

## Always Remember

*Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead according to my gospel:*

### *2 Timothy 2:7*

The second Epistle of Timothy is addressed to Paul's beloved son in the faith. The truths of this letter were designed to instruct and prepare young Timothy for forging ahead with spreading the gospel after Paul's martyrdom. It charges the young protégé to stand strong for the integrity of the right doctrine during perilous times when many would depart from the faith. Paul instructs him to be a soldier for the cause of Christ and not to be caught up in the things of this present world. With all of its important instructions, there was one thing above all others that Timothy was always to remember- *Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead*. This is the centerpiece of all the foundational truths of the Bible and without which all other scriptural teachings would be in vain.

Like Timothy, all believers will go through many trials and challenges as they pursue God's purpose for their lives. As Timothy would benefit from Paul's letter so would all believers through the ages while heeding the instruction in this epistle. Paul emphasized that Timothy should remember the significance and power of the resurrection, and he particularly highlighted that Jesus was from the seed of David. Being of the seed of David, Christ was the fulfillment of God's promise that the line of the kings of God's people would flow from David's lineage and culminate with Jesus the Son of God and King of Kings. As with all of God's promises, this promise would always be fulfilled at God's appointed time. The Lord's promises should produce confidence for all His children as they journey through this life. God demonstrated his love for the world as He gave His only begotten Son to be the payment for the debt of sin, and completed His promise of eternal life by raising Him from the dead. If there were no resurrection, we would remain dead in our sins with no hope. Because Jesus lives, all who believe can live also. This was the constant message in the Book of Acts as the apostles propagated the gospel throughout the world. This is the message that gives hope to people benighted by superstitions and idolatry. Its power changed people, cultures, and nations.

Each day may we strive to remember anew that *Jesus Christ was raised from the dead...*

...when Satan assaults us with fears and worries.

...when the world allures us with its many attractions.

...when our flesh seeks to elevate itself forgetting we do not work in our own power.

...when we feel lonely or forsaken.

...as the world continues to get farther and farther away from the Bible's influence.

...when we have the opportunity to share the gospel's life-giving message with those who have no hope in this world.

May we especially remember this when we begin our journey of faith as well as when we near the finish line of this life. Let the power of this message energize you to follow and serve our Lord today.

J. Ekis

## All men

*I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.*  
*1 Timothy 2:1-2*

In this epistle providing guidance to the young pastor Timothy for the priorities and ordering of the church at Ephesus, Paul includes this prioritized exhortation for various aspects of prayer to be made for all men. As understood by the original language, referring to “anthropos,” this applies to all human beings (not just males). He elaborates that these objects of prayer specifically should include kings, and all that are in authority. There is no distinction of the kind of kings or authorities that should be the object of prayer. Thus, all are included. The particular reason that he gives for including authorities, governmental authorities being implied by the context, is so that the church may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. He continues in the ensuing verse to comment that such living, which inherently includes the offering of prayer for these leaders, is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior. We can conclude from this that the believer’s chief responsibility to such leaders is to pray for them, and then to live a godly life in the sight of all men.

He further extends the reason for such prayer and behavior to be that God our Savior will have all men to be saved and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. This is expanded to explain that the one mediator between God and men – the man Christ Jesus – gave Himself a ransom for all. The word for ransom was actually used to refer to payment of the redemption price for a slave at that time in the Roman empire. In this overall context, we then can conclude that the “all men” to be the objects of prayer, and for whom Christ paid the redemption price, include those in authority, as well as the rest of mankind over which they rule. There is no exclusion that can be added or implied here. Thus, let our prayers for all men continue to be made, knowing that it is the desire of God to save all men.

## **Delightful**

*But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. – Psalm 1:2*

God's Word ought to be a delightful thing to every believer. This Book should be beyond pleasing to us because the Spirit Who wrote it resides within us. If God's Word is a labor or a burden, something is spiritually wrong. The Christian should always be at the ready to assimilate more of God's holy Word. Reading should be frequent (at least daily). Sermons should be sought out, and they should provoke study. Study should engender questions, and therefore additional study. The Spirit of God has actually inspired multiple passages that give us hints as to how we can delight in His Word.

Psalm 119:16 – I will delight myself in thy statutes: I will not forget thy word.

It is vital to commit the Bible to memory. This can be done actively by purposing to memorize a passage, but it can also be accomplished passively by frequent and habitual consumption of the Word. Scripture set to music is another great means of internalizing God's Word. Whatever the conduit, when assiduously and continuously executed, the Word of Christ begins to dwell in us richly (Col. 3:16). It becomes a part of us and will light our path, cheer our hearts, comfort our spirits, and endue us with wisdom and power.

Psalm 119:97 – O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day.

Meditation on the Word is the secret to exponential spiritual growth. It is a critical discipline for the believer who wants to be close to his Lord. Meditation means we don't just passively take the Bible in, but methodically consume it in such a way as to permit the Spirit to impress upon us certain passages. We chew on them, rolling them over and over in our hearts and minds until we understand their meaning and import. A single verse, or even a phrase, may require long hours of prayerful consideration. Over a period of time, this yields a deep and abiding spiritual foundation.

Psalm 119:113 – I hate vain thoughts: but thy law do I love.

Bible reading and study require disciplining the mind. The chambers of our imagery must be controlled. Distractions must be expelled when it is time to commune with the Lord through His Word. This is not as daunting a task as it sounds if we yield ourselves to the Holy Ghost.

Jeremiah 15:16 – Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by thy name, O Lord God of hosts.

God's Word is our sustenance. It is not possible to be spiritually healthy without consistent and regular consumption. The Bible must be our most prized possession and our most consulted friend. We eat three meals daily in order to maintain our physical health. How much more time and effort should be spent feeding our souls and developing a robust spiritual appetite!

Let us resolve to deepen our exploration of the Word of the living God, that we may continuously increase our delights therein. -- D. Murcek

# Pastors Thoughts of the Week

Anchored

*That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul,*

*Hebrews 6:18-19:*

What a comfort this passage provides especially as we find ourselves in the current moral turpitude. In a constantly changing world where every day brings with it a veritable vacillation in cultural mores, leaving in its wake a confused generation in search of some immutable truth upon which to build their lives, let us rejoice and be most grateful for the solidity of our God and His glorious doctrine. He is the Christian's Polaris in the midst of swirling constellations of corrupt ideologies, vain religions, and perverted ethos. Our Lord is likened to a rock, a foundation, a high tower, and, in the above quotation, an anchor.

Tempters seek to lure astray;  
Storms obscure the light of day:  
But in Christ I can be bold,  
I've an anchor that shall hold.

As surely as the law of entropy dictates the degradation of the material world, so there is a similar entropic effect in the spiritual. Evil has its pervasive, corrosive influence manifesting spiritual disintegration wherever it is permitted to invade. Satan is a promoter of change-albeit malevolent change. Just before the Babylonian captivity, Jeremiah pled with the recalcitrant people "Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein." The people of God foolishly fled from (rather than fleeing to) the "refuge" and "anchor" of their souls and so drifted aimlessly for seventy years of ignominy.

The God who cannot lie has vouchsafed to us an immutable promise to provide a place of refuge in the midst of this vexatious atmosphere. He who is the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever has tamed the mercurial spirit of the "old man" and left in its place the indelible, unchanging presence of the Spirit of God. Let us lay hold of such a hope!

Have a blessed week,

*Pastor*

*Faith cometh by hearing: and hearing by the word of God Romans 10:17*

## Depths of the Unseen

### *1 Peter 1:8*

*Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory:*

The Lord, the Creator of the heavens and the earth and an unfathomable vast universe, in his lovingkindness gave man the ability to see the wonders on earth and the glory of the heavens above. The endlessness of the heavens, the depth of the oceans, the height of the mountains, the countless varieties of living creatures, and the wonders of the human body, all testify to the awesomeness of God. While in a cursed world and beholding it with the effects of sin, we still stand amazed at what God has done. With all there is to behold readily, the development of telescopes and microscopes has opened man's eyes to the endlessness of what cannot be seen with the naked eye. Both the macrocosm and the microcosm are incomprehensible.

To the observant, it should be apparent that God uses things we can see to reveal Himself. At the same time, He wants us to have faith in things that cannot be seen with the naked eye or understood by natural reasoning. Many give up on believing in God because they have never seen Him. But the Christian by faith in God finds a vast treasure of unsearchable riches in Christ. Though God is invisible, one who believes in Him can grow in the knowledge of Him while reading and applying the truths found in the Scriptures. Each spiritual lesson learned leads to another and then another as the Lord reveals more and more of Himself to the one who seeks to know Him more deeply. *When we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another (1 John 1:7)*. Prayer is another avenue that leads to a deeper knowledge of the Holy. In the solitude of the prayer closet, a believer has the privilege to bring petitions before the Lord but can also experience hearing the silent voice of God through His Holy Spirit. It is the invisible Spirit of God that bears witness with the believer's spirit confirming that they are a child of God.

Today's text speaks of loving Jesus whom we have never seen. Though never seeing Him, one who experiences the love and forgiveness that Jesus offers to each of us when we believe convinces us of His reality. Our relationship with Jesus is to be the joy of our life. The reality of God's presence should permeate every aspect of our life so that *whether we eat or drink or whatsoever we do, do all to the glory of God*. One day we will finish our course and step on heaven's shore, and then we will finally see Him face to face. Hallelujah!

J. Ekis

## **Cheerful Giving**

*Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver. – 2 Corinthians 9:7*

A generation has all but fully bought into the lie that one must be “passionate” about their work in order for it to be meaningful or worth doing. (Is this part of the reason our country cannot seem to find enough people to work – because mis-directed folks cannot be enthusiastic about providing goods and services that are not particularly exciting in exchange for a paycheck?). Gone are the days when everyone understood that jobs were means to an end – that true purpose normatively came from outside the workplace and that employment was merely the plumbing to that life objective. The unfortunate fact that this generation fails to recognize is that work is exactly that – work. A career should be morally justifiable, but after this, it will usually fall somewhere between enjoyable and tolerable, not exhilarating. After all, any secular vocation is going to have its down sides because it is part of the warp-and-woof of this world. Giving one’s time and talent to Uncle Laban’s fields will pay the bills, and even support the family. The payback, however, will always be accompanied by a good share of headaches.

But it need not be so with God’s work. Here is something about which every believer can be fully excited! God has gifted each of his children in multiple ways and provided us an opportunity to purpose in our hearts how to use those gifts for His glory. Some will point to the Old Testament law of tithing as obligatory to the New Testament believer and are very tedious about ensuring that ten percent of income be allocated to God’s work. While perhaps noble, it is virtually impossible to make that case biblically speaking. If it were true, then we would have to conclude that our Lord only gave only ten percent of everything He had to God’s work and service. But He obviously left us an example of going well beyond the rule of the tenth! In fact, it might be argued that a tenth is a minimum, a starting point – the least a child of the living God can offer their good and gracious God. Everything we have is His! A portion should be set aside for the offering plate, no doubt. But freely we have received, and so freely we should give. In like manner as our Father has bestowed to us from His storehouse, so should our hearts be continuously enthused about handing over our fishes and loaves to His multiplicative power.

As believers, our giving should spring from within. It should encompass not just our income, but our goods, our abilities, and our energies. It should be done with definitive purpose. It should be done with anticipatory care. It should be done with unspeakable joy. After all, what do we possess that we have not received? If we learn to give with such a spirit regularly and zealously, we will find that, over time, it weans us from the temporal to the eternal. Our focus will cease to be earthside where moth and rust corrupt, and redirected toward heaven where no thief can break through to steal or destroy. Nothing given to Jesus perishes or goes to waste. It can only be multiplied many times over in glorifying God and blessing our fellow man.

Let us be mindful to look daily toward what we might put back into His blessed hands for the advancement of His glorious kingdom. -- *D. Murcek*

### **Hast Thou not Known?**

*And one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answering said unto him, Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast no known the things which are come to pass there in these days? – Luke 24:18*

Cleopas had likely spent some alone time in Jerusalem weeping over the last several hours. He loved Jesus and had watched him brutally murdered just three days ago. If he had been permitted to continue to mourn the loss of his dearest friend and hero, it might have been well. But the reports coming from the disciples about a possible resurrection had interrupted his grieving with a burgeoning yet reticent hope, and his emotions were hanging indecisively in the balance. He wanted to believe that Christ was risen – he truly did. But He had dared to believe so many things about Jesus before, and he couldn't shake the imagery of the object of all his hopes and dreams writhing upon that cross. And now, as this Stranger approached and sought communion with he and his travelling companion, the frustration he was experiencing took a new turn. As warm and friendly as this Stranger was, how could He be so incalculably ignorant of recent events – events which continued to transform Cleopas's life. "How do you not know what's happened here the past few days?" It is as if he said, "How are you so ignorant of something that has had such import that it broke my heart, and now taunts me with a rebirth of unsubstantiated hope?"

The Stranger was patient. He dismissed Cleopas' rude incredulousness with a simple counter question. "What things?" With a simple inquiry, He invited Cleopas to expand and expound upon what was torturing his soul. It was an all-encompassing summons, effectively calling Cleopas to, "Tell me what's on your heart. Describe to me the pain. Share with me your tears. Explain to me your unbelief about today's wonderful reports. Let us examine your emotions in light of what you know to be true in your heart of hearts." It is likely that as they opened up to this Stranger, Cleopas and his friend realized that this felt so remarkably familiar, and perhaps, just maybe, he began to recognize the foolishness, or at least the insolent nature of his question. "Have you not known..." It was starting to feel like the Stranger knew – much better than Cleopas did – about recent events, and so much more...

We can no doubt identify. How often have we, like Cleopas, been so heart-broken that even the good news and substantive reality of God's promises are unwelcome to cheer us. We would rather wallow in our grief than believe. And then He approaches, gently nudging us to expose our state. We impertinently ask, "Why, Lord? How is it that you don't see me? Have you not known what is happening here in my world that threatens to consume me?" The words are barely formed within the heart before we realize His tender invitation. "Tell me all about it. Cast your care upon Me, for I care for you." We are smitten to our core and pour out our repentance and our supplications. We have been fools, and slow of heart to believe. We invite Him to stay, for in His presence is fullness of joy. We remember Isaiah's counter rebuke, "Hast thou not known? Hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? There is no searching of His understanding." (Isa. 40:28).

Lord, help us to remember that You are near, that You know, and that You await our cries in order to alleviate our burdens and revive our hearts. -- D. Murcek

# Pastors Thoughts of the Week

## Graciousness

*II Chronicles 30:9: For the LORD your God is gracious and merciful, and will not turn away his face from you, if ye return unto him.*

The Gnostic heretic, Marcion argued for a dualistic belief system which accused the God of the Old Testament as being a malevolent entity, devoid of mercy and grace and fashioned more along the lines of the Platonic concept of the Demiurge. As a result his followers rejected the "wrathful God of the Hebrew Bible" and jettisoned all the books of the Old Testament as well as many of the epistles, except for the writings of the apostle Paul. They must surely have missed the verse we have chosen to expound, not to mention so many other passages that bear incontrovertible witness of both testaments to the benevolent nature of our merciful Creator. Aside from the patent fact that "The LORD our God is one LORD" Deut. 6:4, it must be understood that He is "the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever".

Was the Lord not gracious when He found our primal parents hiding in the garden after their willful defiance? After the antediluvian civilization had corrupted God's way upon the earth, was it not Noah who "found grace in the eyes of the Lord"? When God revealed Himself in part to Moses, did he not proclaim "The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth,"? Jonah lamented that God would spare Ninevah, "for I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil. These are but a few examples that we could cite in defense of the merciful nature of our Lord".

What is so often misunderstood about the wrath of God is that it is always conditional. He only executes it in response to man's disobedience ; and even then only after He has waited for a protracted season for man's repentance. Our text guarantees us God's grace and mercy "if ye turn unto him". God is not a sadistic masochist who delights in tormenting his children. On the contrary He tells us, "Ezekiel 33:11: Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live."

Graciousness has pervaded the Old Testament drama of God's dealings with sinful men, but the fullest manifestation of this attribute was embodied in the ministry of the Lord Jesus. His every word and action sprang forth from a heart suffused with this quality. And the enduring substance of this graciousness has survived two millennia to find its way to us, the willing and glad beneficiaries of such undeserved mercy.

Have a blessed week,

*Pastor*

*Faith cometh by hearing: and hearing by the word of God Romans 10:17*



## The Place of Restoration

*... and came to Jesus, and found the man, out of whom the devils were departed, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in his right mind ...*

*Luke 8:35*

Currently, there is a promotion of information about mental health. There seems to be an increase in the instability of people in our world. Fear-mongering in social media, drugs, fractured family structures, civil unrest, and divisive politics could be a few of the contributing factors. In these stressful and uncertain times, it is important to find a quiet place of solitude to experience peace and refocus the mind on eternal things that are unaffected by things of this world.

Like many people today, the maniacal Gadarene was a tormented and troubled soul. The text does not give us any details of how he became so possessed by many devils, but this individual was most likely given over to the idolatrous practices of the times. Whatever the case, the maniac's condition had dominated his life. Controlled by a tormented mind that was set on self-inflicted harm and an obsession with the dead, the maniac resisted and overcame all attempts to tame him. Only One could penetrate the dark cloud that enveloped him- Jesus, the Light of the World. After our Lord cast out the maniac's demons, we find this troubled soul restored, at peace, and sitting at the feet of his Deliverer. Spiritually made new, the maniac then goes about proclaiming what great things Jesus had done unto him. On the heels of this account, we find Jairus, the ruler of a synagogue, falling at the feet of Jesus pleading for the life of his dying daughter. Troubled with an overwhelming burden, like the maniac, Jairus also finds relief for his daughter and himself at the feet of the Giver of Life and Great Burden Bearer, Jesus.

Through the course of this life, every one of us will encounter trouble of varying degrees. These trials can spawn a plethora of emotions that can consume our thoughts and lives. As believers, we know and trust that God is working out His plan; yet when we are in the midst of trials, it seems difficult to dismiss fearful thoughts. The devil, the great tormenter and enemy of our soul, delights to oppress us in times of testing. We must remember and be resolved to place ourselves at the feet of Jesus. It is at His feet that we can be liberated to worship! It is there that we pray, and it is there that we praise. His feet are those that trod this troubled world to be the Savior and Good Shepherd for all. It is there that as sinners we can find eternal life, and as believers, we can refocus and find our faith and peace restored. Take time to go there often; take time to go there today! J. Ekis

## **Acceptable sacrifice**

*To do justice and judgment is more acceptable to the LORD than sacrifice.*

*Proverbs 21:3*

*By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name. But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.*

*Hebrews 13:15-16*

When we compare scripture with scripture, we can find helpful perspective to not only rightly divide God's word but also apply it. The precept from the Proverbs reminds us of king Saul, who through bad judgment impatiently offered a sacrifice that he was not permitted to offer, instead of waiting for the prophet Samuel as he was clearly instructed. Through this and other instances, we see Saul's disregard for obedience to God's authority coupled with his pretence of sacrifice. What he demonstrates is a misunderstanding of the nature and purpose of sacrifice. In his impatience to wait upon the Lord, he evidently viewed sacrifice as either a good-luck charm or an appeasement. But neither of these is a rightful understanding of God's purpose for sacrifice. These possible views were possibly learned from the idolatrous neighbors of Israel, whose notions of religion came from the minds of sinful men and not from God. These notions continue throughout history to the present, as religion continues to view some form of sacrifice as somehow a trade-off for lack of justice, judgment, or goodness. What is necessary to understand is that sacrifice does not oppose or negate justice, but completes it. With a right view of sacrifice, we understand the true nature of justice with respect to righteousness. Thus, the Proverb does not discourage sacrifice, but comparatively shows that it must be understood based on a reverence for righteous judgment. Then as the writer of Hebrews announces, as we understand the completion of God's justice through the sacrifice of His only Son, we can then by Him offer acceptable sacrifices to God, through continual praise for the gift of His righteousness, and through sharing with others His goodness bestowed upon us. Without Christ in us, our sacrifices are a pretence. With Christ, they become an acceptable offering of thanksgiving (Romans 12:1).

## **Marvel Not**

*Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you. – 1 John 3:13*

Being surprised or astounded is natural to our condition as humans. The very wisest of us possesses but a very small amount of knowledge when compared to what can be known, let alone what is inscrutable. There are, however, things that should not catch us off guard – and yet they do. A handful of these are forthrightly addressed for us in the Scriptures. We do well to meditate on them...

Ecclesiastes 5:8 – If thou seest the oppression of the poor, and violent perverting of judgment and justice in a province, marvel not at the matter: for he that is higher than the highest regardeth; and there be higher than they.

How flummoxed we often are about the perverting of justice in our modern society. But this has been a byproduct of fallen humanity for ages. This world is the devil's domain – for now. There is One higher, however, Who has yet to speak. Perhaps we ought to marvel at His patience while we await the expiration date of this upside-down system.

John 3:7 – Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.

Christ told Nicodemus to suspend his astonishment with regard to His teaching regarding man's need for a rebirth. It really should not have surprised a teacher in Israel. A thorough reading of the Old Testament alone tells us that our natural state is altogether vanity. We should not marvel that we must be born again – but we can be awestruck that God has so graciously extended such an unfathomable gift us and is waiting still for sinners to take advantage of it.

John 5:28 – Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice.

What? We should not be aghast that we shall rise after our death. Exactly. Forever is in mankind's spiritual DNA. Even the ancient patriarch Job knew that he would stand in the latter day upon the earth and see God in his flesh. Why do we have difficulty with this foundational gospel truth? We should rather be surprised that not only shall we rise, but we shall be like Him when we see Him as He is!

1 John 3:13 – Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you.

Our text for today's meditation is the most condemning of our frequent lapses into spiritual bewilderment. Why are we so often shocked at the world's growing vitriol against us? Jesus told us that it hated Him, and if it hated Him, it would hate us as well. Yet Christians often seek to court the world's favor, and then stand amazed when they realize that any fellowship gained with this world is superficial and short-lived. We would be much better off to marvel not that the world hates us, but that God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. After all – it is that love that won us. And it is still outstretched to whosoever will humble themselves and come to Him by faith.

Let us make sure we have a good pair of Bible glasses on, so that we stand in awe of the right things.

-- D. Murcek

## **Our Righteous Destroyer**

***He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning.  
For this purpose the Son of God was manifested that he might destroy the  
works of the devil.***

### **1 John 3:8**

The Book of Genesis records the devil's destructive intent from the outset. The first man Adam sinned against God's command and succumbed to the serpent's evil plan thereby plunging the world into the resultant chaos of sin. Earthly paradise was lost. Instead of the pure and perfect Garden of Eden man would now live in a world impacted by an awful curse. Life became laborious filled with many pains and sorrows, and death came upon all mankind. To the destroyer's delight, death would reign from Adam to this present time. Beginning with Cain slaying his own brother, death would come in many different ways to mankind. Disease, famine, natural disasters, wars, murders, and declining into old age would produce what the curse initiated. All of creation would groan to be delivered from this terrible plight.

By God's grace, our Champion the Lord Jesus Christ would come with His own destructive power to eliminate the curse. In His first advent, Jesus came to a world permeated with spiritual and moral darkness. Even at His birth, the infant Jesus was sought to be killed by the wicked King Herod. Later, while on His mission to purchase our salvation, the Son of God would destroy countless evil works of the devil in lives. Immediately after the Sermon on the Mount, the Lord was confronted by a man afflicted with leprosy. Ostracized and outcast with no hope in this life, the leper's life was drastically changed when Jesus released him from the ravages of leprosy. A woman caught in an adulterous lifestyle, likely seeking some relationship that might bring her a sense of belonging and was moments from being executed, found forgiveness and a new life when our Savior intervened. Bartimaeus, groping through life in blindness, had his condition reversed when he came in contact with Jesus. And Lazarus, who experienced an early death, was brought back to life when the One who *is* the Resurrection and the Life released him from the grave. All of these reversals would be temporary until our Savior would utterly destroy the works of the devil by rising from the dead after suffering the horrendous pain of the cross. When He returns, the Lord Jesus will eradicate everything that is wrong in this life.

As we live our life here, we are daily impacted and affected by the world's curse. Our adversary the devil is like a roaring lion seeking to devour us with his destructive power. However, as Christians, after surrendering to Christ, we can be released from Satan's clutches. Although for the moment believers still live in a cursed world, by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit we can access His power to resist the devil. The impact of the curse is diminished when we embrace the promise of our Lord's return. Finally, Jesus will totally destroy all the works of that one who sought to destroy mankind. Let us praise God and anxiously look for His soon return when He will right every wrong. Maranatha!

~ J. Ekis

## **Adorning sound doctrine**

*But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine.*

*Titus 2:1*

In these pastoral epistles, the apostle Paul often exhorts Timothy and Titus regarding the importance of sound doctrine. While we understand the word “doctrine” to mean teaching, it is relevant that the balance of this exhortation dwells on what Titus is to teach concerning the behaviors of various groups within the church. He deals first with the aged men and women, then with how the aged women are to teach the young women, by implication including through their own holy behavior. Titus is then to exhort the young men to a number of godly behaviors, also making himself as a young pastor their example. Finally, he is to exhort servants, literally slaves in the Roman empire, to demonstrate obedience, fidelity – faithfulness, loyalty, honesty – to their own masters.

Throughout this enumeration the apostle points to the reason for teaching such behaviors – that they “become” sound doctrine. To become, as used in our text, is to be appropriate, suitable, or befitting. Thus, the behavior of the young women as taught by the example of the aged women is to be such “that the word of God be not blasphemed,” or spoken against as evil. The young men’s speech is to be sound – healthy, whole, uncorrupt – so that it cannot be condemned by those contrary to the gospel. For the servants, their behavior is “to adorn the doctrine of God our Savior.” To adorn is to “put in order,” to decorate, or to display the beauty or excellence of something.

Not once does the apostle suggest that such behaviors would justify or sanctify anyone. Such notions are the doctrine of the unbelieving and religious world, but are not the doctrine of God. He makes that clear when he explains that the grace of God, not men’s works, has provided salvation for all mankind, which teaches those who have believed His grace to live unto Him who gave Himself for us (vv. 11-14). So the behaviors of His disciples that exemplify His gracious love are a response to, and not a cause of, His saving love, and should be a decoration of the doctrine of God that will draw men and women unto Him. This, he says, is becoming of sound doctrine. How are we doing with this?

## **Confidence or Shame**

*And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming. – 1 John 2:28*

Jesus is coming! When He does, we will stand before Him. We have a choice as to how that awesome moment will unfold. Will it be in confidence, or will we be ashamed? Each of us will assume one or the other of these two postures when we meet our long-awaited Lord face to face. John provides us the prescription for avoiding being ashamed before Him. It is to abide in Him. In light of this, it is spiritually beneficial to pause and examine ourselves for a moment...

Abiding in Him means He is our root, our life source. Jesus is the vine, and we are the branches. If we abide in Him, He also abides in us. It is from Him that we draw our strength and energy daily to live and move and have our being. If we are abiding in Him, it is evident to us. His presence is known and felt each waking moment. Is this the case with me today?

Abiding in Him will produce fruit. Both the fruit of the Spirit and the fruit of our labors in His fields will be part of the makeup of our daily living. Do love, joy, peace, longsuffering, goodness, gentleness, faith, meekness, and temperance dominate my being? Are there things this week that I am actively trying to accomplish for my Lord with His help? The answers to these types of self-examining questions will reveal if we are abiding in Him.

If we are abiding in Him, His Word will be abiding in us. Is God's Word alive in me? Is it on my heart and mind constantly? Do I retreat to it frequently for guidance, strength, comfort, and hope? Does it shape my perspective above and before anything else?

Abiding in Him means we will ask what we will, and it shall be done for us. How could it be otherwise? How is my prayer life? Do I ask for things according to God's will, or selfishly? Do I obtain answers to prayer? Do I know certainly when I call that He is listening? Am I patient for His response?

Abiding in Him means we keep His commandments. Do I see myself as a subject, or a sovereign? Do I have a heart that desires to obey Christ? Am I happy to submit my will to His way?

If we are not abiding in Him, we will wither. As we age, we must not think that we cannot still be fruitful. Just the opposite is true in the abiding life of the Christian. Is there an enervating spiritual life in me? Am I filled with His Spirit? Or is my life barren and unfruitful?

Abiding in Him is in the ever-present tense. Life in Christ is moment-by-moment. Yesterday is gone. Today is new. Now is here. Am I going to live for Him right now?

Let us seek to abide in our blessed Lord, that we may have confidence at His appearing and not be ashamed before Him when He comes. -- D. Murcek

# *Pastors Thoughts of the Week*

## **How To Really Succeed**

*Joshua 1:8: This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.*

For decades the markets have been flooded with self-help books that purport to provide to its reader the keys to successful living. Of the writing of these “many books, there is no end”. In most cases, the only success that has come from these panacean formulas is the financial gain enjoyed by the authors. At the core of these magical tutorials is the belief in one’s self. The theory is that with enough motivation and self-confidence anyone can aspire to his loftiest goals. Public schools, the media, entertainers, and athletes keep putting forth the party line that “you can be whatever you want to be”.

Joshua was about to embark on an enterprise that would present formidable challenges. Forty years earlier his countrymen adamantly refused to embrace the campaign citing the seeming invincibility of the adversaries that stood in the way of victory. He had before him only one “How to Succeed” book-God’s Book! To its truths, Joshua assiduously applied his heart, soul, and mind and the guaranteed success was granted.

It is to be understood that spiritual success is not measured by military triumphs or, in the modern context, dollars and cents, social standing, or popularity. There is a far more transcendent prosperity that the Lord has in mind for the students of His word. In this temporal world, we all will encounter successes and failures in varying degrees. We live in an imperfect world and must not demand or expect a smooth journey. The Word of God acquaints us with multiple illustrations of those who have fought to win the prize by enduring failure, upset, disappointment, and even untimely death.

Must I be carried to the skies  
on flow'ry beds of ease,  
while others fought to win the prize,  
and sailed thro' bloody seas?

Success in this world is a transitory, penultimate experience. Believers are not dazzled by its ephemeral glitter. Even those who have achieved “great success” in this world are often found lamenting that it did not bring the satisfaction that they thought it would. “Is That All There Is?” is their melancholic paean. Believers who meditate on the promises of God will never fall for that devilish delusion. Proverbs 4:18: But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day. The triumph is secure and the victory permanent. We shall enjoy His good success despite whatever earthly disappointments assail us.

Blessings to all who read,

*Pastor*

## Simple, But Not Shallow

*But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.*

*1 Corinthians 2:10*

Christianity is one of the largest religions in the world today, and its adherents can be found in almost every country. Within Christianity, there are many divisions and even subdivisions, and one of those divisions is Protestantism. Birthed by the Reformation, Protestantism is divided into denominations and even these denominations have subdivisions. The foundation of Christianity is simple, but over time it has been complicated by the traditions and opinions of men. However, the core of our faith is easy enough for a child to understand, yet the truths of the scriptures must be revealed by the Holy Spirit and by searching.

When people first come to Christ their faith is new and pure. New converts usually know little or nothing about the divisions of Christianity. They possess a child-like faith that is necessary for entrance into heaven. *Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 18:3)*. The basic components of salvation are few. A person must by faith believe that Jesus was the only begotten sinless Son of God who gave his life as a substitute to pay for our sins. His payment for sin is sufficient by God's grace and has nothing to do with our good deeds. One also must believe that after three days, Jesus rose from the grave gaining victory over death, and because He lives, the believer also lives. This simple and powerful message has changed the lives of countless people and has impacted the course of history through the ages.

Believers should never lose sight of the simplicity of this saving message; yet, from the time of our conversion, we should experience a hunger and thirst to know more. We are commanded to *Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ (2Peter 3:18)*. To grow as believers, the scriptures tell us *As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby (1 Peter 2:2)*. By reading God's word, His children gain greater understanding about the mind of the Lord and the plan He has for their lives. Reading the Bible can seem like we are either looking for something in the daytime or searching at nighttime. In the daytime things are more easily seen because of the abundance of light, while at nighttime it requires more diligence and a flashlight. Simple truths in the Scriptures are obvious and easily seen, while the deeper things of God may demand more effort in our searching and enlightenment from the Spirit of God.

Today's verse refers to the Spiritual truths of God which need the assistance of the Holy Spirit to be revealed to our inner spiritual man. God has many wonderful truths that will help us grow as His children. Some will be easily understood, but there will be those deeper truths that require His guidance to give us deeper and more intimate knowledge of the endless treasure of our loving Father.

J.

Ekis