurred of sufficient weight to warrant judicial action, we still are instructed to go first to the one whom we think has wronged us (Mt. 18:15ff). It is tempting for us not to go to the offending party, but rather to broadcast our grievance to others, attempting to enlist their sympathy and support. However, by our doing so we not only prejudice others against our neighbor, but also arouse widespread resentment against ourselves, as others rightly perceive our circularizing as a magnifying, rather than reconciling, of the problem. We must resist this unwise, unrighteous, and unloving temptation.

Tuesday, January 28th - Proverbs 25: 11,12

Wise, loving, and fitting words are not only valuable in their material, but also beautiful in their craftsmanship. It is encouraging to think that our prayerfully considered and judiciously weighed words spoken at the appropriate time could be so precious. Even when our words are delivered in the form of challenging reproof, they remain valuable and beautiful if they are true, loving, and timely. They also serve to beautify and enrich those who hear and apply such speech.

Wednesday, January 29th - Proverbs 25: 13,14

During the arid heat of harvest, a cold blast would be most refreshing. So a faithful messenger serves to refresh and relieve deeply his masters. Those who send messengers, especially with vital information, can grow weary with concern and anticipation until they learn that their message has been delivered in timely and accurate fashion. Thus, by our dispatch and fidelity let us seek to be such a blessing to those who rely on us to convey information. Let us especially be faithful in our delivering of the gospel message, and not be like the empty boaster, who claims to serve for the glory of his master and the good of others, but who in reality stirs up all of the commotion of a storm only to deliver no refreshing rain.

Thursday, January 30th - Proverbs 25:15

God's Word equips us to prevail even over those in authority over us. This is so because the Author of the Word is in authority over all. Here we learn that patience and forbearance serve to do more than over-power a ruler; they persuade him. When we demonstrate self control under provocation, speaking soft but true and fitting words in our own behalf, the hardest resistance is broken more often than not. That gentleness, which is a fruit of God's Holy Spirit, serves to make our cause and us great (2 Sam. 22:36; Ps. 18:35), for the grace of God can only effectually be employed in the cause of God. By gentleness we demonstrate that neither our cause nor we are threatening tyrants, but rather servants of salvation.

Friday, January 31st - Proverbs 25: 16,17

Too much, even of the good things of this fallen world, is bad. Honey may be sweet and strengthening, but our eating too much cloy. Note that honey here represents anything that is good and desirable. The rule is all things in their proper measure. This applies not only to things we take to ourselves, but also to the extent to which we give ourselves to others. It is better to make fewer, shorter, sweeter visits to others' homes—thereby leaving them desiring more of our company—than it is to make a tiring nuisance of ourselves, so that our friends turn their houses into fortresses to keep us out.

Saturday, February 1st - Proverbs 25: 17

Although we may wear out our welcome by our too frequent or prolonged visits to our neighbors and friends, there is One we can visit at any time and for any length of stay. Our Lord never grows weary of our drawing near to the throne of His grace. We were made to spend measured amounts of time with others, and immeasurable time with Him.

Sunday, February 2nd - Proverbs 25: 18

When we misrepresent another it is as injurious to him as if we had taken a bat to break his head, a sword to thrust into his heart, and (not or) an arrow to wound him from afar. We should be as careful not to inflict such word wounds by our words as we are not to resort to such brutal multiple assaults.

Monday, February 3rd - Proverbs 25: 19

A bad tooth impedes our nourishment and our speech, as well as serving to make us constantly and generally miserable. An unsure foot impedes our ability to stand or to run to safety. If we rely upon a faithless soul, we set ourselves up to experience misery and debilitation in trying times. Therefore, we are instructed to be discriminating concerning in whom we place our confidence. Those walking most

intimately with the Lord are least likely to fail us when the pressure is on us, for they will be most like the Lord Himself, who never fails us.

Tuesday, February 4th - Proverbs 25: 20

It is cruel to remove a man's coat on a cold day, for such removal only makes him colder. It is absurd to pour vinegar into soda, for the vinegar only dissolves the soda leaving an effervescent admixture. Similarly, it is unfitting to sing and express gaiety around those with sore, wounded hearts. A cheerful song may lift one who is mildly depressed, but it only causes more pain to one who is deeply grieving. The Bible tells us to weep with those whose weeping reveals a sore heart (Rom. 12:15). Sympathetic tears form better balm than inconsiderate songs.

Wednesday, February 5th - Proverbs 25: 21,22

Not only are we to restrain ourselves from vindictiveness; we are also to do good to them that hate us, and pray for those who spitefully use us (Lk. 6:28). Our giving of blessing in response to our receiving cursing may serve to convict and convert our enemy. If it does not, he is the greater loser, while we are compensated most richly by the Lord of glory. The Lord's vengeance is greater when His grace manifested through His children is spurned; His vindicating reward is greater for His children when they lovingly serve even their enemies.

Thursday, February 6th - Proverbs 25: 23

As invariably as certain winds bring foul weather, so a backbiting tongue never results in anything but more anger. Such anger is well deserved when one is too cowardly, too malicious, too irresponsible to bring charges directly to another's attention, but instead skulks around verbally stabbing in the back. These are winds that from us, at least, we can and should keep from blowing.

Friday, February 7th - Proverbs 25: 24

The company of a contentious soul—man or woman—is a curse to be avoided. The more intimate such a contrary soul is with us, the more awfully invasive is the contending spirit which disrupts our balance, peace, and contentment. If a woman, the weaker vessel, when possessed of such a spirit can virtually vanquish her husband to a corner of the attic in his own house, how much more intolerable must a man, the head of the household, make life for his dependent family members when he is contentious. Let us thus learn to bring, by prayer and suitable precept and example, ourselves and the other members of our family to the Prince of Peace, who alone vanquishes contention, replacing it with His peace.

Saturday, February 8th - Proverbs 25: 25

Two water images are used in these verses to show us something good and something bad. As cool, pure water refreshes a parched soul, so good news coming from a distant land revives sagging spirits. This is so especially when we have a vital interest in such a distant land, and when, due to our far removal from such a land, we form anxious speculations over it until objective reports come to dispel our doubts. How reviving good news is from the courts of heaven that tells us that in Christ we have peace with God (Rom. 5: 1,2)!

Sunday, February 9th - Proverbs 25: 26

Miry, polluted water mocks a thirsty man, who is in need of the hydration contained in the water, but who cannot receive it due to the contaminants such water contains. So is the righteous man who compromises with or concedes to the wicked. The preserving power of his salt is lost; the refreshing power of the springs of living water welling up within him is destroyed when he mixes the purity of God's grace with the pollution of man's sin. Whenever we are tempted to compromise with evil, let us remember this image, which shows us how utterly useless such compromise renders us.

Monday, February 10th - Proverbs 25: 27,28

Helping one's self to too much of a good thing is not beneficial, but rather is harmful indulgence. This maxim, illustrated once again with the image of eating honey, applies to our seeking commendation from others. As honey, a creational blessing, can bless or curse, depending on the amount ingested, so the praise of men can be, when given in warranted measure, a blessed encouragement. When sought or given beyond measure, it becomes a spoiling curse. We should control our desire for good things of this world lest harm result. One's life is secured, as with a wall of protection, when he controls and possesses his spirit in peace under all circumstances, and submits it to the blessed control of the Holy Spirit. Then one's life is not exposed to corrupting invasions, but is hedged about by the power, love, and discipline of the Lord (2 Tim. 1:7).

Tuesday, February 11th - Proverbs 26: 1,3,8

A fool is wickedly perverse. Such a person is inherently dishonorable, and when honor is bestowed upon him it is most unfitting. Sooner should we see snow in summer heat, or rain in the dryness of harvest—which would delay, if not destroy, the harvest—than to see a fool honored. Sooner should we do most self-defeating things, such as binding a stone which we hope to throw, into a sling so that it may not be launched, than to give honor to a fool. There are, however, some things very much befitting a fool. As

dumb animals must be driven by a whip and guided by a bridle, so fools only respond to the language of force. So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is...(Eph. 5:17). Fools never prosper, nor are they ever legitimately honored.

Wednesday, February 12th - Proverbs 26: 2

We need never fear the unwarranted curses of others. A curse calls upon God to punish someone, and our Father would never respond to such a call issued against His blood-bought children who stand faithfully in His Son. By extension, neither should we concern ourselves unduly when others have a low opinion of us and seek to express that opinion to others. Rather than our being distracted by the mudslinging of others, taking feverish flight to avoid being hit by the mud, or attempting to convince others that we are wrongly targeted, let us trust in the Lord who in Christ has proclaimed us righteous. If God has accepted us, can anyone who matters ultimately reject us? If His omnipotence protects us, can anyone's malice lastingly harm us? Read Rom. 8: 31-39.

Thursday, February 13th - Proverbs 26: 4,5

The Word of God—which reveals to us the vast differences between eternity and time, light and darkness, good and evil, heaven and hell, God and Satan—teaches us to identify character and to practice a holy discrimination accordingly. It may seem courteous and pious when one dignifies a fool's perverse arguments by giving patient and reasonable answers. However, such condescension to a fool's level serves not to lift him from his folly, but rather to degrade the one endeavoring to engage in such dialogue with the fool. Such indiscriminate condescension confirms and emboldens a fool in his folly. We should answer a fool as he deserves, not as he desires. His problem is his own character, not the issues over which he seeks to contend. We protect ourselves and serve a fool for his own good when we keep this in mind, and seek to point it out to the fool in appropriate terms.

Friday, February 14th - Proverbs 26: 6,7,9

The reason a fool is unworthy of honor and undeserving of reasonable conversation is that he is essentially irresponsible, and thus he will abuse any responsibility or privilege given to him. Since this is so, God's Word warns us further not to entrust any meaningful task to a fool. Because he cannot deliver a message without perverting it, those who rely on a fool to speak for them may as well mutilate themselves outwardly and inwardly. A fool will deliver even a message of peace as words of war, and will transform wise proverbs, intended for blessing, into useless, powerless, prating at best, and into barbed thorns, wounding himself (though his folly, as drunkenness, makes him insensitive to the injury) and others at worst. Therefore, we are not only to be spare and righteously discriminating with the words we speak to a fool (vv.4,5), but also with the work we expect him to do.

Saturday, February 15th - Proverbs 26: 10

This verse is exceedingly difficult to translate. The New American Standard translation draws a comparison between the man who hires fools and strangers, and a poor archer who, instead of hitting the target (such as game for food), pierces innocent bystanders. Such indiscriminate contracting is more likely to injure others than to accomplish the work proposed. Another way to translate the verse is: A master produces all things, but he who hires a fool is one who hires those missing the mark. In other words, even a master craftsman, who can produce great things himself, will be disappointed and frustrated if he relies upon a fool for assistance. For a fool can accomplish nothing but destruction. Not even a master can correct the twisted aim of such a perverted one. Here we have another warning not to depend upon wickedly perverse souls for anything.

Sunday, February 16th - Proverbs 26: 11

The vile, unalterable nature of a fool is here portrayed. He feeds on garbage, spews it forth in worse form, then he devours it again. Fools never learn, but continue to be the major consumers of their own published folly. Fallen man thinks he is wise, but apart from Christ he feeds on the filth regurgitated from his own sinful nature. Thanks be to God that He has delivered us in Christ from such a dog's diet, and has given us an appetite for that which He provides in life-transforming abundance, namely, the heavenly manna of the Word of God.

Monday, February 17th - Proverbs 26: 12

From yesterday's reading we would think that the fool is the worst person of all. Yet here we learn that the vain and conceited man is worse than the fool. A proud soul who is intoxicated with a false sense of self-importance is the furthest from hope of person. Let us learn to crucify in ourselves vanity even more than folly.

Tuesday, February 18th - Proverbs 26: 13-16

Here the Holy Spirit draws another disgusting picture for us so that we may avoid becoming like it. The sluggard is in the hopeless company of the fool and the conceited. It is not that he lacks ability to stand and serve; he rather neglects and misuses his abilities. He uses his powers of perception to exalt himself, but refuses to use them to acknowledge the more deserving character of others (v.16). At times he refuses to employ his perception at all, manufacturing, instead, imagined obstacles to his service, so as to excuse his lack of exertion (v.13). The sluggard moves, but only to sink more comfortably into his somnolent way of life (v.14). His refusal to spend his energies, even in godly service, however, fails to

save his energies. The less he does, the less he is able to do, until he finds even feeding himself to be a tiring chore (v.15). God has not given us our talents and powers to bury beneath wicked sloth, but rather to use, doing exhilarating exploits for His glory and our own good (2 Tim. 1:7). Our seeking to sit and save our lives is deadly; our spending them in the Lord's service will produce in us strength and satisfaction.

Wednesday, February 19th - Proverbs 26: 17

Only a madman fails to respect the nature of a dog so that he grabs the animal by the ears (for what reason?) only to feel the dog's bite in return. Likewise, with all good intention we may feel called and equipped to take up the offenses of others, or to mediate the strife of contending parties. Yet, there is a great difference between the faithful and principled endeavor to be true peacemakers, and the presumptuous intrusion into others' business, which issues only injury to them and the would-be mediator. This is a critical difference that we do well to recognize and respect.

Thursday, February 20th - Proverbs 26: 18,19

As nothing but pain and injury are conveyed by firebrands, arrows, and death, so there is never anything helpful or humorous in hurting another, even in so-called good fun. The person who jokes may not intend to hurt his neighbor, but the deceit he employs in the cause of humor is always an injurious sin for which he must sincerely repent. It would be better to avoid this sin altogether. What is fun to us may be far from a laughing matter to others. Our calling is to judge our actions not by how much enjoyment we may derive from them, but by whether they edify our neighbor, whom we are to love as ourselves.

Friday, February 21st - Proverbs 26: 20,22

Words do not need to be spoken loudly in order to have a powerful effect. The still, small voice of the Lord (1 Kings 19:12,13) can be as powerful as the shouts of divine wisdom (Prov. 8:1-3). These godly extremes of volume have their evil counterparts (counterfeits, too!) in the boisterousness of sinful passions (Prov. 7:10,11) and in the wicked communications of the whisperer. There is something beguiling about speech that is too softly delivered. The hushed tones more often than not serve to keep from detection manipulative motives that aim to plant seeds of suspicion deeply in others. When we speak, we should speak the truth in love and in appropriate volume. When we hear, we should listen more to what another says, and less to how he says it, heeding or refusing to listen depending upon whether the words are good or evil.

Saturday, February 22nd - Proverbs 26: 21

The contentious man adds fuel to the fires of strife. He has within himself the evil counterpart to holy zeal. Instead of being consumed by such zeal, however, he delights to give himself and his energies to conflict. There are things, such as the faith once delivered, for which we should earnestly contend (Jude 3). But that holy contention is a means to beget purity and righteous peace. The contentious man's alpha and omega is conflict itself; he aims at and delights in nothing higher.

Sunday, February 23rd - Proverbs 26: 23

A wicked heart issuing splenetic speech is ugly and worthless. Such integrity of evil is base within and defiling without. Sin, left unchecked in any life, will reduce it to worthlessness. How grateful believers should be that the Lord has given us new hearts and put new songs of joy and blessing into our mouths.

Monday, February 24th - Proverbs 26: 24-26

There is gross evil, such as that described in v.23, and there is more refined evil, that seeks to disguise itself in the garb of gracious speech. We cannot judge the hearts of others, but our Lord can and does so judge them. Here in His Word He alerts us to the fact that all who speak kindly do not have loving hearts. Are we then to suspect the motives and intentions of all, since we cannot judge the hearts of any? No. Rather, these verses put us on general alert so that when the evil within manifests itself unmistakably before the Church, we shall see it for what it is, and accordingly guard ourselves and others for whom we are responsible. Charity and critical vigilance are not mutually exclusive.

Tuesday, February 25th - Proverbs 26: 27

Men who plan and execute evil plots may succeed in bruising the heels of the righteous, but ultimately their ploys serve only to crush their own heads. Haman's gallows, intended for Mordecai, served for the godless Agagite's own execution (Esther 7:10). Those who plotted to have Daniel cast into the lion's den succeeded only in exalting Daniel and having themselves and their families destroyed by the lions (Dan. 6:24). Those who thought that the cross would silence Jesus and scatter His followers were themselves overcome by the same pragmatic, unprincipled ruthlessness they employed (the Jews in 70 A.D., the Romans a few centuries later). Meanwhile, Jesus ever lives to make intercession for His Church, which continues to flourish through the ages.

Wednesday, February 26th - Proverbs 26: 28

We may think we prefer to hear sweet lies that may please us and spare us from the truth which sometimes wounds, but even such pleasant deceit is inevitably injurious. The truth both wounds and



heals, its pain producing purity and restoration. But flattery and lies only serve to produce crushing pain and ruin from which there is no recovery.

February 2013

Monday, February 25th - Joshua 22: 22, 23

In v.22, the sons of the two and a half tribes invoke the Lord to be their Judge. In v.23, they testify to their consciences being clear of the knowledge of any sin in their act of having erected the altar. However, they express their testimony in humble terms of conditional statements. In this way, they rest their highest confidence not in their own consciousness of being right but rather in the hands of the Judge of all the earth who alone perfectly knows all things and judges righteously. It is good for us to have a clear conscience before God, but our conscience, while being a good guide, is not our infallible guide. Accordingly, godly men such as David and Paul do not take their stand upon their own sense of being right, but instead they ask the Lord to be their Judge (Ps. 139:23,34; 1 Cor. 4:3-5). We should learn from this not to spend undue time in our seeking to justify ourselves in the sight of men, but rather we should commit ourselves to our justifying God who does for us and in us what men can never do— prompt us to will and do His good pleasure. At the same time, we should not require our brethren to justify themselves to us, but we should commend them to the Lord who lives and works in them as He does in us.

Tues, February 26th - Joshua 22: 22, 23

When the men of the two and a half tribes speak conditionally, saying, If we have...rather than, we have not..., they acknowledge their humble awareness of their own capacity to sin. Accordingly, they are open to correction in a way that fearful self-justification would never allow them to be. That is why fearfully defensive and resistant souls cannot profit from godly correction. However, those whose humility is a godly strength rather than a guise for carnal weakness will not submit to every standard to correction. The godly will not submit themselves ultimately to the opinions of fallible men, but only to the lovingly wise, true, and righteous Word and Spirit of the Lord.

Wednesday, February 27th - Joshua 22: 23

The sons of Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh deny two specifications of sin. First, they deny that the altar they had built represented their determination to worship a god other than the Lord, in violation of the First Commandment. Then they deny any determination to use the altar to worship their

one true Lord in a way that He had not authorized. It is not enough that we worship the right God, but we must also rightly worship Him according to His revealed will and provision, otherwise we are not worshipping Him as His Second Commandment obliges us to do.

Thursday, February 28th - Joshua 22: 24, 25

The men of the two and a half tribes have strongly yet humbly rejected the charges of their brethren (vv.22,23). From that beginning they proceed to speak positively about why they had built the altar. Far from their having acted from desire to offend the Lord and His people and to separate themselves from their saving God and their brethren, they assert that they had acted in hopes of better cleaving to the Lord and to their fellow members of the covenant nation. Here we see how badly and erroneously the sons of the nine and a half tribes had perceived the motives of their brethren. When we are told that love believes and hopes for the best in others (1 Cor. 13:7), our loving God is telling us that we will be nearer the truth when we regard our brethren charitably instead of critically. Even if we find that our brethren are worse than we had charitably thought them to be, it is only by love's patience and kindness that we are made willing and able gently and effectively to restore our erring brethren (1 Cor. 13:4; Gal. 6:1), rather than lovelessly to condemn them.

Friday, March 1st - Joshua 22: 24, 25

These verses reveal the good intentions of the two and a half tribes. We also see from the initial reaction of the nine and half tribes how good intentions can be misconstrued and go awry. The nine and half tribes were at fault in this because of how they regarded their brethren not charitably but rather critically. However, the two and a half tribes were at fault because of how they poorly communicated their intentions. They simply built the altar and assumed that their brethren would understand why they had done so. Our actions and even our words are subject to misunderstanding by others—even by those closest to us whom we love. The curse of the confusion of tongues was more extensive than merely the division of people into different language groups. Because we are sinners, we are both poor perceivers of and communicators with others. The Word of God shows us this and the fruit of the Holy Spirit prompts us to do all we can to make our communications as lovingly true and clear as possible. When we take the time to converse together with our brethren, we can establish better communications but also grow more deeply and truly in love for one another. Loving conversation is far better than lonely speculation.

Saturday, March 2nd - Joshua 22: 24, 25

The sons of Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh failed not only considerably to communicate with their brethren in Canaan. In addition, they failed to regard them charitably. In answering the charges against them, the two and a half tribes manifest a mistrust of their brethren. There had been no

demonstrated cause for that mistrust. Instead, it was their own fears that had moved the trans-Jordanian tribes to erect the altar. The rash and belligerent actions of the nine and a half tribes may seem to lend credence to the mistrust of the two and a half tribes. However, it was at this point not the fact that the two and a half tribes were separated from their brethren by the Jordan that caused this controversy to erupt. It was rather the act of the two and a half tribes on the Canaan side of the Jordan that had provoked their brethren to wrath. When we act upon our fears, our actions tend not to secure us by rather to call upon us the very things we fear.

Sunday, March 3rd - Joshua 22: 24, 25

The two and a half tribes express their concern as a reasonable one. The reality was that a topographical barrier lay between them and their brethren. Upon this fact the sons of Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh ruminated and leaned on their own understanding to anticipate what might be in store for their descendants. Notice that they showed no concern for their own children drifting from the Lord and His people and ordinances, but only fear that their brethren's children would grow cold toward their trans-Jordanian brethren. These departing tribes then acted on their fears, rather than trusting the Lord for His grace to preserve all of Israel's future generations, and talking with the brethren in Canaan to give and receive reassurances that by their mutual commitment to corporate worship, prayer, and loving fellowship, the bonds of their love for one another would bridge the Jordan and keep them united in their Lord. Our fears blind us to many treasures of grace that our Lord provides for our mutual edification in love.

Monday, March 4th - Joshua 22: 24, 25

As the nine and a half tribes had accused the two and a half tribes with unfaithfulness to the Lord, so the two and a half tribes practically accuse their brethren in Canaan of nurturing a spirit of superiority that would in time move them to cut off their trans-Jordanian brethren from the covenant community. According to the sinister scenario entertained by the two and a half tribes, their brethren's children would not strive to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, but rather would magnify a geographical dividing line into a dividing barrier. Furthermore, the two and a half tribes cast the children of their brethren in the sinful light of their blaming the Lord for their actions, citing how He had made the Jordan between them obviously to separate them. Our fears have a way of catastrophizing our differences with our brethren, but our faith reduces even such differences as those between Jew and Gentile, male and female, slave and free to insignificance.

Tuesday, March 5th - Joshua 22: 26-28

In these verses, the men of the two and half tribes explain how the offensive altar was built as their solution to the problem they had anticipated. Their solution may have been reasonable but it was a

faulty solution based upon a fearful anticipation. The altar may not have resulted from the serious sins charged by the two and half tribes, but neither did it arise from faithfully right, compelling, and loving considerations. We do well ever to resort simply and vitally to the provisions of our gracious God, rather than to the devices that issue from our own fearful anticipations.

Wednesday, March 6th - Joshua 22: 26-28

The altar on Jordan's bank did not result from faith and so was not a right solution for the concerns of the two and half tribes. It was not right because it lacked divine warrant. The altar in Israel's tabernacle was a provision the Lord gave to His people for the atonement of their sins. Its sacrifices pointed to and signified the atoning sacrifice of the Lamb of God who was promised as the One to come effectually to take away the sins of His people. There is nothing in divine revelation or faithful reasoning to indicate that the altar could legitimately serve as a model for replication. The desire the two and half tribes had to maintain fellowship with their brethren in Canaan was a good, holy, and loving desire. However, the maintenance of that fellowship depended upon the provision of God, faithfully and mutually applied, not upon the devices of men.

Thursday, March 7th - Joshua 22: 26-28

The solution adopted by the builders of the altar was not compelling in the way that all things in the Church should be. In the family of faith, the royal law is love. Such love compels us to act with sweet reasonableness and serve with edifying intention. We are compelled to act by who we are in Christ and according to our new nature as we work out our salvation by God's effectual grace operating within us (Phil. 2:12,13). It is not a genuine facet of our life in the covenant community that we coerce one another. Such coercion is a matter of our trying to lord ourselves over our brethren, instead of our lovingly serving them. Jesus warned His disciples against the former while commending to them the latter (Matt. 20:25,26). Man-made symbols are no substitute for the living and loving hearts and transformed minds of believers who delight in, guard, and nourish their communion together in Christ.

Friday, March 8th - Joshua 22: 26-28

The making of the altar came closer to being right and compelling than it came to being loving. The altar seemed an appropriate symbol of holy sacrifice. It also was an enduring symbol, made of stone. It therefore seemed adequate to compel the nine and a half tribes to recall their unity with their brethren east of the Jordan. However, the Body of Christ is not bound together even by such holy things as sound doctrine or church discipline. We are instead made to be members of one another by our common faith in Christ, who loved us and gave Himself for us (Gal. 2:20). We are bound together by the fruit of God's Holy Spirit who dwells in us and fosters within us an enduring love for one another (Gal. 5:22). We are

bound together not by external forces but by our being rooted and grounded in the love of God in Christ (Eph. 3:17).

Saturday, March 9th - Joshua 22: 29

The two and a half tribes conclude their defense by stressing that their altar-building resulted not from their rebellion against the Lord but rather was in conformity with their following the Lord as they had done for the previous years when they lived and served with their brethren through the trials of their wilderness sojourning and of their conquest of Canaan. There appears to be deep sincerity in this assertion; and that sincerity no doubt served to convince the delegation from the nine and half tribes that their brethren east of the Jordan were not in the sin they had suspected. Yet were the sons of Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh following the Lord as they had so recently been charged to do by Joshua (vv.2-5). Our loving the Lord, the God who is love, invariably involves our loving our brethren (1 Jn. 4:7-21). We, like these quarrelling brethren, can aim to be right and sincerely so, and that is good. But the more excellent and effective way for us to live is to seek at all times to know and do the loving thing.

Sunday, March 10th - Joshua 22: 30, 31

It is wonderful to see that despite the failures of love and the poor communication from both sides there is true resolution and a happy issue in this sore matter. Phinehas the priest rightly led the delegation from the nine and half tribes as he was best qualified to assess matters pertaining to Israel's worship. He and the entire delegation, representing all of the sons of Israel in Canaan, were pleased with the reasoning and sincerity expressed by the leaders of the two and half tribes. It is good and right to behold brothers dwelling together in unity (Ps. 133). Despite their imperfect faith and love, these brethren, who were at serious odds that almost led to fraternal war, are reconciled once they gather and speak to one another and seek to understand one another. It is fearfully easy for us to stand aloof from our brethren, seeing their faults and magnifying those faults in our own minds. However, when we come to speak face to face with them and listen to them, we realize that when all is said and done they are our brethren whom we love and in whom we find pleasure (Ps.16:3).

Monday, March 11th - Joshua 22: 30, 31

We are told in v.30 that the words of the altar-builders pleased the members of the delegation from Canaan. We learn from v.31 what was the basis for this pleasure. Phinehas, as leader of the representatives from the nine and half tribes, specifies several causes for this rejoicing. First, he says of himself and of his fellow delegates, that on the day of their hearing directly from their altar-building brethren, they had come to know that the Lord was in their midst. When the Lord dwells among His people and His people know and rely on His being among them, they do not so easily suspect one

another and make too much of their differences and distinctions. Fears and loveless thoughts and actions result when we do not believe that Christ is building His Church and dwelling within and among His people by His Holy Spirit.

Tuesday, March 12th - Joshua 22: 30, 31

The second thing Phinehas states as a cause for his delegation's joy is that they had come to know that their brethren had not committed sin against their Lord. When believers learn that their brethren are walking according to the truth of God, they rejoice greatly (3 Jn. 4). Sin in our brethren grieves our Lord and grieves us because we love our God and our brethren and we know that the way of the sinner is hard. However, in this case the sin was almost entirely imagined by the nine and half tribes, and imputed to their brethren. Therefore, Phinehas and his delegation are actually rejoicing over the fact that they were wrong in their uncharitable estimation of their brethren, and the delegation's joy is the sweet fruit of their own repentance from such loveless regard for their brethren. See what pleasures come to those who are humble enough to admit their mistakes of thinking unworthy thoughts about their brethren and about their Lord's sanctifying work in their brethren.

Wednesday, March 13th – Joshua 22: 30, 31

Phinehas was pleased that the two and a half tribes had not committed sin in their having built the altar of witness. However, the sinlessness of believers is not the only aspect of their unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Love is of the very essence of that unity. The heart of the moral law is not simply our blameless obedience to its ten stipulations, but is essentially our perfect and entire love for God and love for our neighbor (Matt. 22:36-39). It is our being rooted and grounded in the love of Christ that is the supreme concern of Christ and His apostles (Jn. 13:34; 15:9,12,17; Eph. 3:17-19; 4:13-16). He who abides by the royal law of love need not fear that he will easily sin against God or man.

Thursday, March 14th - Joshua 22: 30, 31

The final basis of pleasure for Phinehas and his delegation was that by the altar-building tribes having maintained their faithfulness to God, they had delivered all the sons of Israel from the adverse hand of the Lord. By this, the priest meant that the two and half tribes had acted so as not to arouse the holy wrath of the Lord as Phinehas and all of the Israelites in Canaan had feared they had done (vv.16-20). However, the nine and a half tribes had merely imagined that peril. It is a pleasing relief to discover that those whom we love are not and have acted not as badly as we have feared. It is more blessed when by our faith in the Lord's preserving and sanctifying work in our brethren we maintain high hopes for them and discover they are even better than we have hoped.

Friday, March 15th - Joshua 22: 30, 31

Phinehas expresses relief that the two and half tribes had not acted so as to arouse the Lord's chastising hand against all Israel. He also expresses relief for the real jeopardy in which the nine and half tribes had put themselves by their rash determination to go to war with their brethren (v.12). It was by their clear communication of an innocent motive that the two and half tribes calmed the warring frenzy of their brethren. The gentle and convincing answer of the trans-Jordanian tribes to the false charges against them saved them from perishing at the hands of their brethren. Their answer also saved the nine and a half tribes from killing their innocent brethren and so igniting the Lord's holy chastisement against the nine and half tribes. Words that are true and lovingly spoken—however imperfectly spoken—serve to keep brethren in the heart of the Lord's love and away from His correcting hand.

Saturday, March 16th - Joshua 22: 32, 33

The delegation returned from Gilead to Canaan and communicated their relief and joy to the sons of Israel. The pleasure of extinguished anger and restored peace and love was transferred from the leaders to the people of Israel. Far more blessed are the peacemakers, who lead the Lord's people away from angry conflict and into the joys of loving fellowship with their brethren, than are those martially-minded souls who zealously prosecute their brethren in the name of holy zeal. Such blessing is a gracious gift from the Lord, and the people of Israel recognized this and blessed their reconciling God accordingly.

Sunday, March 17th - Joshua 22: 33, 34

The holy pleasure enjoyed by the sons of Israel in Canaan was shared by the tribes in Gilead. From the hearts and mouths of all of the covenant people in both places there ascended to the Lord a chorus of praise and thanks for His work of transforming their fears into faith, their threatening anger into a stronger and purer love, and their fixation on each other's faults—imagined or real—into a blessed focus upon their Lord who brought sweet reconciliation from the bitterness of fraternal controversy. This is the Lord's work and it is wonderful in our sight and most satisfying in our experience with our brethren in Christ.

Monday, March 18th - Joshua 22: 34

This chapter opened with Joshua summoning the two and half tribes in order to commend them for their years of faithful service in company with their brethren. He also challenged them to love the Lord and walk in His ways as they returned to the land their God had given to them. They departed from Joshua and Israel with the thanks of the sons of Israel and the blessing of Israel's leader. From that point, Joshua is conspicuous by his absence from the remainder of the chapter. It is significant vitally instructive for us to see how quickly and radically things changed for the worse when Joshua and his call

for Israel to love the Lord faded from the scene. Without him, the sons of Israel soon turned to their own devices: one faction erecting a mock altar without warrant from God or explanation to their brethren; the other faction rashly and wrongly determining to go to war against the altar-builders. Thankfully, the Lord's gracious work to clarify the communications and warm the love between these contending brethren averted sinful escalation and accomplished righteous and loving restoration of peace and unity. Whenever we take our eyes off of Jesus, our Joshua, and fail to hear and heed His Great Commandment for us to love one another, we, too, will resort to our own miserable devices. Then the misery we experience ourselves and cause for others will prevail until we again see and vitally trust in, rely upon, and gratefully rejoice in the blessed truth that the Lord is our God who prevails over all that would threaten to divide us from Him or from one another in Him (Rom. 8:35-39).

Tuesday, March 19th - Joshua 22: 34

The sons of Reuben, Gad, and half tribe of Manasseh had departed from their brethren in Canaan to cross the Jordan and settle within Gilead. They did so with the warrant of the Lord and the challenge and blessing of Joshua. However, it is clear that they built the altar at the Jordan out of fear rather than faith (v.24), and from their own determination rather than with divine warrant (v.26). The tribes of Israel were immediately divided and almost went to war with each other over that altar. This shows that when we act in fear rather than faith we resort to our own devices that bring the very thing we fear quickly upon us. The two and half tribes feared that in future their sons would be ostracized by the sons of the nine and half tribes, and yet the altar the two and half tribes reckoned would maintain tribal unity almost tore the covenant people immediately asunder. Our reconciliation and loving unity in the Church are achieved and maintained not by our own pious devices but rather by the death of the Son of God for us and by His Holy Spirit dwelling in us.

Wednesday, March 20th - Joshua 22: 34

The sons of Israel had been redeemed by God from Egypt, their parents had died in the wilderness because of their unbelief in the Lord, and the current generation had been led by the Lord's miraculous power into Canaan and therein victoriously settled. These sons of Israel faithfully followed Joshua, God's appointed leader, who himself had over the course of his long life followed the Lord fully. Yet, we have seen how rapidly and radically they turned against one another as soon as all of their common enemies had been destroyed. If this generation, perhaps the most faithful generation of believers ever to live on the earth, fell so quickly and badly into discord, how much more vigilant should we be to cleave to our Lord and to our brethren in love? On the deepest level, it was not the Jordan or a questionable altar that set these brethren against one another. It was their endeavor to live without vital union to their Lord by faith and in love that prompted their quarreling. Without our Savior, we can do nothing; with Him we can do all things, even enduringly love one another.



Thursday, March 21st - Joshua 22: 34

The people that had been in a heated controversy over an altar are reconciled at last and rejoice together. We have seen that even the best and most faithful of God's people are yet imperfect and even wretched (Rom. 7:24), but also that by God's perfect love and edifying power they are raised up together, even when they have fallen. Whenever we are faithless, our Lord remains faithful, because He cannot deny Himself (2 Tim. 2:13), and He has sworn by Himself surely to bless and multiply His people (Heb. 5:13,14).

Friday, March 22nd - Joshua 22: 34

The people who had for a time been divided, due not to a river but rather to their faltering faith and love, rejoice in their restored fellowship. They realized that this was because the Lord, not their loveless passions, was God over and among them, and that He was leading them through their wretchedness into ever deeper and purer love for Him and for one another. To the extent that the witness altar reminded them of this blessed reality, it served a good purpose. Yet we have a better witness in the Word of God that is living and active in its nourishing us in the truth and love of our God. Let us learn to rejoice by the light of God's Word in the God of saving and reconciling love.

Saturday, March 23rd - Joshua 23: 1, 2

Joshua, who was conspicuous by his absence in the controversy between the tribes in Canaan and those in Gilead, comes back into the scene in these closing two chapters of this great book. We learned that after the leader of Israel had finished apportioning the land of Israel's inheritance he was given the city of Timnath-serah in the hill country of Ephraim (Josh. 19:49,50). There he had lived in a kind of semi-retirement, and to there he had summoned the sons of Reuben, Gad, and half-tribe of Manasseh in order to charge and bless them before they returned to their territory in Gilead. Now that Joshua was approaching his own death, he summoned the elders and leaders of all Israel to deliver to them his final words of undying truth and love. As we are called to glorify our God throughout the course of our lives, so we should seek to glorify Him and edify His people in our dying. Whether we live or die we are the Lord's, and are called and equipped to serve for His glory and for the good of His people (Rom. 14:8).

Sunday, March 24th - Joshua 23: 1,2

The circumstances of Joshua's summoning Israel's leaders were not only that he was approaching death but also that his dying came at a time when God had given Israel victory over all her enemies within the land of her inheritance. Such a time of victory, however, was not a time for spiritual complacency. Nor was it a time that rendered Joshua useless. In truth it was a time that would call for special vigilance on the part of God's people against the subtlety of the nations surrounding them and the remnants of the

shattered nations that remained within their borders. It was a time that called for many like Joshua. Therefore, in the good providence of the Lord, Joshua summoned Israel's leaders in an endeavor to impart to them and through them a measure of his own spirit by which he had followed the Lord his God fully. The blessed fruit of the Holy Spirit is blessedly contagious among God's people. When we live by the Spirit we walk by the Spirit and serve to encourage others to do likewise to our dying day.

Monday, March 25th - Joshua 23: 3

In vv. 3-13, Joshua delivers his dying charge to Israel through her leaders. The charge does not begin with imperatives, telling God's people what they should do. Instead, it begins with the blessed indicatives of what the God of saving grace had done for His people. The salvation of the people of God results not from their desiring, doing, or deserving but instead results entirely from the Lord's gracious and loving disposition and almighty, effectual doing.

Tuesday, March 26th – Joshua 23: 3

The sum of Joshua's charge has to do with the person and work of the Lord. What kind of person the Lord is can be understood by what He had done for Israel. They who had been in a miserable bondage in Egypt had been delivered by the compassionate mercy and mighty deeds of the Lord. This Lord who had delivered His people from Egypt also had delivered them victoriously and securely into their blessed home in Canaan. Those being charged had witnessed by their personal experience how sweet, strong, and satisfying were the person and manifold works of their saving God. This merciful and mighty engaging of the Lord for, with, in, and through His people is what makes the Christian faith unique among all the world's religions. For we know, trust, obey, and love not the speculations of men about their fabricated gods but rather the one, true, and living God who has promised us new and eternal life and has backed up His words by merciful and mighty works by which our enslaving and degrading sins have been taken from us by the Son of God and we live new and abundant lives in Him who loved us and died for us so that we might live and reign eternally with Him in glory.

March 2013

Wednesday, March 27th - Proverbs 23: 6-8

Selfish people often endeavor to appear generous, but they cannot be generous. Even when they provide a feast or make lavish provision of whatever sort, they do it as a spectacle, calculated to redound to their own praise, more than as a gracious service to others. Therefore, when a miserly soul urges us to partake of his provision, if we do partake then he begrudges us. Through caustic comments to us or malicious remarks about us to others, he will find some way to make us wish we had never

partaken of his fare, although we did so at his urging and offered him genuine expressions of gratitude and appreciation. We do well never to accept anything from the selfish.

Thursday, March 28th - Proverbs 23: 9

Some men are proud of their rhetorical abilities; others naively feel obliged to speak to all people under all circumstances. Both sorts overrate dialogue. When a man proves himself an obstinate fool, we throw pearls before swine if we speak even wisely and winsomely to him. Our discriminating silences may be interpreted as rudeness by those who overrate dialogue, but when we refuse to engage a perverse man in conversation we are simply following the instruction of God's Word and the example of our blessed Redeemer (Lk. 23:8,9). Note that our silence as well as our speech should be directed by our Lord.

Friday, March 29th - Proverbs 23: 10-12

We learned in Prov. 22:28 that we are forbidden to take more than our rightful due. There the just distribution of God was given as reason for our being content with the property we possess. Here that lesson is reiterated. The temptation to enrich ourselves by exploiting the defenseless is also forbidden. The reason given for this latter prohibition is that Almighty God is the defender of the defenseless, and we must not seek to exploit Him. If we push for a test of strength, then God Almighty will win and we shall lose and justly so. Yet there is a legitimate way to expand ourselves. It is by our growth in the grace and knowledge of Christ. Then we rightfully obtain that which impoverishes no one, but serves to bless and enrich all.

Saturday, March 30th - Proverbs 23: 13,14

It is right and natural to administer discipline to children. Those parents failing to administer it appropriately—due either to negligence or reluctance—are holding back something designed for the good of their children. Godly discipline may be quite painful, but it is never mortal. What it does mortify is sinful rebellion in the heart of the child, which, if left uncrucified will ruin a child's life and potentially his afterlife. How thankful we should be that our heavenly Father chastises us for our own good (Heb. 12:5ff), and that He instructs and enables us to do likewise for the children we love.

Sunday, March 31st - Proverbs 23: 15,16

Godly parents rejoice, not in the administration of discipline, but rather in the fruit it bears in the lives of their children. This is true to perfect and infinite degree with our heavenly Father. Satan impugned God's motives for the prohibition in the garden when he implied that disobedience to God would make Adam and Even like gods. The devil held out a most deceptive promise in that assertion. Yet in truth, it is

the Lord who, by His condescension in Christ, raises us to a status infinitely higher than that of phony gods. He makes us children of God. The Lord rejoices to see us standing and speaking and serving wisely and justly in the liberating and empowering truth of our adoption in Christ. Godly parents likewise rejoice to see their children standing in that truth.

Monday, April 1st - Proverbs 23: 17-21

Sinners, unencumbered by scruples and the dictates of godly wisdom, gorge themselves on the food and drink of this world. When we behold their immediate gratification, we can be tempted to think that theirs are lives of joyous ease and substantial satisfaction. But having too much of the food and drink of this world dissipates life, whereas our feeding on the manna of God provides solid joys and lasting pleasure. We must resist envying the wicked and positively set our minds upon the food which endures to eternal life (Jn. 6:27). God's holy fare only gets better as time goes on, while those who feed on this world's perishing food experience increasing emptiness. Read Ps. 73 as a commentary on this passage.

Tuesday, April 2nd - Proverbs 23: 22,23

Throughout our lives we may continue to profit from the wisdom of our parents, whose love begot us and nurtured us to adulthood. Their wisdom and love do not cease when we leave them to cleave to a wife or husband. But this is so only for godly parents, as v.23 makes clear. Such parents alone have true wisdom and love that are manifested in the counsel they give to their children to prize truth, wisdom, instruction, and understanding. Only the godly seek such jewels until the day they die (when they enter into the perfect and unending possession thereof), and only the godly can issue a credible call to their children to follow in this path which they themselves have found to be so rewarding.

Wednesday, April 3rd - Proverbs 23: 24,25

Not only does it profit children to emulate the godly wisdom of their parents, but also when the virtues of godliness are borne in children the hearts of godly parents are made happy. The best and highest thing we could do for ourselves, our children, and our parents is to cultivate a close walk with the Lord. The closer we draw to Him, the closer He binds us together lovingly with others in the blessed delights of His grace and truth.

Thursday, April 4th - Proverbs 23: 26-28

Fidelity to the Lord and to the family He has instituted entails our being on guard against those who seductively compete against Him and our families. There are, of course, surface charms that those committed to luring us away from the Lord and our loved ones can employ. But those charms cover a pit of destruction. Therefore, we should learn not to drift aimlessly, directing our attention to whatever catches our fancy; rather we should train our hearts and senses upon the Lord, and commit ourselves unswervingly to His ways.

Friday, April 5th - Proverbs 23: 29-35

The folly of intoxication is abundantly illustrated in this passage. Here is a most accurate picture of those who seek happiness in a bottle. However inviting the wine may look, however smooth it may taste, however euphoric it may make one feel, it essentially delivers multiple woes to those drinking too much of it. Note that the drinking of wine is not prohibited; but the loving of it and the undisciplined imbibing of it are. Wine is consistently represented in Scripture as a good thing, a blessing of God. But its potency becomes a curse when taken in too great quantity. Wine can only make us feel good (although there are certain medicinal benefits, too— see 1 Tim. 5:23), and if we seek to enjoy good feelings without faithful, disciplined living in Christ, we shall only accumulate misery. The Holy Spirit leads, enlightens, and empowers us to become good. We cannot ever be too filled with Him (Eph. 5:18).

Saturday, April 6th - Proverbs 23: 29-35

Seeking good feelings through the mechanism of drink leads only to disoriented perception and disgraceful communications. It also deadens men's sensitivities to the point where they do not feel or care about the injuries their drunken state inflicts upon them. Making wine one's god reduces one's world to the size of a numbing bottle. It is far different with the Holy Spirit. The more we are filled with the Spirit of God, the more accurately we perceive our world, the more deeply and clearly we understand ourselves and our circumstances, and the more edifyingly we communicate with others. The more we drink from this fountain of the living God, the larger our world, and we ourselves, become.

Sunday, April 7th - Proverbs 24: 1,2

Evil, unscrupulous men often seem to prosper. It is their apparent success and prosperity that we see, and that we may be tempted to envy. Yet God's word reveals to us that such success comes with a fearful hidden cost. For evil men do not only trample the truth, and so prosper by lying and cheating; they also view others as enemies to be opposed or victims to be looted. Theirs is an empty, loveless world, and they are themselves destined to give account of their lawless deeds to the God of truth, equity, and love. Such evil souls will be found infinitely wanting in that final day.

Monday, April 8th - Proverbs 24: 3,4

Evil men, who do not fear the Lord, lack wisdom. When they tear down others in hopes of enriching themselves, they only destroy themselves. But the fear of the Lord, which is true wisdom, enables a man to build a life for himself, his family, and for the benefit of others. A man's wise submission to and communion with the living God produces in him solid integrity of character and efficient capability in action. His life is founded upon the Rock of Ages, whom nothing can shake. In addition to such foundational and structural solidity, there is the inner fullness of heart and mind, which are richly stored with delightful and valuable powers—all derived from God's Word.

Tuesday, April 9th - Proverbs 24: 5,6

A wise man is strong, not because of his cunning wisdom, but because such wisdom leads him to maintain vital communication with the living God of wisdom and power. The wise know that they are strong in the Lord (Eph. 6:10). As they grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ, their dependence upon and confidence in Him increase. Consequently, their power also grows. Accordingly, the wise do not shrink from challenges offered by godless enemies, but, as David was humbly bold to meet Goliath, they will go forth to engage the enemy, prepared for victory by their having taken counsel not from their fears, but from the truth of God's Word ministered by His faithful servants.

Wednesday, April 10th - Proverbs 24: 7

Although wisdom equips a man to stand and serve in power and authority, fools despise such equipping. They are driven by low ambitions, and thus their power and authority are nil. No one consults a fool for guidance, and so in this verse the fool is pictured as being silent in the gate, the place of civil judgment and social interaction. If no one consults us in things that matter we should examine whether we have truly valued, sought, and consistently applied and grown in the wisdom of the Lord.

Thursday, April 11th - Proverbs 24: 8,9

Planners of evil instinctively seek to cloak their designs, but men will eventually find them out and publish abroad not only what such malicious plotters do but also what they are—namely, worthless, injurious intriguers. Folly may not seem as serious as evil, but God's Word condemns the mere planning of foolishness as sin. Finally, the scoffer, who thinks he is superior to all, is shown to be in reality cursed by and a curse to all men. Let us, then, redeem our time in righteous endeavors, not in planning evil or folly or in scoffing, but in serving the Lord and our brethren.

Friday, April 12th - Proverbs 24: 10

Not every day is a day of adversity. Men are inclined to overestimate their strength by judging that what they have, that seems adequate for sunny days, will be sufficient to weather the worst storms. How sobering and revealing is the evil day when it comes. The storms of life reveal whether we have built our lives on sand or upon the Rock (Lk. 6:46-49). One's fainting in the evil day reveals his dependence upon carnal strength rather than upon the might of the Lord, which enables those who possess it to stand (Eph. 6: 10,11,13,14). The Word of God here forewarns us so that we may be forearmed in the day of distress.

Saturday, April 13th - Proverbs 24: 11,12

We must not seek to evade our responsibility to care for others, as did wicked Cain when he asked, Am I my brother's keeper? (Gen. 4:9). Our God, who came to us in Christ, taking pity on our miserable plight and taking the initiative in accomplishing our redemption, expects His people to bestir themselves from selfish preoccupation and exert themselves in serving others in need. The greatest bondage from which men require deliverance is their bondage to sin. How many opportunities to point those in such great need to the Savior do we ignore? Our saying that we did not see their need is no excuse, for we should make it our business to see and serve such needs. God has given us new, caring hearts, seeing eyes, and resourceful hands to be exercised in serving others, and He holds us accountable for our use or negligence thereof.

Sunday, April 14th - Proverbs 24: 13,14

Honey is most frequently represented in Scripture as a source of delightful, energizing nourishment. Think of how the promised land flowed with milk and honey (Ex. 3:8; Num. 13:27; Dt. 31:20), and how Jonathan was revived by some honey (1 Sam. 14:29). Such creational blessings are good. But note how their highest use is analogical. As honey delights the taste and empowers the body, so wisdom delights the mind and empowers the soul. Yet the analogy applies only so far, because whereas honey only temporarily gives strength, wisdom is a never diminishing source of power and authority. One cannot have too much of this good thing.

Monday, April 15th - Proverbs 24: 15,16

The wicked are here warned against touching the Lord's anointed children. Even when the righteous appear to be most vulnerable—such as when they are resting—they remain indestructible. Those who by faith are united to the death and resurrection power of Christ can be cast down, and that repeatedly;

yet they shall ever rise again, for their Deliverer has vanquished all foes for them. Both the Christian and the unbeliever fall, but the Christian rises again while the unbeliever remains down. Both die, but the Christian is resurrected unto life, while the unbeliever goes down into condemnation.

Tuesday, April 16th - Proverbs 24: 17,18

Our Lord cares more about purifying His children than punishing their enemies. Because He loves us, He does not let our enemies triumph over us, but, instead, He calls them to account, judicially casting them down because of their wickedness. The Lord does this with pure love for us and perfect justice for our enemies. Yet if we take vindictive pleasure in seeing the wicked so judged, we show ourselves being corrupted by and unworthy of such blessed deliverance. Our Lord will not suffer us so to be corrupted. Therefore, He may well release our enemies to resume their service of prodding us into deeper dependence upon the Lord and His gracious power.

Wednesday, April 17th - Proverbs 24: 19,20

Fretting is a mild form of fear, akin to anxiety. When we fret over the threats of evildoers, we impute to them more power to harm us than they actually have. When we envy the wicked, we are motivated by carnal blindness that leads us to see them as being happier and more secure than they actually are. Whether they are threatening or tempting us, the wicked and their power are but flashes in the pan, being destined to fade as quickly as they flare up. Let us have no anxiety or envy in response to them, but rather let us exercise faith in the God of sure peace and lasting pleasure (Phil. 4: 6-9).

Thursday, April 18th - Proverbs 24: 21,22

In our fallen world we are called and equipped by God to pray and work for godly change in all areas of life. But not all change represents true progress. Changeable souls are those who are rootless and restless, being never content even with the provision of the Lord. They are wandering vagabonds like Cain (Gen. 4:12), discontented, restless souls, like Satan who roams about seeking someone to devour (Job. 1:7; 1 Pet. 5:8). Such souls are essentially unsubmitive to the Lord and to the civil authority He has established (Rom. 13:1-7). They are bound to be ruined by those authorities against whom they rebel. We associate with them to our harm. So let us stand fast, fearing God and submitting to His governing authorities, and we shall be upheld by both.

Friday, April 19th - Proverbs 24: 23-26

It is right to rebuke the wicked and reward the righteous. Those who indulge in personal favoritism reverse these just deserts. Only a foolish, short-sighted person shows such partiality. The wise soul



knows not only that it is wrong to be partial, but also that it is bad policy which will eventually serve to undermine authority, replacing blessed security and favor with the curse of animosity from others. Lasting pleasure comes to us only as we live lives of principled integrity, judging, speaking, and acting with decided equity.

Saturday, April 20th - Proverbs 24: 27

God's Word serves to make us provident, diligent, and responsible in all affairs. It shows us that the order of our work matters as much as how we work. This verse speaks to us about priority in our work. It could be read in at least two ways: 1) we should prepare our work, gathering all necessary materials before we begin to build. It is tempting to think that preparation is a waste of time which delays the true aim of building; but speedy, ill-considered building is a matter of false economy and efficiency (Lk. 6: 46-49; 1 Cor. 3:10-15); 2) we should concentrate on that which produces something to sustain ourselves and our families before concerning ourselves with the building of a house, which only produces shelter and comfort. Neither of these necessities should be neglected, but we can live longer without a house than we can without food. This is so especially for spiritual pilgrims, who in this life have no continuing city, but who must daily subsist on the bread of heaven.

Sunday, April 21st - Proverbs 24: 28,29

There are times when the interests of justice and social welfare demand that we serve as a witness against our neighbor. Yet it is wrong for us to offer such testimony without just cause, and certainly it is wrong when we find ourselves embellishing our testimony to make it appear as though it were from a just cause. Such activity proceeds from malice and is rightly characterized as tale bearing. Nor should we set ourselves up as judge and executioner. The Lord, with His perfect righteousness, knowledge, and wisdom, is far more competent in such matters that rightly belong to Him.

Monday, April 22nd - Proverbs 24: 30-34

The negligence of a sluggard is manifested in the disintegrating circumstances of his life. His indolence is suicidal, as it keeps him from maintaining the very sources of his nourishment (the field) and enjoyment (the vineyard). He claims ever to be in need of just a little more sleep, but the truth is that he indulges in far more than his due portion of slumber. He feels the need for more rest because that rest he takes is never refreshing. This is so because instead of his life being a productive and satisfying rhythm of rest and work, he violates the fourth commandment that directs us to rest in the Lord on His day, then to work for the Lord, by His direction and power, for six days. The sluggard's rest does not rejuvenate, but robs him of all but his misery and guilt.

Tuesday, April 23rd - Proverbs 25: 1

Solomon wrote some 3,000 proverbs (1 Kings 4:32), and in this verse it seems implied that many of them remained unpublished until long after his death. Hezekiah was a godly king who lived many years after Solomon. He was a reformer who sought to remove the defilement of years of religious neglect and apostasy (2 Chron. 29:1-11). He sought to destroy idolatry and promote true godliness. As he worked to clean out the temple, so he must have worked to search out gems of inspired truth that may have been until his day unpublished. Therefore, we have the following gems by his discovering and preserving efforts. We should be very thankful for the faithfulness of Solomon in writing and for the faithfulness of Hezekiah and his workers in publishing and preserving such truth. May our faithfulness serve coming generations in similar fashion.

Wednesday, April 24th - Proverbs 25: 2,3

The ways and works of the Lord that are revealed to us are but glimpses of a greater, concealed glory. The Lord has many more things to share with us when our capacity to contain them is perfected and expanded (Dt. 29:29; Jn. 16:12). Meanwhile, His judgments remain unsearchable and His ways unfathomable (Rom. 11:33). Nothing is hidden from Him (Heb. 4:13), and He is in need of no one's service in disclosing a matter.

Earthly kings do not have such inherently majestic attributes that render them inscrutable to others. Nor are they without need of the intelligence provided by others. The welfare of their kingdom depends upon their being well informed and discreet with what intelligence they gather. Therefore, we have a responsibility absolutely to trust in, rely upon, and worship our God, while we pray for and respect the vital work and sensitive discretion of those in authority over us.

Thursday, April 25th - Proverbs 25: 4,5

Not all removals result in loss or diminishment. When dross is removed from silver, its beauty, value, and purity increase rather than decrease. Likewise, when wickedness is removed from the nation, there is no loss of anything but misery, while there is an increase of blessed security and happiness. This same principle applies to church, family, and individual life. When we mortify sin—even and especially the sin that seems most pleasant to us—we lose nothing but gain everything.

Friday, April 26th - Proverbs 25: 6,7

Selfish ambition and self-promoting efforts always will be thwarted. If we are foolish enough to force our way into an undeserved place of honor, we shall only be disgraced when those in authority demote us. It is far better for us to seek and occupy the lowest place, serving there with all diligence, and from

that lowly place to be promoted and publicly honored by those above us. Such was the instruction of Jesus (Lk. 14:7-11), and such was His example as He counted equality with God a thing not to be grasped, but rather humbled Himself to the point of doing the dirtiest of all jobs—that of being accounted a sinful criminal and accordingly executed. He did this for us, the ones who justly deserved to be so painfully humiliated (Phil. 2:5-8). From there God exalted Him above all! Thus, our Lord demonstrated that the way up is down.

April 2013

Saturday, April 27th – Joshua 23: 3, 4

Joshua briefly states what the Lord had done for Israel (v.3) and then reminds the people of Israel what their God had given to them (v.4). The Lord not only had empowered His people to prevail over their enemies within Canaan but He also had granted to His people the land from which they had cleared all of their enemies. The God of salvation does not only secure His people from all of their foes, but He also enriches His people with those things that had belonged to the enemies of His Church. In Christ, we are not only conquerors over our enemies but we are made to be super-conquerors who are enriched with the plunder of those over whom we triumph. Those meek enough to trust and obediently follow their almighty God shall inherit the earth (Mt. 5:5).

Sunday, April 28th - Joshua 23: 4, 5

The blessed victories our Lord grants and the rich gifts He showers upon His people are but the beginnings of their blessedness. In v.5, Joshua promises the people of Israel as, Christ's apostle promises us in Phil. 1:6, that the good work the Lord begins for his redeemed children He will continue to perfect until the day of Christ Jesus. In that great final day we shall see and marvel at the fact that all the things we have received here in our pilgrimage are but tokens of the immeasurable treasures that will be ours for eternity in glory.

Monday, April 29th - Joshua 23: 6-11

The certainty of the Lord's promise is not intended to lull us into complacency. Therefore, Joshua moves from the indicatives of his charge to the imperatives that grow as sweet fruits from those divine indicatives. The Lord had accomplished for Israel and had given and promised all that Joshua has summarized, not so that the people enriched by His hand would drift from Him, but rather so that in loving gratitude they would cleave to Him. Joshua indicates how the people of Israel should cleave to their God in this passage. He does so under three headings: 1) that they obey God's law; 2) that they remain distinct from the godless while clinging to their Lord; and, 3) that they love the Lord who has first loved them. By their heeding these imperatives, the people of God would avoid ungrateful complacency

and degrading co-mingling with the godless. At the same time, the Lord's people would foster thankful and loving communion with the glorious and divine lover of their souls.

Tuesday, April 30th - Joshua 23: 6

As the people of Israel had been to this point faithfully obeying the God of their salvation and blessedness, so Joshua urges them to continue in that obedience that had proven to be so profitable to them. Yet the commitment of the Lord's people to know and do His revealed will should not be weak and cold. The deceptive enticements and imposing intimidations of the world, of the devils, and of the remnants of our own flesh, are too strong to be effectively resisted by a mild determination to obey the Lord. Therefore, Joshua calls for God's people to be firmly committed to run the course of obedience that the Lord sets before them. In addition to a firm commitment to obey God's will we must have a determination fully to obey His will. This means not only that we seek to know the whole counsel of God, but also that we carry out our obedience in comprehensive compliance with the divine will. We must not deviate from the course our Lord sets before us in His Word. If the Lord is our God, we should not treat Him or His Word as though they were dispensable. If the Lord is our God, let us serve Him according to the excellence and glory of His person and revealed will. Let us revere the Lord who has given us the inexpressible joy of our redemption and who dwells in us and works in us to will and do His good pleasure (Phil. 2:13).

Wednesday, May 1st - Joshua 23: 6, 7

The positive charge Joshua gives is that the Lord's people should be firmly determined to obey the God of their salvation. In every way the Lord had revealed Himself to be worthy of such strong devotion. He had loved and provided wonderfully for His people. The negative aspect of this charge is that the Lord's people should keep themselves from loving the world or the worldly. There are a number of reasons why the believer should not love the world or envy and court the favor of the worldly. Joshua cites a dangerous dynamic in support of this negative part of his charge. If God's people were to cultivate unduly familiar relations with those who are not their brethren, the children of the Lord learn to speak the language of the idols of the wicked. The Israelites' speaking would be followed by swearing that showed a more serious regard for the idols. This would lead to a servile bondage to and finally worship of the world's idols. Did idols redeem God's people from their bondage to sin? Why then should they even be acknowledged, let alone worshipped? Yet, if we who have tasted and seen that the Lord is good do not keep a principled and critical distinction between ourselves and the worldly, we shall inevitably let our devotion to our Lord cool and our bondage to the idols of the worldly will begin and increase.

Thursday, May 2nd - Joshua 23: 6, 7

The prohibition in v.7 calls for the children of Israel literally not to go among their worldly neighbors. This does not mean that the Israelites were forbidden to be civil and even loving in their dealings with those outside of the covenant of God. Jesus and His apostles direct believers to be in but not of the world (Jn. 17:15,16; 1 Cor. 5:9-11). This is what Joshua is saying as well. He is directing the Lord's people to love their saving God with all of their being (v.6), then to love their neighbors by serving them and shining with the liberating truth of God's saving grace, but not envying them and enslaving themselves to the worldly or to the idols of the worldly. When we worship our God, we do not envy the wicked and desire to go after them and become like them, but rather we pity them and pray for them to be saved as we are (Ps. 73).

Friday, May 3rd - Joshua 23: 6-8

Notice how the vital devotion of believers to their God comes before (v.6) and follows after (v.8) Joshua's caution against undue familiarity with unbelievers. Those most close to the Lord can most safely draw near to those without Christ and without hope in the world. They can do so most effectively, too, as they best shine with the glory of Christ's character and spread the sweet fragrance of Christ's saving grace. Those who go after the world seeking that which they think they do not have in their Father's household, only become like the worldly in their guilt, shame, fear, and misery. May our Lord ever be our alpha and omega so that we might effectively share Him with others rather than drift from Him into the clutches of idolaters.

Saturday, May 4th - Joshua 23: 6-8

In v. 6, Joshua calls for believers to have and maintain a firm determination to know and fully to obey the law of the Lord. In v.8, Joshua calls for believers to have and maintain a strong hold upon the living God of their salvation. With gratitude for the liberating power of God's Word we are to respect and live according to that Word. With love and reverence for the living God who gave us His Word, we are to cling to His person as well as obey the principles of His revealed will. We can distinguish between the Lord and His law but there is nothing in the teaching of His Word or in the character of His person that indicates to us that we should hold to one without the other.

Sunday, May 5th - Joshua 23: 8

When Joshua adds to his challenge in this verse the words, as you have done to this day, he is both commending the children of Israel for their faithful obedience as well as encouraging them to realize that by the course of their trusting the Lord they had consistently experienced His great blessing. Our obedience to our God is for our highest good and greatest blessing. We are called to fix our sight on and follow fully no strange god but rather our loving Savior who has never disappointed but only delighted

us with His compassionate care and lavish blessing. It is good when we recall the blessedness of our past obedience so that we might be encouraged in our present and future obedience.

Monday, May 6th - Joshua 23: 8, 9

Israel had tasted and seen that their Lord was good. Their trust in Him had been rewarded richly with the consistent demonstrations of the Lord's almighty power working for Israel and against their enemies. The Israelites stood on ground, lived in cities, possessed territories for their tribes, and had a land as the home of their covenant nation all because the Lord had swept their numerous and strong enemies from the land that He had promised them. Who would not continue to trust in and obediently cling to such a gracious and giving God? If this God is for us, who can stand against us?

Tuesday, May 7th - Joshua 23: 8-10

The Lord not only bared His almighty arm for His people, He also worked within them to empower them with the strength of His might. We marvel at young David facing the Philistine giant with a sling and stones and prevailing over superior natural strength and martial experience. Yet David was simply humble enough to cling to his Lord, knowing that He who gives life to the dead can certainly empower the weak to prevail over the strong. The Lord had made of the sons of Israel in Joshua's day many such as David, and Joshua commends this fact to his brethren then and throughout the ages so that even we might know that our faith in God overcomes the world (1 Jn. 5:4). Such victories should not be rare but should rather be the common heritage of all who are made strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might (Eph. 6:10ff).

Wednesday, May 8th - Joshua 23: 11

This verse expresses the final and strongest positive aspect of Joshua's charge to Israel. Joshua has charged his brethren to keep and obey the law of the Lord (v.6) and to cling to the living Lord of that law (v.8). Now the people of God are charged to love the Lord their God with all of their hearts. We may obey righteous rules out of a sense of duty; we may cling to our saving God from a sense of desperation; but we love our Lord because He who has first loved us is supremely lovely in the beauty of His holiness and majesty of His glory. When we cleave to our God in love, we shall find ourselves bound to Him with bonds stronger than death. Nothing extinguishes the fires of love for the world that deceives and kills more than does our loving the God who is true and compassionate in all of His dealings with us.

Thursday, May 9th - Joshua 23: 11

Joshua does not simply tell Israel to love their God. He also indicates that such love will require serious effort from God's people. We must take diligent heed to love our God. If we grow casual in our relationship with Him, our love will grow cold. If we substitute service for Him for loving devotion to Him, our love will grow cold and He will correct, rather than commend us, as the words of Jesus to busy Martha and to the church at Ephesus—both of whom had left their first love—indicate (Lk. 10:38-42; Rev. 2:1-7).

Friday, May 10th - Joshua 23: 11

The charge to be diligent and careful in our loving the Lord is not made necessary because the Lord is hard to love. It is rather because those who do not love the Lord hate Him and hate those who love Him (Ps. 2:1-3). It is the most appropriate and delightful thing to love our God who has demonstrated His love for us by His having delivered us, not from bondage in Egypt as He had done for the Israelites in Joshua's day, but from the dominion of our sin, which the Egyptian exodus typified. Our God has done this at the infinite cost of His beloved and only begotten Son, and He has done so while we were loathsome sinners. Whatever suffering we may encounter in our endeavor to love our Lord, it is not worthy to be compared to the glory of His love for us (Rom. 8:18).

Saturday, May 11th - Joshua 23: 11

Note carefully the words: take diligent heed to yourselves. It is not the fighting we have with Satan and the world, nor is it any failing of the Lord that causes our love for our God to diminish. We are to expect powerful enticements and intimidations from our enemies as they seek to lure or drive us from our Lord. We are also to expect the Lord Himself at times to test our faith. That is a good, although painful thing, and its wonderful results should lead us to love our wise and sanctifying God more, not less. None of these things have the power to drive us from the Lord. We must consent in order to stop loving our Lord. No one or nothing in heaven or earth can force us to cease loving Him. Therefore, we must take heed to our hearts, for out of them flow the issues of life and love for our God (Prov. 4:23). As our faith works itself out in love, we will become more like Jacob and the Canaanite woman, both of whom would not let anything drive them from the God of all blessing.

Sunday, May 12th - Joshua 23: 12, 13

With these verses, Joshua completes his charge to Israel. Having set before the covenant people the numerous and considerable blessings they had experienced as fruits of their faithfulness to the Lord, Joshua now makes clear the grim alternative to such faithfulness. Whenever the Lord's people cease loving their God and choose the people and ways of the world, God will give them the desires of their hearts. In His doing so, the Lord hides His compassionate face and withholds His almighty hand while, at the same time, He gives His wayward people up to their essential impotence without Him. Those who

choose not to love the God who has first loved them will invariably enter into a course of miserable experience at the hands of the loveless and merciless worldlings whose company they had courted and whose ways they had desired. Why would we ever leave the God who is love for those who will only hate and hurt us?

Monday, May 13th - Joshua 23: 12, 13

The subtle but sure dynamic of believers' backsliding is set out with keen accuracy in these verses. Initially, the people of the Lord begin their loveless drift from Him by turning their attention to the world from which He had saved them. Then such backsliders proceed with desperate determination to cling to the world. Yet observe how Joshua speaks of the rest of these nations, these which remain among you. The believer can never return to a full and exciting world because the Lord has shattered the dominion of sin and of the world in the lives of His people. Therefore, believers have only these broken remnants to contend with, and it makes it that much more appalling to think that when we backslide we demonstrate a determined preference for such defeated, shattered remnants over our loving and triumphant God. The final result of this dynamic of backsliding is that the children of light will intermarry with the brood of darkness. Better that a man should cease drinking the finest wine and choose to drink a caustic poison than that he should cease loving the Lord, his saving God, and fall back into loving the world that is lost.

Tuesday, May 14th - Joshua 23: 12, 13

In v.12, Joshua warns Israel against making carnal choices that would cause them to drift from their saving God. In v.13, Joshua adds to this warning the painful consequences that the children of Israel would face as a result of their making such ungrateful and faithless choices. With these consequences we perceive a growing development of misery corresponding with the development of apostasy drawn out in v.12. The first bitter consequence is that the Lord would cease driving the remnants of His people's enemies out of the Promised Land. If they love their sin and cease to love their God, they will find their God withdrawing His hand from them so that they might fall more easily into the sinister power of their chosen lovers, who are in reality their enemies. Those enemies, in turn, will begin deceptively to ensnare the backsliders then move boldly to trap them in their malicious schemes. If the Israelites resist, their foes will painfully whip them into the chosen way of their captors, as well as painfully reducing their perception of what is right, good, and loving, as indicated by the image of thorns in the Israelites' eyes. The end result is that Israel would wither away as a spiritual force in the world and they would perish in their eviction by the Lord from the land that was theirs only because He had given it to them. Such dreadful consequences then, as now, always follow as a result of any believers turning away from their Lord, who is their life and the one true lover of their souls. Without Him we can do nothing and we become nothing.



Wednesday, May 15th - Joshua 23: 14

With this verse, Joshua stresses to the people of Israel how good and loving their God had been in His abundantly blessing ways with them. On the day Israel's aged and dying leader spoke these words, the covenant people were deeply and vitally aware of how greatly they had been blessed by their Lord. In attitude and action the Lord had repeatedly demonstrated His love for them. All of His words were backed up by His glorious works for their highest good. All of His great and precious promises were not only fulfilled but the divine provision consistently exceeded the promises. How wretched are those who choose the darkness and death of the world over the liberating light, abundant life, and immeasurable love of the Lord.

Thursday, May 16th - Joshua 23: 14, 15

The blessing of the Lord was a consistent certainty for Israel because God had promised such blessing to those who lived by faith in Him. The generation here being charged by Joshua was one that demonstrated consistent faithfulness to their God. However, Joshua makes it clear that no less a consistent certainty would be the Lord's curse upon those who, having tasted His saving love and power, let their faith grow weak and their love for the Lord grow cold. The choice is clear: if the Lord is God, we should serve Him and live abundantly blessed lives; if we make our enemies our gods they will painfully afflict us because God's almighty hand will be against us.

Friday, May 17th - Joshua 23: 16

The way Joshua speaks in this verse is as though he regarded Israel's eventual unfaithfulness to the Lord as a certainty. The sad truth is that Israel's history proved that Joshua spoke prophetically. The covenant people eventually did drift from their Lord and His blessings; they did go after the godless nations; and they did suffer the divine curses of which Joshua had faithfully warned them. These things are written so that we might not sin, as they did. The love we lose and the misery we gain are too terrible for speaking, let alone for living!

Saturday, May 18th - Joshua 23: 16

As grim as the warning in this verse may be and as grievous as Israel's failure to heed it turned out to be, we do see indications of the glory of God's grace and justice in Joshua's words. The Lord's grace is apparent by the mention of His covenant made with Israel. It is further evident in how the Lord faithfully called His people seriously to keep His covenant and to have mutually loving communion with Him for their highest blessing and deepest satisfaction. Furthermore, we detect the gracious patience of the Lord when He endures His people's sinning and withholds His judgments upon them for generations, as they gradually but surely left their Lord to serve other gods. We see the Lord's glorious justice when He

finally brings His holy wrath upon His children who had rendered themselves impenitent sinners in His sight. It is just that God should cast them from His household into the far country which they eagerly would seek. The Lord our God is praiseworthy in all of His dealings, even those that prove to be most painful for His people.

Sunday, May 19th - Joshua 23: 16

The glory of the grace and justice may be apparent in this verse. What is not so apparent in Joshua's words but does become apparent in God's future dealings with His sinful people is that divine justice exercised through painful judgments upon God's people does not have the final word. Centuries after Joshua's warning, the covenant people would suffer the Lord's judgments and be cast out of the Promised Land. Yet, when the Assyrian captivity of the ten northern tribes and later the Babylonian Captivity of the two southern tribes appeared to signal the well-deserved execution of the covenant people, the return of the Jews from their Babylonian Captivity to the Promised Land signaled a veritable resurrection of God's people. That would be so because with the Lord His mercy always triumphs over His judgments (Jas. 2:13). This is supremely so because the height of the glory of God's grace is manifested through His giving His sinless, beloved Son to be sin for His people and to fulfill all the demands of divine justice by His becoming sin and being judged in their place. All of the warnings of Scripture are written so that we might not sin, but when we do sin (as we all do sin), we have a prevailing Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous in whom God's grace and truth have been realized (Jn. 1:17; 1 Jn. 2:1,2).

Monday, May 20th - Joshua 24: 1

In addition to his giving a final charge to Israel, Joshua had one more service to perform for God's glory and for the good of God's people. The old, dying leader of Israel had more to say for the blessing and edification of the living stones in the household of God. Even when believers grow old, they will still find fruitful employment in the Lord's vineyard if they seek it and appropriate the Lord's grace and enabling power to do it.

Tuesday, May 21st - Joshua 24: 1, 2

Joshua called together the entire covenant nation for his final address to them. Every member of every tribe gathered along with all of their leaders so that each one could hear directly the vital message and respond personally to it. They were gathered at Shechem, near the mountains of Gerizim and Ebal, the mountains of blessing and cursing (Dt. 27:13,14). However, Shechem was also the place where Abraham first learned from God that he was in the Promised Land (Gen. 12:6,7). Accordingly, in that most significant place, Joshua began his review of redemptive history with a reference to the Lord's initial dealings with Abraham. God had called Abraham out of his natural birthplace and away from his natural

family, prior to leading him into Canaan. The children of Abraham were therefore reminded that had the Lord not mercifully intervened in the life of their father, Abraham, they would not be in Shechem, nor would they be in Israel, nor would they be in a covenant of saving grace with their loving Lord. It was by God's grace that they were who they were and were where they were as descendants of the father of justifying faith in the God of salvation.

Wednesday, May 22nd - Joshua 24: 3

From this verse through verse 13 Joshua serves as the spokesman for the Lord, who speaks in the first person to all of His people. In direct terms the Lord says: I took your father Abraham...I gave him Isaac. What God takes from His people is always for their good and blessing, just as God took Abraham from godless Ur and from his godless family. God takes only to give, as He gave to Abraham a child of merciful and miraculous provision. We are enriched, never impoverished, by God's taking from us, and we are blessed, never cursed, by God's giving to us. This is the invariable pattern of the Lord's dealings with all of His people in every age.

Thursday, May 23rd - Joshua 24: 4

What the Lord began with His giving Abraham a son of promise, He continued in His giving to Isaac two sons. The sons of Isaac were twins naturally but spiritually they were vastly different from one another. Although the Lord hated Esau (Mal. 1:2; Rom. 9:13), and although Esau was godless and grieved his parents (Gen. 26:34,35), the Lord showered His common grace upon him by giving him a bountiful life in Seir (Edom). Yet with Jacob, the Lord showered the immeasurable blessings of His saving grace, drawing Jacob into a decisive wrestling match in which that patriarch prevailed over the Lord and was changed in name and nature from Jacob the supplanter to Israel the prince of God. To Jacob the Lord gave twelve sons, whose checkered history Joshua does not mention but rather passes over to the point of their going into Egypt where their brother, Joseph, had been exalted by the Lord to be their gracious savior from a great famine. Notes of grace, love, salvation, and transformed lives always sound in the lives of those elected in love by God in Christ.

Friday, May 24th - Joshua 24: 5

The entrance of Jacob and his sons into Egypt was but an early shadow of the perfect substance of salvation in Christ. Therefore, although the patriarch and his sons went into Egypt to find a gracious salvation from starvation, the land of Egypt eventually became a place of oppressive slavery for the Lord's people. Yet in that furnace of affliction the family of Jacob grew into a vast multitude, whose cries of misery were heard by their compassionate Lord. In response, the Lord sent men—Moses and Aaron—to lead His people out of their bondage. The Lord also performed mighty deeds to break the Egyptians' hold on His people. The Lord did these things from His merciful determination to bring His people out of

their Egyptian slavery from which they never could have delivered themselves. Even when driven by necessity and reasonable responses to such necessity we poor sinners still land ourselves in deep trouble from which only our Lord has power and loving determination to deliver us.

Saturday, May 25th - Joshua 24: 6, 7

The Lord's merciful and mighty provision for His people extended beyond His delivering them from their bondage. The Lord remained with His people, bringing them out of Egypt and working to secure them and provide for them in their liberation. Even when their freedom was threatened and there seemed no way of escape for them from Pharaoh's pursuing army, the Lord made a way of escape for the Israelites that also served as a means of execution for their enemies. All of these miraculous works many of the Israelites saw first hand (at least those who were under the age of twenty at that time). If our God loves and saves us when we are in the dominion of our sin, how much more will He love and care for us now that we are His redeemed children (Rom. 8:32)?

Sunday, May 26th - Joshua 24: 7

Joshua mentions that Israel lived in the wilderness for a long time. He says nothing about why the children of Israel sojourned there for so long (due to their faithless refusal to enter Canaan at Kadesh-barnea), nor does he speak of all of the Israelites over the age of twenty having died in the wilderness according to the Lord's chastisement upon them. With a mere mention that acts as a short bridge between Israel's exit from Egypt and entrance into Canaan Joshua only gently alludes to the painful aspects. This is not an avoidance of a shameful and grievous reality. It is instead showing us a proper perspective upon such courses of divine chastisements when they are seen in their setting of the Lord's overwhelming grace and justifying love. All of us who are in Christ will find eventually that our sufferings are not worth mentioning in the light of our glorious inheritance in Christ (Rom. 8:18).

Monday, May 27th – Joshua 24: 8

In this verse, Joshua speaks of Israel's approach to the Promised Land. He speaks in the first person singular for the Lord, saying in the name of the Lord: I brought...I gave...I destroyed. In this way, Lord is represented vividly as speaking directly to His people, reminding them of His constant and varied dealings with them for their good. It is humbling that believers must be reminded of the manifold goodness the Lord has performed for them. It is gracious of our tenderly patient God that He provides for us such reminders in His Word.

Tuesday, May 28th - Joshua 24: 8

The Lord brought the Israelites Joshua into Canaan by a way that passed through the land of the Amorites. Had the covenant people forty years previously entered Canaan at Kadesh-barnea, as God had directed them to do, they would have come into their inheritance through the sparsely populated southern desert and would have encountered little opposition. That generation, however, feared to follow their God in that relatively easy way. In contrast, their children did not fear to follow the Lord into harsh opposition that afflicted them even before they reached the borders of the Promised Land. Their faith was vindicated when God empowered them to destroy the Amorites and it was rewarded by their being able for a time to dwell in the cities of their vanquished foes. Faith prompts God's people to find their blessing and reward through their trusting obedience to the ways of their Lord, even when His ways lead through many trials.

Wednesday, May 29th - Joshua 24: 9, 10

The divinely appointed course of training and strengthening Israel's faith continued after Israel's victory over the Amorites. The Moabite king, Balak, would not rest nor let God's people rest in such close proximity to his kingdom. The Amorites whom Israel had defeated had been oppressive enemies of the Moabites (Num. 21:26). We would expect, therefore, that the Moabites would have welcomed Sihon's defeat. The Moabites were descendants of Abraham's nephew, Lot, and therefore distant relatives of the Israelites (Gen. 19:36,37). Furthermore, the Lord had expressly forbidden His people to harass or provoke Moab to war (Deut. 2:9). There was no reason for the Moabites to fear the people of God and yet the wicked flee when no one pursues them (Prov. 28:1). Consequently, the king of Moab arose to fight against Israel, but the Lord sinlessly used that king's sinful attacks to strengthen and to bless His people. Our God always uses our trials to serve for our good (Rom. 8:28).

Thursday, May 30th - Joshua 24: 9, 10

After the Lord had empowered the sons of Israel to triumph over the Amorite armies, they faced a more subtle but dangerous foe in the king of Moab. Balak fought against Israel not with armies of flesh and blood but with the spiritual enemy of Balaam, a wicked prophet. It was the intention of both Balak and Balaam to curse Israel (Num. 22-24). However, it was the intention of the Lord to bless His people and He did so by overruling the evil determination of both Moab's king and the wicked prophet. The Lord not only shielded His people from Balaam's curse but He also prompted Balaam to pronounce repeated blessings upon Israel. Therefore, the Lord showed His people how He was leading them to be more than conquerors over all of their foes. The Lord continues to lead His people in continual triumphs (Rom. 8:37-39). We should learn to view all of our enemies' attacks as sure signs only of their destruction and of the advancement of our salvation (Phil. 1:28).

Friday, May 31st - Joshua 24: 11

The entrance into Canaan that God provided for the children of Israel under Joshua was much harder than what He had set before their unbelieving parents at Kadesh-barnea. Moses was prepared to lead Israel through the open spaces of the southern Canaanite desert into a gradually growing encounter with the people living in the Promised Land. But without faith, the Israelites could not even perform that easy task. Under Joshua, the faithful children of such unbelieving parents fought their way through king and kingdoms blocking the way into Canaan. They were led miraculously to cross the watery barrier of the Jordan and face and destroy Jericho, a great and fortified city, as well as all the great kings and armies that lay beyond Jericho. The difference resulted not from the relative difficulty of the challenge but rather from the exercise of faith or failure to exercise faith by these different generations. Those without faith were practically without God and they could do nothing (Jn. 15:5), while those who had and exercised faith were united with the Lord and could do all things (Phil. 4:13).

Saturday, June 1st - Joshua 24: 12, 13

In these verses we learn that the Lord had fulfilled His promise even to use tiny insects to drive mighty enemies out of the land He had promised to His people. In the historical account of Joshua we are not told of when the hornets were aroused to fight as Israel's allies. But here Joshua refers to that fact that they had done so, and that it was done in accordance with the promise of God's Word (Ex. 23:27,28; Deut. 7:20). Great enemies may make imposing threats against the beloved people of the Lord but by the Word and powerful working of the Lord who is ever for His people, nothing that is set against them will ever prevail (Isa. 54: 15-17).

Sunday, June 2nd - Joshua 24: 12, 13

The Lord enabled His people to do the negative work of clearing the land of their inheritance of all their enemies. The Lord also provided positive blessing to His people when He permitted them to live comfortably, securely, and fruitfully in the land from which they had driven all of their foes. The work our God begins in our trials He always completes with triumph and precious reward.

Monday, June 3rd - Joshua 24: 1-13

In this review of the Lord's faithful dealings with His people we observe a remarkable overall perspective. Only positive things are recorded. Nothing is said of Abraham's sin with Hagar; of Isaac's faithless preference for his godless son Esau; of Jacob's deceit or of the manifold lies and murders of his sons; of Moses' sinful anger; or of Israel's sin at Kadesh-barnea and later at Ai. This is not, however, a misleading selective account that leaves out undesirable facts. It is instead a faithful account that fixes our attention on the gracious God who lovingly covers all the sins of His people in the cleansing blood of His Son, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of His people. This is a highly significant perspective for us. It indicates to us that in the day of our entrance into our heavenly home we will not encounter

accusers or be conscious of our sins because our Lord will have removed them all from us. This is how His hand, pierced for our transgressions, wipes away all of our tears. Our seeing this now gives us hope that will not disappoint and the joy of the Lord that is our strength.

Tuesday, June 4th - Joshua 24: 14

From the marvelous review of the manifold indicatives that tell of the great blessings the Lord had wrought for His people, Joshua turns to the blessed imperatives that are the Israelites' proper response to the riches of the saving grace of their God. These imperatives are not only right responses to such blessing but also serve to preserve the people of God in the edifying enjoyment of their blessings from God. Joshua summarizes Israel's debt to divine grace when he tells the Lord's people to hold in highest regard the God of their salvation and abundant blessing. Only He should be the Lord of their lives. Only He should be their helper and the beloved lover of their souls. The reverent attitude toward the Lord then is to work itself out in service of worship and good works that please God and bless men. Finally, the godly attitudes and actions of the covenant people should be the genuine fruits of their characters and in faithful conformity to the Lord's standard of truth, goodness, and love. Our bearing of such responsibilities will result only in our rejoicing and never in our regret.

Wednesday, June 5th - Joshua 24: 14

In addition to the positive imperatives of our revering and serving our saving God, we must also perform the negative but necessary duty of putting out of our hearts, minds, and lives all false gods that would compete for our affections and allegiance and cause our devotion to our Lord to grow cold.

Thursday, June 6th - Joshua 24: 15

Joshua has set before Israel the blessings of God as incentives for the covenant people to continue in their commitment to their Lord (vv.1-13). In v.14, Joshua not only called for such commitment to continue but he also described in positive and negative terms the character of that commitment. Here in v.15 Israel's leader speaks words that may seem to work against the incentives and exhortations he has just delivered. He calls for Israel to consider alternatives to the Lord. Joshua directs the people to choose according to their pleasure between their serving either the Lord or the false gods of their fathers. However, this call for the covenant people to choose their allegiance in accordance with what pleases them is not something that weakens but rather strengthens the appeal of the Lord and His saving work. It is false gods and their deluded followers who rely heavily upon coercion and compulsion to make and keep their followers. The living God of salvation loves and receives only those who make Him and His ways to be their free and full choice. Our Lord loves only those who cheerfully give themselves to Him, because only those who love Him with all their being have truly been captivated by His saving and life-changing love for them.

Friday, June 7th - Joshua 24: 15

While Joshua sets before Israel a free choice between the Lord and false gods he adds his own example of fidelity to the Lord as a factor for the people to weigh as they ponder their choice. Joshua had lived a long life and most of it had been spent in Egyptian bondage followed by forty years of wilderness sojourning. Yet, he had remained faithful to the Lord through all of those tribulations. Why and how had he done that? It was because it had pleased him supremely to know and follow his God, even through many fiery furnaces. Joshua was a living example of one who had placed his entire hope in the Lord and he had not been disappointed, but rather had been delighted in his choice. How can the hope of anyone who trusts the God in whose presence is fullness of joy and in whose right hand are pleasures forever result in anything other than delight (Ps. 16:11)?

Saturday, June 8th - Joshua 24: 15

The gods whom Israel's fathers had served had disappointed them. All who had remained in Ur of the Chaldees from whence God had called Abraham lived without hope and died without salvation. All who had served the gods of the Amorites who had inhabited Canaan lived without hope and had died without salvation under the sword of Joshua and the covenant nation he led. Only those who serve the Lord, the God of Israel, have true hope and possess eternal life and are filled with joy that is inexpressible.

Sunday, June 9th - Joshua 24: 15

So credible was Joshua's faith in the Lord and so undeniable was the pleasure he took in his knowing and serving the Lord that his own family followed his lead into a life of loving service to the God who had saved them. Joshua, therefore, speaks for himself and his family when he says that they would continue to serve the Lord whom they knew loved them and would give Himself as the Servant who would save them (Is. 52:13-53:12). This family whose members devoted themselves to the Lord are set before Israel as living incentives for the covenant people to imitate to their delight and not their disappointment.

Monday, June 10th - Joshua 24: 15

When Joshua speaks for himself and his household, saying that they would serve the Lord, we should understand that he is saying certain things and that he is not saying certain things. What he is saying is that by his exercise of faith and diligent attendance upon and application of the means of God's grace, he would continue to follow and serve the Lord as he had done for all of his life. He is further saying that



he would diligently seek God's grace to be a loving husband and father who by his prayers, precepts, and example would serve effectually to encourage his family to follow his lead in their serving Lord. What he is not saying is that by a loveless and imposing compelling of his family he would coerce them into outward compliance with the standards of godly living. The former course nourishes wheat in the Lord's kingdom; the latter course breeds hypocrites whose apparent service might impress some people but will never be accepted by the Lord who loves only sincere and cheerful servants (2 Cor. 9:7).

Tuesday, June 11th - Joshua 24: 15

When Joshua declares that he and his household will serve the Lord, he is not claiming that each member of his family would certainly be a faithful follower of the Lord. The families portrayed in God's Word are always shown to be far less than perfect and to contain at times godless reprobates. Abraham and Isaac each experienced and contributed to discord in their marriages. One of Isaac's sons was a deceitful supplanter while the other was a godless man whom we know God hated (Rom. 9:13). Except for Joseph and possibly Benjamin, the sons of Jacob were deceivers, murderers, and haters of their brother, Joseph. Yet there is a godly way for committed servants of the Lord to manage even such households. They, by their prayers, precepts, and examples, will continue to serve the Lord and wait upon His convicting and converting work to return prodigal children to the ways of the Lord that were taught and shown to them by their godly parents.

Wednesday, June 12th - Joshua 24: 15

The pleasure Joshua commends is the joy of the Lord that is the strength of all who are united by faith to Jesus. Our Savior gives us His joy amid the world's tribulations (Jn. 16:33; 17:13) and the deceitful pleasures of sin that wage war against the good of our souls (Heb. 11:25; Jas. 4:1-3; 1 Pet. 2:11). If we love the Lord, we will not delight in the sinful things; if we love the world, the love of the Father is not in us (1 Jn. 2:15-17). The Lord gives to all what pleases them best.

Thursday, June 13th - Joshua 24: 16-18

In these verses, the children of Israel express their acceptance of Joshua's call for them to continue walking in faithful devotion to their Lord. With hearty enthusiasm they reject the offer to serve other gods (v.16). They support their refusal with reasons that show their clear understanding of and grateful appreciation for all that the Lord had done for their blessing. Their words in vv.17,18 echo and summarize what Joshua had listed in vv.2-13. By their adding their amen to Joshua's review of the manifold ways in which the Lord had blessed them, they testify that their religious devotion runs deeper than emotional excitement, although there is emotional energy evident in their response. But their response is based on their right apprehension of facts and accomplished deeds of their redemption from bondage in Egypt and their blessed settlement in Canaan. Our religion is based on reality, and our

devotion to the God of our salvation is most reasonable. It is by our experience of the saving mercies of God that we joyfully and with reverent determination offer Him our lives as living sacrifices, which is our most high and reasonable service (Rom. 12:1).

Friday, June 14th - Joshua 24: 16-18

In v. 14, Joshua called God's people to a commitment that contained a positive and a negative aspect. Positively, they were to fear and serve the Lord; negatively, they were to renounce the false gods of their fathers. In the people's response in vv.16-18, they first accept the negative aspect, refusing to serve gods other than the Lord. In the refusal, they speak in terms stronger than those Joshua used when he called upon them to put away the gods of their fathers. Here the people confess their determination to put such gods far from them when they say, Far be it from us that we should forsake the Lord to serve other gods. The more we rightly see the worthiness of the Lord and the worthlessness of the things of the world, the more we will love and cleave to the Lord while loathing and strongly rejecting the idols of men.

Saturday, June 15th - Joshua 24: 16-18

The people of Israel declared that they would neither forsake the Lord nor serve other gods (v.16). The reasons given in vv.17, 18a indicate how vitally aware the people were of their indebtedness to the mercy and almighty power of their Lord. Emphatically, the people declare that they will serve the Lord whom they gratefully recognize to be their God (v.18b). By their positive declaration of commitment to the Lord following their acknowledgement of the Lord's faithful and lavish blessing of them, the people are saying that their trust is in the God who has been tried and found to be true and trustworthy. We are not called to trust and serve an unknown God. We are, instead, called to taste and see how abundantly good our God proves Himself to be.

Sunday, June 16th - Joshua 24: 19, 20

With the words in these verses, Joshua issues a deeper challenge to the people of Israel. These challenging words are not designed to discourage the people of Israel and undermine their assurance of faith, so much as to test and strengthen their faith. We find the Lord administering such tests to Jacob when he wrestled with the angel of the Lord, and the angel demanded that the patriarch let Him go (Gen. 32:24-28), and when Jesus met the cries of the Canaanite woman with silence and apparent insults before He granted her request and commended her faith (Mt. 15:21-28). It is not easy to serve the Lord. It is an impossible thing to do without God's grace and our exercise of the faith He graciously gives to us.

Monday, June 17th - Joshua 24: 19, 20

The first thing Joshua challenges is whether the people's declaration of commitment is well based. Jesus told His disciples that they would all fall away from Him. Peter strongly denied it and boasted that if his fellow disciples should fall away, he would stay with Jesus even if he died in doing so (Mk. 14:27-31). The rest of the disciples joined in that boast (Mk. 14:27-31). Yet, all of the disciples did flee from Jesus in His crucial hour, and Peter denied Jesus three times. Our faithful devotion to our saving Lord depends not on our poor promises and poorer performance. None of us can serve the Lord in our natural strength. The demands of our God are impossible for us to fulfill without His enabling us to remain united by faith to Christ, who is our justification, and whose Spirit alone works in us to will and to do His good pleasure (Phil. 2:13).

Tuesday, June 18th - Joshua 24: 19, 20

The second thing that Joshua challenges in these verses is the adequacy of the people's concept of the character of the Lord. Here the focus moves from the faith of the people to the divine object of their faith. It also moves from a consideration of the many divine blessings the people had received from God to a consideration of God Himself. Why did the Lord bring these people out of their bondage in Egypt, preserve them in their wilderness sojourn, and lead them safely and triumphantly into Canaan? The answer is that the Lord was jealous for the fruits of His saving and sanctifying work in the lives of His people. Read Ezekiel 16 (the entire chapter) to see the full sweep of the Lord's holy, jealous love for His people as He disciplined them but also restored them to Himself.

Wednesday, June 19th - Joshua 24: 19, 20

The jealousy of the Lord is a holy attribute and not a fit of petulant disappointment. So entirely has the Lord committed Himself to His people in love that He sets Himself entirely against all that would move His people away from Him. Therefore, when His people allow external temptation to become internal motivation for them, drawing them away from Him, He will not stand for it impotently or tolerate it in apathy. Instead, He will wisely and effectively apply His holy measures of correction to bring His beloved children to themselves and back to Him. The jealousy of God assures us that whatever we may lose by our sinful wandering, we shall never lose the One who loves us with a zeal for us to return to and rejoice in our first and only true love (Lk. 15: 21-24).

Thursday, June 20th - Joshua 24: 19, 20

What Joshua here says about the Lord is an example of what in Scripture is referred to as a hard saying. The words seem wrong and undesirable in several ways. They seem to represent God as being only conditionally gracious; they seem to represent His salvation as imperfect, being inadequate to save

His people from their worst sins; they seem to regard the Lord as the deliverer of His people only when they do not disappoint Him, and when they do disappoint Him, then He becomes their destroyer. These words cast the Lord in His least appealing and most appalling aspect. They are most offensive to carnal sense but not to right spiritual assessment. To those who are truly faithful, their trust in the Lord will not be shaken even if He slays them without apparent cause (Job 13:15).

Friday, June 21st - Joshua 24: 19, 20

The words of this challenge are given and will be received in two very different senses. To those who are tares in the Church, they are prophetic in revealing the pathology of their eventual apostasy and the coming upon them of the holy curses of the Lord that will be their well-deserved portion. To those who are wheat in the Church, these words will be rightly seen as a sobering warning and loving call for them not to forsake the Lord and endure the painful course of His holy chastisements, even though they will be saved and their tears wiped away by God in the end. Why would any right thinking and rightly grateful person want to forsake the Lord for any amount of time? All is profoundly joyful and pleasant in His presence (Ps. 16:11); all is wailing and gnashing of teeth apart from Him, even if such parting is but for a painful season in the far country.

Saturday, June 22nd - Joshua 24: 19-21

When Joshua confronts the people of God with their Lord in His most serious and awful aspect, the people do not take offense or regard these features of their relationship with their God to be undesirable defects. Instead, they reject Joshua's challenge as being a sure prophecy against them and regard it as a faithful and loving warning that is designed by God for their preservation and highest good. They emphatically and unreservedly declare that they will serve their holy, jealous, chastising, and loving God of salvation and abundant eternal blessing. How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation and so glorious a God (Heb. 2:1-3)?

Sunday, June 23rd - Joshua 24: 22

Once the people of Israel sincerely and emphatically declared their determination to serve the Lord, Joshua took steps to seal their commitment by calling upon them to acknowledge the fact that they would henceforth be untrue to themselves and their freely expressed testimony should they ever prove unfaithful to the Lord. They and we are changeable creatures and we all do well to bind ourselves to consistent conformity with our highest and best intentions that we earnestly express to others and to ourselves. This generation of Israelites proved faithful to their word (cf. v.31).

Monday, June 24th - Joshua 24: 23

The challenge Joshua made and the commitment the people of Israel made in response to it receives special attention in one area. Twice Joshua had warned the people of God to put away from themselves false gods (vv.14,20). The Israelites responded to this repeated warning mainly with a positive commitment to serve the Lord (vv.16,21). Therefore, in the verse for today's reading we find Joshua once more calling for the covenant people to put away the false gods they already harbored in their midst. No believer in this world of pilgrimage can afford to ignore sin or Satan. We must understand and resolutely resist both. However, we must not become obsessed with this negative dimension of our spiritual life while ignoring or paying scant attention to the positive dimension of our loving and serving the Lord our God. Therefore, Joshua once more wisely calls for the people to fix their hearts' loving devotion on the Lord their God. Our loving the Lord and our abhorring all evil are two things our Savior has joined together in His Word to us in this life (Rom. 12:9), and we must never allow them to be put asunder in our thinking or living.

Tuesday, June 25th - Joshua 24: 23, 24

Joshua calls for God's people to put away their false gods and lovingly serve the true God of their salvation. The people respond by once again emphatically declaring their determination to serve the Lord, while saying nothing about their commitment to put away their false gods. This need not indicate an evasion on the part of Israel, but neither does it represent a clear and unequivocal intention on the part of the people to put away their false gods. Scripture indicates to us the high fidelity of this generation of the people of Israel (v.31). However, even they were not a perfect people. There will always remain remnants of sin and seeds of unfaithfulness to our Lord in us all for as long as we are in this world of shadows and imperfection. The Apostle Paul gives clear and sobering testimony of this humbling and painful reality in Romans 7. There he paints our plight in vivid tones when he declares that although he is called to be righteous and to do right, and although he sincerely desires both, yet he still sins (Rom. 7:12-23). This painful and perplexing reality causes him to cry out: Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death? To which he rightly answers in the comforting words: Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord (Rom. 7:24,25). All the words of Scripture and all of our godly commitments to the appointed means of God's grace are to the end that we might not sin. However, we all can and do sin; none of us perfectly puts away all the idols of our minds and hearts. But when we do sin we have an Advocate with the Father who is Jesus Christ the righteous who has paid perfectly for all of our sins (1 Jn. 2:1,2).

Wednesday, June 26th - Joshua 24: 25

Strictly speaking, Joshua did not make a new covenant with God's people. Instead, he made a re-affirmation of the covenant that God had made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob who sojourned in Canaan. That covenant was re-affirmed through Moses who led God's people out of their miserable

sojourn in Egypt, and now that Joshua had led God's people into the Promised Land, he appropriately re-affirmed the covenant once again. That covenant stipulates that the Lord will be the God of His people and that the Lord's chosen and redeemed ones will be His beloved and loving children (cf. Jn. 1:12; Rev. 21: 3-7). It is this blessed, loving relationship that the Lord our God has established with us that is to be the regulating law and governing power of our lives in Christ, not only now in this life, but also with Christ in eternal glory, where not one jot of this covenant will pass away.

June 2013

Thursday, June 27th – Joshua 24: 25

The covenant Joshua made with the people of Israel was to be to them a statute and an ordinance. The word, statute, speaks of the binding legal character of the covenant. It implies the security God's people have in their formal and binding relationship with the Lord. The God who made this covenant would never break it. So seriously does He regard it that He confirmed it not only with an oath, wherein He swore by His own name perfectly to establish and keep it (Heb. 6:13), but He also sealed it with the blood of His beloved and only begotten Son (Heb. 9:13-15). No stronger law can be, or ever be imagined, that could overcome the law that binds the Lord to His people and His people to Him.

Friday, June 28th - Joshua 24: 25

Joshua also refers to the covenant as an ordinance. While the word statute refers to law, the word, ordinance, has to do with the regulation of life in accordance with law. We should never regard any aspect of God's Word or works as mere information or legal requirement. We should especially regard as a matter of vital importance the eternal covenant the Lord made to be our God and to be in a mutually loving relationship with us. The fact that our holy and loving God has taken the initiative to be reconciled to us and to reconcile us to Him through Christ should captivate our every thought, elevate and warm our every passion, comfort us with peace, and strengthen us with joy. Our lives can and should be regulated with the joyful reality that God has removed every impediment to our enjoying blessed and delightful fellowship with Him.

Saturday, June 29th - Joshua 24: 25

Moses twice affirmed the Lord's covenant of saving redemption (Ex. 24 and Dt. 29). So we find Joshua twice affirming the covenant with the generation of Israelites under his leadership (Josh. 8:30ff and Josh. 24:25). These are not vain repetitions but are instead emphatic reinforcements designed to keep the covenant of saving grace constantly in the minds and vitally in the hearts of the people of the Lord. Even the redeemed people of God are prone to forget their purification from their former sins (2

Pet. 1:5-9), and require edifying reminders (2 Pet. 1:12-15). Our Lord graciously prompts His servants called to lead and nourish His people patiently to provide such reminders as often as may be necessary.

Sunday, June 30th - Joshua 24: 26

In addition to Joshua's verbal affirmation of the covenant, he added several special seals to bind the people of God more securely in that relationship with the Lord that fostered their highest blessedness. One of those preserving seals was that Joshua wrote the words he had spoken in the Word of God. He did this not by way of his own invention but rather by the guidance of the Spirit of the Lord who inspired all of Scripture. By his writing of his charge and of God's covenant in Scripture, Israel would have these words of God's liberating truth, healing love, and saving faithfulness in a form that would endure beyond Joshua's lifetime and would be available to instruct, correct, encourage, and bless the Church in every age, including our own. By the words he wrote, Joshua contributed to the book of the law that all of God's people should be very careful to know and do (Josh. 1:8).

Monday, July 1st - Joshua 24: 26, 27

In addition to the words he recorded, Joshua also erected a stone of witness to serve as an enduring reminder to Israel's future generations of the covenant by which they were blessedly bound with their Lord. As with Joshua's contribution to God's Holy Word, so it was with the erection of this stone; it did not result from Joshua's will or design but instead was the fruit of a special prompting of the Holy Spirit. We do well to note precisely why this stone was set up as a testifying memorial. Joshua indicates that the stone had heard all the words of the Lord to His people, not the words of the people expressing their commitment to the Lord (v.24). The voice of the Lord speaking through Joshua to His people had sounded upon the rock just as it had done upon the eardrums of the children of Israel. Joshua then indicates that if the Israelites ever denied their God, the rock would speak to them as a mute and convicting appeal to repent of their ungrateful drifting from the God who had committed Himself to their salvation. It is a humbling thing for the people of God to know that when they cease hearing God's Word they are acting with less sensitivity and right response than do the dull and lowly aspects of creation respond to the voice of God who made them.

Tuesday, July 2nd - Joshua 24: 28

This verse records the last public service Joshua performed for the glory of his God and for the good of his Israelite brethren. He dismissed the people. Joshua had fulfilled his first duty, personally to trust and follow his Lord fully, and from that exemplary devotion he had performed his public duty to lead Israel into a deep and true experience of their salvation. With his final words and actions Joshua had done all in his power to establish the people of Israel in their faithful and loving walk with their Lord. Now that he had finished the course set before him by God, Joshua dismissed the people with a wealth of spiritual

provision to live in the bountiful land the Lord had given to them. In the same way, our Jesus makes abundant provision for us to walk by faith and to live in the place He has gone to prepare for us (Jn. 14:1-3).

Wednesday, July 3rd - Joshua 24: 29

We are told in this verse that it was after these things that Joshua died. The things referred to are the faithful living and serving of Joshua. To the end of his life, Joshua served for the glory of God and the good of God's people. He was born the son of Nun, and by that natural birth he was born a sinner. Yet by God's saving grace Joshua was born again and with his new nature and by his exercise of the faith God had given him, he delighted to be the servant of the Lord. No higher title or honor could ever be attributed to any person.

Thursday, July 4th - Joshua 24: 29

This verse is wonderfully written and expresses a profoundly comforting perspective on Christian living and dying. The last enemy that casts a fearful shadow over all the days of the unbeliever's life is summed up in one word: died. That word is set within the matrix of Joshua's title (servant of the Lord) of Joshua's service (after these things) and of Joshua's age (110 years). His long life, his fruitful service, and his honored title all outshine the dark wages of sin. This is so not only for Joshua but also for all who through faith in Christ have been delivered from the enslaving fear of death (Heb. 2:14,15) and can face it as the portal for their glorious and everlasting gain (Rom. 8:18; Phil. 1:21).

Friday, July 5th - Joshua 24: 29

Joshua lived a long life but not as long as was the life of Moses (Dt. 34:7). However, the Lord granted Joshua sufficient years to fulfill his divine calling. The days of all people are in God's hands. He summons a rich, complacent fool to depart from this life sooner than that fool expects (Lk. 12:20), while He preserves His servants through many tribulations and mortal dangers. Our race is set before us and we do well to run it with endurance by faith that is fixed on Jesus, the One who holds the keys to death and Hades, as well as eternal life and Heaven (Heb. 12:1,2; Rev. 1:17-19).

Saturday, July 6th - Joshua 24: 30

The Word of God records not only a notice regarding Joshua's death but also significant information concerning his burial. Unlike the situation with all of Joshua's contemporaries (excepting Caleb), whose bodies were left in undesignated graves through the wilderness south of Canaan, Joshua's mortal remains were buried in the Promised Land. The servant of the Lord and leader of Israel had come a long



way into the rich blessing of God from the place where his life had begun. Joshua was born a slave in Egypt, having no freedom, no possessions, and no comforts. He began his life under the heavy burden of oppression, hard labors, and misery. However, by the grace of his Lord and through his faith in his Lord, Joshua came out of Egypt with Moses and all Israel, lived through the forty years of Israel's wilderness wanderings, and succeeded Moses as the Lord's appointed leader of Israel. He came to, saw, and conquered Canaan by his faithful trust in and obedience to his almighty God. Therefore, he ended his life as an honored and accomplished leader of the covenant people, and the possessor of his rich portion in the Promised Land. At his death, Joshua was incalculably more blessed than he had been at his birth. This was so because He who began the good work of salvation in his life had brought Joshua out of his misery and into the merciful blessing of God. Similarly, God's grace finds us in bondage, guilt, corruption, misery, and poverty but it takes us from that state into one of abundantly rich blessing, so that we die, having gained much in our lives, and leaving our earthly pilgrimage to enter into even greater gain (Phil. 1:21).

Sunday, July 7th - Joshua 24: 30

The notice of Joshua's burial is also significant when we compare it to the burial of Moses (Dt. 34:5,6). Joshua was buried in the Promised Land while Moses had been buried in Moab. The hands of the Israelites buried Joshua, while the hands of the Lord buried Moses. The place of Joshua's burial was not only known but was also part of his rich inheritance from the Lord, while the place of Moses' grave was and is unknown to any person. These differences are due to the redemptive design of God who provided for His servants in ways that foreshadowed the essential differences between God's Law (Moses) and His grace (Christ). The Law shows sinners Heaven but cannot lead them into Heaven, because the Law can convict sinners but not convert them. Moses died because he had with sinful anger scolded the people of Israel for their continued sins in the wilderness (Num. 20:1-2; 27:12-14). The Law can only find plentiful targets of sin in all people because all are sinners (Rom. 3:23). Yet Joshua, foreshadowing Jesus, led the covenant people into the Promised Land, not because of their merit but rather because of the redeeming mercies of God who in Christ takes away the sins of His people.

Monday, July 8th - Joshua 24: 31

The legacy Joshua left for the people of Israel was their secured and blessed settlement in the Promised Land. Yet that settlement was only part of Joshua's legacy, and the least part of it. By his prayers, precepts, and example, Joshua led the people of his generation and of the elders who survived him into their living lives of blessed faithfulness to the Lord. No greater gift can a believer give to his friends, neighbors, children, and brethren in Christ than the prayers, precepts, and example that issue from his own faithful devotion to the Lord.

Tuesday, July 9th - Joshua 24: 32

The Book of Joshua concludes with the three highly significant funerals of Joshua, Joseph, and Eleazar the priest. In v.32 we are told of the second of these three funerals. Joseph had been the father of Ephraim and Manasseh, who had been born to him while he dwelt in Egypt. Joshua was of the tribe of Ephraim, and so was a descendant of Joseph. Death, the wages of sin, had claimed both men. However, the treatment their mortal remains received indicates that death was not triumphant in its claim but only served to transport these faithful servants from the good wine of grace to the best wine of glory. The Lord remained their God in life as well as in and through death. And although they were dead, yet they still speak to us, indicating that they lived on because their God was not the God of the dead but rather of the living (Mk. 12:26,27).

Wednesday, July 10th - Joshua 24: 32

The accumulating account of these burials of the dead are given not to show the power of death and the growing cause the Israelites had for grief, although deaths and burials are always solemn and sobering occasions. Instead, the accounts of these burials of the faithful servants of the Lord provide a heaping up of the sweet and fortifying testimonies of faith in these men and their consequent triumph over death and the grave. Joseph's faith is seen not only in the record Scripture gives us of his life, but also and especially in the orders he gave to his brothers. Those brothers were the fathers of the Israelites who buried Joseph's bones in the soil of the Promised Land as Joseph had directed (Gen. 50:24,25). Yet, the faith of Joseph was not fixed on the Promised Land but rather on the God who had promised it (Heb. 11:22), and who had power to raise him and all of God's people from their graves on the last day. Therefore, Joseph's being buried in the Promised Land points to his and to our belonging to the eternal Paradise of God in which we shall live and reign gloriously with Christ forever.

Thursday, July 11th - Joshua 24: 32

More than the faith of Joseph is alluded to in this verse. The faith of Jacob, Joseph's father, also comes into view. We are reminded that Joseph was buried in the territory of Manasseh, his oldest son, near the city of Shechem, and in the ground that Jacob had purchased from the Canaanite sons of Hamor. Where is faith in these references? The ground that Jacob had purchased from the sons of Hamor was procured after the patriarch had wrestled with the angel of the Lord and prevailed, thereby having his name changed from Jacob, meaning supplanter, to Israel, meaning prince of God (Gen. 32: 24-28). The purchase was also made after Jacob had been blessedly reunited with his brother, Esau (Gen. 33). As his response to these preliminary blessings from the Lord and from his previously offended brother, the first act Jacob performed on his newly acquired land was to build an altar to the Lord, the God of Israel (Gen. 33:20). It was therefore very fitting that Joseph's bones were buried in ground that had been consecrated by his father to the God of reconciling and resurrection power.

Friday, July 12th - Joshua 24: 32

Even the faith of Abraham, Joseph's great grandfather, comes into to view in this verse. Although Abraham, after he left Ur, had entered and traveled through much of the Promised Land, it was not until he had reached Shechem, in the heart of Canaan, that the Lord revealed to him that he was in the land of divine promise (Gen. 12:6). There at Shechem, Abraham preceded his grandson, Jacob, in building an altar to the Lord (Gen. 12:7). That land, so frequently sanctified by holy sacrifices to the Lord was the perfect place for Joseph's mortal remains to be buried. It was through the saving sacrifice of Christ, to whom the sacrifices of the patriarchs pointed, that those faithful fathers had hope of their resurrection from death. Their hope is our hope also in Christ.

Saturday, July 13th - Joshua 24: 33

In addition to the burials of Joshua and Joseph, Scripture also records the death and burial of Eleazar, the high priest son of Aaron. Eleazar, too, was buried in a fitting part of the Promised Land. His grave was at Gibeah, othat belonged to his son, Phinehas, a man whose zeal for the Lord had served to arrest a plague that the Lord had brought upon His unfaithful people (Num. 25: 1-9). In response to the zeal of Phinehas, the Lord conferred upon him and his sons a perpetual priesthood (Num. 25:10-13). Yet even these priests died and were buried. But their priesthood pointed to the effectual and everlasting priesthood of Jesus, who rose from the grave victorious over sin and death because He offered not lambs and bulls but Himself as the atoning sacrifice (Heb. 7:23-28).

Sunday, July 14th - Joshua 24: 29-33

The Book of Joshua opened with a notice of the death of Moses (Josh. 1:1) and it concludes with notices of the death and burial of Joshua and two of Israel's other great servants. It may seem from this that death prevails even over the best of the Lord's servants. Yet, while we are here confronted by death and grief we also are much more comforted by notes of eternal life, great gain, and hope that does not disappoint. These faithful fathers are to this day entombed in the Promised Land wherein they were brought by the saving promise and power of the Lord. That Land was but a token of the heavenly citizenship that they, by faith, attained (Heb. 11:13-16). Toward that glorious hope and heavenly citizenship all of the true Israel in every age are drawing nearer every day, whether they walk by great faith, as did Joshua and his generation, or by distressed faith as did the following generations under the judges and kings. The Lord calls and enables us all to arise and cross through the river of death into the eternal life and glorious home He gives to us in Christ (Josh. 1:2,3).

The Letter of 1 John

Monday, July 15th – 1 Jn. 1: 1-4

While 1 John is commonly referred to as a letter, the fact that it has no introductory greeting or signature or mention of the identity of those addressed may indicate that what we have in this production is the substance of a sermon. The Church has always regarded the author of this piece of writing to have been the beloved disciple and apostle John. This opinion is based upon the strong similarities of language and content that we observe between the fourth Gospel and 1, 2, and 3 John. The contents of 1 John are both negative and positive. Negatively, John writes against false teaching and hypocritical living. He may, in fact, have been contending against seminal forms of Docetism, the heresy that denied the full humanity of Jesus, and Gnosticism, the heresy that maintained that sinners are saved by their initiation into high levels of hidden knowledge. Positively, John writes about believers' fellowship in and with the Lord, the light of true holiness, the love of God and love of brethren for one another in Christ, joy in the Lord, and assurance of salvation. These themes are addressed in a structure of progressive parallelism, in which a theme is stated then re-stated in a more developed form. The repetition strengthens the force of the statement while the development adds fullness to the statement. It was a structure common to Hebrew literature (cf. Psalms and Proverbs) and one John used in his Gospel, his letters, and in Revelation. All of this is to say that 1 John is a profound and carefully constructed piece of writing that is full of nourishing truth and healing love for the people of God in all ages.

Tuesday, July 16th - 1 Jn. 1: 1, 2

The profundity of John's perspective is strikingly apparent in the opening words of this letter. As he began his Gospel with a reference to the eternal being and counsel of God (In the beginning was the Word..., Jn. 1:1), so he launches his first letter from the viewpoint of the infinite and eternal God. His first word, What, is abrupt and cryptic. It is a neuter relative pronoun that may refer to the gospel, which in Greek is a neuter noun. The gospel, of course, is a message of glad tidings. However, while this message comes to us in time, John indicates that its true character is eternal. It existed, from the beginning, not from the start of time but from eternity that preceded time. It is the eternal gospel. This Word has eternal validity and power. It is not novel; it is not transient; it is not the result of men's finite and fallible speculations. What John is about to share is infinitely greater than anything any person has ever experienced or will ever experience in this world of the shifting sands of time.

Wednesday, July 17th - 1 Jn. 1: 1, 2

From the eternal validity and power of the message he is about to declare, John goes on to express how this message has been transmitted from eternity into time, and to creatures in time, specifically to himself and his fellow disciples of Christ. This is the import of the words, What we have heard, what we

have seen...what...our hands have handled. This message has not remained in eternity hidden from creatures of time. Nor has it entered our world as a mere message composed of verbal propositions and abstract truths. When John speaks of his and his brethren having heard, seen, and handled what has come into time from eternity, he stresses that the eternal gospel has come essentially in the living reality of human flesh. John, therefore, asserts that with the incarnation of Christ, God came into the world and assumed to Himself a true and full human nature in all respects except in that of personal sin. Our incarnate God is infinitely more than verbal propositions, mental speculations, or deduced doctrines. He has come among us as one of us to do us true, infinite, and everlasting good.

Thursday, July 18th - 1 Jn. 1: 1, 2

That which John has represented first as a message (What), then as a living message (hear, seen, handled), finally is declared to be a good message. It is the greatest message for those dead in sin, because it is the Word of life. This is the gift of God that is suited perfectly to man's need. For man is a sinner, separated from God and guilty and corrupt in his sin. That guilt and corruption has made sinners to be ashamed of themselves and afraid of the God whom they have offended. That is why Adam dreaded hearing the sound of God approaching him after his fall and also why Adam sought to flee and hide himself from the Lord. Sinners fear that the approach of God spells their death and doom. In reality God has come to save sinners from their death and to give them eternal life.

Friday, July 19th - 1 Jn. 1: 1, 2

When John defines the content of the message he had received, he uses the expression, Word of life. By his designating the gospel as the Word, he is in keeping with the way he introduces the incarnate Christ in the opening of his Gospel (Jn. 1:1-14). The connotations expressed in his referring to Jesus as the living, incarnate Word of God are rich and significant. The Greek term for word is one from which our word, logic, has come. Therefore, the gospel message is the communication of the divine logic—the holy and loving reasons—upon which the incarnation of the Son of God and His redeeming work are based. But this Word communicates far more than information. In Christ, the knowledge and wisdom of God, the loving disposition of God, and the holy character of God are not only commended to us but are actually communicated to us in a way that transforms us into the likeness of God.

Saturday, July 20th - 1 Jn. 1: 1, 2

The character of the Word may be understood from its effects upon those to whom it has been communicated. They have heard God's declaration of truth and love, law and grace, promises and provision. They have seen divine works of compassion and salvation in the works of Christ, and they have handled God Himself who has entered our cursed world to dwell among sinners, not to judge them but to save them, allowing them an intimate familiarity with Himself such as John enjoyed when he

leaned on the breast of Jesus. John offers to his readers no fantasy but rather a firm and certain testimony to a glorious reality.

Sunday, July 21st - 1 Jn. 1: 1, 2

We understand the agenda of God sending His Son into our world through John's use of the phrase Word of Life. God in Christ has entered our world. Ours is a world of universal sin and death. In his Gospel, John refers to death twelve times in the chapter where Jesus claims to be the resurrection and life and then proceeds to raise Lazarus from the dead (Jn. 11). In the two opening verses of 1 John the author mentions life three times to emphasize the liberating and joyful truth that God has come into our world not to judge and kill and condemn us, as Adam the first sinner and all sinners since him have feared. God in Christ has come to raise sinners out of their death and into His glorious eternal life.

Monday, July 22nd - 1 Jn. 1: 1, 2

John writes of his apprehension of the Word of life in v.1, saying that he has seen, heard, and handled the Word. In v.2 he writes of how it has pleased God to transmit the Word of life to sinners other than John and the other disciples who had personally known the incarnate Son of God. The life that was shown to them they have seen and taken effective steps to show to others. God has not chosen to send His Son perpetually to remain in this world. Instead, the Lord has transformed men like John, who have heard, seen, and handled Christ to their own salvation. There are two Greek words for our verb to see. One means mere sensual apprehension, the other means to apprehend with persuaded understanding. In the latter sense of seeing John writes that what he and the other apostles had seen, he testifies of and proclaims to his readers. Testimony is a solemn declaration of truth, while proclamation implies the publishing of authoritative decrees. Thanks be to God that what John and the other apostles had received they did not keep to themselves but faithfully shared with others so that they, too (we, too), might come to know the Word of life.

Tuesday, July 23rd - 1 Jn. 1: 1, 2

The life John proclaims is more than a sustaining of mere physical being. Our salvation is far more than our mere survival of an encounter with God. The life Christ conveys is eternal in duration and abundant in blessedness. Its source is no less than the eternal God and Father of Jesus Christ, who is the eternal Son of God. Therefore, this life is replete with the features that pertain to and issue from the eternal God of exalted glory. In Christ we have not only everlasting life but also every spiritual blessing.

Wednesday, July 24th - 1 Jn. 1: 3

The supreme goal of the divine Word of life coming to us is the reconciliation of God with sinners. Our sin has severed us from God and from the light and life of which He is the source. The Word of life comes to people who are dead in their sins and makes them alive (Eph. 2:1-7). Yet, we live these new lives not separated from God but in most intimate and loving fellowship with Him. We also have fellowship with one another because the sin from which Christ frees us had filled us with mutual fear and suspicion of one another. John knew that the work of the Word of life through the proclamation of the gospel would result in holy relationships of mutual love between God and His people as well as among His people because John had heard Jesus pray for this (Jn. 17:20-26), and John had begun to experience this in his own life.

Thursday, July 25th - 1 Jn. 1: 3

We do well to understand what John does and does not mean when he uses the word, fellowship. He does not mean our having a mere physical perception of or mental assent toward Jesus. Knowing Christ as an historical person, knowing Him after the flesh, did not suffice even for His disciples (cf. the despair of the disciples on the Emmaus road with Jesus, Lk. 24:13ff). What John does mean is our knowing God and one another in Christ as God and we truly are in ourselves and in our relationships. This means our knowing God in the three persons of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as well as our apprehending the glorious divine attributes and works with grateful and loving devotion. Our knowing God in this way is eternal life (Jn. 17:3), and anything less or other than this is not life at all.

Friday, July 26th - 1 Jn. 1: 4

The essential nature of our bonding to the Lord and to one another in fellowship is love. The essential fruit of such loving fellowship is mutual joyful satisfaction. Our Larger and Shorter Catechisms rightly inform us that our chief end is to glorify and enjoy God forever. Jesus speaks to us in Scripture so that His joy may be in us to fullest measure (Jn. 15:11; 17:13). The Word of life has come to us so that our guilty dread of almighty God might be replaced by glad delight in the Lord we know and love intimately enough to address as Abba, Father (Rom. 8:15). As we apprehend the love of God in His giving of His Son to save us, we love Him and others whom we had previously hated (1 Jn. 4:19). And in the exercise of this love, we find invigorating joy in our fellowship with and service for our saving God and our brethren in Christ, as well as finding joy in our knowing and doing His will (Ps. 45:7).

July 2013

Saturday, July 27th – 1 Jn. 1: 5

John has written of how the Word of eternal life was manifested in our world for the purpose of His establishing joyful fellowship with those whom He brings to new life. This introduction is followed with some explanation of the nature of the fellowship believers have in Christ. In the first part of v.5, however, John reiterates the faithfulness and utter reliability of his testimony about these most exalted and transcendent matters. What John writes is not the result of man's speculation or reasoned opinion or wishful imagining. His is a solemn and trustworthy testimony. He declares a message he had received from God, not only through the inspiration of God's Holy Spirit, as all of the other writers of Scripture experienced (2 Pet. 1:20,21), but also by his personal experience of fellowship with God through the incarnate Son of God, Christ Jesus. This same divine Savior continues to speak through John's words to all who have spiritual ears to hear, and their lives are transformed into the likeness of that Savior who is speaking to them through the writing His beloved apostle. The Lord God, therefore, initiates the fellowship we enjoy with Him and He also determines its nature and mode of establishment.

Sunday, July 28th - 1 Jn. 1: 5

Our fellowship with God is a fellowship with the living source of light. John is not saying that light is the preferred environment of the Lord, nor is he saying that God is like light. Instead, John declares that God is light, that light is of His nature and that He is the source of light. But what is the light of which he writes? In Genesis we learn that the first thing God spoke into being was light (Gen. 1:3). That light was what is to us visible energy. The qualities of that light are such things as illumination, effusiveness, and penetrating power. Nothing is hidden but all is revealed in light. No covering and no deception can be in light, and such things are not in God who is light (1 Cor. 4:5; Heb. 4:13). Light also is energizing. As our sun is the physical source for all that energizes and sustains life on our earth, so Christ is the light that vanquishes the darkness that is without energy or life (Jn. 8:12;12:36). Light is also incorruptible; it exposes evil and awful things but it does not partake of the nature of those things (Jn. 1:4,5). God is all of these things and more, and in His light we see all light and all that light reveals and empowers (Ps. 36:9).

Monday, July 29th - 1 Jn. 1: 5

Light is antithetical to darkness. Whereas illumination and vital energy are the qualities of light, concealment and lack of energy are the qualities of darkness. John makes the point emphatically that all effulgence and energy, all light and life are in God and from God and darkness and death are in no measure in Him or of Him. We who by our sin are separated from God and therefore are children of darkness and death have been saved not by scintillating fragments of light that we see and try to follow, but rather by the living, infinite, and eternal source of physical, moral, intellectual, and spiritual light.



Tuesday, July 30th - 1 Jn. 1: 5

John stresses that in God there is no darkness at all. This means that in God there is no lack of energy or vitality. It also means there is in Him not the smallest degree of deception, impurity, or obscurity. Darkness disguises reality in its shadow, but God reveals reality not only in its surface appearance but also and especially in its true inner essence (Heb. 4:12,13). The pure in heart who see God (Mt. 5:8) see all things truly in His light (Ps. 36:9).

Wednesday, July 31st - 1 Jn. 1: 6

John is writing about the one, true, and living God, who has revealed Himself to this apostle as light. Yet, John is also writing about the saving reconciliation God has wrought in Christ and the fellowship this has made possible between God and those who are new creatures in Christ. Therefore, John moves in v.6 from his testimony concerning God to one of the essential tests of the true Christian character of those who live in fellowship with the Lord. The first test he presents is that of the conformity of believers to the character of their saving God. If God is light, we who truly believe in Him should shine with His likeness (Mt. 5:16). All of the qualities of light—energy, clarity, illumination, purity, and so on—should be ours in increasing measure if we are in fellowship with God through our union to His Son by faith.

Thursday, August 1st - 1 Jn. 1: 6

In this verse, we have the first of several times that John writes the phrase, if we say. He who will later write that believers should not believe every spirit but should test them to see whether they are from God (1 Jn. 4:1), performs such testing in vv.6-10. Talk is cheap but truth is precious. Empty profession of faith in Christ and hypocritical testimony with respect to one's spiritual experience will save no one. We must possess Christ as well as profess our faith in Him. If we truly possess Him, we shall practice the truth in love as well as speak about it.

Friday, August 2nd - 1 Jn. 1: 6

John expresses two features that belie a person's claim to be living in fellowship with God. The first feature is the one making an empty profession walking in darkness. This speaks of positive and active determination. No matter how sincere or persuasive a person's theological talk may be, if that person's actions manifest a progressive desire for and conformity with the obfuscation of the world, that person's words are lies that are shown to be so by his works. Jesus warns us that many who say, Lord, Lord will be refused entrance into the kingdom of heaven because in His perfect light it will be apparent to all that they have practiced lawlessness against God, however lovingly they may have spoken about Him (Mt. 7:21-23).

Saturday, August 3rd - 1 Jn. 1: 6

If one's practice contradicts his profession, we are to be guided by the man's works more than his words. Those who pursue the works of darkness, such as Paul writes of in Eph. 5:3-13, lie when they say they have fellowship with the God of light and moral purity. Their walk in darkness manifests their positive determination to live in violation of God's holy will. There is a negative feature to such living and moving in darkness, and John touches on that when he writes that they do not practice the truth. The truth is not a mere collection of facts but is a living reality that is inextricably bound to the person of Christ (Jn. 14:6) and of His Father who is light and love (Jn. 10:30; 1 Jn. 1:5; 4:8). Accordingly, the children of God who are in true and loving fellowship with Him are called and enabled to live the truth in love (Eph. 4:15). It is why Paul writes that we are to walk in love (Eph. 5:2) and to walk in the light of truth (Eph. 5:8,9).

Sunday, August 4th - 1 Jn. 1: 7

In contrast to false professors of faith, who truly live and walk in the deceptive and deadly ways of the world, John sets the life of the true believer. Such a believer walks in the light. He makes consistent progress in the discovery of God's will and of the Lord's effectual wisdom (Eph. 5:8-10). He also grows in his knowledge of others, especially of his brethren in Christ with whom he has true fellowship. The bond between those who walk in the light of the Lord's truth is the love the Lord has for us as His redeemed people. It was the love of God that prompted Him to accomplish our salvation from the sin that not only alienated us from Him but also alienated us from one another.

Monday, August 5th - 1 Jn. 1: 7

The natural man loves and lives in darkness because his sin makes him ashamed of himself and afraid of the God against whom he ceaselessly sins. Recall how Adam, after his fall, sought to hide his shame from Eve with leaves and sought to hide himself from God entirely because of his dread of the Lord. When Jesus cleanses us from our sin, we are no longer ashamed of ourselves or afraid of our God. We are secure in His love and in His transforming work by which He cleanses us of our sin that had ruined all of our relationships.

Tuesday, August 6th - 1 Jn. 1: 7

The shed blood of Jesus has cleansed us of all sin. It may not seem so when we continue to be entangled in the remnants of our sin. Yet, the death of the Son of God for us has struck the mortal blow to all of our sin and to death, sin's wages. We are now freed from the dominion of sin (Rom. 6 & 8), even though

we still wrestle with the remnants of sin (Rom. 7). However often we may be entangled in sin, we shall be finally and fully and for all eternity delivered from our wretchedness by our God who through Christ has set us free from the sin that bound us in shame, fear, and guilt (Rom 7:24,25). Furthermore, the Lord progressively sanctifies us by the working of His Spirit, and will certainly glorify us in the final day when we all will be perfectly and perpetually confirmed to the image of His Son (Rom. 8:29,30).

Wednesday, August 7th - 1 Jn. 1: 7, 8

When John writes that the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin, he attributes the cause and character of darkness to sin. If we walk in the light, it is because the dominion of sin has been broken in our lives. If we walk in the darkness, it is because we remain in our sin and it is sin that has brought upon us the deprivation of every form of life's energy and illumination that is the light of life. Literal as well as every figurative form of light and darkness ultimately issue from a spiritual source: light encompasses us when we are united to Christ by faith; darkness enshrouds us if we are apart from Christ in our sin (1 Jn. 1:4-13).

Thursday, August 8th - 1 Jn. 1: 7, 8

Our washing by the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit, who applies to us the cleansing power of the death of Christ, is how we are cleansed of our sins (Titus 3:5-7). However, one of the first glimpses of true light that we perceive as newly regenerated creatures in Christ is the character and magnitude of that from which we have been saved. We who have seen the light of God's saving grace know that He has saved us from that death and darkness that have resulted from our sin. Therefore, we would never deny the sin that is the root from which the fruits of our death and darkness have come. Such denying is the posturing of the person who is still in his sin, trying vainly to deny the root of all his shame, fear, and misery.

Friday, August 9th - 1 Jn. 1: 7, 8

Words of denial form a covering even more poor than that of the fig leaves our first parents put on to hide their shame caused by their sin. John makes the keen observation that such words of denial fool neither God nor man, but only bring delusion upon the one denying his sin. It is the truth that sets a sinner free, and the truth begins to live and operate within a sinner when he ceases his deluded denial that he needs a Savior to deliver him from his sin.

Saturday, August 10th - 1 Jn. 1: 8, 9

It is not our denial and self-delusion that release us from the death and darkness of our sin. True liberation from death and growth in joyful new life take place for us when we candidly confess to God that we have sinned against Him. One who is in the death-grip of his sin will never and can never confess his sin. He is too afraid that God will condemn Him and cast him into eternal darkness. That is why Adam fled and hid from the Lord after his fall. Adam knew he had sinned against God and he could not bring himself to confess it, fearing that the Lord would justly judge and condemn him. The believer may also be tempted to fear confessing his sin to the Lord. However, in the light of God's truth, rather than in the darkness of his guilty fears, he knows that even though Adam denied and sought to evade his sin, when he confessed it to the Lord the response of the Lord was the first declaration of the gospel (Gen. 3:15), and the provision of clothing that pointed to the Lamb of God who would effectively take away Adam's sin. Similarly, when we confess our sin to God, we shall always find that He is the last to condemn us, and the first to cleanse us, of every trace of our sin.

Sunday, August 11th - 1 Jn. 1: 9

The action John commends in this verse can only seem unnatural and fearfully unreasonable to the natural man. Why would a sinner admit his sin to the divine Judge whom he has offended? Accordingly, the unregenerate looks for the covering of leaves, lying words or even the rocks of the mountains to hide him from the Lord (Rev. 6: 15-17). Yet, the new creature in Christ knows that God has demonstrated His saving love for him in that while he was at his worst in his sin, Christ died for him (Rom. 5:8). Accordingly, the regenerate learns by the blessed experience of confession and the Lord's quick and full forgiveness to be true and transparent with his loving heavenly Father who will never condemn him for, but ever cleanse him from, his sin.

Monday, August 12th - 1 Jn. 1: 9

We would expect that when we confess our sins to the God of holy justice the result would be that He would judge and condemn us. However, when we do confess our sins to Him, rather than His holy and righteous condemnation that we would expect to face, what we actually experience is His full forgiveness and cleansing of our sins. Why is this so? It is because of who God is and what He has done. John tells us that God is faithful. By this he means that God remains faithful to us even when we are faithless toward Him (2 Tim. 2:13). He can never and will never deny His eternal, predestinating love for us (Eph. 1:3-6), nor will He ever fail or refuse to fulfill His covenant of grace to be our God and have us as His people.

Tuesday, August 13th - 1 Jn. 1: 10

John tells us that in addition to His faithfulness, God is also righteous. The righteousness of God speaks of His holy justice expressed in right administrations. Such righteousness is an eternal attribute of God and is the one we sinners most fear. However, because God is also faithful to the eternal attribute of His love and keeps faithfully to the covenant promise that He would save sinners, we who have been saved have nothing to fear from the Lord's righteousness. Instead, we can rejoice in the security we have in the righteous way our God has accomplished our salvation. In Christ, God has fully and forever punished our sinful disobedience while at the same time accepting Christ's perfect righteousness as our righteousness (Rom. 8:3,4). So, when we confess our sins, God is faithful to deal with us graciously and lovingly in Christ and He is righteous and therefore will never demand that we pay for the sins for which Christ has already paid in full.

Wednesday, August 14th - 1 Jn. 1: 10

In v.7, John writes that those who walk in the light do so because the atoning sacrifice of Jesus has cleansed them of all sin. In vv.8,9 John dealt with one of man's false solutions to his sin. He showed how useless it was for a sinner to conceal his sin by his claiming personal perfection. He also showed how our confession of sin resulted not in our condemnation but rather in our being cleansed of all sin. This speaks of the believer's growth in sanctification. Now in v.10 John deals further with those who would deny their sin. In v.8, the denial was with respect to the sin nature, but in v.10 it is a denial of the commission of actual transgressions. If anyone claims that he has not, in fact, committed any sins, why then has God plainly said that all have sinned and continually fall short of His glory (Rom. 3:23)? Those who claim sinless perfection do not succeed in establishing their false claim, but rather add to the sins by their insinuating that God is a liar when He says that all have sinned. Our attempts at self-justification only dig us into deeper pits of sinful guilt.

Thursday, August 15th – 1 Jn. 1: 6-10

If we deny our actual sins—and such denial can take place in the more subtle form of our trying to minimize and rationalize our sins—we not only seek to make God a liar but we also demonstrate that His Word is not in us. By that latter expression John means that the self-justifying soul feeds upon fractured and fallible human logic but not upon the full theological content of the Word of the Lord. The attitude of a believer is one of his hungering and thirsting for the Word and loving that Word even when it convicts him as a necessary part of cleansing him of sin. The attitude of the sinner is that he is true even if God must be a liar, and that he must be right even if it means that God is wrong. The attitude of the believer is that God is true and every man, including himself, is a liar (Rom. 3:4).

Friday, August 16th - 1 Jn. 2: 1

Repeatedly in these verses John writes the challenging words: If we say. He does not point his challenges at those outside of the Church but rather at those who profess to be reconciled with God. Therefore, John writes not, if you (or they) say, but instead he writes, if we say. The Church has always been plagued with the teaching and teachers of sinless perfection. The early Gnostics taught that sin was not in the heart and soul of a person but resided in the material world and by proper training in higher degrees of knowledge could be entirely avoided. The Pharisees and Judaisers also maintained the necessity and possibility of one's achieving sinless perfection. Closer to our day there have been various perfectionist movements in Wesleyan, Pentecostal, and Charismatic societies. But we are called by the Word of God to examine ourselves in the light of God's Word and by the illuminating power of His Holy Spirit. We are not to be content to rest in an empty profession of our being in fellowship with God through Christ. Our lives must bear the blessed fruit of such fellowship. That fruit consists of our working out our salvation through a process of our mortifying our sin, and not denying that we have sin. We rejoice that in Christ there is no condemnation for us, yet we recognize that the dregs of sin remain in us and prompt us yet to commit actual sins. How do we deal with such sins? We simply, candidly, and as specifically as possible confess to God our sins. By such confession we give Him no information He did not already have, but we do unburden ourselves of what was a painful load we were carrying. He tells us to cast our burdens on Him, not so that He might have evidence to condemn us, but because He cares for us, and He and delights to cleanse us of all our sin (1 Pet. 5:7).

Saturday, August 17th - 1 Jn. 2: 1

The challenging words John wrote in the second half of chapter 1 were composed with the intention of saving those professing faith in Christ from the sin of hypocrisy in which they would profess to be in the light and yet perform as those dwelling in darkness. John also wrote lovingly as he indicates by addressing his readers not as sinful hypocrites but rather at his little children. For those in the kingdom of God tender expressions of unchangeable truth in love will always be better spoken and more readily received than would be the case with harsh words of prosecution. When we are addressed in words of loving appeal that comport best with the mercies of God, we are powerfully prompted to leave our sin and offer our bodies as living sacrifices of obedience to the One who so loved us and gave Himself for us (Rom. 12:1; Gal. 2:20).

Sunday, August 18th - 1 Jn. 2: 1

John has warned against hypocrisy in 1:6,8,10 and given encouragement for the faithful in 1:7,9. All of those verses have been written to keep those reading them from sin. By his expressing this intention he indicates that our owning our sin by confession and finding God's ready and full forgiveness will serve not to confirm us in the way of sin but will actually serve to keep us out of sin. When our sin increases and through our confession we experience the blessing of God's grace abounding all the more, we will not want to sin so that grace might further abound, but rather we will with grateful delight determine not to let sin be master over us (Rom. 6:1-12).

Monday, August 19th - 1 Jn. 2: 1

John has written the encouragements of 1:7,9 not to breed complacency in sin among his readers but rather to keep them from sinning. In the same way, he wrote the challenges of 1:6,8,10 not to drive his readers to despair and surrender to their sin, but instead to lead them out of their sin and into the sweet blessing of their living lives of genuine faith in the gracious provisions of God in Christ. The whole Word of God is written to liberate those who read it from their sin.

Tuesday, August 20th - 1 Jn. 2: 1

Even though John writes, and the entire Bible has been written, so that we may not sin, that is not the entire reason for the Scriptures. If the Bible were simply a book instructing us not to sin, we would have no gospel and no saving deliverance from our sin. The truth is that we have sinned prior to our conversions and we do sin subsequent to our conversions. Therefore, John writes preventatively, to help us avoid sin, and he writes restoratively, to remind us of the help that is ours when we do sin. Even when we sin against the light of Scripture and the love of God such sinning is not unforgiveable. When we do sin, we have the perfect Advocate who defends us from the wrath of God whose holy law we have violated. It is because of the Advocate that we should feel free and gratefully relieved to confess our sins more quickly and frequently than we do. Our denying our sins or our delaying our confession of them cannot help or heal us. Only our Advocate can do that.

Wednesday, August 21st - 1 Jn. 2: 1

When John writes about the advocacy of Christ he puts no limit on the magnitude or frequency of the sins Christ is able and willing to cleanse. Whether our sin be that of long-term hypocrisy or that of a committed believer who is overtaken in transgression, as David was with Bathsheba, the sinner who runs to Christ with his confession will find a Defender of his soul against all accusers, even against the penetrating accusations of divine law. How silly and suicidal we are when we do not run quickly, even when we are hot in our sin, to disclose our sins fully to our Advocate who can and will relieve us from all condemnation.

Thursday, August 22nd - 1 Jn. 2: 1

Not only the worst sinners but also the best saints are in need of the advocacy of Christ. That is why John includes himself as being in need of what he writes in this verse. This beloved apostle of Jesus does not write: If anyone sins, he...If anyone sins you..., instead he writes: If anyone sins, we have an

Advocate. The greatest saints are most gratefully conscious of the rich and fresh mercies in Christ that God provides and that they need each day.

Friday, August 23rd - 1 Jn. 2: 1

It is highly significant that John informs us that the advocacy of Christ is with the Father. That paternal designation indicates a dual rather than a singular advocacy. Christ is not our defense attorney against the exacting judgments of an almighty King and Judge. Our Advocate is with God and is Himself God (Jn. 1:1). He therefore makes His case to us that while God is an offended, almighty Judge, He is more than that. The full glory of God is not in His holy justice alone, but in His justice satisfied by His own gracious doing. Jesus supremely came not to judge the world but to save the world (Jn. 3:17). He came to manifest the full glory of God as the Father of His beloved Son and the loving Father of those redeemed by His Son (Jn. 10:14-18; 14:8,9). The perfect measure of God's glory is perceived only when we see Him and abide by and in Him as our loving Father (Jn. 17:1-3). Demons and unrepentant sinners regard God as King and Judge and dread and hate Him as such (Ps. 2:1-3; Rev. 6:15-17). Only those who have been effectually called by God's Holy Spirit through Christ see and are joyfully secured in the fullness of God as our Father (Rom. 8:14-17).

Saturday, August 24th - 1 Jn. 2: 1

We have seen that one aspect of the advocacy of Christ with the Father is His showing to us the full glory and sincere and saving love of God as our Father. The other aspect is Christ's pleading for us before the Father, asking Him to accept us as His children. How could a holy God accept such sinful people as His children? According to the eternal counsel and determination of the triune God, those whom God elected in love from the foundation of the world would become blameless before Him and have authority, or secure legal standing, to be His children (Eph. 1:3-6; Jn. 1:12,13). Our Advocate, however, does not present persuasive arguments before God for our defense; He presents Himself in His perfect righteousness as our righteousness. Therefore, even when we sin we have no need to fear rejection or condemnation from any quarter whatsoever, certainly not from the throne of heaven upon which our loving Father reigns for our good.

Sunday, August 25th - 1 Jn. 2: 1, 2

Our Advocate is righteous in His person. This designation alerts us that the Father loves His only begotten Son not only because of who He is in relation to the Father but also because of how He acts in all of His doings. It is in the perfect righteousness of the Son that we are accepted by the Father. How has that righteousness become ours? This question leads us to consider the atoning work of the Son. John has already touched on the man-oriented aspect of Christ's work when he wrote of our being cleansed by His blood (1:7). This cleansing work is called expiation, and has the connotation of our sins



being carried away from us. John also speaks of the God-oriented aspect of Christ's work when he tells us that Jesus is the propitiation for our sins. The word, propitiation, speaks of an appeasing of an offended party. Our sin has ignited God's wrath, not as emotional anger but as a just expression of His holy nature. This divine reaction to our sin means that every sinner has an infinite and eternal problem in his having provoked the holy wrath of the infinite and eternal God. Only an infinite and eternal person could be our effective Advocate. That person had to be truly human and in His humanity suffer the penalty for our sins. That person had to be divine in order to impart to His human merit sufficiency for all sinners. We could not have a more qualified and effectual Advocate than we have in Jesus Christ.

Monday, August 26th - 1 Jn. 2: 1, 2

John employs our Savior's full name when he refers to our Advocate. Jesus is the name that refers to His humanity and the atoning and redeeming work He accomplished as the second Adam, who had no personal sin but who volunteered to become sin to save us from our sins (Mt. 1:21; Heb. 2:10-18). Christ is the name that refers to the anointing Jesus received from God to authorize and empower Him to shed the perfect blood of the eternal covenant for our salvation and to the Father's satisfaction. Here is the only substantial and effective remedy for our residual sin.

August 2013

Tuesday, August 27th – 1 Jn. 2: 3-6

John has written about our living in the light (1:7). One of the first things that light does is to expose sin. Those dwelling in darkness will deny their sin (1:8,10), but those dwelling in light will confess their sin (1:9), knowing that they have the only sufficient and loving Advocate to plead the merits of His person and work for them before the Father (2:1,2). If our knowledge of sin comes from the light of God, then also our knowledge of God Himself and all that He has mercifully provided for our salvation from sin also comes from the light of His Word and Spirit. The negative effect of light is our conviction of sin while the positive effect is our coming vitally to know our God and be conformed to His character. In vv.3ff, John considers this positive dimension of our fellowship with God in three aspects: our knowing God (vv.3,4); our loving God (v.5); and our abiding in God (v.6). All right living in loving fellowship with God begins with our knowing Him, the one true, and living God, through Jesus Christ, His Son (Jn. 17:3).

Wednesday, August 28th - 1 Jn. 2: 3

When John writes the phrase, by this, he clearly means to indicate that our keeping of the Lord's commandments indicate our true communion with Him. However, that phrase immediately follows what John has written about our avoiding of sin and relying upon Christ our Advocate when we do sin (vv.1,2). This holy desire we have to know and do righteousness and not to sin arises from our new

nature in Christ and our new and vital union with Him. Our knowing that all things for us are made new in Christ gives to us the proper impetus of gratitude for our working out our salvation in the safety and security of His love, not in our labors of obedience.

Thursday, August 29th - 1 Jn. 2: 3

When John writes that we know that we have come to know Him, he is speaking of a true assurance that is based on the solid and immovable foundation of the person and work of Christ. We know, or have true assurance, that we know Christ when we find ourselves resting in Him and relying upon Him and His saving work and desiring to know and do His holy will. We do not gain such assurance by our probing intellectually into questions of whether we have been elected by God to be saved. Rather, we gain and grow in our assurance when we become marvels to ourselves by our loving the Lord when we had previously suppressed the truth of Him in unrighteousness, and by our loving our neighbors when we had previously despised and dreaded them.

Friday, August 30th - 1 Jn. 2: 3

When John writes, we have come to know Him, he is saying something about the character of our knowing and of the object of our knowing. The object of our knowing is not some false god that demands but does not deliver, that promises pleasure but provides only pain. The object of our knowing is the one, true and living God. By our knowing Him we have and enjoy eternal life (Jn. 17:3). The character of our knowing this gracious, saving God is not that of mere intellectual apprehension. It is based upon true facts—but is far more than our simply knowing and speaking accurately of the facts of who God is and what He has done. It is, instead, a matter of our being in a loving intimacy with our God, wherein we grow in the grace and knowledge and enjoyment of Him who has known us and loved us perfectly, immeasurably, and unchangeably from the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:3-6).

Saturday, August 31st - 1 Jn. 2: 3

Our assurance that we truly know our God can be rightly judged by our obedience to His commandments. Our knowing the saving love of God and our loving Him with the new hearts He has given to us together beget in us a growing desire and effectual determination to know and do His will. Increasingly, we want to live according to His holy, wise, and loving ways, and not according to our own fallible and sin-laced ways. John received this teaching on assurance from Jesus, who told His disciples that if they loved Him they would cleave to His commandments (Jn. 14:15). Jesus also said that if they kept His commandments we would abide in His love (Jn. 15:10). So we see that love makes our obedience not a duty but a delight. The only way we can truly keep our Lord's commandments is when we love Him and others because we have known His love for us first (1 Jn. 4:19).

Sunday, September 1st - 1 Jn. 2: 4-6

The Gnostics believed and taught that sinners saved themselves by their attaining ever higher and more arcane degrees of knowledge. For them salvation was a matter of men knowing principles. However, for John and for all true teachers of the gospel, salvation is a matter of sinners being lovingly united to the person of Jesus Christ. From our loving communion with the person of the Son of God who has accomplished our salvation, we come to love and render practical obedience to His commandments, the sum of which is that we should love Him and others ever more!

Monday, September 2nd - 1 Jn. 2: 4

Many people profess that they know God simply because they have intellectual awareness of Him and can speak of doctrines contained in His Word. However, Jesus made it clear in His Sermon on the Mount that it is not those who say to him, Lord, Lord, but it is those who do His Father's will who will enter the kingdom of heaven (Mt. 7:21-23). In this verse, John makes the same point. Words alone never satisfy anyone, especially not God whose Word effectively called into existence not only the original creation but also the new creation in Christ. Sinners do not need nor do they really desire a world of empty words. We need and become profoundly thankful for the fact that God has not lectured us about salvation but has instead accomplished it through the saving work of Christ. Those who say they know God but whose works do not match their words are infinitely removed from the God of truth and astounding good works. Such empty professors John describes emphatically as liars and as those entirely lacking the living truth of God within their minds and hearts.

Tuesday, September 3rd - 1 Jn. 2: 4, 5

When John writes that the one who professes to know the Lord but does not keep His commandments is a liar devoid of the truth, he is actually saying that such a one is also devoid of love. This dimension of love comes into view in v.5, where John speaks of those who do live in obedience to the revealed will of the Lord. The empty professor possesses nothing of value in his life. He speaks words that do not correlate with reality and he lacks an apprehension and experience of the love of God that is the crowning pinnacle of what is true about God. On the other hand, the one who practices the truth of God's Word does so precisely because through that Word and by the Spirit of God who inspired it, he has come to know the saving love of God for him and responds in a life of loving gratitude to His loving Lord.

Wednesday, September 4th - 1 Jn. 2: 4,5

These verses do not teach that our obedience is the root and requirement that earn God's love. Instead, we are taught that it is the love of God for us that is the root from which our love for and obedience to Him issue. The love we have for God causes us to desire to know Him better and to delight to know and to do those things that please Him. Such love in us neither came to us nor is capable of being exercised by us in an atmosphere of loveless obligation on the part of God. If we believe that God saved us only because He obliged Himself to do so in order to maintain His exalted majesty, we would never love Him and what obedience we offered would be begrudging. Therefore, John does not write that our obedience shows that our love for God has been perfected, but rather it shows that we have apprehended and nourished ourselves on His perfect love for us. It is out of our apprehension of His love for us that love comes to fruition in us.

Thursday, September 5th - 1 Jn. 2: 3-5

In these verses, John repeatedly speaks of our keeping God's commandments. The Greek word used in the original New Testament literally means: to watch and act accordingly. It speaks of an attitude of careful attentiveness to something valuable and vital. There are at least two senses in which we watchfully keep God's commandments. One sense has to do with necessary vigilance. We guard our affections in relation to God's commandments. We resist the insinuations of the devil that God's Word is foolish or harsh and we guard against that worldly influence that holds God's Word in contempt. The second sense is that we watch over our lives and all things pertaining to them by the light of God's Word. The psalmist declares that God's Word is a light to his effective progress through this life (Ps. 119:105). Therefore, we who know the potency and precious nature of the Lord's revelation should cleave to God's Word with grateful and loving determination, not so that we might talk about it, but so that we might live by it.

Friday, September 6th - 1 Jn. 2: 4, 5

We observe a subtle but significant difference between the words John employs in v.4 and v.5 to describe God's revelation to man. In v.4, where it is the unregenerate of whom John writes, he uses the expression, His commandments, to refer to the Lord's revelation of His will. However, in v.5, when it is the children of God who are under consideration, John writes of the divine revelation as, His Word. The difference is that while for the unbeliever and believer alike God's Word speaks in imperative commandments (cf. v.3 where believers are keeping His commandments), for the unbeliever all of God's revelation is regarded as imposing dictates. For the child of God, there is a matrix of fullest divine communication that he perceives and accepts gladly in God's Word. There are promises, testimonies, encouragements, descriptions of divine provision, as well as imperative commandments. Those who see

only commandments in Scripture are fixed upon regulations and law that they resent and therefore do not obey. Those who see the whole counsel of God in Scripture embrace a relationship with the God of grace and love, and that communion Him makes obedience to Him to be sweet and satisfying.

Saturday, September 7th - 1 Jn. 2: 5, 6

John writes that whoever keeps God's Word does so as the evident fruit of the love of God being perfected in him. Paul writes of this in terms of the fruit of the Spirit forming in the believer's life primarily love (Gal. 5:22). When we find such fruit of the love of God forming in us and showing itself in our keeping of His Word, our assurance that we truly know our Lord increases. However, John has more to say about our relationship with the Lord than what he has said about our knowing Him and being assured of that by our loving obedience to Him. While it is true that God's love is in us, it is also true that we are in God. This is to say far more than that we are in God's world or even in His Church. If we have the Spirit of Christ dwelling in us, we are intimately united to God. We increasingly are conscious of having intimate access not only to His throne of sovereign authority but also to His mind, His heart, and His powerful hand.

Sunday, September 8th - 1 Jn. 2: 5, 6

We observe another slight but significant shift in the terms John uses in these verses. In v.5, he writes of our being in Him, meaning in God through Christ (Col. 3:3). In v.6, John writes of our abiding in Him. Our being in God through our union to Christ is not static but rather dynamic. From our being in Him we remain in Him, living, moving, growing, and serving in the easy yoke and light burden that are His and in which we find our refreshment and joy. Jesus gave a fuller expression of how the believer abides vitally in Him when He spoke of Himself as the true vine and of believers as being the branches of the vine (Jn. 15:1-16). By our abiding in Christ, we draw all of our vital energies from Him and by such nourishment we become like Him.

Monday, September 9th - 1 Jn. 2: 5, 6

If we abide in Christ we become like Him both in our persons and in our performances. We also progress in our growing conformity to His character and activities. John captures this truth of progression by his use of the word walk. The passing moments of our lives are to be spent in loving and constant regard for our Father. That is how Christ spent His earthly moments. Similarly, we should see all things in our lives in relation to Him—to His will, His purpose, His love for us, His wisdom guiding us, His almighty power protecting us, and His glory and our highest joy in His glory.

Tuesday, September 10th - 1 Jn. 2: 7-9

John has written in vv.3-6 about how believers have loving union with their saving God. Corresponding to this vertical union with the Lord is a horizontal dimension wherein believers love one another in their communion with Christ. The essence of the commandments of the Lord is that we love our God with all our being and love our neighbor as we do ourselves (Mt. 22:36-40). These loves are inseparable because they come from the character of God who has joined them together and no man can tear them apart.

Wednesday, September 11th - 1 Jn. 2: 7

John addresses his readers as those who are, beloved. He who knew well the love his Savior had for him, wants his brethren in Christ to know that Jesus loves them. He wants them to know that he loves them as well, for he who knows the love of God loves his neighbor and especially his brethren. This expression of love sweetens the directive tone of the commandment that John is about to expound. We do well, whether we are teaching or being taught God's Word, to recall that we and our brethren are together loved by our heavenly Father and that we love each other and are therefore inclined to encourage one another in the mutual performances of our duties in the Lord.

Thursday, September 12th - 1 Jn. 2: 7

After he lovingly addresses his readers, John begins to explain the character of the supreme commandment of God, the royal law of love. He starts by declaring that the commandment for us to love one another is not a novel doctrine but one that is as old as creation. The light that God first created was replete with love as was every aspect of His creation. God lovingly made all things to provide for man, the crown of His creation. God created the first man not to be a solitary being ruling over the lower creation but rather one in loving fellowship with others of his own kind. Adam and Eve were made to love and to be loved by each other. When our first parents sinned, the redemptive promises and provisions of the Lord were given to direct and enable men to love and respect each other. The God who is love would never have created beings in His likeness to be related to each other in any way other than that of the royal law of love.

Friday, September 13th - 1 Jn. 2: 8

While John tells us that the commandment for us to love one another is not novel but rather ancient, he adds that there is a new and fresh dimension to this venerable commandment. The new dimension is apparent in two ways. It is first apparent in Christ, who was and forever will remain the supreme embodiment and example of how one should love others. The old commandment, prior to the coming of Christ, was known never for its fulfillment but only for its violation by even the best of believers. However, Jesus was the first human ever perfectly to love God with all His being and to love

His neighbors, even His enemies, and to love His own people to the point of His self-sacrifice to save them. In Christ, therefore, we see for the first time the true character of the commandment to love.

Saturday, September 14th - 1 Jn. 2: 8

The second way in which the new dimension of the commandment for us to love others is apparent is in the lives of those who are in Christ. Believers are ones who have received God's perfect love in Christ (v.5). Whereas Old Testament saints apprehended God's love for them and loved one another accordingly, they did so in a world of shadows and types and promises, while New Testament believers have and exercise such love in a world of the substance and provision of salvation in the Son of Man who laid down His life for His sheep. Our being so substantially loved gives to us new hearts upon which the law of God is being sweetly written and fulfilled by us in sincere and loving gratitude (Rom. 8:4). The true light of God's love has come to us and dwells in us, and although our love is not yet perfect, it is becoming the prevailing power in our hearts and is chasing the shadows of loveless self-regard from our lives.

Sunday, September 15th – 1 Jn. 2: 9

Once again John contrasts the words with the works of all who profess to know God and to live in the light of His love. A man can easily say that he is in the light of God's truth because he knows biblical doctrine and can talk about it masterfully. Yet, God gave His Word not so that we could discuss it but rather so that we could live it in love. It is impossible for someone who truly knows the God of such a loving salvation and who truly lives in the liberating light of God's truth to hate his brother in the Lord. When John uses the word, hate, to describe the disposition of a professing believer toward his brother, he does not mean that only those showing the most developed antithesis to love remain in a dark and evil alienation from God. Instead, John is giving a true characterization of any degree of lovelessness. Our occasional excursions into loveless dealings with our brethren shows that we have slipped into the realm of sinful darkness. When we find ourselves even in such temporary darkness, we should seek God's forgiveness and grace to get out of it as quickly as possible.

Monday, September 16th - 1 Jn. 2: 9, 10

The one who fails to love his brother, actually lives in darkness no matter how persuasively he speaks about his dwelling in light. This is so because the light of God's truth is ultimately not about reality or even righteousness, although His truth includes these features. Ultimately God's truth and moral character contain holy love that prompts Him to reconcile sinners to Himself and be forever in a loving relationship with them. That is why John informs us that the one who loves his brother is the one who truly abides by the blessed and blessing dictates of the glory of God's liberating truth and nourishing love.

Tuesday, September 17th - 1 Jn. 2: 9, 10

It indicates differing priorities when John uses a different arrangement in the word order of these two verses. In v.9, the claim of one being in the light comes before the act of his hating his brother. This indicates that in the estimation of false professors their talk takes priority over their walk. In v.10, the act of one loving his brother is set first, followed by the statement of the truth of that one living in God's light. Nothing is said about any claims the loving one may make. Such dwellers in God's light speak more by their actions than by their words. They know that faith without works of loving is dead and useless (Jas. 2:17).

Wednesday, September 18th - 1 Jn. 2: 9, 10

The one who hates his brother is in the darkness, despite his profession or protests. This can be true of an unbeliever who has lived in a continual course of darkness or of a believer who has slipped into a state of loveless regard for his brother. Hate may begin with a cooling of love that develops into indifference, then neglect, annoyance, and finally animosity. However a person comes to hate his brother, it is painful for him and for others that he should be in such a state. All parties would be blessed were he to be liberated from such darkness. Yet for the one in the light, he is in a state of blessedness and joy. Accordingly, he desires and joyfully determines to remain in such a state. He not only remains in the light, he lives in that light, being transformed by it and growing and developing ever greater capacities to apprehend God's love for him and to exercise godly love toward others.

Thursday, September 19th - 1 Jn. 2: 10

Here John expresses two things about the one who loves his brother: that he abides in the light, and that he gives no cause for anyone to stumble. The one who loves his brother abides in the light and that light, being the effulgent glory of God, is the place of highest blessedness and greatest joy. In God's light, he sees light (Ps. 36:9), and in God's presence he finds eternal joy and enduring pleasures (Ps. 16:11). He abides in this state precisely because it is so precious and pleasant to him. It is also a state that produces within him a growing love for God and for others.

Friday, September 20th - 1 Jn. 2: 10

In addition to the one who loves his brother dwelling in the light, we are told that he also is one who gives no cause for offense. Because of who he is as a new creature in Christ, and because of his dwelling in a peacefully reconciled state and loving relationship with God, he is not only blessed himself but he is also a blessing to others. The one who loves has no cause in himself for stumbling. His heart is



captivated by the Lord's love and is growing in purity by the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit. His mind is being transformed by the liberating light of God's truth. He desires to love and he is learning better how to love his brother. His brother, who receives such love, certainly has no cause for stumbling over such ministry of love. The one living in the light is a true helper and source of blessing for others. If his brother does stumble over his loving ministrations it will be in spite of, not because of, the loving believer's charitable service.

Saturday, September 21st - 1 Jn. 2: 11

With this verse, John returns to a consideration of the one who hates his brother. Of such a person John writes four things: he is in the darkness; he walks in the darkness; he does not know where he is going; and the darkness has blinded his eyes. These four features portray a complex and ever worsening condition. While the one who loves his brother does not himself stumble as he loves, nor does he cause those whom he loves to stumble, the one who hates his brother is the cause of his own deepening misery and is a constant danger to others. Those of us who live in the light should be profoundly grateful that we have been delivered by Christ from such a state of manifold misery, and we should pray fervently that our Lord mercifully and mightily deliver those who dwell in such darkness from its dangerous thrall.

Sunday, September 22nd - 1 Jn. 2: 11

John has written in v.9 that the one who hates his brother is in the darkness. Why does he repeat that assertion in our current verse? He does so for emphasis upon the fact that the one who hates his brother is in the most miserable and cursed condition that one can experience in this world. The one in darkness is there because he is separated from God who is light (1 Jn. 1:5). He is separated from the God and source of all wisdom, energy, illuminating power, liberating truth, equitable justice, love, joy, and peace. He is separated from this God because of his sin, and so he is and is conscious of his being responsible for that separation. A person can live happily and productively in the worst circumstances, such as fiery furnaces or lions' dens, so long as that person lives in the conscious blessing of the light and love of the Lord. But a person in the darkness can live in a king's palace and be miserable and menacing toward others because of the fearful and incapacitating reality of his being severed from the God of light, life, and love.

Monday, September 23rd - 1 Jn. 2: 11

John also repeats that the one hating his brother is in the darkness as a foundation from which he can express further sobering truths about those dwelling in the darkness. Therefore, John adds that the one hating his brother also walks in the darkness. The image of walking implies a progression. The one hating his brother thinks, speaks, lives, and moves. He considers himself to be alive and well. Yet whatever

progress he makes, it is not toward improvement, blessing, and joy. Instead, he is plunging into increasing depths of darkness and misery. How could it be otherwise when the hater of others lives, moves, and has his being in the dark dungeon of sin, being alienated from the God of light and of joyful, effective living?

Tuesday, September 24th - 1 Jn. 2: 11

John adds to the condition of the one walking in darkness that he does not know where he is going. The sinner excels at being certain that he is right and reasonable. Adam hid in the trees of the garden thinking that he had found a safe place of escape from the God whom he had come to dread (Gen. 3:8-10). The wicked are in an uproar against the Lord and His anointed, thinking that God had enslaved them and that they could throw off His binding cords and fetters (Ps. 2:1-3). The rich fool thought that his only challenge in life was to build bigger barns to contain his wealth (Lk. 12:15-21). All of these thought they acted on the basis of true knowledge about God and about themselves. All of them were proven to be ones who acted in catastrophic ignorance. A modicum of wisdom in a man who knew he was in darkness would dictate that he stand still, rather than walk, because he did not and could not know what injurious and even mortal dangers lurked in the darkness. Such a man would seek to perceive or produce light or call for help from someone in the light. But those walking in the darkness plunge ahead in their ignorance to fall ever deeper into misery.

Wednesday, September 25th - 1 Jn. 2: 11

The final thing John writes about the one who hates his brother is that the darkness has blinded his eyes. It is very hard to find places in this world where darkness is total and where one's eyes cannot after a time adjust to the dark and enable one with night vision to perceive some features of his surroundings. However, the man who hates his brother dwells in a moral and spiritual darkness that renders him blind to all of his surroundings, or at least to a right perception of all of his surroundings. The one who hates his brother hates the one who loves him and whom he should love. If he will despise the filial bond and hate a loving one so close to him, he will pervert and damage all of his relationships. The worst feature of this deepest darkness and total blindness is that those in it think they see and perceive all things rightly. Added to their darkness is blindness that will not see the light.

Thursday, September 26th - 1 Jn. 2: 12

Here John explains that he is not addressing those who hate their brothers and dwell in darkness. We do better to speak to the God of light and saving mercy about those in such darkness, rather than try to speak to them about their plight. John is writing, instead, to regenerated and lovingly adopted children of God. Only they have eyes to see, ears to hear, minds rightly to apprehend, and hearts to accept his words of truth and love. They have these capacities, as do all who are in Christ, because in Christ they

have forgiveness of their sins that had separated them from the God of light and love, and had made them ashamed of themselves, dreadfully afraid of God, and despisers of their neighbors. What a great change the person and work of Christ Jesus have wrought in us. We are new creatures with transformed minds and new hearts that love the Lord and his Word and our brethren and neighbors as well. We see and delight in all that our Lord shows us and inclines and enables us to do in the light of His glorious truth and love.

September 2013

Friday, September 27th – 1 Jn. 2: 12-14

In these verses, John refers to his readers under three classifications: children, young men, and fathers. These designations appear to speak to all believers of spiritual growth and differing capacities and responsibilities into which we grow in the Christian life. There is nothing static or stale about our lives in Christ. We all grow in His grace and knowledge, and as we grow we become increasingly inclined and enabled lovingly to serve for the glory of our Lord and for the good of our brethren.

Saturday, September 28th - 1 Jn. 2: 12-14

The first reference to children (v.12) seems to be a general classification of all who read this letter. This appears to be indicated by John's use of the Greek word that applies to filial relationships more than young age (TEKNIA). In the Old Testament, a similar convention is found in the designation, children of Israel. If this is what John intends, then he is emphasizing that for his readers something decisive and irreversible has occurred. God has changed them from sinners into His beloved children who have a new status (justified), a new relation to God (beloved children growing into His likeness), and new loves (for their Father and brethren in Christ). John is writing to nourish these new creatures in Christ and to keep them from becoming vain hearers and empty, loveless talkers about the Word instead of vital doers of it.

Sunday, September 29th - 1 Jn. 2: 13, 14

John moves from the general designation children to his specification of three classes of believers. The first class is that of fathers. With this paternal word, he addresses believers, male and female, who have grown into spiritual maturity into a deep and loving intimacy with the Lord. These saints have become protecting and providing members of the family of faith. They have attained this position not by their fearing or courting the favor of men but rather by their having grown in their firmly loving adherence to the Lord, who is the one thing necessary. John refers to the Lord somewhat ambiguously, as the one who has been from the beginning. Here are echoes of the opening words of John's Gospel in which John writes of Christ as the eternal Word, being divine with God and yet distinct from God the

Father. The most blessed and useful degree of edification we can attain is when we learn to come to the Father through the Son and find our rest and refreshment in our being yoked with Him who has infinite and eternal being, wisdom, power, authority, dominion, and love.

Monday, September 30th - 1 Jn. 2: 13, 14

John employs the Hebrew literary device of progressive parallelism in these verses. We find this device in many of the psalms and proverbs, where a matter is stated, then repeated for emphasis, but the repetition contains words that further develop the original statement. In v.13, John writing to fathers, using the progressive present tense. However, in v.14, John says, literally, I wrote to the fathers, using the aorist tense that indicates past action. When we put these two together we learn that what John had written in the past about the eternity and divinity of Christ is an unchangeable yet ever fresh and refreshing truth upon which those who are most mature in Christ feed unceasingly. Yet, the fact that John repeatedly addresses these fathers alerts us to the sobering truth that even those who are most spiritually mature in this life are still in need of reminders of the uniqueness of their Redeemer, lest they be drawn away from Him.

Tuesday, October 1st - 1 Jn. 2: 13, 14

The second class John addresses is that which is composed of, young men. The special quality associated with these believers is their strength that has enabled them to stand victoriously against the wiles of the devil. These, then, would be saints, again whether men or women, who were not babes and raw recruits in the army of the Lord, but were ripening adults and effective soldiers of Christ. This class would compliment not compete against, their spiritual elders. Yet John writes to them because even they who fight zealously against Satan, and do so prevailingly by the power of God's Word abiding in them, can be distracted from the great commandment of the Lord. That commandment is both for them to overcome evil and to love the Lord and others, especially their brethren.

Wednesday, October 2nd - 1 Jn. 2: 13, 14

Whereas John addresses fathers and young men twice in these verses, he only writes once to children. However, what he writes is sufficient for those who are spiritual babes. They are the new creatures they have become in Christ because they have come to know and love by faith the God who has first loved and regenerated them in Christ. They will, in due course, grow better to know and wisely to use the whole counsel of God in all forms of spiritual service. However, spiritual babes feed best on the milk of their Father's loving care, until they grow by the nourishment of that milk to be able to perceive, understand, and apply the rich and elegant beauty and power contained in the whole counsel of God. Meanwhile, they, too, are addressed and encouraged to abide in God's love.

Thursday, October 3rd - 1 Jn. 2: 15-17

Not only are all Christians called to love their brethren, as John has explained in vv.10,11, but also all Christians are not to love the world or the things in the world. We know from how the apostle specifies the world in these verses that he is not contradicting what he wrote in his Gospel about God's love for the world (Jn. 3:16). Instead, John is calling upon the children of faith not to love the creation above the Creator who has loved and redeemed them in Christ. More specifically, he is directing us to realize that between the kingdom of God and the kings of this world there is constant warfare (Ps. 2). We must be on guard not to become enticed by the sinful temptations or awed by the counterfeit splendor of sinful people in high worldly places. We love an infinitely better King and kingdom.

Friday, October 4th - 1 Jn. 2: 15

John directs his readers not to love the world. By this he means that we are to love neither the realm of sinful humanity nor the lower creation that has since man's fall been under God's curse. There are natural beauties in the world that can enchant us into thinking that even heaven could not be better than what we have here and now. God not only drove man out of the garden after his fall, but He also cursed the world so that His redeemed people would know that their inheritance is in an infinitely better world that is imperishable, undefiled, and will not fade away (1 Pet. 1:4). We can see sparks of the glory of God even in this world, but the infinite source of God's never-fading glory is reserved for us in a higher place, and that is where we are to set our focus and affections (Col. 3:1-4).

Saturday, October 5th - 1 Jn. 2: 15

We are specifically exhorted not to love the things in the world. Such things as gold and diamonds as well as the artistic, mechanical, technological, cultural, and political creations of sinful humanity are not to become idols for those who have been redeemed by the infinitely precious and powerful blood of the Son of God. The supreme demonstration of the love of our God is not to be found in the world or the things in the world, but rather in the One who was with God and was God from all eternity, who came into the world to save those who are lost (Jn. 1:1,2,10-13). We who have known this saving love will rejoice in this call for us to love Him with all of our being, and not to love the world our sin has marred.

Sunday, October 6th - 1 Jn. 2: 16

Our call not to love the world is based on wise and right reasoning. Essentially, we are not to love the world because there is neither true love nor anything perfectly lovely in the world for us to love. The driving force of all people of the world is not love for others but lust for self-gratification. However much

at times it may appear otherwise, we receive this critical intelligence about the true character of all godless people and productions from the God who knows not only men's actions but also their thoughts and intentions (Heb. 4:12,13).

Monday, October 7th - 1 Jn. 2: 16

The world is the creation of God. As such, the world continues to manifest the glory of God's wisdom, power, and goodness. However, the world now is far different from the very good original creation of God. All humans in the world are sinners (Rom. 3:23) and all sub-human facets of the world have been subjected to vanity by the curse of God brought upon the world due to man's sin (Rom. 8:20). Yet, the natural man persists in his determination to love the world as it is because he thinks he can use it to his own advantage (Rom. 1:20-23). This is so because those who are not regenerated suppress the truth of God and His glory and determine not to allow themselves even to conceive of a Creator reigning over the creation and fashioning a new creation infinitely superior to this cursed world. We who are of this new creation are made for higher things than to love this ruined world, but we must be reminded of this and ever recalled by the Word and Spirit of God to our first love (Rev. 2:4).

Tuesday, October 8th - 1 Jn. 2: 16

Notice from the precise wording of this verse that even though Christians know better than to love this sinful and cursed world, there are yet in the world sufficient traces of the glory of God to allure believers away from their Creator and attract them to the creation. There is nothing essentially repulsive about our physical bodies or our powers of perception or the wonder of life in general. There are many beautiful wonders inherent in these things. However, it is the lust of the flesh and of the eyes and the pride of life that ruins even the good remains of God's creation. When we have excessive and misplaced affections for good things, we spoil any right enjoyment we may have even of those things.

Wednesday, October 9th - 1 Jn. 2: 16

The lust of the flesh speaks not of a true and right appreciation for the fact of our fearfully and wonderfully composed anatomy. Instead, it refers to an excessive appetite for sensual indulgence at the cost of moral, spiritual, and even intellectual considerations. Lust is the perverted counterfeit of love. By lust we grasp things for our own light and momentary pleasure, regardless of the pain and impoverishment we may cause others, or even ourselves, in the process. By love we find enduring satisfaction in our serving for the true and lasting pleasure of others. We find our joy in our exalting them to increasing levels of joy. Lust defiles physical joys, and reduces our apprehension to superficial appearances while blinding us to the deeper realities of ethical boundaries as well as sweet and loving fellowship with God and our neighbors.

Thursday, October 10th - 1 Jn. 2: 16

Sin has made our bodies into factories that manufacture idolatrous impulses and actions. Instead of our loving people in the God-given entirety of their being and their relational connections with others, we lust for them as mere objects for our superficial gratification. If the lust of the flesh speaks of this inner prompting and outer performance of sensual self-indulgence, the lust of the eyes refers to the sinful perversion of our powers of perception and mental processing. Before man was sinful, he possessed clear powers of perception and profound powers of understanding. Before his fall, Adam knew that his eyes were given to him by God so that he could see and serve his Lord and exercise an effectual and beneficial dominion over the lower creation. But the sinner does not see to serve God or others; he sees to identify things and people in order to reduce them to objects for his self-gratification. David saw Bathsheba, then took her and killed her husband. He did so because he regarded that woman not as a daughter of Israel, a child of God, the wife of a godly husband, and his sister in the Lord, but merely as an object for his momentary physical gratification. What this verse forbids us to love is not something lovely but rather something that is a proven power to destroy all that is truly lovely.

Friday, October 11th - 1 Jn. 2: 16

In addition to the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes that John tells us motivate all those who are part of the natural order of this sinful world, he also warns us against the spirit of arrogant pride that possesses all sinners. Literally, John writes against the boasting of life. Such an expression is certainly referring to arrogance and pride within the sinner, whereby he determines that there is no God (Ps. 14:1), or that, if there is a God, He is an undesirable oppressor worthy only of man's rebellious defiance (Ps. 2:1-3). However, John's phrase also identifies what the object of boasting is for the proud. It is life, not the Lord of life. The sinner clings to his lustful life and to his perverted perceptions of reality. The natural man boasts in his conceited notions of his endowments and attainments and therefore he spurns the God of grace. The natural man, in his erroneous estimation of his bondage to sin, refuses God's grace because he either regards it as unnecessary to his good life or insufficient to improve his bad life. Either way, the sinner boasts in his life as he conceives it to be and not as the Lord of gracious salvation is willing and able blessedly to remake it.

Saturday, October 12th - 1 Jn. 2: 16, 17

When John writes of all that is in the world not being from the Father, he is not denying that God created and reigns over the world. Instead, he is asserting the universality of sin, corruption, and depravity in our world. These prevalent maladies are not from the Father. God did not create sin. God is the Savior of people from their sin and from the consequences of sin. Man, the crown of God's creation, brought sin into himself and into his world. God takes sin out of man and will remove it ultimately from

the world. He does this by making sinners into new creatures and bringing them into a new relationship with Himself. The regenerated people of God know Him as their Father and dwell in the security of His protection and the joy of His provision. They love the God who first loved and saved them, not the world that is yet in rebellion against Him.

Sunday, October 13th - 1 Jn. 2: 15-17

John tells us not to love the world for two reasons. The first reason is that the world is not now as it was when God first created it (v.16). The world is now infected by sin and corruption, misery and death, none of which God had created as part of the very good world He had made. Implicit in this call for believers not to love the world is the reality that God had regenerated them, making them new creatures in Christ and giving them a glorious inheritance in the new heaven and earth in which there will be no trace of sin or suffering. The second reason for us not to love the world is that this world will not last forever (v.17). Eternal life is a feature of our new natures in Christ. We who have eternal life have appetites and capacities that far exceed the limitations of this world that is passing away. When we enter into the joy of our Master in the celestial glory that He is now preparing for us (Jn. 14:1-3), we shall see that heaven was made for us and we were made for the everlasting pleasures of heaven (Ps. 16:11).

Monday, October 14th - 1 Jn. 2: 15-17

The call for us not to love the world is not a call for the denial of great pleasures. It is rather a call for us not to feed on trash when we have in our possession by faith infinite and eternal treasures (Phil. 4:7). We are not to love the world because of who we are: new creatures in Christ who have been saved from this cursed and dying world. We are not to love the world because of who we are in relation to the God who created this world, and when we spoiled this world by our sin He proved Himself to be the God who made us new creatures, who adopted us as His beloved children, and who has destined us to live and reign with Him forever in everlasting glory. We are not to love the world because it is in rebellion against our Father and hates us as it hates our Savior (Jn. 15:18,19). We are not to love the world because we are destined to be and are progressing toward an infinitely better world. We are not to love as our home this world through which we are passing as pilgrims, making our way through this vale of soul-making amid many tribulations and afflictions (2 Cor. 4:16-18), as we head to our eternal home with our Father, in whose presence is fullness of joy (Ps. 16:11).

Tuesday, October 15th – 1 Jn. 2: 18-20

With v.18, John begins to show that behind and above the principles of light and darkness and the Christian's relation to this world stand the persons of God and the devil. Behind the darkness and depravity of this world stands the devil, who is a deceiver and murderer. The source of light is Christ,



God's fullest and final Word (Heb. 1:1) who is the living truth who sets sinners free and the loving Savior who gives eternal life to His people. It is because of Christ's coming into the world as the supreme revelation of God that John declares that the ultimate stage of redemptive history has arrived. There is conflict between Christ and Satan. This conflict is not an event in the distant future. There will be the final conflict, but spiritual battles raged in John's day as they rage in our own day, and will rage beyond our day. There are only two contenders in this warfare: Satan with his antichrist followers, and Christ with His anointed people.

Wednesday, October 16th - 1 Jn. 2: 18

John informs us that there is demonic activity associated with Christ having come into the world to save His people. This demonic activity does not indicate that Satan and his followers have launched a victorious campaign. Instead, the demonic movements are the result of Christ having defeated His foes and made a public display of them (Col. 2:15). Even before John wrote these words about the activity of the antichrist he indicates that believers had already been forewarned about spirits of the antichrist and of apostasy. Biblical teaching on the devil, his wiles, and his defeat, is basic and vital for all Christians. Paul certainly delivered this teaching to the Thessalonians (2 Thess. 2:1-12), and did so within three weeks of ministry among them (Acts 17:1-10, noting especially v.2).

Thursday, October 17th - 1 Jn. 2: 18, 19

Scripture prophesies the coming of the antichrist in the end times (Dan. 11:31; 12:11; Mt. 24:15; Mk. 13:14; 2 Thess. 2:1-4). However, John makes clear that this sinister character has many precursors who will be active in every age of the Church. John identifies an entire class of such antichrists in v.19. They are apostates who for a time had been in the Church professing but not really possessing faith in Christ. They are tares among the wheat who feign submission to Christ but who really trust in anything other than Christ crucified. They are ones who practically proved their opposition to Christ by their having left the flock for whom the Good Shepherd has laid down His life. In the early Church such apostates were men like Cerinthus, who called Jesus the Christ but taught that He was only a man; Arius, who called Jesus God but robbed Him of the divine attribute of His eternal being; Marcion, who made the humanity of Jesus to be a phantom; and Sabellius, who taught that Jesus was really God the Father appearing to men in the mode of a Son. All of these undermined the person of Jesus while men such as Pelagius undermined the efficacy of the work of Jesus, teaching that He had only accomplished a potential salvation for all, not an actual salvation of the elect. All of these antichrists arose in the Church and led some members of the Church away from the person and work of Jesus Christ. Men of their spirit have ever plagued the Church and ever will seek to do the devil's work of deceiving the children of God. Therefore, it is not only our own unholy passions against which we must be on guard, but our vigilance is also required against such persons who are against Christ with their actions, whatever they may claim by their words.

Friday, October 18th - 1 Jn. 2: 20

In contrast to the antichrists plaguing the people of Christ, John refers to true believers as being ones anointed. By their anointing, they are equipped to stand effectively against those who oppose their Savior and oppress them with false doctrine and faithless deeds. We who believe in Christ have an anointing from the Holy Son of God whose name, Christ, is actually a title that means He was anointed with the Spirit of God to be the perfect and effectual prophet, priest, and king for His people (Acts 10:38; Heb. 1:9). We have been anointed by the One who Himself was anointed to accomplish our redemption, and we have been anointed with the Holy Spirit who empowered Christ throughout His earthly life and victorious death (Rom. 5:5; 8:15,16). Our anointing equips us not only with discernment and wisdom that prevail against those who would move us away from Christ but, above all, with the sweetest and strongest fruit of the Holy Spirit which is our love for Christ and our love for our brethren in Christ (Gal. 5:22).

Saturday, October 19th - 1 Jn. 2: 20, 21

The special effect of our anointing is that we grow in the knowledge of the truth. Jesus informed John of this directly when He told all of His disciples that the Holy Spirit would guide them into all the truth (Jn. 16:13,14). In his commentary on 1 John titled, Tests of Life, Robert Law writes: The Spirit is not a source of independent revelation, but makes the revelation of Christ effectual. The Holy Spirit informs us through His formulating within us a right knowledge of Scripture. He also illuminates and empowers us, giving to us a firm and lovingly fervent assurance of the truth, which is the strongest defense against antichristian error and deceit. The result is that by our knowledge of Christ, the one thing necessary, we come to have a true and right understanding of all things. In His light we see light (Ps. 36:9); in His love we are inseparable from Him.

Sunday, October 20th - 1 Jn. 2: 22

John also designates antichrists as liars. He means by the term, liars, that they are oppose to Christ who is the truth. Such liars do not oppose only the principles of veracity but ultimately the person of the Son of God. It is significant that this opposition is shown to be not only personal but also increasingly intimate in terms of the God whom the liars oppose. The opposition starts with the truth that Jesus is the Christ, a denial of the office Jesus. But the opposition militates against the person of God in addition to the office of His Son. All antichrists oppose and refuse all that Jesus prayed in His high priestly prayer, especially when He petitioned the Father to incorporate the redeemed into their divine and loving fellowship (Jn. 17:17-26). Great is the loss of such liars; great is the gain of the lovers of the truth.

Monday, October 21st - 1 Jn. 2: 23

There is only one God; there is only one truth; there is only one life. There are only two ways that all people can live in relation to the Lord, the truth, and the life. People either deny the Son of God, Jesus Christ, or they confess Him to be the way, truth, and life in God. Those who deny that Jesus is the Son of God incarnate deny not only the Son but also the Father who sent Him. The Jews largely rejected the claims Jesus made of His divinity, and did so out of zeal for their inadequate notion of the truth that the Lord their God was one (Dt. 6:4). Such denial will cost them, if they persist in it, not only personal possession of the Son but also possession of the Father. For while there is only one God, that God is in three persons, or essences, as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Those who confess this declare the same thing that in reality is the truth.

Tuesday, October 22nd - 1 Jn. 2: 24, 25, 27

In vv.6 and 10 of this second chapter, John wrote of believers abiding in Christ and in His light. In vv.24 and 27, the apostle refers to Christ and His truth abiding in believers. The first reference speaks of the Word of God dwelling richly in us (Col. 3:16). The second reference indicates the anointing that Christ administers to His people by His sending to them the other Comforter to dwell in them. The first reference exhorts us to let the Word dwell in us, while the second indicates the reality of the Holy Spirit permanently abiding in us.

Wednesday, October 23rd - 1 Jn. 2: 25, 26

The Father and His Son promise believers and provide for them every spiritual blessing (Eph. 1:3). Liars and deceivers seek to deprive believers of the truth, life, and love that only God can provide. While we who are new creatures in Christ cannot lose our regeneration, justification, or eternal inheritance, we can experience diminished assurance, peace, comfort, and hope if we hear and heed the deceiving teaching of those who are against Christ. Let us resist such liars.

Thursday, October 24th - 1 Jn. 2: 28

Once again John encourages his readers to abide in their Lord and to enjoy their rich treasures of truth and love, knowledge and wisdom, comfort and joy, blessing, honor, and glorious exaltation in Christ. John expresses this encouragement in terms of tender endearment. He had already referred to his readers as beloved (v.2), little children (v.12), children (v.18), and now he once more addresses them as little children. These are terms that express the tender and loving relationship that exists between redeemed believers and their redeeming God. We are not only a saved people, we are saved because we are a beloved people who have been adopted and are cherished by our heavenly Father. Such warm

and loving family bonds are the opposite of the cold and uncaring isolation into which apostates have plunged themselves and would drag us.

Friday, October 25th - 1 Jn. 2: 28, 29

John develops further the theme of our abiding in Christ in these verses and in the opening verses of the third chapter of this letter. He leads us to consider this matter from three perspectives: 1) the return of Christ; 2) the practice of righteousness; and 3) growth in family likeness to Christ. The first dimension encourages us to abide in Christ with a view to our preparation for the day of His return. Our abiding in Him will foster in us the confidence of familiarity with Him and vanquish the shame of our distraction from Him. Our abiding in Him makes us know more profoundly and practically His love for us. Our peace and security grow from this vital knowledge. Accordingly, we look forward to His return with happy anticipation. If we do not abide in Him, fears fill the void left by our failure to exercise faith, while faulty perceptions of our God and of His Christ will obscure the truth of His loving person and saving work.

Saturday, October 26th - 1 Jn. 2: 28, 29

The second dimension that John expresses in relation to our abiding in Christ is that of our practice of righteousness (v.29). Our God is not only the loving and merciful justifier of sinners, He is also the God of all righteousness. Jesus came to do the loving and holy will of His Father. That divine will consisted of His loving and saving His people as well as His fulfilling all righteousness for them and that to the satisfaction of His righteous Father (Jn. 17:25,26). If we abide in this righteous Father through His righteous Son we will come increasingly to love and do His holy will (Phil. 2:13).

October 2013

Sunday, October 27th – 1 Jn. 2: 28 – 3: 2

The third dimension of our abiding in Christ is that of the family likeness that we who come to have as we are sanctified in His truth and grow to maturity in His love. John defines this process of our growing into an ever clearer and fuller godliness under the headings of our practice of righteousness and our growth in the love of God. Because the Son, our elder Brother (Heb. 2:12), and our Father are righteous, we not only acknowledge right and wrong as God defines them but we practice right and resist doing wrong. Such practice of righteousness results not from our determined self-effort but instead results as the fruit of our growing and becoming more and more what we are in Christ. Our right doing also cannot be accomplished apart from our being rooted and grounded in the love of God (Eph. 3:17-19). The supreme thing that the love of God inclines and empowers us to do is to love Him and to love others. As is the Father, so are His children.

Monday, October 28th - 1 Jn. 3: 1

Our being the children of God is the fruit of His great love for us. We are called in this verse to focus our attention upon the magnitude and character of God's love for us. So great and glorious is His love that He forgave all of our sins. He also assumed the infinite cost of His justly granting such forgiveness by His giving His infinite, eternal, beloved, and only-begotten Son. In addition to God's merciful cleansing of us from all of our sins, He has brought us into the most loving and intimate relationship with Him by His adopting us as His children. We can focus on this great love, but because it is infinite, immeasurable, and unchangeable, we who are finite cannot fathom its wonders.

Tuesday, October 29th - 1 Jn. 3: 1

We who are in Christ are called children of God. By whom are we so designated? We are called children of God by the Lord Himself. The Father regards us as His children (Rev. 21:7); the Son regards us as His brethren (Heb. 2:12) and as His children (Heb. 2:13); the Holy Spirit prompts us to regard and refer to God as our Father (Rom. 8:14-17; Gal. 4:6). We are not merely called God's children but we are the children of God, made so and called so by our saving God. We can rest in and rely upon this family bond that the Lord has established and that no person or power can ever break (Rom. 8:38,39).

Wednesday, October 30th - 1 Jn. 3: 1

It is not only the Lord who called us His children. The world also recognizes the family likeness we have to our redeeming God. When John writes that for this reason the world does not know us, he means that the unregenerate ones who fill the world do, in fact, perceive that we are not as they are in their sinful love of darkness and hatred of the light. Because the wicked hate the Lord (Ps. 2), they seek to suppress all knowledge of him (Rom. 1:18). Because we are children of the Lord, who bear in our attitude, priorities, and actions a growing likeness to our God, the world hates us as well (Jn. 15:18-25). Because the world hates us by reason of our being in Christ and being beloved children of God, Jesus tells us to rejoice in our persecution by the worldly (Mt. 5:10-12).

Thursday, October 31st - 1 Jn. 3: 1, 2

After John has stated that even the world recognizes our status as children of God, he hastens to remind us how greatly we are loved by our God and by our brethren. He does this by addressing his readers once again as beloved. Although we are greatly blessed now and even exalt in our being children of God, there are greater blessings that we shall certainly possess. What we are now is marvelous in that we have been transformed from sinners who were alienated from the Lord into beloved children of God

who are growing daily in our love for the Lord and our resemblance to Him. But in this process of our growth in the grace of the Lord we are not now all that we are destined to be. As precious and powerful as our faith in Christ now is, by that faith we only perceive our Redeemer partly and obscurely (1 Cor. 13:9-13). Therefore we now have been only partly transformed into His likeness. But a day will come when we see Him and know Him fully. Then we shall be perfectly like Him and reign and rejoice with Him forever (Rev. 22:4,5). We have more in Christ now than we know; we shall yet have more in Christ than we can now imagine (1 Cor. 2:9).

Friday, November 1st - 1 Jn. 3: 2, 3

The promise that we shall one day see the face of our Redeemer and be perfectly transformed into His likeness gives us hope here and now. That hope, however, does not prompt us to live in complacency or with a casual attitude toward sin. Instead, hope encourages us to exercise fully the faith we now have and to employ the means of grace to grow in our knowing Christ and in our becoming like Him. If our hope is like our faith, fixed on Christ, we shall become ever more like Him in His moral purity and in His holy love.

Saturday, November 2nd - 1 Jn. 3: 3, 4

From the positive riches of our abiding in Christ, we move to something negative. The Word of God contains not only commendations of the blessings of salvation, but it also contains condemnations of evil and of counterfeit Christian doctrine and living. Therefore, John once again contrasts the genuine blessing of our conformity to Christ with the counterfeit blessing of one's licentious living in sin. He writes categorically that everyone who practices sin is demonstrating that he does not focus on Christ, who is pure, but rather on sin that is impure. We become like whatever is our focus, whether our focus is Christ (2 Cor. 3:18), or sin (Rom. 1:21-25).

Sunday, November 3rd - 1 Jn. 3: 3, 4

John's statement in v. 4 is set in contrast with what he expresses in v.3. Everyone who focuses by faith upon Christ becomes like Christ; everyone who practices sin grows in sinfulness. These propositions do not only state principles but also remain essentially personal. Believing persons focus on Christ and practice righteousness (2:29) because they are children of God who are growing in their Christ likeness. The natural, unregenerate people of this world tend not to focus on persons, at least not to love and serve them as Christians do. The unregenerate concentrate upon people and things as objects for their own gratification, while they suppress the knowledge of God. However, John makes clear that such sinners are in bondage to their sin, as their practice of sin manifests. They are also generating a growing measure of guilt because with each sin they are violating God's holy law and demonstrating contempt for the holy God who has revealed His law in His Word. We who are in Christ have been

delivered by Christ from sin's dominating power and from the swelling magnitude of guilt that results from our actual transgressions.

Monday, November 4th - 1 Jn. 3: 4, 5

John writes of sinful bondage and growing violations of divine law in v.4. He then in v.5 indicates why it is incompatible that we who abide in Christ should practice sin. It is because of the person and work of our Savior that we cannot any longer live in sin. This is something we know not only from the teaching of God's Word but also because of who we are as new creatures in Christ. In the person of Christ there is no sin. Therefore, we who have been drawn into His saving love for us learn to hate and mortify sin precisely because it is entirely lacking in the One who has loved and saved us. Also, by the work of Christ, our sins have been taken away, having been imputed to Him and mortified in His death on the cross. Therefore, we who had in Him died to sin can and do no longer live in it. Read of this in the fuller treatment Paul gives in Rom. 6:1-11.

Tuesday, November 5th - 1 Jn. 3: 5

John writes that He appeared. The personal pronoun, of course, refers to Jesus Christ, who was not only born into the world as man but also came into the world as God. The verb translates literally that He was made known. It is an expression indicating that Christ came into the world and the Father sent Him into the world to be known as the only source for the salvation of sinners. What God would have us to know about the person and work of Christ is that He has saved us from every aspect of all our sins. Jesus has saved us from the penalty and power of our sins. He has destroyed the works of Satan, who excites our sins, and He will in heaven remove from us the presence of the remnants of our sins as well as the possibility of our ever sinning again. In Him there is no sin. By His work there is now no longer any dominion of sin in our lives, and one day there will be in us not even the vestige of sin.

Wednesday, November 6th - 1 Jn. 3: 6, 7

With the dominion, guilt, and corruption of our sins having been taken away by Jesus, it follows that sin will no longer have mastery over those who abide in Him (Rom. 6:12,14). The remnants of our sin nature that Paul calls the body of this death (Rom. 7:24), may still aggravate and even entangle us at times, but we are called and enabled progressively to lay our sin aside (Heb. 12:1), although never perfectly in this life (1 Jn. 1:8,9). While the remnants of our sin may aggravate us, they do so as increasingly feeble annoyances, as we with our new natures in Christ hunger and thirst for righteousness and practice righteousness by God's indwelling and enabling Spirit (Phil. 2:13). This, too, is a fruit of Christ's having appeared in our world (v.5).

Thursday, November 7th - 1 Jn. 3: 6, 7

What John literally writes in v.6 is that all who abide in Him do not sin. By this he does not mean that believers in this life can ever attain personal sinless perfection (1 Jn. 1:8,9). What he does mean is that for all believers a new power controls their lives. We who perceive Christ by faith and know Him by the truth of God's Word and the liberty we experience in His love, no longer dwell in sin but rather delight in holiness and increasingly do righteousness. The reason we have experienced this radical change is not that we have decided to be good. It is the result of our being regenerated as beloved children of God. Because of who we are now we relish righteousness and practice it because out of love for our Savior who is the source of all righteousness.

Friday, November 8th - 1 Jn. 3: 7, 8

Those who practice righteousness do so because they are children of their divine Father, the God of righteousness. Those who practice sin, whose priorities and plans and actions all result from their rebellious alienation from God, have a father who is evil. They are children of the devil who is the source of all deceit and death (Jn. 8:49). As are these radically different fathers, so are their radically different children. The family likeness is manifested not through what the children profess but rather by what they characteristically practice.

Saturday, November 9th - 1 Jn. 3: 8

John has told us not to love the world partly because the world is passing away (1 Jn. 2:15-17). Now in v.8 he adds that we should not envy or in any way imitate the sinful practices of the devil's children because our Savior came to destroy all works of the devil. Jesus came to give the redeemed eternal life. However, all who remain in the deceptive and deadly thrall of the devil will be judged by Jesus in the final day. Jesus was the one from whom John learned about this final separation of the sheep of God's flock, who will enter into the eternal joy of their Savior, from the goats who will be cast by Christ into eternal punishment (Mt. 25:31-46).

Sunday, November 10th - 1 Jn. 3: 8

When we read in this verse of Christ appearing to destroy the works of the devil, we find an admonition to avoid and hate all sinful practice with a holy hatred. But we also find an astonishing encouragement for all who are in Christ. The purpose of our Savior was not only to redeem us from our sins but also to destroy the author of sin, Satan, and all that his sinister and devastating work has ruined from the time of Adam's fall to the end of the world. For those of us in Christ this means that in the last day every way in which the deceptive and destructive work of Satan has touched our lives and our world will be swallowed up in the glorious victory of Christ. Not only will the stinging power be drawn from death (1



Cor. 15:54-57), but also the ruining productions of the devil will be fully transformed into acts that ultimately will benefit us. All that Satan has intended for evil against us, Christ has come to transform into inconceivable good for us (Gen. 50:19-21; Rom. 8:28).

Monday, November 11th - 1 Jn. 3: 5-8

My Scottish pastor and friend, William Still, has captured the essence of this passage in his excellent book titled, *Towards Spiritual Maturity*. He summarizes the things Christ accomplished for His people by His coming into our world in terms of three dimensions of the cross. By His atoning death, Jesus has saved us from 1) our sins, or the actual transgressions we have committed; 2) our sin, the depraved nature we have that prompts our practice of unrighteousness; and 3) Satan, the author and cunning peddler of sin in our world. In less formal terms, Mr. Still expressed our salvation from the fruit, root, and brute of sin!

Tuesday, November 12th - 1 Jn. 3: 6, 9

What John is not teaching in v.6 is the requirement or possibility of believers attaining sinless perfection. What he is teaching is the responsibility and resources we have in Christ to be free from the dominion of sin. By our maintaining vital fellowship with Christ we increasingly practice righteousness. In v.9, John returns to the theme of our abiding in Christ but takes us to a more fundamental level than our communion with our Lord. Why do we abide in Christ? It is because of who we are in ourselves as well as in our relationship with Him. We who are in Christ have been justified by our faith in Christ. Accordingly, we are regarded as righteous because of Christ's righteousness having been imputed to us by God. But in addition to this imputation there is impartation. We are not only accounted righteous but we are actually becoming righteous. This process begins with our regeneration, progresses throughout the course of our sanctification, and is consummated in our glorification (Rom. 8:29,30). God has implanted the seed of His own holy nature in us at our new birth. Now and forever the life of God is growing in our souls, and that growth produces in us a growing appetite for holiness and an increasing hatred for sin.

Wednesday, November 13th - 1 Jn. 3: 10, 11

Once more John declares what he had learned from Jesus, which is that we can judge a tree by its fruit (Mt. 7:15-23). The one who habitually practices sin is not born of God but is a child of the devil. One who hungers for and grows in his practice of righteousness is manifesting fruit of a true child of God. From this statement, John transitions to a further consideration of love, which is the essence of true righteousness. The apostle has written about loving one's brother in 2:7-11. That passage was an introduction to the theme of love that John begins to expand from v.11 through to 1 Jn. 5:3. The devil can prompt the wicked to imitate the doing of righteous deeds such as prophesying and performing

miracles (Mt. 7:21-23), feeding the poor and living sacrificially (1 Cor. 13:1-3). But neither the devil nor unregenerate people can convincingly imitate love. The devil and his deceived children would rather be cast into hell than to do a single small loving deed.

Thursday, November 14th - 1 Jn. 3: 10, 11

The oldest divine message from God to man that was and will forever remain the Lord's Great Commandment is that we should love God and one another. John writes in v.10 that a believer should love his brother. The singular points us to specific, concrete individuals with all of their actual strengths and weakness, virtues and vices, faults, flaws, and emerging perfections. We are not called and our new natures in Christ are not constituted to love the mere ideal of all of our brethren or the Church as a whole. We encompass the real entirety of the body of Christ by our embracing the brother or sister near to us whom we know well enough to be tried and put off by their annoying faults and failures and their costly needs. Jesus teaches us that it is by our lovingly ministering, to one of these brothers of Mine...that we truly love and serve Him and His body, the Church (Mt. 25:40).

Friday, November 15th – 1 Jn. 3: 11, 12

In v.12, John identifies for us what the Great Commandment of God is not. The first man born into the world—born as the fruit of the loving intimacy of his parents—was Cain. He soon had a brother born of the same parents in the same way. Abel, however, did not receive love from his older brother but rather was hated and murdered by Cain. Mere natural proximity does not produce love. And while Cain audaciously asked God if he was his brother's keeper, it proved to be but a short step from Cain's rationalized indifference to his becoming his brother's killer. Love is the power that respects, preserves, and enriches life for the one loving as well as for the beloved. The one who has no love will not respect or care for another soul but will eventually have murderous hatred for that soul, even if he is one's brother.

Saturday, November 16th - 1 Jn. 3: 11, 12

John places love in opposition to murder. These are the only two alternatives we have for all of our relationships. Cain sought to assert apathy when he declared that he was not his brother's keeper, but soon he murdered his brother. When we love others, we regard them with charitable affection that inclines us to serve them, help them, and bless them. When we do not love others, we regard them with contempt, envy, and hatred. All of our relationships are heading in the one direction or the other because both love and hatred are dynamic powers that ultimately bear either love's sweet fruit of our embracing others or hatred's bitter fruit of our destroying others.

Sunday, November 17th - 1 Jn. 3: 11, 12

John tells us precisely why Cain murdered his brother. It was because Cain's deeds were evil while Abel's were righteous. In Gen. 4:3-8, we are told that the Lord had regard for Abel and his offering (v.4) but that for Cain and his offering the Lord had no regard (v.5). Simply put, Abel approached the Lord through an offering that foreshadowed Christ; Cain came without such an offering. John tells us that Cain murdered Abel because his own deeds were evil and his brother's were righteous. Nothing arouses the hatred of the wicked more than when believers seek by God's grace to worship and work in truth and love.

Monday, November 18th - 1 Jn. 3: 13, 14

The grace of God in Christ enables and enriches all who accept it by faith. They become as Abel, performing good works as the loving fruit of God's Holy Spirit. They also become as Abel in their being targeted by the hatred of those who refuse God's saving grace. This animosity of the unregenerate against the children of God should not surprise the beloved children of the Lord. Those dead in their trespasses and sins hate those who are alive together with Christ. Those doing evil hate the persons and works of Christians because, above all, they hate the person and work of Christ (Jn. 15:18-21).

Tuesday, November 19th - 1 Jn. 3: 13, 14

The reality that the world hates those of us who are in Christ and hates us with a murderous hatred can be disconcerting if not shocking to us. Yet the world's hatred is not worthy to be compared with the Lord's saving grace and healing love that we have in Christ. The true marvel is not the world's murderous ire. The true marvel is that we who were dead in our sins have been brought out of our death and into eternal life that is not only everlasting but is characterized by love and every glorious blessing. The supreme indicator that we have passed from death to such life is that we love our brethren. We are enabled to love precisely because we have been loved by our God and equipped by Him with the growing fruit of His Holy Spirit. The indwelling Holy Spirit inclines us to love and empowers us to live forever. The Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead will also give life to our mortal bodies after our death (Rom. 8:11). We are perfectly protected from the worst that the wicked can do to us.

Wednesday, November 20th - 1 Jn. 3: 14, 15

We have passed out of death into eternal life. That life is filled with love that we receive from God and our brethren in Christ, and that we give to God and to our brethren. Those who hate us and take steps to destroy us cannot prevail over the life and love we have in our God. The Son of God has given us this life (Jn. 10:27,28) and the Father, who has given us to Christ, holds us in His hand from which no one can

snatch us (Jn. 10:29). Those who do not love have no power to hurt us ultimately, and even as they try to do so they succeed only in confirming themselves in misery, guilt, and death.

Thursday, November 21st - 1 Jn. 3: 16

In this verse John defines love in terms of the sacrificial death of Christ for the salvation of sinners. That sacrificial death demonstrates love in its highest and purest expression. It also is the source and character of the love we in Christ have for our brethren. The one who does not love progressively takes the lives of others; the one who loves progressively gives his life in service for others. And since we who are in Christ have eternal life, we can afford to love even to the extent of our laying down our lives for our brethren.

Friday, November 22nd - 1 Jn. 3: 16, 17

In these verses John expresses what love is in its highest and lowest manifestations. The supreme demonstration of love is when we lay down our lives for our brethren. However, the occasions for such ultimate self-sacrifice are rare. For most of us, such occasions do not arise at all in our lives. Far more often our love is tested and grows through lower manifestations of love, such as our giving a drink to the thirsty, food to the hungry, and clothing to the naked (Mt. 25:34-36). If we focus entirely upon the highest degree of self-sacrifice, we will miss many daily opportunities to show love to the saints as well as to receive love from them.

Saturday, November 23rd - 1 Jn. 3: 17

The most common and least costly expression of love is when we share our worldly goods with brethren who are in need of such things. After all, we are called not to love the world or the things in it (1 Jn. 2:15ff). Instead we are to use the things of this world that our God has given to us for our own welfare and also as means to bless others. When such giving is prompted by sincere love, Jesus tells us that both will be blessed, the giver even more than the receiver (Acts 20:35). Experience confirms this promise as we can testify on the basis of our expanded blessedness in every act of our giving to others in love.

Sunday, November 24th - 1 Jn. 3: 17

This verse presents a case in which a professing believer has worldly goods to share. He does not see a stranger who may be indolent or criminal and therefore possibly responsible for his own lack. Instead, he sees a brother in Christ whom he knows and for whom he should care. This is a case in which it is most clearly right and easy for a believer to exercise practical charity. If a person in this position will not love in such a little way, he only deludes himself if he thinks he would lay down his life for his brother.

Monday, November 25th - 1 Jn. 3: 17, 18

In this case, there is no lack of resources for the professing believer to share. There is also nothing wrong with his powers of perception. He sees his brother in need. The original Greek uses a term for seeing that implies contemplation as well as visual apprehension (we get our word theory from that Greek verb). What stops this person from sharing is his closing his heart, lest his heart prompt him to feel sympathy and compassion that might cost him in his giving to relieve his brother's need. A closed heart blinds our eyes and binds our hands. When we shut our hearts in this way, we neither profit ourselves nor bless others. We cut ourselves off from the flow of love that improves life, and, instead, encase ourselves in a veritable tomb.

Tuesday, November 26th - 1 Jn. 3: 17, 18

The love of God does not prompt us to close our hearts to the needs of our brethren. Our Father's love opens our hearts to a cherishing fellow feeling with those in need and stirs us to seek and find resources and ways to bring relief to our suffering brethren. The love of God prompts us joyfully to take every opportunity to exercise our love for others and to expand our hearts and deepen our love by such exercise. The love of God abiding in us also saves us from half-measures of loving expression, such as our merely professing our love and yet failing to perform loving actions. The love of God comes to us not only in the principles and promises of His Word but supremely in His provision of Christ for our salvation. If we have received such true and substantial love from our God, that love will incline and enable us to love others in sincere and substantial ways.

November 2013

Wednesday, November 27th – 1 Jn. 3: 18-20

If we love others sincerely and substantially in the truth of Christ's love for us, we shall serve to bless them and also find that we, too, are blessed. A vital dividend issuing from our loving others is that we have growing assurance that we are of the truth that sets us free from our sinfully deceiving and injuring others. We also have a clear conscience before God who commands us to love Him and others. Love may call for sacrifice but it is never a sacrifice that impoverishes those who do love. Christ received a glorious bride as the sweet and joyful fruit of His loving sacrifice, and we who lose our lives loving others as He loved us will find our lives to be infinitely enriched (Lk. 9:24; Jn. 12:25).

Thursday, November 28th - 1 Jn. 3: 18-20

Our exercise of genuine love breeds for us assurance that we are of the truth. By the way he expresses this in v.19, John leads us to understand that such love is the supreme and inimitable fruit of our being vitally in Christ, who is the truth and the demonstrated love of God (Jn. 14:6; Rom. 5:8). Not only are we assured of our being in Christ, but we are also assured of our being of the living, divine truth of God. Our love issues from us because we have received the love of God in Christ and have been made by our Lord into ones who love others just as He has loved us. We are of the truth not only with respect to certain aspects of our Savior who is the truth, such as His righteousness and holy purity, but we are of Christ entirely as branches growing from the vine that supports and sustains them (Jn. 15:1-5). We prove truly to be of Him when we abide in His love and so love others (Jn. 15:7-12).

Friday, November 29th - 1 Jn. 3: 18-20

The image Jesus used of His being the vine and His disciples being the branches aptly applies to our abiding in Christ and growing in the assurance that we are of Him (Jn. 15:1-12). We do not attain instantaneous perfection in our conformity to Christ and in our living the truth in love as He did. We grow progressively into that conformity. Our loving others, however imperfectly, indicates and assures us that we are truly regenerated in Christ and that the process of our being conformed to Him has begun. In this we become marvels to ourselves, finding that with growing sincerity and consistency we sincerely love others and delight to serve them, whereas before our regeneration we were entirely self-centered. Such a change gives us a growing confidence, even in the sight of our God, to trust our hearts and their expanding capacity to love. And when our hearts convict us of our failures to love and of our faults in loving, we have confidence in our wise and gracious God who knows us thoroughly and loves us unchangeably.

Saturday, November 30th - 1 Jn. 3: 18-20

Our hearts prompt us to love others and our hearts testify to us regarding the precious significance of such love, even in God's sight. Yet our hearts also, because they grow more tender in love and in longing to love better, can also speak condemningly to us when we love imperfectly. When that is the case, we turn to our heavenly Father, who is the source of love, and trust His assessment of our love. He who knows all about us is perfectly competent to search us and bring correction when that is needed. He is also powerful and compassionate to help and empower us to love better. Although with His omniscience we might expect our God always to be finding fault with our poor loving, the reality is that His love covers our faults and sins with a charitable judgment that can seem to us extravagant. Recall how Jesus tells us that our Father will regard generously such small loving actions as our giving the least of our hungry brethren a meal or a visit. Our God will confer the glorious and eternal kingdom upon us in connection with such small deeds of love (Mt. 25:34-40). Our own hearts, in fact, tend to underestimate the priceless value of our love; but our God, though His assessment may seem lavish, is alone competent to recognize and reward our loving service.

Sunday, December 1st - 1 Jn. 3: 21, 22

Our exercise of genuine love does not only assure us that we are of the truth but it also produces in us a genuine confidence before our God. The confidence of which John writes contains no pride, arrogance, or presumption. Instead, it consists of our having a fearless sense of candor and joyful freedom before our God. Such confidence is based upon God's love for us but also upon our love for Him and for others whom He also loves. Those who love as God loves will be bold, not bashful, in the presence of the One who is both the source of their love and the lover of their souls.

Monday, December 2nd - 1 Jn. 3: 21, 22

Our confidence before God is far more than a feeling of exultation. Our confidence leads to our requesting and receiving from God all for which we pray. The more we love the more we know that it is because the God we ask in our prayers has first loved us (1 Jn. 4:19). The more we love, the more boldly we pray in the name of Christ who loved us (Gal. 2:20), and ask Him in loving gratitude to enable us to know and do His good and loving pleasure (Rom. 8:26,27; Phil. 2:13). That which makes our prayers most effective is our asking that God would make us more loving.

Tuesday, December 3rd - 1 Jn. 3: 21, 22

The more we grow in our understanding and experience of God's love for us, the more we find that our love for God and delight in Him will grow. Our love for others will grow as well. Our assurance and confidence in the Lord will increase and lead to our asking God for grace to know and do His commandments. The sum of His commandments is that we love Him and others. Therefore we see how genuine Christian living and serving are motivated by love that does not diminish but is enlarged by its exercise.

Wednesday, December 4th - 1 Jn. 3: 23

The commandments of the Lord that we keep are summarized in the Great Commandment that tells us to love God and others. The summary of the Great Commandment that John gives in this verse begins with reference to our faith in our Savior. The apostle is expressing a great deal of vital truth in the phrase, we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ. Our faith is essentially receptive. Therefore, when we believe in the name of our Savior we are actually doing more than mentally acknowledging

Him. We are receiving, resting in, and relying upon Christ. The reference to the name of Christ indicates the Son of God as He has revealed Himself to us in Scripture. The reference to His Son indicates supremely the love of God by which He gave His only begotten Son to save us. Finally, the name Jesus Christ, speaks of the incarnation of the Son of God who loved us and came as God in the likeness of human flesh to save us. This commandment, therefore, is not initially or essentially about a duty we are obliged to perform, but is rather about our receiving the person of the incarnate Son of God as well as His saving work as the supreme demonstration of the love of God by which we are inclined and empowered to respond by our loving God (Rom. 5:8; 1 Jn. 4:19).

Thursday, December 5th - 1 Jn. 3: 23

The commandment for God's people to believe in Jesus Christ the Son of God was one that John heard directly from the mouth of Jesus (Jn. 6:28,29). By our faithfully receiving and resting upon the person and work of the God who has loved us and come to save us in Christ, we, in turn, love Him with all of our being. Yet, because we love the God who has loved and saved sinners, we are directed and enabled by our Lord to love our neighbor and especially our brethren in Christ. It is impossible for us truly to love the God of our salvation and not love and serve our beloved brethren in Christ.

Friday, December 6th - 1 Jn. 3: 24

With this verse, John takes us to the dimension of our abiding in Christ. Here we learn that we keep the Great Commandment, and its distinct ten specifications as expressed in the Decalogue, not because of who we are in ourselves (sinners trying vainly to obey divine orders) but rather because of who we are in relation to Christ. We do not live by God's law so much as we live with and in loving relation to our saving God. He is the God who has sent His Son to fulfill the just requirement of the law for us in Christ and in us by His Holy Spirit (Rom 8:3-5). The Spirit of Christ indwells all who are of Christ and live in Christ (Rom. 8:9-14). The indwelling Spirit testifies with our regenerated spirits that we are the children of God (Rom. 8:16). Therefore, our abiding in Christ and His abiding in us by His Spirit provides for us a thorough source of loving comfort and holy enabling that inclines us to know and do God's will and pleasure, which is that we love Him and one another.

Saturday, December 7th - 1 Jn. 3: 24 – 4: 1

We know by the testimony and enabling of Christ's Holy Spirit that He abides in us. It is by the Holy Spirit that we who are naturally self-centered and loveless sinners are becoming Christ-centered and loving servants of our Lord and of our brethren. Such blessed fruits indicate the indwelling and sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit. However, not every spiritual influence we sense comes from the Holy Spirit. Therefore, in the opening verse of the fourth chapter of this letter, John issues an admonition for us to test the spirits and discern whether they are from God. Not all spiritual activity comes from our



holy God. Satan can disguise himself as an angel of light and it is vital that we recognize and resist his wiles (2 Cor. 11:14; Eph. 6:11; 1 Pet. 5:8,9). The Word of God instructs us to know our enemy. If we keep an eye on our spiritual foes we may lose an eye, but if we do not we will lose both eyes!

Sunday, December 8th - 1 Jn. 4: 1

The first thing we are told in this verse is that we should not believe every spirit. The Holy Spirit who inspired John to write this epistle is telling us to be critical of all spirits. Such an initial refusal to believe all spirits is not a lack of faith but rather an exercise of genuine faith. Credulity results in superstition rather than sanctification. The Holy Spirit Himself understands and respects the need we have to test even Him before we entrust ourselves to Him. The Spirit of God can pass all of our legitimate testing, whereas false spirits cannot. Therefore, such testing is vital and serves for our safety and true sanctification.

Monday, December 9th - 1 Jn. 4: 1

Who are the spirits not from God? The devil and his legions are such spirits. They can appear to be our spiritual counselors, such as Satan sought to appear to Jesus when he tempted our Lord to jump from the pinnacle of the temple as a test of His faith in God's Word (Mt. 4:5,6). However, it is not by the light of one or two portions of Scripture that we discern this false, tempting spirit, but rather, as Jesus demonstrated, it is in the light of our knowing the whole counsel of God and putting on the whole armor of God that we can detect and reject the blandishments of the evil one (Mt. 4:7; Eph. 6:10ff).

Tuesday, December 10th - 1 Jn. 4: 1

Although Satan and his devils may be the ultimate false spirits, they employ various spiritual devices to beguile those who do not practice spiritual vigilance. People who claim to be spiritual simply because they give themselves to all spiritual impulses can seek to influence us and we need to be wary of them. Jesus warns us about such false spirits when He tells us that many in the last day will point to a course of their spiritual activities as evidence of their having known and served the Lord, only to find that He never knew them and that they were all along workers of sinful lawlessness (Mt. 7:21-23). We must learn to discern them and to be unmoved by them.

Wednesday, December 11th - 1 Jn. 4: 1

False spirits can also affect us immediately. They may tempt us with accusing or flattering thoughts designed not to bless us and render us to be a blessing to others, but rather to ensnare us in sin and

despair. Not all of our thoughts issue from us and we must learn to distinguish between those thoughts of our transformed minds and the sinister and subtle suggestions of Satan.

Thursday, December 12th - 1 Jn. 4: 1

John tells us it is necessary for us to test all spirits because many false prophets are in the world in every age. With the mention of prophets the most dangerous and frequent guise of godless spirits is identified. Prophets speak for God and reveal to us His holy will. False prophets, however, only claim to have divine authority, while in reality they seek to lead believers away from the Lord and from His saving gospel and sanctifying ordinances. The effect of spirits that tempt us to sin is greatly limited because we know that we should not sin, and so we are on our guard against sin. False prophets, however, do not overtly tempt us to sin. Instead, they claim to show us the path of righteousness. Every impulse of our new nature inclines us to hear and heed the way that is right in God's sight and that leads us to Him. Yet, the ways of such prophets are false. They lead not to God but away from Him. There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death (Prov. 16:25).

Friday, December 13th - 1 Jn. 4: 1

John tells us not to believe every spirit. He does not tell us to ignore every spirit or to refuse every spirit, for such counsel would lead to our rejecting the Holy Spirit. Instead, he tells us to engage with every spirit in a very specific way. We are to test them all. The root meaning of the Greek word translated, test, is to seem or to appear. Literally, we are called to put to the test all spirits to determine if the reality is as it appears to be. Such a testing will show to be false all but God's Holy Spirit and the faithful spirits of our brethren. Then we may safely cleave to those spirits who are truly of God.

Saturday, December 14th - 1 Jn. 4: 1-3

The testing we are to perform is not to be excessively critical and negative. John indicates that it is to be critical but positive when he tells us in v.2 that we are to be looking for the Spirit of God. We are to be critical but not cynical. We are to try all things in hope of our finding the true, the right, the good, and the godly in order that we might hold fast only to all that is of our God.

Sunday, December 15th – 1 Jn. 4: 2, 3

These verses prescribe the method of our testing. It is a method that is not based upon personal preferences but rather upon the objective standard of the person and work of God in Christ. It is the confession that Jesus elicited from Peter when He asked His disciples: Who do people say that the Son of Man is? (Mt. 16:13-20). What do people make of Jesus Christ? He is the only source of salvation for

sinner, and therefore the question is of vital and eternal consequence. Those are of God who confess that God has come with an authoritative and empowering anointing. The title, Christ refers to such anointing. Those are of God who confess that God has come as man for man to accomplish salvation. The name, Jesus means savior. Those who believe and manifestly commit themselves to the person and work of the unique God/man, and teach others to do so, are of God. Jesus Himself warned that, ...false Christs and false prophets will arise and show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect. (Mt. 24:24). Those calling for us to rely upon miraculous spectacles or philosophical speculations, or emotional impulses, or a dead orthodoxy are not from God and are spirits of antichrist.

Monday, December 16th - 1 Jn. 4: 2, 3

The test of one's confession involves more than simply an articulation of orthodox doctrine. John means that the confession of the truth regarding the person and work of Jesus Christ is one that is actually believed and consistently lived. The devils know and can express orthodox theology, but they tremble at the truth because they do not embrace it and live by it (Jas. 2:19). If John calls for believers to love in word and deed (1 Jn. 3:18), he would certainly not instruct them to believe spirits simply because they speak about Jesus Christ while failing to abide by the truth of who Christ is and what He has accomplished lovingly for the salvation of sinners.

Tuesday, December 17th - 1 Jn. 4: 2, 3

The confession of those spirits who are from God focuses upon the person and work of Jesus Christ. There may be many confessions regarding a supreme divine being. Jews and Muslims are monotheists, as are Christians, but unlike Christians they reject Jesus Christ. There may be confessions that extol the Holy Spirit or the Word of God, but if Jesus Christ is not the central and supreme focus of such confessions, those confessions fail to do justice to Christ, to the Holy Spirit, and to the Word of God. There is one name God has given, Scripture declares, and the Holy Spirit glorifies, and that name is Jesus Christ.

Wednesday, December 18th - 1 Jn. 4: 2, 3

The supreme and unique significance of the name, Jesus Christ, is that it declares the full divinity and true humanity of our Savior. The name, Christ, is actually a title, meaning the one anointed by God to accomplish salvation. In the case of Jesus Christ, the one anointed came from God not merely as a prophet, priest, or king. Instead, He came as the perfect and eternally effectual prophet, priest, and king. The One who came was not only a man or an angel but was the fully divine Son of God. He came not as divine teacher, worker of miracles, or judge, but He came as man—God incarnate—ultimately to live His perfect human life and die His atoning death. By His doing so, He became sin for us and we

became the righteousness of God in Him. None but Jesus Christ compares with His unique person and saving work prompted by His immeasurable love. Antichrists confess infinitely less than this.

Thursday, December 19th - 1 Jn. 4: 1-3

John has warned his readers that many false prophets had gone out into the world in his day. He also alerted his brethren that antichrist had come into the world to fill such false prophets and others like them with zealous and deceptive opposition to the person and work of Jesus Christ. If such deceptive and malicious spirits were at work in John's day, we cannot expect them to be absent or inactive in our day. Now more than ever we who are in Christ need to exercise spiritual discernment and to put on the full armor of God (Eph. 6:10ff).

Friday, December 20th - 1 Jn. 4: 4-6

John does not only warn us in vv.1-3 but in vv.4-6 he ministers comfort to us with the truth that although many false prophets and the antichrist are arrayed against us, we who are in Christ and who confess and confide in Him shall triumph over all of these subtle and determined foes. We need not despair over the faithful warnings of God's Word because with those warnings come the words of assurance of our God that He is for us and that nothing will prevail against us (Rom. 8:31,32).

Saturday, December 21st - 1 Jn. 4: 4

In contrast to the challenge of the many antichrists, John declares the comforting triumph of the children of God. He does not say that we shall overcome them in the end, when our God righteously reconciles all things. John informs us that we have overcome them before the great final day of reckoning. Even as he declares our triumph, he addresses us in terms that may seem to highlight our weakness and lack of capacity for this fight. John once more refers to his readers as, little children. How can our confidence grow when we are reminded of our tender vulnerability? Our confidence grows just as David's grew when he faced the reality of the well-equipped and highly experienced giant and the reality of his own youth, inexperience, and lack of martial equipment in the light of the ultimate reality that David was a beloved child of the Lord God Almighty. We face our giants clad not in worldly armor but rather clothed in the name and effective armor of the Lord. We are of God and can stand and will stand in Him and the strength of His might (Eph. 6:10ff). We are in the Lord but He is also in us, working to incline and empower us to accomplish His good will. That standing makes us to be more than conquerors in Christ (Rom. 8:37).

Sunday, December 22nd - 1 Jn. 4: 5

This verse reveals to us the essential weaknesses of all those spirits who are not from God. Their lives are based upon the world that is finite and cursed of God and passing away (1 Jn. 2:17). Their perceptions and powers are finite and fallible. They speak in terms that are essentially foolish because they rely upon their own reasoning and speculations as though there were no God (Ps. 14:1; Rom. 1:21-23). Their audience is limited to those who are like them—dead in trespasses and sins and walking according to the evil spirit that works in the sons of disobedience (Eph. 2:1,2). Our God laughs at them (Ps. 2:4) until He speaks to them in His holy wrath that will melt them in terror and cause them to cry for the rocks of the earth's mountains to fall on them and hide them from the God they have treated with contempt (Ps. 2:5; Rev. 6:16,17).

Monday, December 23rd - 1 Jn. 4: 5, 6

The spiritually dead have their association and affinity with the spiritually dead (v.5). Yet, those who are new creatures in Christ have spiritual life in themselves and love in their hearts by which they associate with like-minded brethren in Christ. They also associate with sinners, some of whom will come to see their loving light shining and become like them, giving thankful glory to the God who has mercifully saved them. Ours is a fellowship in holy affection and common union with the Son of God who loved us and gave Himself for us. Those who are not of God will not respect us or respond favorably to our overtures to them. Their rejection of us is not due to their superiority to us but rather is because they hate truth and love error while we love the truth and hate all that is not of the truth. We pity them and pray for them that they will come to embrace the truth that alone sets them free from their sin and death.

Tuesday, December 24th - 1 Jn. 4: 7

John has told us to test the spirits of all who would influence us spiritually. The test he has thus far prescribed is one of the truth regarding the person and work of Christ. With v.7, John proceeds to prescribe another test to be applied to all who profess to be of God. It is the test of love that no antichrist can successfully imitate. These two tests do not stand independent of each other but have been joined together inseparably by the God of truth and love. Accordingly, we are to live the truth in love (Eph. 4:14-16), and expect to find such integrated living in all who are truly of God.

Wednesday, December 25th - 1 Jn. 4: 7

Both the call to test all spirits and the call to practice brotherly love are issued in the imperative. Neither truth nor love is dispensable. John is not making a pious suggestion but is expressing an exhortation. Yet it is a gracious and empowering exhortation. As Jesus called dead Lazarus to come out of his tomb, and with that call empowered him to live again and to walk in response to the call of Jesus, so John calls on ones who still have remnants of sinful self-regard in them (1 Jn. 1:8) to love their brethren. With this call,

the Lord also conveys quickening power to our new natures so that we desire to love and actually do love our brethren as our God desires and directs us to do.

Thursday, December 26th - 1 Jn. 4: 7, 8

We can identify three elements that form the basis that empowers us to love our brethren. The first element is God Himself: He is the source and conveyor of such love. It is His nature to love, and He is ever acting in love for His Son and for His people. The second element is our new nature in Christ: God's life and the seed of His holy and loving nature as well as His Holy Spirit are in us (1 Jn. 3:9). The third element is our knowing God: He is the One who has loved us and loved our brethren and we love Him and our brethren because He has first loved us. The fruit of God's Holy Spirit that is headed by love (Gal. 5:22,23) is nurtured by our knowing this God who is love, and those who do not love do not know him.

December 2013

Friday, December 27th – 1 John 4: 7, 8

God is love. He is the infinite and eternal source of life and love for all who are truly His people. Our love is derived from His love, but He derives His love from no source apart from Himself. Love is God's nature and essence. He needs no outward influences to ignite, direct, or empower His love. Instead, His love is ever active and self-communicating. Creation and redemption manifest the love God has for His adopted children in Christ (Eph. 1:4-6). God lovingly made all things by and for Christ, who is the heir of all things (Heb. 1:2). When sin entered and marred God's creation, He did not cease loving His Son or His creatures who had sinned against Him. Instead, He remained committed to making sinners into saints and forming them into a fit bride for His Son. Nothing can separate the children of God from His love for and in Christ (Rom. 8:38,39). We who are in Christ are destined to be rooted and grounded in this divine love (Eph. 3:14-19). The one who does not love is not in vital communion with the God who is love.

Saturday, December 28th - 1 John 4: 7, 8

Our old nature was not only sinful but it was also a nature created by God. In Christ we are begotten of God. A man creates things apart from and other than himself; he begets living beings from himself who are of his nature. John has already indicated that we who are in Christ have been begotten by God and that the seed of His own holy and loving nature is developing in us (1 Jn. 3:9). When we love, it is not only because we have experienced the healing influence of God's love, but it is also because we have been begotten by God as new creatures in His image and likeness. Therefore, we love not only because we are commanded to love by our God, who has loved us, but also because we have partaken of His nature which is love. Those who have not been begotten of God cannot possibly love.

Sunday, December 29th - 1 John 4: 7, 8

Every one who loves does so only because he has been begotten of God and is developing into His nature and likeness. That development is nurtured by the believer's knowing God. Such knowing involves progressive discoveries of the attributes and actions as well as of the unfolding plans and purposes of God. This knowing involves both cognition and loving communion with the God who is the source and object of our love. Those who have been begotten of God have growing capacities and desires to know and practice conscious, vital, and consistent communion with the God who has loved them and who is transforming them entirely into love, as He is love (Mt. 22:27-39).

Monday, December 30th - 1 John 4: 9, 10

In vv. 7,8, John writes about our love and its source and object being God. In vv.9,10, the apostle tells us of the manifestation of God's love. From these verses we learn about the nature of God's love. It is a love in which God, the supreme and perfect being, has given of Himself the best to help and to have the worst beings. He who is holy loved those who were defiled and corrupted by their own sin. God did not give mere time or attention or resources to those in sin; He gave his only-begotten and beloved Son. John writes that God sent His Son, but the nature of that sending was not that of visitation in which the Son taught sinners and acted kindly toward them. The Son was sent by the Father to die for sinners so that through that supreme sacrifice those who were dead in their sins might have eternal life. This aspect of God's love reveals to us that God's love is self-prompted and has been infinitely exercised for us. There was nothing lovely or desirable in us to prompt God's love. He did not discover in us anything lovely that He desired, but rather He loved us from the foundation of the world and determined to make us lovely at infinite cost to Himself (Eph. 1:4-6).

Tuesday, December 31st - 1 John 4: 9, 10

In v.9, we learn of the character of God's love. He who is the only supreme and perfect being gave His Son and therefore paid an infinite price to redeem His rebellious, defiled creatures. God's love is such that He who was supremely offended offered the supreme sacrifice to save such sinners. In v.10, we are told of the self-prompting motivation of the divine love. Our God did not demand or wait for sinners to reform and redeem themselves before He loved them. Nor did God wait for us to love Him before He regarded us in love. The magnitude of our sin against the infinite and eternal God, as well as the depth of our depravity and incapacitation in our sin, together made it impossible for us to love or to offer atonement to the God whom we have offended. However, because of God's love, and only because of God's love, the Lord took the initiative to accomplish our salvation. He did so through His giving His beloved Son to be the propitiation for our sins. This means that God made Him who knew no sin to become sin for us and bear in His person all that was required by the holy character of God to make

sinners righteous. Only those who are righteous and who love righteousness can love and delight in the holy God of righteousness and not dread Him and seek to flee from Him.

Wednesday, January 1st - 1 John 4: 9-11

With v.11, John informs us of an obligation we have to love one another in Christ. This obligation is based upon the formulation that Jesus gave to the moral law when He declared that we should love God with all our being and our neighbor as we do ourselves. But there is more being said in these verses than that we ought to love one another. The obligation for us to love others arises not from the basis of a commandment but rather from the basis of God's compassion toward us. It is not that we should merely try to imitate the love of our God because He has so loved us. John is predicating this obligation to love upon the amazing fact that God has not only manifested His love for us but also He has manifested His love in us. The same Greek preposition that we translate, in, is used in vv.9,12,13,16. This informs us that the very love of God has not only been exercised for and toward us in redemption, but it also has been implanted into our new natures at regeneration. The phrase, we also ought to love, in v.11, therefore, speaks not so much in terms of moral obligation and legal requirement as it does in terms of natural progression and delighted self-determination as a result of who we are as new creatures in Christ.

Thursday, January 2nd - 1 John 4: 11, 12

Since God has loved us to the extent of His planting within us the seed of His own nature (1 Jn. 3:9), and since it is His nature to love (1 Jn. 4:8), it is our new nature to love as He has loved. John teaches us that since God is a Spirit, no person has ever apprehended Him due to His essential incomprehensibility. We have not and cannot discover God; but God has revealed Himself to us in His loving actions by which we have been redeemed from our loveless and killing sin and regenerated as His living and loving children.

Friday, January 3rd - 1 John 4: 11, 12

If we love, we do so as a fruit of God's having loved and saved us. If we love it is not only because God has released us from our self-caused misery, but also because He dwells within us by His Holy Spirit. The work of the Holy Spirit is more than His comforting us as we emerge from darkness into God's light and heal from our wounds that our sin has wrought in us. The work of the Holy Spirit is supremely that He positively and effectually works to conform us to the perfect character of our God. The Apostle Paul writes of this as the nine-faceted fruit of the Holy Spirit, with love being the primary facet (Gal. 5:22,23).

Saturday, January 4th - 1 John 4: 12, 13



The love of God has prompted Him to save us from our miserable plight in sin. The divine love has also prompted our God to re-establish the relationship with Him that was severed by our sin (Is. 59:2). That relationship is infinitely more than one of civil and polite mutual acknowledgement. God has come in Christ to establish between Himself and us a mutually intimate and lovingly interpenetrating relationship, wherein He abides in us (v.12) and we abide in Him (v.13). This mutual indwelling forms the most strong and lasting bond between our God and us. He not only upholds us with His almighty hand, the grip of which nothing can break (Jn. 10:29), but He also dwells within us with His entire divine being. At the same time, we, as new loving creatures, cling to Him by faith that works itself out in a love that will never let Him go from us, even if at times it might appear that He would leave us. Recall the loving and prevailing grasp Jacob and the Canaanite woman had upon God (Gen. 32:24-28; Matt. 15:22-28). If we have begun to love God, our grasp will surely grow to be as theirs was.

Sunday, January 5th - 1 John 4: 12, 13

We abide in God through Christ and God abides in us through His Holy Spirit. The abiding is strong because it is bound by love (Jn. 17:23-26; Rom. 8:37-39). It is not an occasional visitation but rather a constant state. Through this mutual abiding, we grow into progressive conformity with the character of our God until we are changed into His perfect likeness on the final day. His Word and Spirit and works all tell us that this blessed, mutually loving, and everlasting relationship with God is ours now in growing measure until we see His face and then know even as we are known by His love for us and our love for Him.

Monday, January 6th - 1 John 4: 12-14

John writes that no one has seen the unseen God who, apart from His revealing Himself to us, would remain incomprehensible to us. However, we have seen God through the person and work of His Son. Jesus responded when His disciple, Philip, requested to see the Father, that all who have seen the Son have seen the Father (Jn. 14:9). But such beholding of God through Christ and His saving work is not by physical sight. It is by faith. In response to the same question by Philip, Jesus calls upon His disciples to believe in Him and in His works (Jn. 14:11). Such faith gives us the conviction of things unseen, even of God Himself who is unseen apart from our exercise of faith that believes He is and that He rewards all who seek Him (Heb. 11:1,6).

Tuesday, January 7th - 1 John 4: 13, 14

The assurance of our abiding in God and His abiding in us arises from the operations of His Holy Spirit in our lives. The Spirit testifies to us that we are God's children, but He also testifies with our spirits (our new natures) that we are children of God (Rom. 8:1). God works in us by His Spirit leading us to know,

will, and do His will (Phil. 2:13). The result of the Spirit's sanctifying work in us is that we grow in the true knowledge of God through Christ.

Wednesday, January 8th - 1 John 4: 13-15

If we have the testimony of God's Spirit and of our own new natures telling us that we are children of God (Rom. 8:16), then it follows that we as beloved children abide in our loving and saving God. It also follows that as children who have partaken of His nature, we love our heavenly Father. We further manifest our love as a fruit of His Spirit working in us to transform our minds with the liberating truth of Jesus as God's Son whom we love and love to confess before God and men.

Thursday, January 9th - 1 John 4: 16

In this verse, John declares that all who are truly in Christ have come to know with a grateful certainty and to believe with an even stronger faith that God has loved them with a saving love. But the apostle is saying more than that by his writing literally that we have known and believed the love which God has in us. The Greek preposition in our verse, which few if any English versions translate as in, has in as the primary meaning for that word. John is not primarily writing about the love God has for us here. Instead, he is writing about the love God has planted in us by the regenerating and sanctifying work of His Holy Spirit. We have come to recognize and believe that we love others because God has imparted His love to us. If we love, it is because we have the seed of His nature in us (1 Jn. 3:9). It is God's nature to love not only with benevolence toward us but also in such a way that He transforms us into new creatures who live in Him, and He lives in us. We therefore exercise that love which is His Law that He has written on our new hearts.

Friday, January 10th - 1 John 4: 16, 17

Because we are born of God's Holy Spirit and have God's nature growing in us, we enjoy the comfort of our current communion with our God. This comfort was touched on in 1 Jn. 3:21. However, in v.17 of our reading for today, John takes us beyond our current communion to the final day of divine judgment. The love we now perceive through faith in our redeeming God, and the love we now exercise because we are regenerated and growing into His nature, together form in us confidence that we have truly been saved by God's grace from being guilty and dead sinners to being justified and beloved children of God. Now we believe that there is for us no condemnation from God because we are in Christ and He is in us (Rom. 8:1ff). But in the final day we shall experience the perfection of our new natures and find that we have not only freedom from the fear of God's judgment, but also inexpressible joy in our seeing the face of Christ and reigning with Him in glory forever (Rev. 22:4).

Saturday, January 11th - 1 John 4: 17, 18

John writes in v.17 of God's love being perfected with us. His use of the unusual preposition, with, speaks of the various aspects of God's relationship with us and our relationship with Him. The expression contains the implication that the divine love will be perfected in our personal thoughts and emotions. In that perfection, our attitude will never fail to be anything other than purely loving toward our Lord and our brethren. However, the preposition, with, also indicates the perfection of all our actions as we related with our Lord and our brethren. Now we may love truly but then act in ways that may not truly represent the love of our hearts, or be perceived as loving by others. When we are perfected in God's love, we shall then love perfectly in attitude toward all others and act in perfectly loving ways with all others. As those who love and act in such love we shall have nothing to fear from any source.

Sunday, January 12th - 1 John 4: 18

In our sin we dread God and seek to flee and hide from Him. Yet when we realize that He loves us and has demonstrated that love in the saving person and works of His Son, our fear melts and we rejoice in our God. When we sin against our God (failing to love Him entirely or our neighbor as ourselves), the dread of the Lord rises within us again as a dark shadow, if not a condemning substance. However, the more consistently we confess our sins to Him the more thoroughly we become convinced that He readily forgives us because He unchangeably loves us and is committed to correcting us for our highest good (Rom. 8:28) and not to condemning and punishing us. The more we fear, the farther we show ourselves to be from our being perfected in His love.

Monday, January 13th - 1 John 4: 19

With this succinct sentence of five words John states most clearly and profoundly that our love is a fruit of God's love having blessedly sought, found, and mastered us. The Greek states emphatically: We, even we, love. We who were so loveless and self-absorbed have become lovers of God and man. Our love is the effect of God's love. By His love, God planned and purposed our salvation from eternity (Eph. 1:4-6). He also has applied it to us by His effectual calling and our consequent justification, sanctification, and glorification (Rom. 8:29,30). To these majestic and affectionate things we can say nothing except thanks be to our loving God, who has saved us from our own loveless and fearfully miserable selves!

Tuesday, January 14th - 1 John 4: 20

As he did in the previous chapter (vv.10-18,23) so again John draws out the concrete expression of love. True love does not remain a hidden attitude without manifesting action. Nor does true love seek to separate what God has joined together. If anyone professes to love God while hating his brother he is

demonstrating no love at all. The God whom we are commanded to love is the One who commands us to love our brethren in Christ. Jesus inextricably linked our loving God and loving our neighbor (and certainly our brethren) into two sides of a single coin (Matt. 22:32-40).

Wednesday, January 15th – 1 John 4: 20

John writes of a person claiming to love God while hating his brother. So irreconcilable are these two things that John does not hesitate to assert that only a liar, who loves neither God nor man, can say the former while doing the latter. Furthermore, John writes of the pietistic hypocrite hating his brother. The singular noun indicates that a person cannot hate even one who might be the least in the kingdom of God and, at the same time, truly love God. The nature of the love that has been imparted to us by God impels us to prefer our dying over our hating even our most unlovable brother. Such dying is precisely what our Lord did rather than justly hate us for our sins.

Thursday, January 16th - 1 John 4: 20

What does John mean by the liar hating his brother? In Matt. 25:31-46 we learn that such hatred is not necessarily manifested in acts of cursing, beating, or killing one's brother. The one whom the Lord condemns for hating his brother is one who simply ignores his brother in need. Our giving or withholding a meal from the hungry, a drink from the thirsty, clothing, shelter, or fellowship from a brother in need of those things, is taken into ultimately great consideration by our Lord, especially in the final day of judgment.

Friday, January 17th - 1 John 4: 20, 21

The God whom all in Christ profess to love has commanded us to love Him and our brother. We may imagine that we can love God and hate our brother because he is in sin or is simply so unlovely to us. We may imagine that we can love God and yet ignore our brethren as we find those whom Jesus warns in Matt. 7:21ff doing. Such ones fancy that they are serving the Lord and have no time to trifle with inglorious and undeserving people. Yet Jesus warns that they are vainly building their house on sand. God commands us to love our brother with no exceptions allowed.

Saturday, January 18th - 1 John 5: 1

John continues to develop the theme of the inter-related actions of one's faith in Christ and one's love for his brethren. In this verse, the apostle anticipates objection from those whom he has designated as liars in 4:20. Those failing to love their brethren might reason that they are not saved by their love but rather by their faith in Jesus Christ. John responds by declaring that true faith in Christ, the only-

begotten Son of the Father, issues only from those who have been regenerated by God. If they have been regenerated, they have the seed of God's nature in them (1 Jn. 3:9), and that nature is one of love (1 Jn. 4:8,16). Those begotten of God's saving love become lovers of all who have been begotten of the God who is love. Orthodox profession is no substitute for the loving performance that is the primary fruit of God's Spirit living in a person who truly believes in Christ.

Sunday, January 19th - 1 John 5: 1, 2

True faith unites us to Christ, who is God's loving gift for our salvation and who has Himself loved us and given Himself for us (Gal. 2:20). True faith prompts us not only to receive God's salvation but also to love the God of our salvation. Those who truly love God love all of the children of God, even the least of them. Those who love the children of God can be assured that they do so with true, holy love, rather than with mere sentimentality, when they first love God and live by His loving and righteous commandments. Our love for and obedience to God and our love for the children of God are all effects of God having first loved us and made us alive together with Christ (Eph. 2:4,5). Such love and obedience are fruits of our being saved through faith that is a gift of God (Eph. 2:8) and of our being God's workmanship created in Christ for good and loving works (Eph. 2:10).

Monday, January 20th - John 5: 3

Our loving God and our brethren and our obeying God's commandments are not for us harsh duties. If we are regenerated by the Holy Spirit and united to Christ by faith, we know that we are loved by God, saved by His grace, and find our refreshment and joy in our being yoked to our Savior and in our bearing His light burden of loving obedience to the Father (Matt. 11:28-30). We who are truly saved apprehend the love of God in His calling us to obey His commandments, and such love of God for us and our reciprocated love for Him together make even our most sacrificial obedience to be sweet. The spring of true obedience is love, not fear, not duteous drudgery.

Tuesday, January 21st - 1 John 5: 1-4

True faith in Christ is exercised only by the regenerated children of God who love God and love their brethren (v.1). Such regenerated ones have assurance that their love is true and holy and that their faith is genuine when they love God and obey His commandments (v.2). Their love and obedience rise far above duty into the realm of delight (v.3). With what he writes in v.4 of today's passage, John elucidates another effect of our regeneration and exercise of faith. This additional effect is that we are made to be victors over the world that is hostile to our God (Ps. 2) and that entices, distracts, and intimidates the children of God. We who are in Christ have not only been delivered from the world that is passing away with all of its sin (1 Jn. 2:17); we are even now more than conquerors over the world (Rom. 8:35-39).

Wednesday, January 22nd - 1 John 5: 4, 5

John connects our overcoming the temptations and tribulations of the world with both our regeneration and our exercise of faith. Here the perspective has shifted from our enjoying fellowship with God in light, righteousness, and love, to our maintaining that fellowship amid our conflict with a hostile world. The Christian is always as were those Jews who rebuilt Jerusalem's broken city wall in the days of Nehemiah. He builds up with one hand while holding a sword in the other (Neh. 4:17). But our new natures give us indefatigable hearts for the fight as well as for the work, and our faith rightly shows us our saving God in Christ, who has overcome the world for us so that we might have peace with God even amid the world's attacks (Jn. 14:1; 16:33).

Thursday, January 23rd - 1 John 5: 4, 5

Our victory over the world is based upon our regeneration and our exercise of faith. In this we are like Lazarus, whom Jesus raised from the dead (Jn.11). When Jesus called to Lazarus in his tomb, He did not command the dead man to make himself live. Our Lord, with His gracious and almighty power, made Lazarus to live again, and as a miraculously revived man Lazarus heard, believed, and obeyed the voice of Jesus commanding him to come out of the tomb. Afterward, the enemies of Jesus sought to kill not only our Lord but also Lazarus, whom He had raised from the dead (Jn. 11:49-53; 12:9-11). The sinister plan of those enemies was an absurd and vain thing, since Jesus had already demonstrated in His raising of Lazarus that He had the keys of death and was victor over death and the source of eternal life for His people (Rev. 1:18).

Friday, January 24th - 1 John 5: 4, 5

We are new creatures in Christ and because of our regeneration we cannot be overcome by the world. We who are of the Spirit have indestructible, eternal life. While we live in this world that is as hostile to us as it is to our God and His Christ, we are not only justified before God by our faith but we also live victoriously over the world, flesh, and devil by our faith. For the children of God, the exercise of faithful trust in and obedience to God becomes increasingly the most natural thing for them to do. The results of such exercise of faith are always stunningly productive to the glory of God and for the good of the faithful.

Saturday, January 25th - 1 John 5: 4, 5

John writes of our faith overcoming the world. Here we should understand that John is not speaking of faith as an intermittent belief in the facts of the Bible or that God will perform a certain miracle or make some specific provision for us. By the word, faith, John means our vital and continuing resting in and relying upon Jesus for our salvation and for all that pertains to our eternal, abundant, and triumphant living. This faith John refers to as our faith. It is an instrumental power that each regenerated soul personally possesses and exercises to abide in union with Christ. We find a most encouraging example of faith being victoriously exercised in the account of Jesus being tempted by Satan in the desert (Matt. 4:1-11). There the Son of God was tried repeatedly and there He stood repeatedly by His trust in and reliance upon His Father. Jesus is the author and of our faith, as well as being the object of it (Heb. 12:2).

Sunday, January 26th - 1 John 5: 4, 5

John defines our victorious faith as our believing that Jesus is the Son of God. This definition is actually the completing portion of what John had written previously. In 1 Jn. 4:2, John emphasized the incarnation and true humanity of our Lord. Now John completes the definition of what the faithful believe when he writes that we believe Jesus was the Son of God. This speaks of the full divinity of our Lord. The world finds it incredible and ridiculous that the God whom sinners had offended should come into the world He had cursed because of our sin and assume our human nature in every way, except in His being sinful, and yet submit to being accounted sinful and executed—all to save sinners. The regenerate find all of this wonderfully believable and by their receiving and resting in it they rise up in triumph over the world of unbelieving scoffers as well as over death, judgment, and hell.