

2003

Thursday, January 23rd - Philippians 2: 1, 2

The second *if* in v.1 mentions the consolation of love. Sin makes us self-centered and loveless. But the saving love of God in Christ has delivered us from the corruption of sin (that made us unlovely to God and man) and has also delivered us from the dominion of sin (whereby we neither received nor gave love). We know that the Father predestined us to this salvation in love (Eph. 1:4,5), and He demonstrated that love for us by giving His Son to die for us (Rom. 5:8). Such divine love for us heals our wounded hearts, and warms them to love our saving God, who first loved us (1 Jn. 4:19). We are also directed and empowered to love our brethren in Christ (Jn. 15:12). We who have been so wonderfully comforted by the love of God should delight and determine to embrace our brethren in the strongest form of unity. Our bonds in Christ are not those of sentimentality or dutiful agreement, but rather a love that is stronger than death (Song of Sol. 8:6).

Friday, January 24th - Philippians 2: 1, 2

Paul mentions thirdly in v.1 the fellowship of the Spirit. There are numerous seals binding us together in Christ. There is the persuasive transformation of our minds in Christ, the solace of our receiving and sharing His love, and the incorporating ministry of God's Holy Spirit. The blessed unity of Christian fellowship is fostered by the fruit of the Holy Spirit growing in our lives (Gal. 5:22,23). This, in turn, makes our fellowship to be of a deep, sincere, spiritual nature, as opposed to an association maintained by mere outward civilities.

Saturday, January 25th - Philippians 2: 1, 2

The final *if* in v.1 mentions affection and compassion. The word translated affection is one that refers to the inner organs of the body (*spla,gcna*), and means deepest, most tender feelings. We have been dealt with by Christ's deepest compassion and most tender mercies. We who have received such from our Lord should have and express similar feelings toward one another (Eph. 4:32).

Sunday, January 26th - Philippians 2: 1, 2

The fruits of encouragement, loving consolation, spiritual fellowship, and tender compassions all grow from the root of our being in Christ. Since the Philippians to whom Paul was writing were in Christ, the apostle had joy. However, by the Philippians showing and nurturing the fruits mentioned in v.1, they would maintain such blessed unity of mind, heart, spirit, and purpose, that the cup of Paul's joy would be filled to overflowing. Neither is the Lord nor are His true servants pleased when discord and divisions arise within churches. We delight our Lord and those caring leaders He gives to His Church when we live the truth lovingly, making it our highest priority to preserve and strengthen the unity of the Spirit in the bond of affectionate and compassionate peace.

Monday, January 27th - Philippians 2: 3, 4

The one mind and singular purpose to which Paul's children in the faith and to which all believers in every age are to be committed is defined in these verse. In negative terms, believers are to do nothing from motives of selfishness or vain conceit. As Christians, our lives are no longer our own. We have been bought with the blood of Christ and we now forever belong to Him. This is not our curse, but our blessing. This reality involves, however, not simply personal blessing but blessing for the entire membership of the body of Christ. Thus, all we do is to have reference never only to ourselves, but always to the glory of our saving God and the good of our brethren. Even our own legitimate personal interests, to which we should

responsibly attend with the resources our Lord provides for us, should never be allowed to overshadow the communion we have with our brethren and thus the compassionate care we should have for them.

Tuesday, January 28th - Philippians 2: 3, 4

The positive dimension of the one mind and purpose we believers are to have in Christ is composed of humility and servanthood. The attitude of humility leads us to deny ourselves and voluntarily to take the lower place, not only leaving the higher place of honor open for others in the fellowship of the saints, but positively seeking to promote others to that higher place. The worthiness or unworthiness of others for the more prominent place is not to be our concern. We are to *regard*, or consider, and thus treat others in the body of Christ as though they were the greatest and we the least in the Kingdom of God. We are to engage ourselves as servants to promote their highest interests. To the natural man, this seems an impossible and undesirable commitment; however, we are no longer natural men but have been made by God's saving grace new creatures in Christ.

Wednesday, January 29th - Philippians 2: 3, 4

In Christ, we are called to die to self and live as servants of others. This calling is set out in these verses in absolute terms, with no exceptions or extenuations being admitted as excuses for selfishness. In v.3, the attitude of humility is contrasted with that of empty conceit, while in v.4 the action of our promoting the interests of others is contrasted with that of our working solely for self-interest. Thus, our minds and muscles, indeed, every fiber of our being, should be involved lovingly and self-sacrificially to serve for the good of our brethren (Jn. 15:12,13).

Thursday, January 30th - Philippians 2: 3, 4

There are passages in Scripture that speak directly to certain members of the Church, and indirectly to others. The pastoral epistles, for example, speak directly to pastors, indirectly to members of the flock, indicating to them what they are to expect from their pastors and how they should support and pray for them. Paul's words to husbands, wives, and children, and to masters and servants in his Ephesian and Colossian letters similarly speak directly to one group and indirectly to others (Eph. 5:22-6:9; Col. 3:18-4:1). In these verses calling for self-denial and the loving promotion of others, however, all of us are directly called to carry out the divine order. All of us, even though we may be actually superior to certain brethren—as masters would be to slaves—are called to treat all of our brethren as though they were more important than ourselves. How sweet and felicitous would be all fellowships if all members thereof would hear and heed this calling.

Friday, January 31st - Philippians 2: 3, 4

The call for every believer to regard every other believer as more important than himself indicates to us not only our loving duty to others but also the caring and promoting treatment we can expect from our brethren. How beautifully our Lord has composed His Body, the Church. Each member thereof is called and empowered lovingly to endeavor to promote all others before himself. Thus, while we seek to exalt others, they seek to exalt us! Far from bringing confusion and conflict into an assembly of God's people, this brings holy order and mutual love, respect, satisfaction, and gratitude. This competition of compassionate service leaves no one behind and produces no losers, but only winners.

Saturday, February 1st - Philippians 2: 3, 4

From these verses, we learn that we may expect to receive loving care from our brethren, but we may not turn the expectation into an entitlement we can demand. Whether we receive from our brethren loving service and preferment or not, our calling is to give such service to them.

Sunday, February 2nd - Philippians 2: 5-11

These verses form one of the most wonderful yet difficult passages in the Bible. The reason for the difficulty is not that the thoughts expressed are vague, confusing, or wrong in any way. It is rather that the truths revealed are so profound and mysterious that they carry us, as Frederick Faber writes in his beloved hymn, *far beyond reason's height and reached only by childlike love*. We must remember, however, that the Holy Spirit inspired Paul to write these words not to puzzle or amaze us, but to enlighten and edify us, thus giving us encouragement and empowering for practical Christian living.

The key to a right understanding of this profound passage is found when we recall its context. In vv.1-4 Paul has told believers to be of the same mind. That mind is sketched in vv.1-4, but its source, example, and goal are given in vv.5-11. Thus, we are not given a precise and exhaustive exposition of the being of Christ in our verses, so much as we are given a vision of the mind and motivation of Christ through His voluntary, loving, self-sacrificial service. Here is a revelation of the best Man who suffered things far worse than any of His followers would suffer, and He did so for souls completely unworthy of such a sacrifice.

Monday, February 3rd - Philippians 2: 5-7

The mind or attitude of Christ was expressed in His action of incarnation, life, death, resurrection, and ascension. What Christ did was to deny Himself, and to condescend to the lowest level. He did this for a high and holy purpose. What He achieved lifted men out of the depths of their sin, and resulted in His being exalted above all, except His Father. That attitude of condescension is what is to be the motivating mind of each and every Christian. To what lowly service for the good of others are we called this day?

Tuesday, February 4th - Philippians 2: 6-8

These verses sketch for us the progressive condescension of Christ. His voluntary stooping to serve began from the highest of heights. Christ was and is divine. Prior to His birth in this world, He existed with God and was in essence divine and thus co-equal with God the Father (Jn. 1:1). It is the divine rank of the Son of God that Paul emphasizes in v.6 when he writes that the divine Son did not regard the rank of divinity, or the prerogatives of who He was as God, as something to be fully exploited. Instead of His grasp being the divine prerogatives, He grasped the rank of a man, of a servant, of a suffering servant, of an executed criminal. No man has ever descended from such a height to such depths as did the Son of God in His incarnation and death. Let no Christian, therefore, ever think that he is being asked to stoop too low when he is asked to honor his brethren above himself.

Wednesday, February 5th - Philippians 2: 6-8

That which Christ grasped was infinitely beneath His divinity. In the Prologue of John's Gospel we are told not only that the Word was divine, but also that through Him all things were created (Jn. 1:1,2). Therefore, when the eternal Son of God assumed humanity, He who was the infinite, divine Creator of all things became Himself a creature, subject to the limitations of a creature. The Son of God was made in the likeness of men, meaning that He was truly man, but differed in one vastly essential way, namely, that He was personally without sin. But why did He voluntarily assume our humanity? He did so for the very purpose of taking upon Himself the sin of His people. He who knew no sin was accounted as sin to save His people from their sins (2 Cor. 5:21).

Thursday, February 6th - Philippians 2: 6-8

Christ did not empty Himself of His divinity. He never ceased being God. In His earthly life He manifested the glory of the only begotten Son of God (Jn. 1:14). In assuming His human nature, the Son of God became and forever will be what He was not before, while remaining what He had been for all eternity. Thus, we say rightly that Jesus is the God/Man. What He emptied was His perfect human life, as a libation offering for the sins of His people (Is. 53:12). None of us could ever give anything so precious in our service.

Friday, February 7th - Philippians 2: 6-8

Jesus took the form of a bond-servant. He voluntarily committed Himself to be bound to do an unimaginably difficult, painful, and dirty job. He stooped to the level of His getting under the full load of the guilt of the sins of His people, carrying the entire penalty for our sin away from us. His submitting to the service of His bearing all that our sin deserved entailed His being born to poor, peasant parents, His being deprived of proper shelter at His birth, His humble and quiet growth to adulthood in Nazareth, and His endurance of opposition during His public ministry, culminating in His arrest, trial, and crucifixion. No other servant has ever borne such harsh and unjust treatment, and done it so freely and willingly.

Saturday, February 8th - Philippians 2: 6-8

Our Redeemer took on the form of a bond-servant. He assumed the rank and miserable prerogatives of a slave, though He had the rank and prerogatives of God. He was not compelled to become such a slave, but chose to become one to release His people from the miserable bondage into which their sin had dragged them. Here we do well to compare the first Adam with Christ, the second Adam. The first Adam was not God, but a man, a creature of God. Yet the first Adam snatched after the rank of God when he partook of the forbidden fruit (recall, *You shall be like God*). What he accomplished by his sinful ambition was degradation, deprivation, and death. The second Adam was God. Yet, He did not exercise His divine prerogatives, but freely and graciously grasped the misery and death of His people's sin. Adam partook of the fruit of a living tree, and thereby he died, plunging all of his posterity into death. Christ laid hold of a dead tree—a cross—and through His death thereon, He brought eternal life to His people, and attained highest exaltation for Himself.

Sunday, February 9th - Philippians 2: 6-8

The motivation of Christ, in His assumed humanity, was not a determination to escape or rise out of His humble circumstances. Rather, He humbled Himself, willingly bowing Himself beneath His humiliating and painful circumstances. Jesus was not pressed down by His circumstances, but He embraced them, humbling Himself under the hand of His Father's justice. Though He was infinite in wisdom (Prov. 8) and sovereign in power and authority as the Son of God, He consented to learn obedience as a man (Heb. 5:8). Similarly, we are called, not to be compelled by our challenging circumstances grimly to submit them, but voluntarily to humble ourselves under the mighty hand of our God (1 Pet. 5:6).

Monday, February 10th - Philippians 2: 6-8

The extent of Christ's obedience is set out by Paul in measured steps in these verses. But to whom was Jesus obedient? He rendered perfect obedience in thought, word, and action to His Father. Never once did He in any way sin. But His obedience went inconceivably beyond His perfectly fulfilling the holy Law of God. He bore the divine punishment due for His people's violation of God's Law. Accordingly, every step of His life was one of self-denial, of bond-service, of death to self which culminated in His death on the cross. Never, in the course of His earthly life, did Jesus draw back from the costly terms of the divine determination to save man by the blood of God. The crowning conclusion of His obedience was a diadem of thorns, a course of rough and rude mocking, nails driven through the hands that multiplied loaves, made blind eyes to see, and cleansed lepers, a spear through the side, and, finally, death on the cursed wood. His attitude toward it all was one of a humble and strong submission to it for the love of His Father and of His people.

Tuesday, February 11th - Philippians 2: 6-8

When we die, it cannot be said of us that we do so in obedience. We must die. Our lives have been forfeited by our sin, death being the wages of sin (Rom. 6:23). But the humble, obedient service of Jesus extended to His dying. He, being sinless, was not personally subject to death, but rather He chose to lay down His life, substituting Himself for His people (Jn. 10:17,18), giving His life for and to us, while bearing our sin and death. However, He, the Creator and Sustainer of life, did not only submit Himself to die. His death came because He was judged by the civil authorities to be guilty of the crime of sedition, and He was judged by the ecclesiastical authorities to be guilty of the sin of blasphemy. Thus, the Romans esteemed His death a punishment for crimes against men, while the Jews esteemed His death the due punishment for sins against God. Jesus submitted obediently to being accounted the worst criminal and sinner, and He willingly bore the penalty due those violations of the laws of man and God. None of us is called to stoop so low, yet our attitude should be a willingness to do so.

Wednesday, February 12th - Philippians 2: 9-11

In these verses, Paul speaks of what God the Father did in response to the suffering service of His Son. The apostle does not mention all of the results of Christ's saving work, such as His redeeming a people to be His body and bride. Instead, the personal exaltation of Jesus as a consequence of His suffering service is highlighted. The reason for this particular focus is that a reminder of the glorious exaltation issuing from the Savior's obedient humiliation and suffering serves as a holy incentive for believers to have the same motivation as their saving Lord, knowing that their service, while it may go unappreciated at times by men, will not go unrewarded by God.

Thursday, February 13th - Philippians 2: 9

The exaltation of Jesus not only results from His voluntary humiliation and costly obedience. His exaltation corresponds to His humiliation. He who stooped to be reckoned, not as the Son of God, but as a man, as a poor man, as a blasphemous criminal worthy of execution, has been by God infinitely exalted above every creature. Finite, fallible men did not recognize His worthiness or promote Him to His highest station, but God, who raised Him from the dead, conferred upon the God/Man, Christ Jesus, the supreme honor of sitting at His right hand on the throne of His sovereign glory, giving to Him all authority in heaven and on earth (Mt. 28:18).

Friday, February 14th - Philippians 2: 9

Jesus took to Himself the form of a bond-servant (v.7). The Son of God, by His incarnation, found Himself in appearance as a man (v.8). Corresponding to these acts of voluntary humiliation, God highly exalted Jesus above all creatures. It was precisely for such glorious exaltation of His humanity that the God/Man prayed (Jn. 17:5) and pursued the course of His sufferings (Mt. 16:21). The height to which God exalted Jesus is by Paul more fully set out in Eph. 1:20-32, which glories richly reward and beautify the wounds He suffered in His service to count the interests of His people as being more important than His own (Phil. 2:3).

Saturday, February 15th - Philippians 2: 9

God not only exalted Christ Jesus, but He conferred upon Him a name above every name. In Scripture, a name implies the revelation of character, rather than an arbitrary designation. Thus, by God's raising up Jesus from the dead, thereby vindicating His atoning work, the Father not only vindicated His Son, but manifested the supremely glorious, majestic, and blessed character of Christ Jesus. Worthy has this Lamb been deemed by God, on account of His saving sufferings, to receive all power, riches, wisdom, might, honor, glory, and blessing (Rev. 5:12).

Sunday, February 16th - Philippians 2: 10, 11

In v. 9 Paul mentions the Father's conferring of supreme exaltation upon Christ in consequence of His having humbled Himself in obedience to the point of His crucifixion. In v.10, we are given a glimpse into the ultimate response of all creatures to the Father's exaltation of Christ. The creational response is universal. Every creature individually and all together bow the knee in homage to the exalted Christ. Not only by their actions do all creatures acknowledge the supreme glory of Christ Jesus, but by their testimony they articulate the true meaning of their prostration before Christ. In His humiliation, men mocked and devils ridiculed Jesus. Still, men and devils defy and persecute Christ through His people on earth (Recall, *Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?*). Yet God has installed His King, not only upon Zion, but on heaven's throne, and it behooves all creatures now to kiss the Son before whom all will one day bow (Ps. 2:6,12).

Monday, February 17th - Philippians 2: 10, 11

The name, Jesus, means Savior (Mt. 1:21). By His saving work, Jesus manifested the fullest revelation and blessedness of God. Every creature will be compelled one day to acknowledge the supreme majesty and authority of the Savior. Every tongue will be compelled to testify that the Man, Jesus Christ, is not only Savior of sinners, but Lord over all things. This glorious exaltation of Christ Jesus by God comes not at the expense of God's glory, but serves perfectly to enhance the glory of God the Father. For it is the Father who has purposed our salvation from the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:4), and who gave His Son to save sinners (Jn. 3:16), and who exalts His incarnate Son who has accomplished our salvation. No one will be able to begrudge or criticize the Father for so giving His only begotten Son to suffer and die, or His adopted sons to humble themselves by putting the interests of others before their own. The glory of the Father will be fully manifested in the exaltation of His Son and His Son's brethren (Heb. 2:12).

Tuesday, February 18th - Philippians 2: 9-11

If God the Father is glorified through the suffering obedience of His Son, with the consequent exaltation of the Son, it follows that we who are in Christ, who cultivate within ourselves the humble, obedient servant's attitude of Christ, will also glorify God by our service, our sufferings, and by the glory yet to be revealed in our exaltation in Christ (Rom. 8:18).

Wednesday, February 19th - Philippians 2: 12

If the name of the Savior is above every name (v.9), then we who have received salvation shall be lifted to unimaginably great heights of glory as we unpack the treasures of our salvation. By the example and enabling power of the Savior, we are to live out our great and glorious salvation. Paul issues this imperative to his readers as an affectionate appeal, addressing them as his *beloved*. His beloved Philippians, his children in the faith, had been obedient in their cultivating the servant's attitude of Christ. While Paul was with them, he encouraged them in their obedience, and now, through this letter, he urges his readers to continue to work out what God had wrought in them by His saving grace and redeeming power.

Thursday, February 20th - Philippians 2: 12

Our salvation must be worked out. The word translated *work out* (*katerga,zesqe*) means to work thoroughly, even painfully to completion. An easy, automatic affair is the last thing that the genuine Christian life is. If we, as some pietistically say, let go and let God, we shall find that we have let go of God to become spiritual casualties.

Friday, February 21st - Philippians 2: 12, 13

We are to work out our salvation with a due sense of sober and serious care. The fear and trembling Paul speaks of are not components of dread, but of reverential awe and most profound gratitude. For we are not called to work so as to produce our salvation; we are not to work in order to become justified in God's sight. Instead, we are called to work to exalt our brethren as the true servants of the exalted and exalting

Savior. Those brethren are ones whom the Lord will own and honor as trophies of His own saving work on the final day.

Saturday, February 22nd - Philippians 2: 12, 13

The attitude of holy awe with which we work out our salvation is not lessened but heightened by the wondrous realization that God is at work in us. By His Holy Spirit indwelling believers, God prompts and empowers them to know, to love, to delight in, and cheerfully and fruitfully to do His will. The Spirit does not compel, but rather quickens our new nature to a grateful and loving willingness to do the will of the Lord. The Spirit further gives us enabling power to work in accordance with our holy willingness to serve our God. The result of such sanctified willing and working is sheer, holy, gloriously blessed pleasure. Supremely, the working out of our salvation pleases our Lord. But because His just, holy, and loving will is so blessed in its nature and effects upon all of God's creatures, including ourselves, when we work out our salvation we bring pleasure to others, and we even delight ourselves in the process.

Sunday, February 23rd - Philippians 2: 12, 13

We are called to work out our salvation, but the success of our endeavor does not depend upon our frail and finite resources. Rather, our success is made certain by the reality of God working in us. The apostle John teaches us that we love because God first loved us (1 Jn. 4:19). Here Paul teaches us similarly that we work because God first is at work in us. The Greek words the apostle uses for the Lord's working in us are

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Monday, February 24th - Philippians 2: 12, 13

The working of God within us causes us to will those righteous and loving things that bring pleasure to God and man. The Lord gives us a desire, a hungering and thirsting for His will. Whenever we sincerely want the things pertaining to His salvation, it is because God is working that desire in us which He fully intends to satisfy.

Tuesday, February 25th - Philippians 2: 12, 13

The God who works in us (*o` evnergw/n*) causes us to do, or to work (*evnergei/n*) for His pleasure. Our doing God's will is not our originating, making, or creating this pleasure. If that were the case, Paul would have used another Greek word, *poiēi/n*, meaning to make or to do. Instead, the in-working of God is not God's working through or out of us, as though we were mere passive channels. It is His infusing us with an energy whereby we serve energetically with heart, soul, strength, and mind for His pleasure. Read Eph. 3:20, 21 to gain some idea of the immense magnitude of our Lord's energizing work in us.

Wednesday, February 26th - Philippians 2: 12, 13

Paul writes of his own service in Co. 1:29. What he says there casts light upon the nature of our working out of our salvation. The apostle says that he labors (*kopiw/*), a word meaning to work hard, to toil, to labor to the point of weariness. To that he adds that he strives (*avgwnizo,menoj*), meaning to fight, to struggle, to compete as an athlete. Our word, *agony*, comes from that Greek word. But his expenditure of

effort is according to God's working in him (evne,rgeian) which energizes (evnergoume,nhn) him with power (duna,mei), from which our words *dynamic* and *dynamite* come. The Lord's energizing power prompts the believer to labor and fight the good fight of faith. It is not easy being an obedient believer, but we are sustained in the expenditure of energy by the Lord's infinite power.

Thursday, February 27th - Philippians 2: 12, 13

Though we are called to serve others (vv.3,4), we are neither called nor capable to save them. It is *our* salvation we are exhorted by Paul to work out. We are not hirelings or slaves working to enrich others while we languish. We are possessors of salvation. When we work it out in humble service for others, we are cultivating the inheritance graciously given to us by the Lord, and, by His enabling power, we are enriching our portion of that inheritance. Read in Mt. 25:34-40 how our Lord recognizes and rewards our working out of our salvation as we serve others.

Friday, February 28th - Philippians 2: 14

The working out of our salvation will entail our growing in the grace and knowledge of the Lord, as we attend and apply to ourselves the means of God's grace. It also involves our worshipping our God and being conformed to the image of His Son. That conformity leads us to love and serve our brethren, our neighbor, even our enemy. However, the attitude with which we do these things is a matter most significant to our God. Nothing that we do in response to His grace, for His glory, and for our fellow man's good should be done with a spirit of resentment or reservation. All that we do should be free of grumbling, which is a bitter fruit of our begrudging the energy, effort, and resources we spend in our knowing and doing our Lord's will. Grumbling is a cowardly fruit, for grumblers dare express their resentment only in muted tones. Neither are we more openly to dispute with God concerning the administration of His wisdom, love, or power, nor are we to dispute with our brethren, seeking to compel their submission to God's will while we neglect our own obedience to the divine will.

Saturday, March 1st - Philippians 2: 14, 15

Those who grumble and dispute reveal their impotence, caprice, and rebellion against the holy authority of God. They grumble in frustration because they lack power to have their own way. They dispute in an effort not to vindicate right, but to force their own will. Those serving the Lord with an attitude purged of these sinful vices show to the world that they are new creatures of God, becoming, through their obedient and sanctified living, as blameless and innocent before God and man as they have been declared to be by the Lord who has justified them.

Sunday, March 2nd - Philippians 2: 14, 15

Those who serve without the resentful attitude of rebellion from God, render their service with sweet submission to and grateful delight in the Lord. Thereby they manifest that they are neither rebels at odds with the Lord nor slaves in a forced bondage to Him, but are rather children of the King of glory, destined to inherit a share in the glorious light, life, and love of His eternal kingdom. Such children live and serve in stark contrast to the twisted, bitter, and corrupt mass of sinful humanity among whom the children of God live out their new lives in this world. The Lord's children may be attacked by men, but they are above reproach before God. They can be cursed and threatened by wicked men, but they are as far above the reach of their benighted enemies as are the stars above the earth.

Monday, March 3rd - Philippians 2: 16

If we are going to serve God and man without grumbling or disputing, we must feed upon and publish abroad the Word of God. That Word begets and sustains new, eternal, abundant life in Christ. It enables us to persevere in cheerful, obedient service to the end of our earthly pilgrimage or until the coming of Christ on the final day. It is truly as our Lord said in His Word, that man lives not by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord (Dt. 8:3; Mt. 4:4).

Tuesday, March 4th - Philippians 2: 16

Our holding to and holding forth the word of life enables us to live here and now, rendering cheerful service to God and man. That in itself is a great blessing for ourselves as well as for others whom we serve. However, there is more to the blessing than current satisfaction. How we live and serve now will have impact in the day of Christ's revelation, when the full significance of and reward for our service will be manifested. The apostle Paul certainly anticipates reward for his faithful and loving service to the Philippians, and their growth in grace as a result of that service. We may safely and with deepest delight glory in the fruit we have produced by Christ's enabling power and for His glory. All else, in the light of the final day when true value is revealed, will be seen to have been vain.

Wednesday, March 5th - Philippians 2: 17, 18

Rather than his resenting and grumbling over costly service for Christ and for his brethren in Christ, Paul indicates that he rejoices in the privilege and pleasure of such service. The apostle is a living example of that cheerful service he is instructing the Philippians to render. In this, Paul follows the example of his Redeemer, who poured Himself out for the salvation of His people (Phil. 2:7). Nor did either Jesus or Paul give themselves sacrificially with a grimly duteous attitude. There is joy set before all who give themselves in service for the glory of God and the good of man (Heb. 12:2).

Thursday, March 6th - Philippians 2: 17, 18

Paul speaks of his being poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrifice and service of the Philippians' faith. His faithful service to Christ and for the believers at Philippi was to him costly and sacrificial. It had landed him in prison, from which he wrote this epistle. It would eventually lead to his execution at Rome. Yet, far from his regretting or grumbling against the course he had pursued by God's direction and power, he rightly conceived of it as a sacred, living sacrifice offered to and accepted by God. With respect to the Philippians' faith, Paul's sacrifice was a service of holy love. By the very act of his offering himself to the glory of his Lord and for the edification of his brethren, Paul was inspired by joy. As we rightly tell our children, when you put **J**esus first, **O**thers next, and **Y**ourself last of all, it is a formula that spells joy.

Friday, March 7th - Philippians 2: 17, 18

We should not conceive of either the sacrifice of Christ or the sacrificial service of His apostles as being mere spectacles set before us. Christianity is no spectator sport, but is a matter of participatory living. Therefore, Paul seeks to share his joy with those to whom he writes, encouraging them to join in and reciprocate the joy he was experiencing. It is ever the testimony of God's Word and of His servants through all ages that the trusting, obedient, diligently serving believer has, as the sweet fruit issuing from the roots of his sacrificial service, joy unspeakable and full of glory (1 Pet. 1:8).

Saturday, March 8th - Philippians 2: 18

For all of the self-denying labor, striving, toil, sweat, pain, and sacrifice rendered by the obedient Christian, the result is not the believer's misery, but rather his joy. God's holy will and pleasure (v.13) is not our pain, but our pleasure. Our Lord declared that His food was to do the will of His Father (Jn. 4:34). That doing of the Father's will was His joy—a joy that He would have to be made full in His disciples (Jn. 15:11; 17:13).

If we have this joy of the Lord, it is our strengthening blessing (Neh. 8:10), which we desire and determine to share with others.

Sunday, March 9th - Philippians 2: 19

Paul has been dealing with the great themes of Christian unity, mutual love and respect, sacrificial service, and the source of these, namely, the life, death, and resurrection of Christ. At this point in the letter, the apostle turns his attention to some more mundane details. It is not the case, however, that these practical details are detached from the high, spiritual principles already articulated in this epistle. Paul mentions that he would be sending to the Philippians Timothy and Epaphroditus (v.25). Those two men exemplified the very mind of Christ about which Paul had been writing. They would accompany this letter—Epaphroditus likely carrying it back to his home church—as living epistles of faithful and fruitful servanthood in Christ. Thusly did Paul illustrate the admonitions of 1:27-2:18 with two living trophies of grace.

Monday, March 10th - Philippians 2: 19,20

Paul plans to send Timothy to the Philippians for several reasons. First, he wants to send a faithful servant of Christ whom he knew would care for their interests in the Lord (v.20). Then, Paul hoped to gather encouraging news regarding the spiritual welfare of his children in the faith at Philippi when Timothy returned from there to report to Paul (v.19). Timothy would thus serve as a unifying bond, a living conduit of the holy love between Paul and the Philippians. He would be the right man to reinforce the sanctifying contents of this letter. Our Lord, through Paul, makes manifold provision for the edification of His people.

Tuesday, March 11th - Philippians 2: 19,20

Timothy was with Paul when the church at Philippi was founded. He was a trusted servant of Christ and proven co-laborer with Paul. If Paul's imprisonment prevented him from visiting his beloved Philippians, then Timothy would be the logical alternative for Paul to send in his place. Paul's thinking was directed, however, not only by logic, but even moreso by his hope in the Lord Jesus. Even the best of plans should humbly be submitted by believers to the sovereignty of the heavenly King for His perfect disposition.

Wednesday, March 12th - Philippians 2: 19, 20

Paul's love for the Philippians and his hope in the Lord Jesus made him confident that Timothy would complete his mission, ministering to the saints at Philippi and, upon his return to the apostle, reporting on their condition to Paul. The apostle further expected the report on the condition of the flock at Philippi to be most encouraging. Paul's hopes were enhanced by the character of the living conduit he was intending to connect between himself and the Philippians. When the right man is chosen, the work depending upon him is well on its way to a happy completion.

Thursday, March 13th - Philippians 19, 20

The caring character of Timothy is what Paul highlights as making him supremely suitable for his service to both Paul and the Philippians. The apostle mentions two major qualifications Timothy possessed. First, he is of a kindred spirit with Paul. The exact word Paul employs means *equal spirit* (ἴσος, yucon). Paul plans to send a man to the Philippians who is caring and competent in ministry as nearly to the apostle's degree of care and competence as could be found. Secondly, Paul says that Timothy has as genuine a care for the Philippians as did the apostle himself. Timothy was no smooth professional. His was neither pretended concern nor pietistic feigning, but genuine, sincere and loving care for the highest spiritual welfare of the believers at Philippi. May more of us be like Timothy, and may more who are like him be employed in the Church.

Friday, March 14th - Philippians 2: 21

Paul commends Timothy as being not only a caring and competent servant, but also as being a rare servant of Christ. He was unlike most others in Christian ministry. He had, by God's grace, broken away from the pack, not only of the world, but also from the pack of most Christians—even of most Christian leaders. Many were the casualties of complacency and self-regard in the early Church (as is so now). There were and are now precious few in ministry who have so deeply died to self interest that they can devote their full attention to caring for others. May our God make us and send to us more selfless men like Timothy.

Saturday, March 15th - Philippians 2: 22, 23

It was not only Paul's words that commended Timothy, but the works performed by Paul's young co-laborer served to manifest his tried and true worth in the work of God's kingdom. Indeed, Timothy so closely, faithfully, and submissively followed Paul's example of ministry that he could be considered as a younger version of the apostle himself, being descended from him spiritually, and living up to the standard of his father in the faith. This valuable servant of Christ, so dear to the Philippians and to Paul himself, was being held by Paul only until he knew how his trial would fare, so that Timothy could bring that news to the Philippians as well. Such patient waiting by Timothy for his marching orders only added to his proven worth.

Sunday, March 16th - Philippians 2: 23

Paul would send the living treasure of his son in the faith to the Philippians as soon as he knew how his trial fared. The loving apostle knew that his beloved Philippians would want the latest and most accurate information about the apostle's welfare. Such is the mutually tender consideration of love in Christ. Timothy, a man of proven worth, was being reserved by Paul until that valuable bit of intelligence could be conveyed with him. Our Lord withholds all blessings from us until they are fully furnished with all facets His wisdom and holy love intend them to have for us.

Monday, March 17th - Philippians 2: 23, 24

Paul promises to send Timothy to Philippi as soon as that excellent young man could carry with him the news of the outcome of the apostle's trial. The delay in Paul's sending Timothy is thus filled with hope for the Philippians having fuller intelligence regarding the situation of the apostle. Added to that hope, Paul speaks of his trusting expectation that he would be released from prison and enabled to come to Philippi soon after Timothy's arrival there with the good news. Hence, this letter's promise would be followed by blessed provision in the person of Timothy, followed by even greater blessing of Paul's own coming. For all believers, God's arrangement is to reserve the best wine until last. For us, the best is ever yet to be.

Tuesday, March 18th - Philippians 2: 23, 24

Paul has a sure hope of sending Timothy to the Philippians. Regarding his own acquittal at trial and release from prison, thus enabling him to visit the Philippians, he had to exercise trust in the Lord. This does not mean that if Paul believes hard enough he would surely have his desired release. Rather, it means that though he should ask for an acquittal before men, he trusted in a heavenly Sovereign who brought the greatest blessing to His people not by freeing Himself from the cross, but by His bearing it unto His own death. We may and must ever trust that with our Lord, denials of our requests lead not to our impoverishment, but rather to our lasting enrichment.

Wednesday, March 19th - Philippians 2: 23, 24

Was Paul ever released from prison as he trusted he would be? Evidence is slim from which we may determine the answer. From an ancient text dated c. 180-200 AD, these words are written: *...the blessed apostle Paul himself, following the example of his predecessor John, writes to no more than seven churches by name in the following order: to the Corinthians (first) to the Ephesians (second), to the Philippians (third), to the Colossians (forth), to the Galatians (fifth), to the Thessalonians (sixth), to the Romans*

(seventh)... If this account from *The Muratorian Fragment* is accurate, Paul was released from the prison in which he wrote to the Philippians and surely visited them as he trusted he would (Phil. 1:25). For we know that Paul wrote Romans from Corinth, where Gaius was his host (Rom. 16:23). Whether he did or did not receive an acquittal and release, however, those who trust in the Lord are never disappointed (1 Pet. 2:6).

Thursday, March 20th - Philippians 2: 25, 26

Paul has already indicated his intention to send Timothy as soon as possible to the Philippians. At this point, he mentions another man he is sending immediately, carrying this very letter to them. Epaphroditus was a member of the church at Philippi who had been deputed by the assembly there to bring Paul a gift and news about the Philippians (Phil. 4:18). There are hints that by their sending of Epaphroditus, the Philippians intended him to stay with Paul, thus perhaps allowing Timothy to be freed up to come to them. With this letter, however, they were not receiving the man they hoped would be sent to them, but were receiving back the man they sent to stay with Paul. The apostle takes the time to explain this situation, so contrary to the Philippians' intention and expectation. As Paul was trusting the Lord for His best—though it could run counter to the apostle's expectation—so the Philippians would have to trust that God's best was being provided for them through Paul's prayerful disposition of these men.

Friday, March 21st - Philippians 2: 25, 26

What love the apostle had for the Philippians! He was going to send them not just one treasured servant of Christ, but two. He has already commended Timothy's worth and explained what was holding up his coming. Now Paul commends Epaphroditus and explains why he was sent with this letter. The righteous are ever sweetly reasonable and lovingly considerate in their disposing of matters and giving clear reasons for their actions.

Saturday, March 22nd - Philippians 2: 25, 26

Paul clearly appreciated the sending of Epaphroditus by the Philippians. He expresses his appreciation for that living gift, while at the same time removing any grounds for them to suspect that Epaphroditus had failed in his mission or was petulantly rejected by Paul. For Paul describes the returning brother in most laudatory terms: *my brother* and *fellow-worker* and *fellow soldier*. With these designations, the apostle acknowledges the loving kinship obtaining between himself and Epaphroditus, as well as the tireless diligence and courageous faithfulness of his service. With the designation *your messenger*, Paul does not use the common term (αγγελος), but the word conveying the notion of one sent with an authoritative communication (αποστολον, from which we get the term, *apostle*). Thus, Paul testifies that he rated the Philippians' messenger most highly. When Paul says that Epaphroditus ministered to his need, he gratefully acknowledges his sincere appreciation for the success of Epaphroditus' mission and the consideration of the Philippians in their having deputed him for that mission. No defect in the man or his mission, and no rejection by Paul of this treasured man, could account for his return to Philippi. But a more necessary and excellent use for Epaphroditus had been apprehended by Paul and put into action.

Sunday, March 23rd - Philippians 2: 25, 26

If no defect or rejection could account for the return of Epaphroditus to Philippi, why did Paul send the man back? Foremost in answer to this question is the loving concern both Paul and Epaphroditus had for the Philippians themselves. They had heard rightly that their man had become sick on his mission to the apostle. Both Paul and Epaphroditus agreed that the best way lovingly to relieve the Philippians' loving concern was to have the fully recovered messenger they had sent to Paul return to them. What we give lovingly to others in Christ can often be returned lovingly to us if the return relieves us of the burden of concern.

Monday, March 24th - Philippians 2: 27

Paul makes clear how seriously sick Epaphroditus was. The Philippian servant was on the verge of being called by God out of this world into the gain of being in Christ's nearer presence (Phil. 1:21). Yet, God returned him to full health, for, no doubt, Epaphroditus desired to live on for Christ. God also returned him in loving consideration for Paul, not desiring to deprive the apostle of such a choice minister to his need. But Paul lovingly determined not to cling selfishly to the restored servant, but rather freely to give up as a loving gift to his beloved Philippians the man death almost took from him and them. The gifts and blessings we receive from the Lord are best when we not only gratefully savor them, but also lovingly share them.

Tuesday, March 25th - Philippians 2: 27,28

The intertwining depths and reciprocating action of love in Christ are evident in these verses. We see first that Epaphroditus did not shrink from the cost of rendering service to a marked man, like Paul. In the course of his ministering to the imprisoned Apostle's needs, the health of Epaphroditus came under attack to the point of threatening him with death. There is not a hint that the faithful fellow-worker with Paul regretted his bearing such cost in the course of his ministry to Christ and to Christ's apostle. Love impelled him so to give himself. God's merciful love prompted Him to spare Epaphroditus. Paul's love for the Philippians impelled him to send Epaphroditus back to Philippi, so that, upon the believers there seeing their practically resurrected brother, their distress over him would be vanquished by joy. The love of God prompts all who have it to be generously considerate of and giving to those around them.

Wednesday, March 26th - Philippians 2: 29

Paul stresses that the Philippians should receive Epaphroditus with no reservation but rather with pure rejoicing. Far from their suspecting him of having been for any reason rejected by the apostle, they are told to esteem Epaphroditus most highly, for in every way he was a man whose deeds had manifested most clearly and excellently the very giving, serving, cost-bearing, loving, refreshing, and joy-inspiring character of Christ. Such men are not to be despised or taken for granted, but are to be held in high regard. Alas, not all believers have and exercise such Christ-like character. We should not be envious of those who do, but should honor them, with gratitude to God for His grace having made them so singular.

Thursday, March 27th - Philippians 2: 29, 30

Paul does not attribute the sickness of Epaphroditus to infectious disease or bodily breakdown, but portrays it as a death he was fully willing to die—and almost called upon to die—as part of his service for Christ. The man risked his life, consciously and unreservedly, placing it in peril in obedience to Christ, doing so for the relief of Paul, and as a precious, living sacrifice offered by the Philippian church. Far from Paul viewing the

near mortal sickness of the man sent from the Philippians to minister to him as a curse, effectively robbing him of such refreshing ministry, the apostle regards it as the precious perfection of a living love gift sent to him by his beloved Philippians. Sound faith alone can view the afflictions of God's people in such positive light, thus sweetening with delightful gratitude the otherwise bitter waters of suffering.

Friday, March 28th - Philippians 3: 1

From the theme of Christian unity, maintained only by believers having and exercising the mind of Christ—such as the living examples of Timothy and Epaphroditus had—Paul proceeds to issue several imperatives in this third chapter. The first imperative is a call for the Philippians, and for all believers reading this letter, to rejoice in the Lord. Our glorifying God by our obedient, loving, and sacrificially giving service leads not to our deprivation and impoverishment, but to our joy. The first question of our Shorter Catechism rightly grasps these two things which God has joined together, telling us that man's chief end is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever. The appropriation of God's grace for our faithful living is a holy duty, but much more than a duty. It is our delight.

Saturday, March 29th - Philippians 3: 1

The rejoicing of which Paul speaks in this verse is something deeper than happy feelings. It is a more deep and constant stream of grateful and reverent exultation that has its source and sustaining power in the grace of God, the love of Christ, the power of the Holy Spirit, and the truth of God's Word that sets us free. Such rejoicing is not commended to us by Paul as a suggestion, as though it were an option or needless luxury of the Christian life. The apostle commands it as a necessity. This is so because the more we draw our comfort and joy from Christ, the better we find ourselves being enabled to endure spiritual combat. Nehemiah told the people of his day that the joy of the Lord was their strength (Neh. 8:10). The people then needed strength to stand and to serve effectively amidst numerous enemies. So it is with us, that our rejoicing in the Lord serves to safeguard us from distraction or defection from Christ and His service.

Sunday, March 30th - Philippians 3: 1

Paul commands believers to rejoice in the Lord. We are to find and experience our joy not in material possessions or the applause of men. Rather, the inexhaustible source of our joy is in our communion with the living God of grace, through His redeeming Son, and by His Holy Spirit. The knowledge that our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth, whose love is unchangeable and immeasurable, whose power, goodness, and provision for us is perfect, and whose glorious kingdom, which is our

inheritance and sure hope, is inconceivably wonderful—all of these things, and more of such treasures that are our possession in Christ, form the foundation of the Christian's joy.

Monday, March 31st - Philippians 3: 2, 3

Paul has issued a positive imperative for believers to rejoice in Christ. In these verses, he issues a negative imperative, in which he warns believers against counterfeits, who claim to have piety and spiritual authority, but who really rob the saints of the liberating truth of God in Christ, and of their joy in the Lord. Not everyone claiming to be a teacher of God's Word truly directs men rightly to glorify God and enjoy Him for time and eternity. Such counterfeit teachers must be avoided, lest we partake of their leaven which our Lord cursed (Mt.23).

Tuesday, April 1st - Philippians 3: 2

Paul identifies the counterfeit teachers, of whom the Philippians are to beware, first in most disparaging terms. The holy apostle designates them as dogs, who build nothing but destroy everything with their snarling, tearing ways. Next, he calls them workers, not of righteousness, but of evil. From these two terms, we might expect Paul's warning to be against crass, carnal men. However, with the third descriptive term he uses for these counterfeits, we understand that Paul was warning his readers against the legalistic Judaisers, who believed and taught that the outward performance of Jewish religious rites would save those so performing them. Rightly does Paul, as did Jesus before him, characterize such pietistic Judaisers as hypocrites, mutilating themselves and others, instead of edifying them, and committing lawless iniquity even as they were confident that they were serving God (Mt. 7:21-23; Mt. 23).

Wednesday, April 2nd - Philippians 3: 2

The Jews referred to the Gentiles as unclean, carping dogs. Yet Paul returns the insult upon the heads of those who had cast it. It was the unbelieving Jews who had crucified Jesus, seeking to devour their Messiah as dogs would devour scraps thrown from a table. It was the unbelieving Jews who dogged Paul wherever he went, seeking to destroy him (Acts 14:19; 15:1,2). Men who maintain their sinful rebellion from the one true God render themselves not gods but beasts.

Thursday, April 3rd - Philippians 3: 2

Every form of legalism, or teaching that men are saved by their own keeping the moral and ceremonial law, while it may sound spiritual and right, is essentially evil. Legalism is evil because it teaches a deceitful, unwarranted, and unattainable way of salvation. In the Council at Jerusalem, apostles and elders debated the matter of Gentile conversion and incorporation into the Church. Peter argued at that council that they should not weigh down the disciples with the yoke of a ceremonial law which neither Peter and his generation, nor their fathers' generation could bear. Then he declared that men are saved through the grace of God by faith (Acts 15:10,11). This gospel alone is the power of God unto salvation (Rom. 1:16), and anything other than this gospel is a ministry of evil.

Friday, April 4th - Philippians 3: 2

Paul refers to the Judaisers as the false circumcision. The word he uses, however, literally means mutilation. The Judaisers had been circumcised in conformity with the shadowy dictates of the old economy. Yet, because they were not circumcised in heart—their sinful nature having been cut away, and replaced by a new nature in the likeness of Christ—their circumcision signified nothing but a mutilation of the flesh, and their legalism mutilated the souls of those practicing it.

Saturday, April 5th - Philippians 3: 2, 3

In these verses, the apostle contrasts the true worshippers of God with the false and legalistic Judaisers. The believers to whom Paul wrote were, along with him, the true circumcision. They were sons of Israel and brethren of Judah's King of kings because they were not outward possessors of the shadows of divine law, but rather were circumcised in heart, having by the new birth been made new creatures in heart, soul, strength, and mind (Rom. 2:28,29). The bloodless rites we practice have more sanctifying potency than the bloody and elaborate Jewish rites precisely because we have in Christ the spiritual substance of salvation, while Judaisers dabble in the cold, lifeless shadows that only point to the Sun of righteousness.

Sunday, April 6th - Philippians 3: 2, 3

We, who are of the true circumcision, worship God not by a lifeless parading of an empty and pretended piety. We worship the true God in and by the enabling agency of His own Holy Spirit. For us, it is not our own reasoning, determining to work for our salvation as a deserved wage. Instead, we were regenerated by the Holy Spirit, as Spirit-anointed men proclaimed to us the saving gospel (1 Pet. 1:12). The Spirit then guides us into all the truth (Jn. 16:13), helps us in our prayers (Rom. 8:26), and testifies with our new spirits

that we are indeed children of God (Rom. 8:16). In greatest contrast to sinful men who try to cover their sin by the fig leaves of their own efforts, we have the renewal of the Holy Spirit of God, who brooded over the surface of the primordial waters at creation, bringing forth by the Word of God life and good order.

Monday, April 7th - Philippians 3: 2

Positively, believers glory in Christ. Negatively, they put no confidence in their natural endowments or attainments. By the testimony of God's Word and by their experience of sanctification, they have learned the truth that without Jesus, they can do nothing (Jn. 15:5). They have also learned that with Christ, they can do all things (Phil. 4:13). We who are of the true circumcision have chosen in Christ the one thing necessary, the good portion that will never be taken from us. With growing holy ardor we take pleasure in Christ, just as the Father is well pleased in His beloved Son. We boast and exult is no one less or other than the Son of God made flesh to deliver us from our sins, to destroy the works of the devil, and to appease the righteous wrath of God. The natural endowments and attainments of no man can begin to compare with all of this.

Tuesday, April 8th - Philippians 3: 4-6

Paul uses himself as an example of those who boast in Christ while putting no confidence in the flesh. In these verses, the apostle recounts his natural endowments and attainments in order to demonstrate that if any man apart from Christ would seem to have confidence before God in who he was and how he had lived, it would have been Saul of Tarsus, the Pharisee. No man, not even the rich young ruler who was near to the kingdom, lacking only one thing, came so close to earning his way into glory as did Saul of Tarsus. Yet, even he, for all of his natural riches and supposed righteousness, was poor, blind, and wretched, being infinitely far from the true family of God.

Wednesday, April 9th - Philippians 3: 5, 6

Saul of Tarsus was born of unblemished spiritual pedigree. To his pristine natural endowments, he added formidable attainments. The unsurpassed natural endowments and attainments Paul lists for himself prior to his regeneration total seven, the perfect number. The apostle was not exaggerating when he claimed that if anyone else had a mind to put confidence in the flesh, he had far more reason so to boast in the flesh. It was not as a result of such supposed perfection, but in spite of Saul's proud conceit over them that the Lord saved him and made him a chosen instrument to declare the Savior's name among the Gentiles. What men regard as an enviable life dressed richly in good deeds, God sees as a living death clothed in filthy rags.

Thursday, April 10th - Philippians 3: 5

Saul of Tarsus was circumcised on the eighth day after his birth. As an infant, he received the sign and seal of the covenant of God's grace at the time prescribed by God's Word (Gen 17:12). He was born of the nation of Israel, and was thus neither a Gentile nor a proselyte, joining himself later in life to the covenant nation. He was born belonging to the tribe of Benjamin, which tribe stayed loyal to Judah when the ten northern tribes of Israel rebelled. In the territory of Benjamin the temple stood, and from Benjamin came Israel's first king, Saul. Finally, the endowments of Saul of Tarsus included his being a Hebrew of Hebrews, meaning that both of his parents were Jews, not only one of them, as was the case with Timothy, whose father was a Greek (Acts 16:1). Saul could not have been endowed with higher or better natural qualities. Yet, his possession of these spiritually significant advantages did not save him from being dead in trespasses and sins, walking according to the prince of the power of the air, and being, by nature, a child of wrath (Eph. 2:1-3).

Friday, April 11th - Philippians 3: 5, 6

To the four natural endowments he possessed at birth, Paul adds his three highest religious attainments. With respect to the Law of God, Paul was Pharisee. It was the Pharisees who took the knowledge and observance of God's holy Law most seriously. Nor was Paul a common Pharisee. His zeal for the Law was such that he persecuted members of the Church of Christ, who deemed themselves saved not by their keeping of the Law, but by the gracious, atoning sacrifice of Jesus. Finally, as to Paul's performing the commandments of God, he was blameless, so far as any man could judge by observation of his outward actions. No man could be deemed more naturally deserving of God's acceptance than was Saul of Tarsus. Yet, his relative advantage over other men left him infinitely separated from God, and without hope, except by God's saving mercy. All men, even the best, have sinned and ever fall short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23).

Saturday, April 12th - Philippians 3: 7

With the contradictory but with which this verse begins, Paul intimates that something of momentous importance intervened in his life, changing the trajectory of his course while radically and permanently altering his views and values. While Saul was at the height of his spiritual pride, on course to persecute further the followers of Christ, armed with warrants for their arrest, riding openly under the sun shining in its noon-time strength, Christ encountered him and out shined with blazing glory the natural sun and all that Saul had up to that point held to be bright and precious. In the radiance of the living Christ, the

poor, powerless emptiness of natural generation and outward conformity to religious ritual was indelibly etched into Paul's heart and mind. Those who have beheld Christ by faith know that it profits them nothing to gain the whole world and lose the Savior of their souls.

Sunday, April 13th - Philippians 3: 7, 8

Paul testifies that from his encounter with the living, risen, glorified Christ, he came rightly to see and accept that what he had previously deemed his boasted advantages were really but glittering impediments to the true welfare of his soul. Thus, he counted his wrongly considered perfect endowments and attainments as being liabilities to be jettisoned from his grasp so that he might lay hold of the true treasure of the one thing necessary, the good portion that far outweighed all else, namely, Christ Jesus and salvation in Him. May Paul's testimony and reordered value system, however they may differ in the details we count as loss for us, be essentially the same as our testimony.

Monday, April 14th - Philippians 3: 7, 8

It was not only Paul's own personal advantages that he counted as loss in view of his knowing Christ, but the apostle adds that he came rightly to assess all things to be loss without Christ. Paul did not simply mentally assess, but he vitally experienced the reality that he was, despite his gilded endowments and attainments, poor, blind, wretched, and naked apart from Christ (Rev. 3:17). From there he came to the true understanding that nothing in this world or the next, nothing great, or small, nothing in itself or in combination with other things, could possibly be anything to him but loss—riches turned to rust (Jas. 5:1-3)—apart from Christ.

Tuesday, April 15th - Philippians 3: 7, 8

Paul says that he had counted what he previously regarded as gain to be loss for Christ's sake. He further states that he continued to count all things as loss in view of his growing in the grace and knowledge of Christ. The word translated, counted, comes from a verb meaning to be led (h[ghmai). By his use of this word, Paul alerts us to the fact that his assessment of the differing values between Christ and all other things resulted not from surface or outward appearance, but rather from a progressive spiritual discernment of the true nature of these things. This reckoning of all things to be loss in view of knowing Christ, cannot be understood by others receiving explanation, so much as by the experience that leads them to the same conclusion. That is why Paul prays for believers' eyes of their hearts to be opened by God, so that they might assess the treasury that is theirs in Christ (Eph. 1:18ff).

Wednesday, April 16th - Philippians 3: 7, 8

Paul did not only regard all things as loss for the sake of Christ, but he actually did lose all things for the sake of Christ. The apostle acted on his radically revised evaluation of the supreme worth of Jesus. In accordance with his calling by God (Acts 9:15,16), Paul did lose his high and respectable standing amongst the Jews and his own family. Several times he lost his freedom, being imprisoned for his preaching Christ. In 2 Cor. 11:23-33 the apostle catalogs a chilling series of afflictions he suffered for his Lord and Savior. The natural advantages of Paul were not simply placed on an altar of his willing attitude to lose them; but they were actually stripped from him, as he found his all in all being crucified with Christ (Gal. 2:20).

Thursday, April 17th - Philippians 3: 7, 8

Paul's loss was great, but his gain was greater. So infinitely greater in magnitude, quality, and quantity were the excellent and glorious blessings he received in Christ, that his great loss was considered by the apostle to be a great relief. It was as though his eyes were opened to see that what he had regarded as treasure was in reality trash, which for him to dump was no loss, but a gain of freedom from his dirty, smelly, cumbersome load. When we walk by faith, we see that there is no loss of anything in Christ but guilt, corruption, misery, and death.

Friday, April 18th - Philippians 3: 7, 8

There is only gain to be had in Christ. This is so because under the sovereign lordship of Christ Jesus, all things are made to work together for our good (Rom. 8:28). Indeed, we are told that in Christ, all things are ours, whether the world or life or death (1 Cor. 3:21-23). This means that in Christ, even our afflictions and death serve for our gain (Phil. 1:21). Furthermore, in Christ every spiritual blessing is ours in the heavenly places (Eph. 1:3), while all of God's promises are to us in Christ yes and amen (2 Cor. 1:20). The only thing we lose in Christ is rubbish. All that is of true value, all that our child's mistake fancies as lost, our Lord has stored for us at home.

Saturday, April 19th - Philippians 3: 7, 8

Paul gained the surpassing value of knowing Christ. What he gained exceeded any valuation. It was infinitely precious. He gained the knowledge of God in Christ, whom to

know is eternal life (Jn. 17:3). He gained the holy and loving beauties of Christ's glorious person. He gained the soul securing, rest giving, joy inspiring perfection of Christ's saving work. All who know Christ have gained that which is of surpassing value.

Sunday, April 20th - Philippians 3: 7, 8

Paul gained Christ and lost all the rubbish of his life. The same choice is ours. We may have our rubbish or we may have the glorious Redeemer of our souls. We cannot have both. To which are we cleaving this day?

Monday, April 21st - Philippians 3: 9

Paul hungers and thirsts not only that he might possess Christ, but also that Christ would possess him, owning the apostle as one of His beloved, redeemed people. Those so owned by the Savior cannot rely on their own supposed righteousness. They cannot regard themselves as worthy of salvation because of their birth or associations, or zealous service, or accomplishments. Those found by God to be truly in Christ have removed the filthy rags of their self-righteousness and have, by faith, appropriated to themselves the perfect righteousness of Jesus (Rom. 13:14). The only righteousness those found in Christ can possess and should desire is that perfect righteousness provided by the grace of God and received by the sinner through his exercise of faith.

Tuesday, April 22nd - Philippians 3: 8, 9

Paul employs the subjunctive mood in v.9. It is the mood not of reality but of potential. He says that he has actually counted all worldly benefits as loss in order that he might gain the potential of his being found by God in Christ. This is not to cast Paul's assurance of salvation and his security in Christ into doubt. It rather is a precise and true statement of the condition of all believers on their pilgrimage through this life. By God's certain election, sovereign regeneration, and Spirit-empowered perseverance, all true believers will endure to the end in Christ. The God who keeps us from stumbling and makes us stand in the presence of His glory blameless and with great joy (Jud. 24), does so through a faith that undergoes many trials and refining tests (1 Pet. 1:5-7). Paul had attained such high position amongst men that he could have coasted, complacently having men's respect for the rest of his life. He traded that possession for the potential that would be actualized by his working out his salvation with fear and trembling (Phil. 2:12,13), living each moment of each day as he aspired to live for all eternity, namely, not being apart from Christ, but in Him.

Wednesday, April 23rd - Philippians 3: 9, 10

When Paul speaks of his being found in Christ, he means his standing and serving and being accepted and commended by God on the final day, would not be on the basis of who he was and what he did, but rather on the basis of the righteous character and atoning work of his Savior. As wonderful as such justification by faith is, whereby a sinner is accounted by God to be as righteous as Jesus, such is not all the apostle has gained in Christ. Paul longs not only to be found in Christ as a result of Christ's justifying work; he also longs to know Christ as the Lover of his soul. We should understand from this that Christ is not only the means of our salvation, but that our salvation has been wrought by Christ as the means whereby we have holy, loving, ever deepening communion with Christ. Our knowing Christ is what powerfully sweetens all that we experience, whether we triumph in resurrection or are thrust down in painful and cruel death. Fellowship with Christ makes any fiery furnace to be a garden of paradise.

Thursday, April 24th - Philippians 3: 10

Our knowing Christ is not a means to some higher end. It is an end in itself, the height and goal of salvation. Our knowing Christ is not a means to our being better citizens, workers, students, family members, though all of these things occur when we truly know the Savior. Christ is not the first among other priorities; He is the sole priority for the redeemed. He Himself has said so (Lk. 9:23-25; 10:38-42; 14:25-27). It is infinitely better that we die alone for and with Christ, than that we live having health, wealth, family, and friends without Him.

Friday, April 25th - Philippians 3: 10

To know Christ is to know both His person and His work. It is to know the benefits and blessings of Christ's being and of His atoning accomplishments. Thus, Paul says that he hungers and thirsts both to know Christ and to know the power of His resurrection. The apostle aspires for more than an intellectual awareness of the fact of the resurrection of Jesus. The post-resurrection appearances of Jesus convinced the disciples of the fact of Christ's having been raised from the dead. But it was not until Pentecost that they themselves experienced a taste of the power of His resurrection. By his faith in Christ, Paul also laid hold of the power of God manifested when He raised Jesus from the dead. The apostle refers to this in his Ephesian epistle as *the surpassing greatness of His power...in accordance with the working of the strength of His might* (Eph. 1:18-21). We behold God's great power in creation, wherein He called all things into being from nothing. We behold the surpassing greatness of God's power in Christ's resurrection, wherein He raised His Son from death to everlasting life. We who know the power of

Christ's resurrection have vital and sure hope in our God who can transform the worst things, such as a tortured death, into triumphant glory.

Saturday, April 26th - Philippians 3: 10

As fallen man feared God and sought to flee and hide from Him, so the sinner fears and denies the certain reality of his death. He also dreads and seeks perpetual escape from suffering, the precursor to death. When a man knows Christ by a justifying faith, he rests and relies with all of his soul upon the One who has triumphed over death and vanquished its sting (Rev. 1;18; 1 Cor. 15:55-57). We can face and make sanctifying sense of our sufferings only when we do so through the power of Christ's resurrection. For when we by faith look to the resurrected Savior, we find that He transforms our sufferings into a fellowship with Him in His sufferings. Thus do we, as did Daniel's friends in their fiery furnace, experience in our sufferings a holy communion with the One by whose sufferings we have been saved, by whose wounds we are healed.

Sunday, April 27th - Philippians 3: 10

Paul desires to know Christ not only in the triumph of His resurrection, but also in the exquisite agonies of His sufferings and death. This is so because the crown of the resurrection comes only through the cross of Christ. Our Lord died, not so that we might avoid suffering and death, but so that we might have fellowship with Him in them, and attain a glorious and eternal reign with Him through them (Rev. 21:3,4; 22:4,5).

Monday, April 28th - Philippians 3: 10, 11

Those who know Christ are enabled to suffer and even to die safely. For God has, in Christ, made all things to serve for our good (Rom. 8:28). Our sufferings serve to strengthen our fellowship with our Savior, resulting not in our injury, but rather in our sanctification. Our death has no power to bind us in corruption (Ps. 16:10,11), but is made to serve as a portal through which we gain perfected fellowship with our resurrected and glorious Redeemer (Phil. 1:21-23).

Tuesday, April 29th - Philippians 3: 10, 11

Those conformed to Christ's sufferings are infinitely blessed (Mt. 5:10-12). Those conformed to Christ's death do no more go down into corruption than did their glorious Savior (Ps. 16:10). In fact, those who are conformed to the death of Jesus are comforted, rather than cursed. They attain to the resurrection from the dead themselves, even as He was raised up on the third day, never to die again (Rom. 6:9). By his faith in Christ, Paul knew that he had sure hope of the crown of glory through his own death because of the decisively delivering death of Christ.

Wednesday, April 30th - Philippians 3: 12

By faith in Christ, Paul rightly reckoned that he would attain the resurrection from the dead. By his faith in Christ, Paul rightly reckoned that the most dark and painful experiences, such as suffering and death, would be used by God to bring him into deeper and more vital communion with his Savior. By faith, Paul had, as every believer in Christ has, all of these treasures held securely in a sure hope (Rom. 8:24, 25). Yet, the best is always yet to be for the believer. Paul lived, moved, served, suffered, and had his being in anticipation of his possession of that for which he hoped and hungered in Christ. The apostle testifies that he simply could not get too close to or have too much of Christ. He hungers and thirsts to embrace Christ in His triumph and trials. His walk by such a pursuing faith was a process destined to perfect fruition when Paul would see the face of His saving, resurrecting Lord, and no longer behold Him as through a glass darkly.

Thursday, May 1st - Philippians 3: 12

Paul testifies how he zealously pursued Christ, hungering for Him as though He were more sustaining than food, which He is; and thirsting for Him as though He were more refreshing and vital than water, which He is. True faith in Christ is never complacent, but ever presses onward and upward to a deeper knowledge and experience of the Savior. Faith makes us grateful for the tokens and pledges of Christ, but also drives us to pursue nothing less than the perfect and permanent possession of the glorious Lord of salvation.

Friday, May 2nd - Philippians 3: 12

The apostle zealously and with single-minded focus and energy pursued perfect conformity to and communion with Christ. The zeal of his pious pursuit was prophetic of his glorious attainment of all for which he hungered and thirsted. This was so for Paul and is so for every believer in Christ because the driving energy for this holy pursuit comes not from the pursuer, but rather is supplied by the Christ who is pursued. Our Savior stimulates that holy hunger which He fully intends perfectly to satisfy (Mt. 5:6; 6:33).

Saturday, May 3rd - Philippians 3: 12, 13

Paul was not a perfectionist. He confesses that he had neither attained perfect knowledge of Christ nor perfect conformity to His suffering and death. And though the apostle was a new creature in Christ, having been raised up spiritually from his death in sin and trespasses (Eph. 2:1-6), he certainly had not attained to the perfect and glorious resurrection from the dead. Yet, Paul pressed on to that perfection for which he was surely destined by God in Christ. He pressed on through battles with his own residual sin and with Satan's temptations and accusations (Rom. 7:21-25). Our not yet being perfect is no cause for our complacency, but rather should spur us on to a continual pursuit of that perfection for which our Lord savingly laid hold of us.

Sunday, May 4th - Philippians 3: 12, 13

The pursuit of our perfection in Christ is exemplified by Paul. It is to be a pursuit of intense focus and complete commitment. Hence, Paul says that he aims at and endeavors after one thing. The disciple of Christ is not to be distracted by the multifarious enticements and intimidations of the world, flesh, and devil. Rather, we are to choose and utterly commit ourselves to the one thing necessary, the good portion which will never be taken from us, but which will carry us from grace to glory (Lk. 10:38-42).

Monday, May 5th - Philippians 3: 13, 14

Paul confesses that he has not attained perfect apprehension of Christ in His person and work. Yet, far from this imperfection discouraging the apostle, he is spurred on to higher commitment and more consistent endeavor to know and be conformed to Christ. Negatively, this involves a determined effort on the part of Paul not to be consumed with thoughts and regrets over his own sin and imperfect obedience. He forgets what lies behind him, not brooding over his past, because he rightly reasoned that what he had confessed to his God had been forgiven by His God (1 Jn. 1:9), and forgotten by Him as well (Is. 54:4; Jer. 31:34). It is not only our sin, which can so easily entangle us, (Heb. 12:1) that retards our progress in grace. Our recollection of those things our God has buried in the sea of His forgetfulness also serves to impede sanctification in our lives. It is not our holy God, but rather the accusing enemy of our souls who would have us bear the chilling shadow of our sin's remembrance, if not the killing burden of its substance.

Tuesday, May 6th - Philippians 3: 13, 14

Paul does not forget all things he has experienced. He did not forget sanctifying lessons he had learned, nor does he commend that we forget the precious lessons we have learned about ourselves and our God. The apostle did not forget the manifold mercies of the Lord. He constantly remembered the great and precious divine promises and provision. But Paul did forget his sins, his imperfections, and his failures. He neither dwelt upon nor used as excuses for current failures the imperfections of his endowments (e.g., bad parents, bad upbringing), or the imperfections of his attainments (e.g., his having persecuted Christians). Paul also forgot his past successes to the extent that they would automatically assure him of current success and fill him with presumption. Instead, he ever remembered the Lord, and looked for His new mercies each day to cover his sins and empower him in fruitful service.

Wednesday, May 7th - Philippians 3: 13, 14

When Paul writes that he forgets what lies behind, he does not mean merely that he obliterates certain things from his mind. The apostle is not confessing that he practiced psychological repression and denial. Rather, he refused to regard his past sins, failures, and even successes as though they had potency or influence upon his current situation. His refusal was an act of faith—of trusting reliance upon His Savior—wherein the apostle deemed past sins to have been accounted and paid for by the atoning blood of Christ, and past successes to be but tokens and pledges, and not the fullness, of the best things yet to be granted to him by his loving Lord.

Thursday, May 8th - Philippians 3: 13, 14

Paul did not only forget past things that would threaten his communion with and service for Christ, but he positively pressed on to become what he was destined to be and to possess what he was destined to attain in Christ. The words, *press on*, have the connotation of a hunter pursuing his game, or an athlete running his race (Heb. 12:1-3). The apostle does not say that he was borne along, or that he glided along. The act of pressing on implies concentrated and disciplined effort. The believer must exert himself, not only hungering and thirsting for his perfection in righteousness, but also striving with all of the energies of his new nature, and according to the directives and incentives of God's Word and by the means of God's grace, to make progress in his sanctification. The casual and indolent believer will be the spiritually impoverished believer.

Friday, May 9th - Philippians 3: 14

Paul's race was being run not as a quest undertaken by his own initiative and pursued in his own strength. He was responding to the call of God in Christ. It was the effectual call of the God of salvation that gave Paul new life, new priorities, a new direction, and willingness and ability to pursue and possess what God had promised. As Jesus demonstrated with Lazarus, when the voice of God summons a man to come forth from his death, that man is made to hear and obey the divine call.

Saturday, May 10th - Philippians 3: 14

The direction and focus of Paul's life were singular. He eyed and pressed toward the goal, not of his own desire or choosing, but of God's providing. That goal is neither vile nor vain. It contains a prize of inconceivable value (1 Cor. 2:9). The goal is upward, meaning that it is exalted in nature, lifting those who attain it to eternal glory and co-regency with Christ (Rev. 22:5). Added to these exalted incentives we have the designation of surpassing value in v.8. In contrast, life without Christ is defined as loss and rubbish (vv.7,8). It is no wonder, then, that Paul pressed on each day, leaving behind the rubbish and nearing his possession of the rich, heavenly reward of God in Christ.

Sunday, May 11th - Philippians 3: 15, 16

Paul was not giving his testimony of the radical change which had taken place in his priorities as a rare example of Christian experience. His treasuring Christ, his longing to know the Savior, to be conformed to His death, and to press on until he possessed the perfect fruition of his faith in Christ were not facets unique to the apostle's working out of his salvation. All who are perfect in Christ run this same race that is set before them by God. In his pressing on perfectly to possess Christ and the fullness of His blessings, the apostle follows in the footsteps of Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—indeed of a great cloud of witnesses (Heb. 11:1-12:2)—and he is followed by a countless multitude of those who have been made alive by God in Christ from the days of Paul to and beyond our own day. Surely we do not want to be out of step with this company captivated by God's grace and destined to glory.

Monday, May 12th - Philippians 3: 15, 16

Paul admitted in v.12 that he was not *perfect*. Now in v.15 he refers to those who are *perfect*. The same word in these verses is used in differing senses. The perfection of v.12 refers to the final sinlessness and glorification of the believer. The perfection of v.15 refers to that degree of spiritual maturity attained amongst members of the Church militant whereby they have and maintain a true spiritual perspective. Such mature ones discern and accept the patterns and seasons of ups and downs in their pilgrimage toward perfect sanctification and eternal glory. They still may stumble, but they are neither diverted nor thrown off their stride by the enticements and intimidations of the world, flesh, and devil. Those having attained such spiritual maturity run their race with increasing zest and alacrity. Their hatred for the husks of this world and their hunger for the delights of heaven grow stronger with each step of advancement in their race. In this sense, the perfect realize their imperfection, and they press on to possess their perfect conformity to and communion with Christ.

Tuesday, May 13th - Philippians 3: 15, 16

The spiritually mature are committed to their making ever greater progress in their sanctification. However, they realize from their own experience and from the testimony of God's Word that spiritual growth is neither instantaneous nor uniform in the pace of its process. The spiritually mature, therefore, exercise patience with their brethren who may press on at a slower pace than that maintained by the mature. The mature realize that sanctification results from what God reveals and imparts, not from what the impatient demand. The mature, while they are most committed to a zealous pursuit of the high calling of God in Christ, are also the ones least threatening, and most patiently sympathetic with regard to their less mature and more slowly growing brethren.

Wednesday, May 14th - Philippians 3: 15, 16

The mature in Christ should be committed not to leaving their less mature brethren behind them, but to helping them carry on in their progress toward the celestial city, maintaining, if not quickening, their pace. The less mature should be equally committed to following the loving encouragements of the more mature. Accordingly, we, as a great army of saints, form a line, or a column, which is the military formation designed for the most rapid movement of all the soldiers composing it. Thusly ordered, we grow together in the grace and knowledge of Christ, until we proceed from grace to glory.

Thursday, May 15th - Philippians 3: 17, 18

Paul has been urging his readers to rejoice in the Lord (3:1), and to beware of counterfeit teachers and teaching (v.2). In v.3, the apostle defined the true worshippers of God, and in vv.4-14, he gave himself as an example of such a worshipper, who puts no confidence in his natural endowments and attainments, but rather presses on to that perfection found only in the glorious consummation of Christ's marriage to His bride, the Church. In our current verses, Paul issues an invitation for his readers to follow his

example. He literally calls them to imitate his attitude and actions as he prized and pursued Christ above all things. The faith is not only to be heard but also seen in the lives of those proclaiming it. The faith was seen in Paul, as the Word became flesh in his renewed life.

Friday, May 16th - Philippians 3: 17, 18

The faith that is seen in a living, spiritually mature man such as Paul invites more than observation by others. It calls men to join in the race from this world to the celestial city. That people know the true and saving principles of God's Word is necessary, but it is not enough to save and sanctify those people. No man is saved by his knowing the truth. The devils know the truth, but are not saved by it (Jas. 2:19). It is our possessing Christ by faith, resulting in our living out the principles of truth, which saves us. It is much harder for us to follow a concrete example and to become ourselves concrete Christians than it is to talk about principles and project an image of spirituality. But the hard way of living out the faith is infinitely more rewarding. We have the pattern of such living inviting our imitation. The original pattern is Jesus, the derived pattern is found in Paul, the other apostles, and the many who think, speak, act, and progress according to apostolic teaching and living.

Saturday, May 17th - Philippians 3: 17, 18

In these verses, Paul continues to paint the contrast between true citizens of heaven and counterfeits. He holds up the pattern of faith and life belonging to heavenly citizens, then cautions his readers with respect to the sad reality that many who profess Christ do not possess Christ. The tares in the Church in any age are not few. The apostle draws our attention not to the talk of such false professors, but to their walk. In this, he follows the lead of Jesus, who tells us that it is by men's fruit—their practical actions—that we know their true character and allegiance (Mt. 7:16ff).

Sunday, May 18th - Philippians 3: 18, 19

Paul's warning comes with weeping. He is not hyper-critical or proudly judgmental when he points out the counterfeit believers. Rather, he speaks from a broken heart. The apostle grieves over the loss the counterfeits will experience. They who are enemies of the Savior's atoning death on the cross, exalt their personal tastes as gods, and vainly try to fill themselves with the things of this cursed earth. They take pride in what true Christians would find shameful. The end of such false and futile living is destruction. Well might the apostle, who by God's mercy had exchanged rubbish for the prize of surpassing value, sin for righteousness, and death for life, weep over those who persisted in feeding on husks that could neither fill them in time nor save them in eternity.

Monday, May 19th - Philippians 3: 18, 19

Paul weeps over those who are enemies of the cross because of the dishonor to Christ occasioned by their rejection of His atoning work. What such enemies reject is the

saving work Jesus did on the cross as well as the sanctifying work their own cross bearing would accomplish in them. Paul says that the rejection of the cross may be rightly judged not by the talk of men. Many piously call out; *Lord, Lord*, who are workers of lawlessness (Mt. 7:21-23). Rather, Paul declares that such men are known by their walk. By the fruit of men's deeds we know what they truly think of the doctrine of salvation.

Tuesday, May 20th - Philippians 3: 18, 19

The apostle gives several examples of how men practically manifest their hostility toward the cross of Christ. He says first that their god is their belly. By this we should understand that enemies of the cross refuse to bear their own cross, as is required of disciples of Christ (Lk. 14:27). They practice no self-denial; they do not mortify their lusts, but rather take every occasion to indulge their every appetite and whim. They ever take the easy way, not the true way, and they make their wants to be supreme over their worship of the true God. Secondly, Paul says that enemies of the cross glory in their shame. They seek to glorify their sins and failures by their wallowing in them. They will claim victim status for themselves rather than magnify the grace and power of Christ to transform their lives and free them from sin's bondage. They exalt carnality and complacency and heap reproach upon those endeavoring to live crucified lives in obedience to Christ.

Wednesday, May 21st - Philippians 3: 18, 19

Paul gives in these verses further practical manifestations of those who are enemies of the cross of Christ. He says that they set their minds on earthly things. They may say that they care that Christ ever lives to make intercession for His people, but their priorities indicated that they actually care more for the applause of men and the accumulation of the things of this perishing world. They care more for their worldly advancement than they do for their own progress in sanctification, for which Christ prays for his people (Jn. 17:17), with the answer to that prayer often involving our bearing trials, afflictions, and loss of earthly things. They are absorbed in worldly affairs, while they neglect heavenly realities. This way of living may seem right and reasonable to them, but the apostle declares that its end is destruction. The course of cross haters is self-destructive at its conclusion and unsatisfying all along its way.

Thursday, May 22nd - Philippians 3: 20, 21

In contrast to the counterfeit believers, Paul speaks of the heavenly citizenship of true believers. By the term, citizenship, Paul means that believers have a rightful place in a legitimate and orderly society. They are not part of a carnal conspiracy of rebellious counterfeit saints. They have blessed privileges and responsibilities, their fulfilling of which leads to mutual edification with their brethren and common blessedness and spiritual enrichment. Their citizenship is not in this world, and hence believers set their minds and affections on the celestial city, whose architect and builder is God (Heb. 11:10). If we are not enemies of the cross of Christ, we then have been crucified with

Christ. Accordingly, we should seek the things above where Christ is and where our lives are hidden with Christ in God (Col.3:1-4). Our citizenship could not be in a safer, more glorious place.

Friday, May 23rd - Philippians 3: 20, 21

The place of our citizenship fills us with exalted delight because of the divine Person who reigns sovereignly over that place. In heaven is our glorious Head, our loving Savior, our sovereign Lord. For Him we hunger and thirst. For His nearer and perfect fellowship we are eager with delightful and energetic anticipation. For Him we wait with trusting patience and contentment. We cry ardently for our heavenly Bridegroom to come for us quickly (Rev. 22:17-21), yet with gratitude and confidence in His perfect wisdom and ways, we occupy ourselves, working for His glory and for the good of men as we await His coming. Such productive patience makes the heavenly minded to be of most, not least, earthly good.

Saturday, May 24th - Philippians 3: 20, 21

Our priority is to share the fellowship of Christ's sufferings and to be conformed to His death (v.10). Such commitment to self-mortification is what enemies of the cross hate and dread. Yet, the priority of our Savior is our vivification, or our being raised and transformed. As we make it our business to descend into conformity with His humiliation and death, He makes it His business to raise us to the height of His own exaltation (Jn. 17:22-24). Our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, will change the momentary, light afflictions of our humiliation for His sake into an eternal weight of glory, when He owns us before His Father and the entire universe, commends us for our service, and bids us enter into His glory and joy forever (Mt. 25:31-40; 2 Cor. 4:16-18; Rev. 21:1-7; 22:1-5). Counterfeit believers have no claim or part in all of that.

Sunday, May 25th - Philippians 3: 20, 21

We not only have our citizenship in heaven, but our characters are now, by the sanctifying work of God's Holy Spirit, being transformed to fit into that glorious place. It may at times appear to us and to others that the process of sanctification has not made much progress in conforming us to the likeness of Christ. However, at our Lord's return, we shall be changed in an instant (1 Cor. 15:50-58), being glorified and made into a perfect likeness of our glorious Redeemer. However poor our progress toward that glorious likeness may be now, its perfection is certain since it depends on the exertion of the omnipotence of our Lord, to whom all power and authority to subject all things to Himself have been given (Mt. 28:18-20).

Monday, May 26th - Philippians 4: 1

Paul has exhorted his readers to rejoice in the Lord (3:1), and to beware of counterfeit Christians (3:2). Now in this opening verse of the final chapter of this letter, the apostle exhorts us to stand firm in the Lord. Our standing firm in the Lord is the nourishing root and immovable foundation for the fruit of our rejoicing and spiritual discernment. We should also note the connection between our firm stand and our vital grasp of our heavenly citizenship (3:20,21). When we are properly heavenly minded, we are of most earthly good. When our affections are set on the Christ of heaven and His sovereign power, and when we know that He will perfect us in glory at His coming, we are most enabled to stand and serve effectively in this world, even in the evil days (Eph. 6:10ff).

Tuesday, May 27th - Philippians 4: 1

Our firmly standing in the Lord is not a matter of grim necessity and joyless duty. Paul twice uses the blessed term of endearment, *beloved*, in this verse to indicate that his exhortation issues from warmest love and directs his readers to the Lord who is Himself love. The love we find in Christ is not mere soft sentiment, but is strong and sweet. The love of Christ for us, ministered to us through His servants, such as the apostle Paul, is as strong as death and full of sweet delight (Song of Sol. 2:3; 8:6).

Wednesday, May 28th - Philippians 4: 1

Paul designates his beloved Philippians as his joy and crown. They are pleasing and precious to him, adorning his head with honor. By these designations the apostle is not flattering his readers, but rather encouraging them to realize how highly and lovingly he esteems them. Sin promises us that we shall be as God, but brings us only guilt, shame, and low esteem. In such miserable desperation we fall easy prey to the devil and to wicked, wayward men. When we recall how greatly loved we are by our Lord and by His people, who are the majestic ones of the earth (Ps. 16:3), we are both encouraged and empowered to stand in the Lord who has redeemed us from the mire to make us His own crowning joy.

Thursday, May 29th - Philippians 4: 1, 2

The personal and practical dimension of good theology becomes evident in the urging Paul adds to his exhortation. Our stand in the Lord is not an independent affair. We stand united with one mind in Christ (2:2,5). Jesus draws us not only to God, but also to all of those who are redeemed members of His body. Hence, Paul urges two ladies in the Philippian church—who obviously were in a strained, if not unreconciled, relation to each other—to replace the discord that separated them with harmony that would unite them in Christ. Syntyche and Euodia are urged to live in harmony, not just occasionally to be civil to one another. They are to make harmony between them to be vital, regular, constant, and sincere, as life itself. Such harmony begins and is sustained by the reckoning of faith, not by the flighty dictates of feelings. Accordingly, Paul adds the nature and means of such harmony when he says literally that they are to be of the same mind in the Lord. Harmonious feelings and actions would issue from attitudes fixed on the Lord. When we focus on each other apart from Christ we see much to displease us.

When we focus on each other through God's beloved Son, we see everything to please us. Those rightly reconciled to the Lord cannot remain unreconciled with their brethren (1 Jn. 4:20, 21).

Friday, May 30th - Philippians 4: 2

When Paul urges Euodia and Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord, he commends them to a course of certain success. We do not know what issue or issues were causing friction between those sisters, nor do we know how deeply and repeatedly they had hurt each other. The nature and number of their wounds do not matter. Their healing and harmony are to be found in the Lord, which is to say, according to His Word and by His power. It is a needless shame for Christians to live as defeated victims of the sinful wounds they have given and received, instead of their looking to the healing power of their victorious great Physician.

Saturday, May 31st - Philippians 4: 2, 3

In v.3, we learn that the women Paul urges to harmonious living were not new and untried believers. They were tried and true servants of Christ who shared the struggles of Paul and of others less than Paul, like Clement, and the rest of the apostle's fellow-workers in Christ. Were these women with Lydia at the place of prayer where Paul first shared the gospel in Philippi (Acts 16:11-15)? Whether they were charter members of the church at Philippi or later additions, it is evident that they were prominent and fruitful members of the fellowship there. Satan aims as high as he can, targeting the leaders of Christ's Church with his flaming darts. Even the spiritually mature and accomplished—indeed, especially such spiritual leaders—need to be on guard, constantly putting on the Lord Jesus Christ and making no provision for the flesh. Their failure to do so affects not only themselves, but many others as well.

Sunday, June 1st - Philippians 4: 2, 3

Paul asks a certain *true comrade* to help the estranged sisters to effect reconciliation and harmonious living. The commentator, Lenski, maintains that the word translated *comrade*, or *fellow-yokeman*, is a proper name, Syzygus. The important thing is not that we identify this person, but that we realize from Paul's instruction that the working of reconciliation and the healing of wounded relationships in the church is not a private matter or one that is properly contained only between the parties at issue. Divisions and discord in the body of Christ adversely affect the whole body, and consequently call for the prayers of the members of the body and the facilitating assistance of those who, by their loving assistance, can help reestablish a yoking together of estranged servants of the Lord.

Monday, June 2nd - Philippians 4: 4

In the place of embittering rancor amongst members of the Philippian church, Paul would have his beloved children in the faith to experience joy in the Lord. Once more,

the apostle directs the focus of believers away from each other's faults and from their own wounds to the glorious sufficiency of the Lord. We expect too readily to find our joy in circumstances and human relationships that please us. Such misplaced expectation ever disappoints and embitters those maintaining it. However, when we rivet our hopes and expectation to the Lord, we shall never be disappointed, nor shall we be hurt and embittered (1 Pet. 2:6). Our standing firm in the Lord (v.1) leads to our living harmoniously with our brethren in the Lord (v.2), which, in turn, produces the abundant fruit of joy in the Lord.

Tuesday, June 3rd - Philippians 4: 5

Our finding our joy in the Lord, and not putting the hopeless pressure on others to produce our joy, is one way in which we can live harmoniously with our brethren. In this verse, Paul gives us another way, not to replace our rejoicing in the Lord, but to enhance it. He commends to his readers the cultivation of a forbearing spirit. Forbearance is a spiritual grace that enables us to maintain an attitude of charity and mercy toward others, even as they manifest their faults and failings. When others offend us and fail or refuse to ask our forgiveness, it is by forbearance that we exercise a principled patience, looking to the Lord, not to our own words or retaliatory actions, to bring those who have offended us to a state of conviction issuing in their repentance. Our incentive for practicing forbearance is our knowledge that the Lord is near. He, too, practices forbearing patience that leads men to repentance (Rom. 2:4).

Wednesday, June 4th - Philippians 4: 6, 7

In addition to our standing in the Lord and rejoicing in the Lord, another blessed discipline whereby we are enabled to maintain personal security and vibrant harmony with our brethren is our prayerful communication with the Lord. Men can wound us, but they cannot heal us. Only our Lord can heal and help us, giving us peace, making us more secure in Him and less demanding of others. Words directed to our God in prayer save us from expending bitter words against men. Prayer makes us more patient with other's failings, because we, having asked our Lord to deal effectively with those failings, learn to wait in hope for His answer.

Thursday, June 5th - Philippians 4: 4: 6

The practical strength of our religion can be seen in the absolute terms Paul uses to describe the securing effect our praying should have on us. We are to be anxious for *nothing* when we commit all things to our God in prayer. There is nothing in heaven or earth, nothing too big or too small, nothing too difficult, nothing in things seen or unseen, in time or eternity that our God cannot dispose of for our good according to His perfect wisdom, love, and power. Our believing prayer to this God vanquishes all of our fears. That is why we are never told in Scripture to fear anything but God. Prayer also vanquishes the milder but more pervasive form of fear, namely, anxiety. If we have any anxiety we have not prayed as we ought.

Friday, June 6th - Philippians 4: 6

The complete vanquishing of anxiety results from our total commitment of all things to our Lord in prayer. It should be no heavy burden to us that we are called to saturate everything in our lives in prayer. The sore and heavy burdens result from our not committing all things to our God in prayer. By prayer, we cast all cares and concerns upon the Lord, who deals with each matter we commit to Him with perfect mastery. He not only receives and deals with the burdens we cast upon Him, but He cares for us more than He cares for those burdens we entrust to Him (1 Pet. 5: 7).

Saturday, June 7th - Philippians 4: 6

Paul specifies prayer in this verse. The general term, prayer, includes all forms of prayer, such as adoration, praise, and intercession. But specifically the apostle mentions supplication and thanksgiving as forms of prayer especially well suited to vanquish our fears and foster our security. By supplication, we humbly let our own requests be made known to God. Our security in this comes from our knowing that however God answers our requests—by delay, denial, or by granting what we ask—the divine answer serves best for our good. Thanksgiving completes the circuit of prayer. We often wrongly think that our asking and the Lord's answering make a complete circuit. Yet, our grateful acknowledgement of the Lord's answer to our prayers sets the stage for further asking on our part and answering on God's part. Our Lord will not reward our presumption and ingratitude with anything but His silence and righteous refusal to hear or heed what we ask in future.

Sunday, June 8th - Philippians 4: 6

In prayer, our requests are made known to God. We do not, therefore, rely upon men as individuals or in social or civic combinations for our safety and security. The God we ask knows better what we need than we ourselves know our need. The God we ask is omniscient to know our need, omnipotent to supply our need, and perfectly wise and unchangeably loving to answer our request far above what we ask and think. How can anything other than secure serenity and overflowing gratitude fill our hearts and minds when we ask the King of heaven to supply our earthly needs?

Monday, June 9th - Philippians 4: 6, 7

Our prayers receive answers from God that are obvious to us only some of the time. When the Lord answers our prayers with delay or denial or in a form totally unexpected by us, we may not for a time perceive His answer. But the peace of God, though we may not directly ask for it, always fills us when we pray. For when we pray we may confidently trust that we have delivered our requests into the most powerful hands that move in response to the wisest mind and most loving heart.

Tuesday, June 10th - Philippians 4: 6, 7

The peace of God is the fruit issuing from all prayer. It comes to us even before we have the answer to our prayers, for as we maintain prayerful communion with our gracious and mighty God, we cannot hold on to our fears or anxieties. This peace is not the objective peace of reconciliation wrought by our justifying faith in Christ, although it is based on that objective rock. It is rather the sensing of our security and felicity, of our safety and highest welfare, as we place our cares and ourselves into the caring hands of our God. It arises as a result of our trusting submission to our wise, holy, and loving God, and is not based upon the presumption that all of our Lord's answers to our requests will be in the affirmative. When we give our requests to God, we yield the outcome to Him, and that always brings us relief and rejoicing.

Wednesday, June 11th - Philippians 4: 6, 7

The peace of God is not peace as the world gives. The relief and serenity of the wicked depend upon the circumstances of the wicked falling out in a way that pleases them. Thus, the world offers only delusive, evasive, or, at best, fleeting peace. The peace our Lord offers us is His peace (Jn. 14:27; 16:33), that issues from His sovereign authority and victorious power over all things. This peace can fill us amidst circumstances that are most adverse, for it depends on the wisdom, love, and power of our God, who is above all circumstances, and governs them all for our good.

Thursday, June 12th - Philippians 4: 6, 7

The peace of God is no poor consolation. It is deeper, fuller, and more empowering than we would expect. That is why Paul says that it passes understanding. It is understandable that if a man were arrested, beaten, thrown into a dungeon, and placed in stocks, he would be filled with agitation and bitterness. But when such a man prays and sings praises to God in that kind of situation, he is drawing on a power that passes understanding, and trusting in One who can rend the earth in order to release that man from his prison. Paul knew, from his experience with Silas when they first came to Philippi, how potent the peace of God truly was and ever would be (Acts 16:19-26).

Friday, June 13th - Philippians 4: 6, 7

The peace of God is not a vague wash of feelings. It is a sturdy sentinel that guards our emotions, our intellect, indeed, all of our vital systems and capacities. This entirely guarding peace is in and issues from Christ Jesus. If doubtful or alarming thoughts arise to cause us anxiety, we pray and petition God in Christ's name, while God answers us by riveting our minds upon the saving love He has demonstrated for us in Christ. If our hearts fail us and fears spread their gloom through our souls, the peace we have with God in Christ fills us with joyful exaltation (Rom. 5:3-5). The peace of God sustains us when we are under assault, because Christ Jesus has overcome any and all assaults that could come against us (Jn. 16:33; Rom. 8:31ff).

Saturday, June 14th - Philippians 4: 6, 7

The peace of God is tied to the person of God. It comes to us only from the God of peace (v.9), and is contained only in Christ Jesus. God keeps the one whose mind is stayed upon Him in perfect peace, because such a one trusts neither in salubrious circumstances nor in the help of man, but he trusts in the living Lord of heaven and earth (Is. 26:3).

Sunday, June 15th - Philippians 4: 8

In addition to his telling believers that they should pray (vv.6,7), the apostle also tells them what they should ponder. The mind fixed on Christ Jesus will not be blind to, but rather made vividly aware of the excellencies and virtues contained in Christ and reflected in the world He has made and upholds by His power. The point of Paul's instruction in this verse is the right feeding of our minds, or the sanctifying employment of our thought process. Our minds are not made so that we let them wander. Nor are we to allow our thoughts to be distracted and dissipated by every notion that might strike our awareness. We are to ponder virtuous things that will ennoble us, and, by implication, refuse to ponder vile things that will degrade us.

Monday, June 16th - Philippians 4: 8

The virtue heading the list of things the godly should ponder is truth. We all fell into sin by the serpent's deception of our first mother, Eve. The Christian's great enemy, the devil, is a liar and a murderer (Jn. 8:44). In greatest contrast, we are saved by Christ, who is the truth (Jn. 14:6). We are sanctified in God's Word, which is truth (Jn. 17:17). We should love the truth and love people who are true. All that is true is as it appears, for the truth does not mislead by false appearances. The truth is trustworthy and sanctifying. We should value the truth so much that we take the time and go to the trouble to test all things to ascertain what is true in distinction from what only pretends to be true (1 Jn. 4:1ff). If we feed upon those things that are true, we shall ourselves become true and trustworthy, having a holy integrity that honors God—the giver and preserver of our integrity—and benefits man—who is blessed by our speaking the truth in love.

Tuesday, June 17th - Philippians 4: 8

Things that are honorable are to be pondered by the godly. Honorable things such as godly deeds and honorable people are to be to us standards and examples. That which is honorable is elevated and dignified, and is the antithesis of all that is low and vulgar. Honorable deeds and those doing them have the will, authority, and glory of someone higher than themselves ever in mind, guiding their thinking, speaking, and acting, and rewarding them by bestowing lasting honor upon them. The dishonorable have minds set no higher than their own impure passions and are a disgrace to themselves and disgusting to others.

Wednesday, June 18th - Philippians 4: 8

That which is right may at first glance appear the same as that which is true. However, while these virtues are closely related, issuing from a single divine source, they can be distinguished. There is in particular a moral and ethical dimension contained in the concept of right. Also, actions that attend and conform to a moral and ethical standard are described as being right, as opposed to being wrong. A person *is* true and speaks the truth, but what he *does* is right, if he is motivated by the righteous God of heaven. That which is right is the truth being lived out in deeds. We should ponder all that is true and right so that we might produce our own true attitudes and right actions by the grace and enabling of the Lord.

Thursday, June 19th - Philippians 4: 8

Aesthetics, not merely attractive appearance, is what Paul means when he uses the term lovely. True beauty of face, form, and essence, as well as of relation to other things is required for something or someone to be lovely. Godliness begets beauty. It is the beauty of holiness that shines through one's countenance, conversation, and actions. Sin mars all things, making them to be disfigured and ugly. The loveliness we see and should savor here during our pilgrimage is but a faint token and pledge of the perfect and perpetual loveliness we shall behold in the face of our Redeemer and the glory surrounding Him.

Friday, June 20th - Philippians 4: 8

We are to ponder whatever is of good repute. Those things that are well spoken of by people of discretion and godly discernment are worthy of our attention and reflection. That which is of good repute must be distinguished from things notorious or merely popular. The celebrities and sports idols of our day have their doings covered by the media, but most of such coverage we should refuse to consider. In contrast, deeds of godly trust and devotion, to which Jesus called His disciples' attention when He commended the poor widow giving all she had as an offering to God, are the things lastingly precious and worthy of our consideration and imitation.

Saturday, June 21st - Philippians 4: 8

Anything that is excellent is worthy of our consideration. The word translated *excellence* has the root meaning of that which is of highest virtue and perfection. The word is used in the New Testament only here and in 1 Peter 2:9 and 2 Peter 1:3. In both of the Peter verses, excellence is associated with the character and glory of God. All that is truly excellent reflects the divine excellence. As we ponder such perfected virtues, we, too, are lifted and become excellent.

Sunday, June 22nd - Philippians 4: 8

The things worthy of praise are not necessarily the things the masses applaud. Paul means those things truly praiseworthy by God and by the godly. Thus, good deeds well and diligently done, loving service to and sacrifice for others, and every manifestation of

spiritual graces are the things our God notes and rewards with praise. Our pondering such truly and rightly praiseworthy things enables us to affirm them with our praise and to imitate them in our own lives.

Monday, June 23rd - Philippians 4: 8

Our minds are to dwell upon, digest, and assimilate the virtues detailed in this verse. We are properly to take them into account and live them out by God's grace. Such pious pondering is not merely a mental exercise. It begins with the mind, but it leads on to right living. We are not to let our minds be filled with trash, or trifles, or anxious thoughts. By true, right, and godly thinking, we are nourished in Christ and consequently are transformed in character, thought, conversation, and action (Rom. 12:1,2). What and how we think vitally matters, for as a man thinks in his heart, so is he (Prov. 23:7).

Tuesday, June 24th - Philippians 4: 9

That godly pondering of proper things leads to godly practice of proper things is evident in the life of the apostle Paul. He here commends himself as an example to be followed. With humility, he knew the fullness of blessing and usefulness God had wrought in his life, and he invites his readers to join him in such blessing and usefulness. The source and sustaining power for such living is the Lord, to whom Paul here refers as the God of peace. It is this personal God of peace who gives the peace of God spoken of in v. 7. All right thoughts and deeds, with the blessed results issuing from them, take their reference from the living God as He has revealed Himself in Scripture, supremely as the peace-making reconciler of His people in Christ. That sweet fruit of peace cost Him everything, but it is free to us.

Wednesday, June 25th - Philippians 4: 9

Paul speaks of the things the Philippians had learned and received, not in general, but from the apostle himself. By this, Paul refers to a process whereby he consciously imparted saving and sanctifying knowledge to his children in the faith. The Philippians, for their part, learned the lessons. They were not negligent in the attention they gave to Paul. Nor did they simply learn spiritual facts and principles. They received them as their own. The sanctifying knowledge imparted by Paul was imbibed, digested, and assimilated by them, so that it became the mastering light and power of their lives. No one makes lasting progress in the truth of God unless he seriously ponders, understands, and applies to himself that truth as it is faithfully ministered by one who has himself been mastered by it.

Thursday, June 26th - Philippians 4: 9

The Philippians not only learned and received the saving truth of God as it was taught and practiced by Paul, they also heard and saw that truth as it issued forth in the speech

and actions of the apostle. What the Philippians heard from the godly apostle were truthful propositions, as Paul articulated the doctrines of the faith. They also would have heard gracious and loving conversation flowing from the renewed mind and warmly affectionate heart of the servant of Christ. What they saw in Paul were actions that confirmed, rather than contradicted, his profession of faith and proclamation of truth. The godly integrity of Paul's life gave consistency to his thoughts, words, and actions. The Philippians were powerfully impressed to hear, heed, observe, and imitate the truth lived out in love by Paul. May our performance reflect our true possession of a saving faith in Jesus, impelling others vitally to possess the Savior.

Friday, June 27th - Philippians 4: 9

The Philippians not only pondered the godly virtues declared and performed by Paul, but they were exhorted by the faithful apostle to practice those virtues. It is not enough that we know and believe the truth as it is in Jesus. We must do the truth as well. Profession of faith in the Savior, without the fruit of performance of faithful and loving works, manifests the emptiness of the profession (Jas. 2:20, 26). Furthermore, the doctrines and deeds we are to proclaim and practice are the same in essence as what Paul taught and lived. Original thinking and novel doing are not virtues esteemed by Scripture, so much as enticements dangled before the unwary by the serpent of old (Gen. 3:1,4,5).

Saturday, June 28th - Philippians 4: 9

The pondering and practice to which Paul calls his readers is not something we perform on our own. The servant of God who calls us to such godly endeavor assures us that God will be with us to grant to us lasting success and plentiful blessing in our learning and living out of the faith. If we resolve, by the instruction of God's Word, to know clearly and thoroughly and to practice vitally and consistently the whole counsel of God, we shall find our God to be with us enabling us and comforting us with His peace. When we truly make God's way to be our way, we find the Lord our God with us wherever we go (Josh. 1:7-9).

Sunday, June 29th - Philippians 4: 10

Early in this letter, Paul shared with his beloved Philippians details about his personal circumstances (1:12ff). Now, towards the close of the epistle, he returns to that personal theme. In particular, he gratefully acknowledges a gift he had received from the church at Philippi. As he had just urged them to practice the godly and gracious things they had learned and seen in his own life (vv.8,9), so he begins to commend them for their recent practice of loving consideration, as evidenced in their gift to him. As Paul expresses his grateful acknowledgement, he incidentally continues to teach his readers much about giving and receiving in the kingdom of God. The riches of Christ are such that no member of His body is ever in such great need that he has nothing to offer in return to those who give to him.

Monday, June 30th - Philippians 4: 10

Apparently, some considerable time had passed since the Philippians had made any sort of practical contribution to Paul's personal needs and public ministry. Some scholars read the first half of this verse as an implied reproach for that time when the Philippians offered no such practical support. If Paul intends such a reproach, he certainly softens it when he expresses his joy over their revived concern. The gracious servant of Christ makes much over the spiritual obedience of others, and covers their faults and failures with love. The loving servant of the Lord, who seeks his ultimate joy in the Lord, never reckons that his brethren's good deeds are too little or come too late.

Tuesday, July 1st - Philippians 4: 10

Even if the Philippians were somewhat negligent in their having for some time sent no practical support to Paul, the apostle judges them with understanding and charity. He reckons that their willingness had ever been keen, but that the occasion had not permitted them to offer their gifts to Paul. Now that the apostle was in obvious need and in a position of forced settlement in his prison, rather than being so much on the move, ministering to so many churches, the Philippians recognized and acted upon an opportunity that made it easy for them to revive their loving and practical concern for Paul. Even if Paul erred in his judgment of charity, his graciously covering the Philippians' failure saved him from soul-embittering resentment and prepared him to experience rejoicing over their lately received gift, and to give encouragement to the Philippians' revived concern. Our Savior will not break a bruised reed, and neither should His servants.

Wednesday, July 2nd - Philippians 4: 11

Paul's expression of thanksgiving is full of checks and counter-balances. This does not mean that his gratitude is tainted with reproach or insincerity. Instead, the apostle's apparent awkwardness, in expressing to the Philippians his thanks for their gift, results from the rich complexity of the transaction of their giving and his receiving in Christ. Even as Paul gratefully acknowledges his receipt of their gift, he gives to them (and to us) something of far greater and more lasting value. He endeavors to share the precious lessons of Christian contentment he had learned. Those who give in the kingdom of God's grace should not be surprised if they receive in return more than they gave.

Thursday, July 3rd - Philippians 4: 11

Paul seeks to make it clear that his joyful gratitude resulted more from the Philippians' revival of loving concern for him than from the gift itself. His appreciation for their gift should not be construed to mean that Paul was in desperate need and despairing temper apart from that gift. It would be untrue and dishonoring to the Lord, whose grace is ever sufficient to make His people more than conquerors in all trials, if Paul were to give the impression that he languished without the support of men. He who had found cause to praise God when he was beaten, bound in stocks, and cast into a dark dungeon during his first visit to Philippi (Acts 16:19ff), still knew how, in his latest imprisonment, to draw

upon the divine grace that enabled him to rejoice in persecutions (2 Cor. 12:10).

Friday, July 4th - Philippians 4: 11

Paul says that he has learned to be content. Thus, he does not speak out of critical need or want, for he is, through Christ, above such want (Ps. 23:1). The apostle testifies that he is conscious of having all that really matters, and that no man could give to him anything except tokens of loving commitment, such as the Philippians had given. Paul had learned this contentment, not over a period of time, but at a decisive point in his past (as indicated by the aorist tense he uses). That point came on the Damascus road, when he counted all things loss in view of his knowing Christ (3:8). At that point, the apostle chose the one thing necessary, the good portion that could never be taken from him (Lk. 10:42), and was ever thereafter content. Have we yet learned this lesson?

Saturday, July 5th - Philippians 4: 11

The contentment of which Paul speaks is not a serene feeling, but a substantial equipping enabling him to have peace and even joy in all things. The word translated, content, literally means, self-sufficient, or self-governing (auvta,rkhj). It does not mean that he is independent of the Lord, but rather that precisely because he was completely dependent upon the Lord who is sovereign over all things, who upholds His people with an almighty hand, and provides for them according to the riches of His wisdom, love, and power, he had no dependence upon lesser sources for his peace and joy. We have in Christ no need to depend upon any man, whose life is but a vapor (Jas 4:14), when we can depend upon the living God who can feed us by ravens (1 Ki. 17:4), free us by earthquakes (Acts 16:26), who gives us freely all things in Christ (Rom. 8:32), and causes all things to work together for our good (Rom. 8:28).

Sunday, July 6th - Philippians 4: 11

Paul had learned to be self-sufficient in all circumstances. That was because he had vital faith in the liberating and securing truth that he lived in Christ and that Christ lived in him. It was the intimacy of Christ's loving and able care for him that made Paul free, not from God, nor from the loving bonds of his brethren (cf. v.14), but from anxious concern over any circumstances—even the most grim. He who has fellowship with Christ in the fiery furnace does not fear but welcomes the flames.

Monday, July 7th - Philippians 4: 12, 13

In these verses, Paul elaborates the lesson of contentment he had learned. He speaks of its fruit in v.12 and of its root in v.13. His testimony regarding this priceless and practical lesson was the loving gift he shared with the Philippians in gratitude for the practical token of their love he had received from them. Because Paul was in prison by the wise providence of God, the apostle was obliged to write his testimony, rather than to speak it to the ears of one generation of saints. Thus, readers of all generations may profit from this precious gift.

Tuesday, July 8th - Philippians 4: 12, 13

Paul's contentment transcended his circumstances. Thus, he testifies of his knowing how to get along with humble means, with hunger, and with suffering need. This does not mean that the apostle practiced a stoical indifference to the means whereby body and soul are held together. His practice was not that of a deadening of desire, for Christ makes His people more appreciative of His creational provision, not less. In many ways, it is the careless, blind, and callously insensitive unbeliever who is unappreciative of the finer things of life. The key to Paul's relative detachment from practical means was his knowing how to view and to use all that his Lord provided for or withheld from him for God's glory and for his own and others' good.

Wednesday, July 9th - Philippians 4: 12, 13

The Proverb writer, Agur, prays that God would give him neither poverty nor riches, lest in his wealth he should forget the Lord, or in his poverty, he should steal and dishonor the Lord (Prov. 30:8,9). The Apostle Paul apparently experienced both states. The knowledge he had that enabled him to live with humble means or in prosperity was not only theoretical, but was practical and experimental. Regarding prosperity, we do not know how it came to Paul after his conversion, but we are certain that when it came, he did not set his heart on fleeting riches (Ps. 62:10), but rightly viewed material abundance as a God-given resource to be used for God's glory and man's good. He who possessed the surpassing value of knowing Christ did not allow himself to be intoxicated by the trinkets of this fading world (1 Jn. 2:15-17).

Thursday, July 10th - Philippians 4: 12, 13

Paul's self-governing contentment endured through all circumstances. This was because it was based upon the unchanging love of God. Circumstances change for all people—believer as well as unbeliever. Yet, while the unbeliever is elated if prosperity comes to him, he can do nothing but lament when poverty overtakes him. His happiness and sense of power depend upon cold, hard, lifeless, and fleeting cash. However, the believer can do all things that are right, good, and useful to others, and he can do so in all circumstances. The believer's ability to live for God's glory and for his neighbor's good is not impeded by his having slender, or even no, earthly means. This is so because those in whom Christ dwells are taught a precious and empowering secret that sustains them in all seasons and circumstances.

Friday, July 11th - Philippians 4: 12, 13

The word Paul uses that is translated, learned the secret, has the idea of one's having been initiated into hidden realities. That word (*memu,hmai*) is used only at this one place in the New Testament. The hidden reality is that whatever our circumstances appear to indicate, greater than our circumstances is our wise and loving God who reigns sovereignly over them for our good. Our reckoning by faith that our God is so using all

things for our good is soul-sustaining, heavenly manna. It is hidden not from us, but treasured up for us, that we might unlock it by faith and so perceive, feed upon, and be nourished by it (Rev. 2:17). By it, we are empowered to stand and serve even in lean times and evil days.

Saturday, July 12th - Philippians 4: 12, 13

The learning of the sustaining secret of which Paul speaks implies that it is taught, and that the teaching has been vitally received. God, by His Word and Spirit, teaches us to depend upon Him in Christ for all things. The theme that we should trust in our Lord with all our hearts for all things and in all things runs throughout Scripture. Those so trusting in and depending on the Lord are never disappointed (1 Pet. 2:6). But we must receive and depend upon the testimony of the absolute trustworthiness of our Lord. Only then can we say that we have learned this precious and potent secret.

Sunday, July 13th - Philippians 4: 12, 13

The secret of Paul's contentment and strength to do all things is not a philosophy but rather a personal, indwelling Savior. Christ in the believer enables him to do all things. The believer who reckons by faith that he possesses Christ by His indwelling Holy Spirit knows and vitally experiences that his indwelling Lord ordains and controls all of his circumstances with love, wisdom, and power that never fail. When believers learn this secret, they find that the basis of their standing and serving in the body of Christ is not mutual need, which can compel our giving and receiving, but rather mutual sufficiency, which frees us to give and receive freely and in love.

Monday, July 14th - Philippians 4: 14

This verse makes clear to us that the self-sufficiency of which Paul has been speaking does not produce an aloof independence in those possessing it. Although Paul has shared with the Philippians the treasure of his learned secret of contentment, he did so in order that they might learn and be blessed thereby. Although that secret gave him sufficiency in all circumstances, still he sincerely appreciated their gift. They did the right and loving thing when they sent it, and by their so giving of themselves to supply some relief to the apostle, they undertook to share his burden of suffering, giving him a blessed degree of relief from it. Our gifts to one another are not essential to each other's salvation, but they are fruits issuing from that salvation, being tokens of our love, reflecting the love of our God by whose love we have been enabled to give loving consideration to our brethren.

Tuesday, July 15th - Philippians 4: 15, 16

The Philippians were apparently leaders in giving support to Paul. They not only shared his latest affliction, but they distinguished themselves by being the only church in the Macedonian region to share with him material support, assisting him in his giving the gospel so that others might receive it. There are notable degrees of giving amongst churches. The Philippian church perhaps gave most, while the Corinthian church likely

gave least. Paul wrote of the latter church: I robbed other churches, taking wages from them to serve you (2 Cor. 11:8). Let us aspire to make our church notable for giving and serving in the economy of the kingdom of God.

Wednesday, July 16th - Philippians 4: 15, 16

Paul speaks of the matter of giving and receiving. There is ever a gracious give and take in the kingdom of God. No church is so self-sufficient as to give only, and none is so destitute as to be only capable of receiving. The Lord, who makes us self-sufficient in Christ, ordains that there be needs in all churches that others can supply. The apostle's imprisonment gave occasion for the Philippians to give and for Paul to receive. Fellowship is fostered when we share in a two-way movement of giving and receiving. There is a grace in giving, and a grace in receiving, and a blessing in both. Let us, therefore, learn graciously and generously to give to servants of Christ and brethren in other churches in need, and graciously and gratefully to receive from them whatever they share with us.

Thursday, July 17th - Philippians 4: 17

In this verse, Paul teaches us that there is more to Christian giving than the gift itself. He also makes clear to us that it is therefore more blessed to give than to receive. There is, of course, the provision of the gift itself which blesses the one receiving it. The fact that such gifts are tokens of loving consideration enhances the blessing of the receiver. However, there is also profit that accrues to the giver. That profit is measured out in time and eternity. In time, what we give shall be given to us in concentrated and overflowing measure (Lk. 6:38). If we do not receive in kind in return from our giving, we should expect a return in better kind than we gave. In eternity, we receive the commendation of our heavenly Master, and are invited to enter into His glorious joy, as He makes much over our little gifts (Mt. 25:34-40).

Friday, July 18th - Philippians 4: 18

Behold how greatly the gracious apostle magnifies the Philippians' gift! Their gift had provided him with a fullness, an abundance, an ample supply, a fragrant aroma, and an acceptable sacrifice that was pleasing not only to Paul but also to God. Clearly, this super-abundance resulted not from the gift itself, but from the sacrificial love of the beloved Philippians of which the gift was but a token. It also was magnified by Christ in Paul, enabling the apostle rightly to see this token as a fruit issuing from Christ's own saving sacrifice. Our Savior's sacrifice fills us with a sufficiency that makes all other gifts to become additional blessings that fill our capacity to contain them to overflowing measure (Mt. 6:33).

Saturday, July 19th - Philippians 4: 18, 19

What is it that makes Christian giving so full of blessing for all concerned? Paul was abundantly helped by the Philippians' gift, the Philippians themselves profited from their

giving, and God was pleased by it. The answer is that all true giving in Christ is a giving out of God's rich supply. Paul states that the Philippians offered by their gift an acceptable sacrifice. That tells us that they gave not out of their excess but from their essence. Theirs was a costly gift. Sacrificial cost implies loss for the giver. However, in Christ, such giving begets greatest gain as God supplies in place of our poor but loving giving that which is according to His immeasurable riches in glory.

Sunday, July 20th - Philippians 4: 18, 19

Our God is intimately involved in all giving and receiving taking place amongst His children. He is pleased when we give with loving and sacrificial generosity; He is grieved when we withhold what we have from our brethren in need (Jas. 2:15,16). Our Lord's pleasure prompts Him to shower His richest blessings upon those who give, while His grief moves Him to withhold such blessings from those intent upon pleasing themselves by their selfishly retaining what God would have them to share with others (Jas. 4:2,3).

Monday, July 21st - Philippians 4: 19

We finite men do but give a portion of our imperfect love and perishing possessions when we give to our brethren in Christ. What we receive in return is a rich supply from God. Paul refers to the Lord here as, my God. The One who supplies us is the God who considers what is done for Paul or for any other members of the body of Christ—even the least of them—as having been done for Himself (Mt. 25:40). This God repays our giving with inconceivable riches in glory.

Tuesday, July 22nd - Philippians 4: 19

The apostle assures us that God will supply all of our needs. We assume too often that our Lord will supply only some or perhaps even most of our needs, for we judge His giving by our faulty assessment of our perceived needs, rather than by His faithful understanding of our true needs and His abundant supplying of them. We may be certain that all of our true needs will be supplied by our God, who knows what we need before we ask Him, to whom belong all things, whose treasury is inexhaustible, whose almighty hand will not fail us, and who has plans for us, to give us a future and a hope (Jer. 29:11).

Wednesday, July 23rd - Philippians 4: 19

Paul does not say that God supplies our needs from His inexhaustible wealth, but rather according to His riches in glory. This means that He ever supplies us in a manner befitting not our need, and surely not our deserving, but commensurate with His rich glory. The apostle further qualifies this divine supplying, saying that it is according to God's riches in glory in Christ Jesus. It is in and through Christ that our God supplies all of our needs. Christ is the one thing necessary, for if we have Him, we have all of the promises and provision of God conveyed to us with a divine yes and amen (2 Cor. 1:20).

Thursday, July 24th - Philippians 4: 19

Our God supplies our every need according to His riches in glory. Divine glory is the only coinage of the kingdom of God. The fullness of that glory is manifested to us in Christ, who is the fullness of God's wisdom (Col. 2:3), love (Jn. 3:16; Rom. 5:8), power (1 Cor. 1:24), and glory (Jn. 1:14). Even if our God ordains that we receive afflictions, that divine supply is according to the Lord's riches in glory, and serves for the ultimate production of priceless and inconceivably satisfying glory in our lives (2 Cor. 4:17,18).

Friday, July 25th - Philippians 4: 19, 20

The riches of God's glory in Christ Jesus are infinite. Paul's mentioning of such glory as is manifested in the accomplishment and application of our redemption lifts the apostle to express a doxological declaration, in which he ascribes infinite and everlasting glory to God. For the saving grace we have received from God in Christ we are inevitably led to glorify the God of so great a salvation. By His lavish grace, freely poured upon us—though His exercise of that saving grace cost him infinitely—we are made not only to be ones who praise God and ascribe glory to Him, but also we are made possessions and possessors of the Lord. This mutual possession we have with God is expressed in Paul's designating Him to be our God. The intimacy we enjoy for time and eternity with our God is evident from the fact that He is further called our Father. The heirs of the glorious King of Heaven possess forever the King and His immeasurable riches in glory (Eph. 1:3).

Saturday, July 26th - Philippians 4: 20

It is a remarkable testimony to the glorious excellence of God and to the vitality of Paul's exercise of faith that the apostle, who was imprisoned when he wrote this letter, was enabled to perceive the glory of God in, through, and above his circumstances. Paul's seeing the infinite and everlasting glory of God led to his singing praise to God. Do we so see and sing, even in our adversity?

Sunday, July 27th - Philippians 4: 21, 22

Those who most strive by God's grace to glorify the Lord are also those who most charitably regard and lovingly greet their fellow believers. Thus, we find Paul turning from his doxology to his directing the exchange of greetings between the redeemed. The apostle calls upon his readers to greet every holy one in Christ. This call for universal greeting is most significant when we recall that in the Philippian church there were two sisters, Euodia and Syntyche (4:2), who, along with their friends and supporters, were not living in harmony in the Lord as they should have been doing. Our factiousness is rightly seen to be baseless in light of the glory of God. It also melts into insignificance when we view all of our brethren—even those least like ourselves—in the perfect righteousness of Christ Jesus, the beloved Son of God in whom we all are accepted by our God and Father.

Monday, July 28th - Philippians 4: 21, 22

The Philippian brethren were not only to give greetings to each other, but they were also to receive greetings conveyed through Paul from brethren who were with him as co-laborers and, possibly, fellow prisoners for Christ. In fact, the circle of those sending their greetings was larger than the brethren with Paul. All the saints whom he knew sent their greetings to the Philippians. There were even some in Nero's own household, converted from darkness to light and made brethren in Christ, who sent their greetings. How could so many, who had never visited the church at Philippi or met its members, be moved to send them loving greetings? The answer is that the holy and passionate love that Paul had for his children in the faith was contagious, and it spread to all brethren with whom Paul had dealings. The holy love our Lord Jesus and God our Father have for us forges us into a universal fellowship wherein loving greetings given and received form the ties that bind and keep us together.

Tuesday, July 29th - Philippians 4: 23

The saving grace of God in Christ forms the alpha and omega of this letter (cf., 1:2). We who, in Christ, are bound for glory, have gained our access to the everlasting splendence of the kingdom of God by divine grace. We are sustained throughout our pilgrimage in this life by that grace. Specifically here, Paul conveys that grace to the spirit of the Philippians. He uses a plural pronoun, translated your, but a singular noun, translated spirit. The grace of God in Christ Jesus forges diverse members into a single heavenly citizenship (3:20), being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose of loving God with all their hearts and their brethren as themselves. The grace of God in Christ took disparate people in ancient Philippi, who were dead in sin and alienated from God and from one another, and made them possessors of eternal life, everlasting glory, and imperishable love for one another. Those who have such grace, have a heaven on earth, even in a prison, then, now, and forever.

THE BOOK OF PROVERBS **(these notes were first published in December 1990)**

Wednesday, July 30th - Proverbs 1: 1

It is said that if we are too heavenly minded we shall be of little earthly good. God's Word tells us otherwise (Col. 3:1-4). It is in fact those most heavenly minded who are most earthly good. For God is the source, fountain, and goal of all true wisdom. When we maintain vital communion with Him through Christ, we find all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge at our disposal (Col. 2:2,3). Wise, efficient, blessed living here on earth results from having our anchor cast within the veil of heaven. The Book of Proverbs, which contains an abundant assortment of practical instruction, makes this evident. Solomon, the author of most of the proverbs, was no mere theorist. He was a man of supreme endowment and attainment. His wisdom was recognized not only in Israel (1

Kings 3:28), but also abroad (1 Kings 4:34). Read about his acumen and accomplishments in the field of philosophy, science, economics, and government in 1 Kings 4:21-34. Our teacher is a great king, but more importantly, a devout son of David, who makes clear to us that the wonder of his wisdom traces its root to the fear of the Lord.

Thursday, July 31st - Proverbs 1: 2-4

The value of these proverbs is seen in what Solomon here claims they can accomplish. Such expansive and high claims may seem exaggerated until we remember the testimony of Solomon's own life. He, being the wisest of men, should be able to convey that wisdom to others. That he does so indicates not only his ability, but his gracious and generous willingness to do so. Solomon wants to share the treasures of his wisdom with others, for he knows that he has received them from a God of inexhaustible wisdom and grace. We do well to give careful attention to his instructions, which issue from and enable us to grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord.

Friday, August 1st - Proverbs 1: 2

Man is born not only depraved morally, but deprived intellectually. He must acquire wisdom and understanding, for they are not innate. The Word of God, through the inspired writer of these proverbs, supplies what we naturally lack. God would have His people enlightened and under-girded with certitude. He would have us to know wisdom, not merely to surmise about it. Wisdom here may be defined as prudent, able, and true correlation of data. It is our perceiving things, not as they appear, but as they essentially are, and responding appropriately. Such wisdom is attained by our submitting to the discipline of instruction, which involves education (ingesting of information) and training (application of information to life). God would also impart to us and have us exercise discernment in our learning and living. For there is counterfeit wisdom in the world, and only God's Word enables us to discriminate between an understanding which is true, good, and edifying, and one which is false, evil, and destructive.

Saturday, August 2nd - Proverbs 1: 3

We are called, in the school of the Lord, not only to know wisdom but also to act wisely. However, the wisdom to which our Lord directs us is not that tainted cunning of the serpent, but rather that which is consistent with the righteous character, just actions, and fair dealings of God. Ours is not to be training aimed at the attainment of worldly wisdom, for our calling is infinitely higher, even to know, be, and act in conformity with the Lord of heaven and earth.

Sunday, August 3rd - Proverbs 1: 4

The young and inexperienced may abound in energy and imagination, but being without a sense of wisdom and discretion they tend to be unstable and impetuous. This is a dangerous state, rendering the young vulnerable to malicious manipulation (Eph. 4:14).

God's Word, far from killing imagination and energy, concentrates them and directs them into good, right, and safely enjoyable and productive paths. The naive is supplied with a sanctified critical capacity which enables him to distinguish the good and productive from the evil and prodigal, and to embrace the former while eschewing the latter. Likewise, the youth attains a moral and intellectual development mediated by the pleasant, practical, and powerful truths of God's Word, as opposed to those painful and often debilitating lessons taught by the school of hard knocks.

Monday, August 4th - Proverbs 1: 5, 6

Not only do naive youths find essential learning in these proverbs, but so do the mature, who have grown in wisdom and understanding. The truly wise man knows that he, being fallen and finite, cannot attain perfect wisdom in this life. Instead, he must ever strive on toward the goal (Phil. 3:12-16), and this he willingly does. He is willing to listen to all things, subjecting them to sanctified analysis (1 Thess. 5:21,22) with the result that his store of things learned as well as his capacity for learning more both increase. Additionally, he shall habitually detect and cultivate sources of wise counsel, becoming increasingly such a source himself. His powers shall grow to where he can untangle and comprehend the most enigmatic utterances. For he submits himself to a Teacher who discerns and knows all things (Heb. 4:12,13).

Tuesday, August 5th - Proverbs 1: 7

With the object of the Book of Proverbs having been stated in vv. 1-6, the lessons begin with this verse. Here we learn that the foundation and goal, the beginning and end, the Alpha and Omega of knowledge is one's reverential regard for and submission to the Lord. To know anything aright we must know Him. We must view all things through the spectacles of the Word of the One who created and governs all things, and we must relate to all things through His redeeming work. Thus we shall be taught by God Himself (Is. 54:13), and enlightened and enriched accordingly. Not all desire this priceless gift, for their hatred of the Giver is greater. Humanity is divided between those who fear God, growing in His grace and knowledge, and those who are fools, despising that which would make them wise unto salvation.

Wednesday, August 6th - Proverbs 1: 7

Two ways of life are set before us: The way of wisdom and life, based on the fear of the Lord, and the way of folly and death, based on rebellion from Him. These two ways are not only set before us, but one of them is clearly commended to us. Let us ever choose the life of saving wisdom in the Lord.

Thursday, August 7th - Proverbs 1: 8, 9

We are commanded to honor our parents (Ex. 20:12), and obey them in the Lord (Eph. 6:1-3), for God has placed them in authority over us, and has commissioned them to be our first teachers in wisdom and the ways of godliness (Dt. 6:4-7). But more than

authority is in view with these words. Parental affection and sweet nurturing within a loving domestic environment are also here. Furthermore, we are encouraged to appreciate the beautiful and enriching results of our submission to such loving instruction. And where natural parents fail to measure up to this blessed standard, let us be comforted with the knowledge that in Christ we have a heavenly Father who addresses us lovingly as His children whom He delights to instruct in His wise ways.

Friday, August 8th - Proverbs 1: 10

It is not enough positively to seek a father's instruction, and negatively to refuse to forsake a mother's teaching. We must also fortify ourselves against the seduction of sinners. Enticements do come upon us in this fallen world, and our business is to resist them. As powerful as the invitations of sinners may seem, they are not coercive but rather depend for their success upon our consent. No one can make us sin; we must agree to do so. Here we are told in clearest terms never to consider or consent to the wooing of the wicked.

Saturday, August 9th - Proverbs 1: 11-14

The enticement of sin consists in the delusive promise of personal gain (vv.13,14). That is the first thing sinners would have us see in their nefarious invitations. It is not the first thing God's Word would have us perceive. The true nature of such sin—its cold, calculating, surreptitious ways, and the fiendish glee sinners derive from inflicting the most horrific suffering upon their victims—this is the first thing our wise and loving Lord reveals to us about such enticements. Our seeing sin in its true colors enables us rightly to loath it, and, consequently, to resist it.

Sunday, August 10th - Proverbs 1: 15, 16

These verses do not so much urge us to refuse association with sinners (which would be inconsistent with the great commission) as they warn us to avoid accompanying them in their evil walk. For most frequently we are enticed not all at once, but a step at a time. Yet small, halting, almost imperceptible steps soon hasten into a run (v.16). Then, when it is too late to overcome the momentum impelling us toward darkest evil, we learn that the path which may have seemed innocent, perhaps even beautiful, leads to murder. David's step of lust certainly put him on such a path (2 Sam. 11:1-17). The best way to avoid such an end is to refuse the beginning of such a course.

Monday, August 11th - Proverbs 1: 17-19

Although sinful temptation promises to enrich the sinner (vv.13,14), in reality sin destroys, not only others (vv.11,12), but ultimately the sinner himself. That one should pursue such a self-destructive course indicates that one exercises less intelligence than do beasts of instinct. They, at least, resist bait when they perceive a trap. Sin dehumanizes men, rendering them suicidal and stupid, then destroys them. How thankful we should be that our blessed Redeemer came into our world to release us from the dark, destructive

bondage of sin. Let us determine to stand in that blessed freedom He has procured for us through His being made sin for us (2 Cor. 5:21) and so destroying the destroyer in His death.

Tuesday, August 12th - Proverbs 1: 20, 21

In contrast with the skulking methods of sin, wisdom stands calling aloud in the open light of day, amidst those places most open to social intercourse. This personified wisdom is, of course, Christ Himself, in whom are hidden all the treasures of divine wisdom (Col. 2:3). Those requiring His enlightenment (and that is all of us!) cannot claim that He is inaccessible. For He, by the testimony of His Spirit to the consciences of men, speaks to them at every place, in every circumstance; and because He speaks to the heart, His voice pierces through all noise and distraction (Rom. 1: 18,19). The heavens themselves are telling of God's glory (Ps. 19:1), so clearly that a man must blind himself in order not to perceive. In even greater degree is this wisdom accessible to those who have hidden God's Word in their hearts.

Wednesday, August 13th - Proverbs 1: 22,23

These verses make it even more evident that men lack saving wisdom not because wisdom is rare or hidden away, but because their hearts love darkness and hate the proffered light. We should never associate naiveté with innocence, nor count ignorance as sweet bliss. We were made to grow in the grace and knowledge and life-changing power of Christ. God's Word and Spirit call us to make progress in this knowledge and walk of holiness. The Spirit of the Lord empowers us in this course where we lack natural ability to respond (Eph. 2:1-10). Hence, for a person to remain ignorant and weak spiritually is telling, not of a victimized deprivation, but of a perverse refusal of divine light and love. A willing intellectual and moral weakness ever has its affinity with wickedness rather than with God's Spirit, who gives us power, and love, and sound judgment (2 Tim. 1:7).

Thursday, August 14th - Proverbs 1: 24-27

Not only is the wisdom of the Lord abundantly available, but the living wisdom of God is motivated by persistent sincerity in issuing calls for repentance. The call of God, His outstretched hand of power, the plenitude of His counsel, His faithful reproofs—all are shown to be adamantly refused by men committed to wickedness and ignorance. That is the reason why Jesus lamented over Jerusalem (Mt. 23:37-39). But ultimately it pleases the Lord more to exercise His judgment against His impudent rejecters than to allow them indefinitely to try and abuse His gracious patience. In a most righteous and holy way, the joy of the Lord will not be diminished, but enhanced when final judgment is rendered. From the reaction of the redeemed pictured in Rev. 19:1-3, our joy will likewise be enhanced on that day. Those sinfully rejecting God's salvation do not in the end hurt the Lord or His children, but only themselves.

Friday, August 15th - Proverbs 1: 28-31

Those who refuse the saving wisdom of God will live to regret their refusal. In that final day, many will call upon the Lord, asking, seeking, knocking for Him, but it will be too late (Mt. 7: 21-23; Rev. 22:11). For the day of salvation, the day of God's gracious, patient, and persistent invitations will have passed, and God will then confirm such people in their wicked course, which led away from Him. It is clear from vv.29,30 that they demanded their own way, not God's. Thus for all eternity they will be nourished on the privative choices they have in this life consistently made. Let no one trifle with the counsel and reproofs of the Lord. For if we sow wicked thoughts, we reap wicked actions; sow wicked actions, reap wicked habits; sow wicked habits, reap wicked character; sow wicked character, reap an unspeakably awful eternity.

Saturday, August 16th - Proverbs 1: 32, 33

There are only two ways to live: Either in the fear of the Lord, or straying away from it. Nor need a man actively and consciously hate the Lord in order to find himself in the endless destruction of hell. He need simply disregard the Lord. Negligence bars man from the only remedy for life and soul destroying sin (Heb. 2:1-3). Yet those who actively, consciously, and with consistent submission hear and heed the voice of the Lord are not killed by sin, but live an eternal and abundant life in Christ, being freed not only from death, but from the fear of death and even of death's shadow (Ps. 23:4).

Sunday, August 17th - Proverbs 2: 1-5

Although divine wisdom cries out (1:20ff), we must be diligent in our response if we are to possess and be empowered by it. We cannot expect passively to receive the fear and knowledge of God. We must make ourselves attentive, turning our hearts from worldly distractions and treasuring the commandments of the Lord. We must cry out, asking, seeking, knocking for that which the Lord designs to give us. Men will go to great lengths to search out and unearth hidden treasures. We should go to greater lengths to discover and possess heavenly treasures. When we do go to those greater lengths, we shall find ourselves richly rewarded (Heb. 11:6).

Monday, August 18th - Proverbs 2: 6, 7a

The Lord gives wisdom, for He gives Himself, the source of all wisdom, to those who diligently seek Him (Jer. 29:13). Wholehearted seeking meets with wholehearted giving, resulting in the treasure of Christ Himself being embraced and filling every fiber of our being. He stores up wisdom, not from us, but for us.

Tuesday, August 19th - Proverbs 2: 7-9

The wisdom of God is the most practical thing in the world. For it enables us to understand things not only in their appearance, but in their essence. Armed with such understanding we avoid countless dangers and pitfalls. This protective power alone makes wisdom infinitely valuable. The treasure itself is also self-protecting, being stored away, protected from the abusing hands of the ungodly, while being abundantly available

to the upright who diligently would discover and apply it.

Wednesday, August 20th - Proverbs 2: 10

It is impossible for the wicked to possess true wisdom, for once possessed it transforms the heart and creates godly appetites. Wisdom is not an impersonal commodity to be acquired irrespective of the character of the one seeking it. Christ does not give wisdom; He gives Himself, the living source of wisdom. Nor does His wisdom merely append to our lives; it enters our hearts and souls, transforming us and filling us not only with a power that is practical and protective, but which also is most pure and pleasant.

Thursday, August 21st - Proverbs 2: 10, 11

Notice that the place wherein wisdom dwells is the heart, not the head, as we might naturally expect. For biblical wisdom does not simply educate, it edifies. Thus when we are told that discretion and understanding are our guards, we should not conceive of them as being external rules, but vital, internal principles, possessed as facets of that wisdom which is becoming flesh in us.

Friday, August 22nd - Proverbs 2: 12-15

Here are some of the awful dangers from which wisdom saves us. The way of evil is wide and greatly traveled, but it leads to death (Mt. 7:14). Men who are in that way publish their perverse thoughts in attempts to seduce or intimidate others to forsake the narrow path of godliness. Such men love the cover of darkness so that they might indulge their evil and devious behavior undetected. For the light would expose the ugly twists and distortions of their evil, thus depriving them of the perverse pleasure they derive from it, as even they would be forced to behold evil's monstrosity.

Saturday, August 23rd - Proverbs 2: 16-19

Wisdom within the heart not only delivers us from the evil man, but also from the enticing woman. The sanctifying will and power of God saves us from all sorts of immorality and unfaithfulness (1 Thess. 4:3-7), as well as consequent misery on many levels. The seducer promises intimacy, but ever remains strange to us. Seducers may attract with their charms but will never disclose their true characters to us. They promise pleasure and gratification, but deliver only pain and the grave. It can never be otherwise, for an adulteress is essentially a stranger, from herself, from her rightful husband, from her lovers, from her God.

Sunday, August 24th - Proverbs 2: 20-22

The delivering powers of wisdom are wonderful and of immense value. However, this treasure does more than keep us out of harm's way. It guides us into the positive blessing of fellowship with other godly souls, and brings an abiding stability and security to our lives. Such stability in ourselves and in our relationships with others is experienced

because godliness has substance and gravity. The word for glory has the idea of weight as its root (2 Cor. 4:17). In contrast, wicked treachery renders a man less a man, alienating him from his home, himself, his fellow man, and from the Lord. Read Psalm 1.

The Book of Genesis

Monday, August 25th - Genesis 1: 1

The first book of the Bible opens with words of supreme simplicity which can be understood by a child, yet which also have a profound depth and massive complexity sufficient to humble and fill with awe men and women of highest intelligence and greatest learning. Genesis is a book that is basic and essential, dealing with the origin of all phenomena. It is theologically seminal, detailing such fundamental doctrines as man's sin, his fall, and God's redeeming grace. It tells us of the patriarchs, chosen by the grace of the Lord, who were foundational for the later kings, prophets, and very nation of Israel. This book, with majestic proclamation, instead of controversial argumentation, informs us that there is one true, living God, who created all things, against whom man rebelled and brought himself and this world into ruin. That which God had made very good (Gen. 1:31), is so marred by the end of Genesis that the focus there is upon a coffin in Egypt. But there is hope, by God's grace and power, of a new creation in that coffin.

Tuesday, August 26th – Genesis 1: 1

The purpose of Genesis is to give a brief survey of the history of God's activity and revelation from the beginning of creation until the time the Israelites entered Egypt, there to be forged into a nation through 430 years of slavery. The perfection of the Lord's works is evident through the linguistic structure of the first chapter, in which the author, Moses, employs the number seven (the perfect number). There are seven Hebrew words in v.1. There are seven divine fiats, or announcements by God that result in phenomena (vv.3,6,9,11,14,20,24). Seven times the Lord pronounces the result of His creative work to be good (vv.4,10,12,18,21,25,31). In addition, there are three divine pronouncements regarding man (vv. 26,28,30), and three divine blessings pronounced (1:22,28; 2:3). This seemingly artificial structure does not mean that the opening chapters are poetry or myth. There are poetic elements, but the events recorded are true and historical and laced with manifold perfection that only our perfect God could create.

Wednesday, August 27th - Genesis 1: 1

This verse declares to us that the world had a beginning. Matter is not eternal. The verse also tells us that the universe came into being as a result of the good pleasure, glorious purpose, and infinite wisdom and power of the eternal God.

Thus, our world and all that it contains has its grounding in the person of God, not in the chaos of random forces and events. Our world has a moral, not a mechanical basis, and this fundamental fact alerts us to the reality that it far more vitally behooves us to know the living and holy Creator than to understand and endeavor to master the matter and forces of creation.

Thursday, August 28th - Genesis 1: 2

These verses tell us that prior to God's creation of time, space, matter, and the imperceptible but real and potent forces of creation, there was nothing but God. This, of course, is not to say that the triune God was lonely and living in a void. His being was and is infinitely full, and gloriously satisfied in the loving and holy harmony of the three distinct Persons of His being. God created the universe out of nothing except His own sovereign will. He created the world to glorify and to enjoy Him, not to fill some emptiness in His condition. Nor did God create the world in perfect and complete order in a single divine fiat. He used the time, as He used the space and matter of His creation, to accomplish His own chosen, holy, and glorious purposes at the pace that best manifests to His highest creatures, namely, holy angels and men, His wisdom, love, and power.

Friday, August 29th - Genesis 1: 1, 2

From the introduction of v.1, Moses moves and focuses our attention on the earth and its environment in v.2. It should be noted from v.1 that the universe surrounding the earth is not designated by the modern term, space, which implies emptiness, but rather is called the heavens, implying fullness. The earth becomes the focus because here is where God would create man, the crown of His creation, here is where redemption would be accomplished by God in the person of Jesus Christ, and here is where redemption would be applied to God's chosen people by His Holy Spirit. Yet, in order to make clear to us that the creation, from its lowest to its highest components, can be and do nothing without the guiding, empowering, and blessing hand of the Creator, we are informed that the earth was originally formless and empty. This chaos would be brought into an orderly cosmos by the operations of the Spirit of God, not only during the opening days of creation, but especially throughout the years in which the new creation would be fashioned in the lives of God's people through the Spirit's application to them of the saving benefits of Christ's work.

Saturday, August 30th - Genesis 1: 3-5

These three, brief verses detail for us the first day of the divine creational work of forming the primeval chaos into an orderly cosmos. The Biblical account of this and the succeeding days of the first week of creation has been interpreted variously throughout the history of the Church. The liberal or rationalistic view regards the account as myth, reckoning that if finite, fallible man cannot perceive matter and forces in the universe operating differently than they appear to do

now, then the way we are told they operated in Genesis 1,2 must be impossible. Rationalists believe that the opening chapters of Genesis tell a simple story to an ignorant, primitive, and pre-scientific people—a story that we in our day have outgrown. The erroneous assumption of rationalists is that God's power is limited to their allowance, that His wisdom is bound by their dictates. Thanks be to God, that His apparent foolishness is greater than the wisdom of man (1 Cor. 1:25). Were God's creational works limited to the puny allowances of the rationalists, there would be no resurrection of Christ as the first fruit of the new creation. As Hamlet rightly told his friend, Horatio, there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in man's philosophy. Of these amazing things we would remain in ignorance, despite our delusions of progress and discovery, were it not for our God—the only One who was there at creation—telling us of His works.

Sunday, August 31st - Genesis 1: 3-5

There are views of creation other than that of the rationalists, who try to reduce all things to the measure of their own mental powers. Augustine believed that creation could well have been instantaneous; other, more modern non-literal views include theories such as the Day Age and Gap Theory. Very modern non-literal views include the Framework Hypothesis and Analogical Day view. The reader may consult other literature for definitions of these views. The view of the Westminster Confession of Faith, to which our church adheres, declares a literal understanding of the account of Creation, telling us that it pleased God...in the beginning, to create, or make of nothing, the world, and all things therein whether visible or invisible, in the space of six days....(WCF IV:1). The power of God is seen in that He accomplished so much in so little time; the wisdom of God is perceived in the days' separation and progression; the loving goodness of God is evident in His pronouncing each day's work to be good. As Francis Turretin rightly declared in his Institutes of Elenctic Theology (vol.1, p.153), the literal sense of Scripture should always prevail unless it yields no obvious sense (as when Jesus says that He is a vine), or the literal is at variance with the clear doctrines of the Word. The literal understanding of this creation account may perplex men who seek to read Scripture in the dim light of their perceptions and analyses of the world, but it yields light, peace, and cause for praising God to all who seek to understand the world in the sure light of God's Word.

Monday, September 1st - Genesis 1: 2, 3

On this first day of creation, the procedure is followed that obtains throughout the following days of creation: God commands and it is done. On this first day, the Lord called into being the essence of light, or those emanations of energy that are visible to the sentient creatures of the world. It is significant that God created the essence of light prior to His calling into being the sun, which is the creational source of physical light. This order bears witness that God Himself, and no instrument of His creation, is the ultimate source of light, and that He can impart it to us without, as well as through, creational, light-emitting sources. When God

spoke, there was immediate and perfect execution. Light came into being, God designating it day. This light alternated with darkness, which God called night, Each cycle of the pattern of alternating light and darkness God also referred to as a day. This was said by God to be good for creation and redounded to His glory.

Tuesday, September 2nd - Genesis 1: 6-8

On the second day of creation, God spoke, calling into being a separation of air from the water that covered the earth (2 Pet. 3:5). The waters were separated into the terrestrial waters and the vapors of an atmosphere, surrounding the earth with a protective covering and providing the elements for a climate on the earth that would make life on it flourish. It is remarkable and greatly comforting for us to know that before there were living creatures on the earth, God was preparing all that would sustain them in life and blessedness. Our Lord makes not lesser, but far greater preparation for our eternal life with Him in His glory (Jn. 14:2,3).

Wednesday, September 3rd - Genesis 1: 8

It may be noted that the second day of creation did not conclude with God pronouncing the work to be good. Some scholars have accounted for this by observing that the work of the second day was but preparatory for the further separation of the waters on the third day of creation, a separation that God would declare to be good (v.10). The good working of God can and does encompass processes, with incomplete stages of the unfolding of His will and work.

Thursday, September 4th - Genesis 1: 9-13

A further separation of the waters covering the earth took place on the third day of creation. This separation made it evident that beneath the surface of the primeval waters mentioned in v.2 there was solid land. From that land, not only would vegetation sprout, but man himself would be formed by God from the dust of the earth. The crowning glories of the works of our God often lie initially hidden beneath apparently chaotic and unlikely coverings.

Friday, September 5th - Genesis 1: 9-13

Once the waters covering the earth were separated by God from the land initially hidden beneath the waters, God named these discrete elements. The dry land was called the earth, the waters were called seas. This separation and designation of the Lord resulted in another divine benediction wherein God pronounced the work good. However, it was not perfection, nor was it completion as the divine activity for the remainder of the third day of creation makes clear. Our God does not despise the day of provisional things, but rather takes holy delight in those components that will comprise His perfected operations.

Saturday, September 6th - Genesis 1: 9-13

From the initial divine work of the land being separated from the seas, the Lord focused His attention and actions further upon the development of the earth on this third creational day. Vegetation of a healthy and pleasing variety and abundance was called forth by God from what must have appeared as a barren earth. We do not read that the Lord planted seeds and grew this vegetation, but rather that He called it forth from the earth. If it is not apparent to us already from the previous divine fiat, it should be so now, that the events recorded in these days of creation were every one miraculous exertions of the almighty power and holy and wise will of our God. The language of v.11 could be intended to indicate that the earth contained within itself potential for vegetation, but it is equally clear that such potential became actual in response to the effectual calling of God. Thus, the process of creation is a miraculous event beyond the ability of man to know by any means other than faith. It is by our exercise of faith in God's account of it that we understand the genesis of the universe (Heb. 11:3).

Sunday, September 7th - Genesis 1: 9-13

The vegetation God called forth did not grow, but sprang forth as a result of the Word of the Lord, just as Lazarus miraculously came to life from death at the calling of Jesus. However, we learn that God does not sustain the world He has created by constant, miraculous exertion. Rather, He created and He sustains second causes for the maintenance and propagation of life. Thus, the trees and plants created by God came forth in their maturity, bearing seed for the spread of their kind of vegetation. Though God was making a world in six days, He intended it to last for at least several millennia, with the vegetation feeding man its fruit while propagating itself by its seed. Let us marvel at the wise forethought and intricate and effective provision of our God.

Monday, September 8th - Genesis 1: 3-13

The first three days of creation have involved work upon the inanimate terrestrial cosmos. The infrastructure necessary to support animate life on earth was, after the third day, in place. The heavens occupied God's attention on the fourth day. Yet here, at the mid-point of the six days of our Lord's creative work, the universe was void of animate life. Yet, God affirms it to be good, He being patiently pleased with His ordered unfolding of His purposes and plans, however lifeless and unpromising they may appear to us, even at fairly advanced stages.

Tuesday, September 9th - Genesis 1: 14-19

On the first day of creation, the Lord created the essence of light. Corresponding to this, on the first day of the second half of the creation week, namely, the fourth day, He created instrumental sources of light. The sun was to serve as the

proximate source of light for the earth. From it, light and energy emissions radiate to sustain plant and animal life on earth. The moon, being a reflection of the sun, does not give its own light and energy but rather indicates, more or less according to its phases, that even in daily darkness the source of light and life has not ceased to be.

Wednesday, September 10th - Genesis 1: 14

The celestial luminaries of sun and moon not only provide light to the earth. They are also designed by God to mark the passage of time in its various increments of day, season, and year. It is notable that no natural phenomena mark a week. It is only God's example of creating in six days and resting on the seventh that marks out a week for man (Ex. 31:7).

Thursday, September 11th - Genesis 1: 14-16

We are told in v.16 that God not only made the earth, sun, and moon, but also that He made all of the stars in the universe. The creation of the stars is so briefly and almost casually mentioned that it is as if we are told that the vast expanse of the heavens and the countless clusters of galaxies and scattered astronomical bodies comprised a work so easy for our almighty God as to be hardly mentioned. In other places of Scripture, we learn that God gave names to all of the stars (Ps. 147:4). What an awesome God has done this vast work, as well as His having created the most miniscule microorganisms, His numbering our hairs, and His knowing our thoughts and intentions (Mt. 10:30; Heb. 4:12).

Friday, September 12th - Genesis 1: 17-19

According to prevailing scientific theory, the universe has resulted from the explosion of a vast, cosmic body, with stars, planets, etc. being hurled throughout space. These verses teach us that the hand of God placed the stars, including our sun, in their courses. Other places in God's Word indicate to us also that it is not random forces but divine design that places the astronomical bodies where they are (Ps. 8:3; Is. 40:26; Jer. 31:35). The heavens are telling the glory of God (Ps. 19:1), for those with eyes of faith to see and to rest secure in the sovereign power, directing wisdom, and holy love of the Lord.

Saturday, September 13th - Genesis 1: 20-23

The fifth day of creation corresponds with the second day, wherein the earth's atmosphere was separated from its covering waters. On the fifth day, the Lord commanded, and there resulted animal life upon the earth. Thus, the fifth day was the first day of the divine formation of animate creation. Specifically, God created aquatic creatures to fill the earth's waters and birds, not to live in the air, but rather to fly through it. With the appearance of creatures having an animating spirit, we perceive that the realms of air and seas created on the second day

were prepared to accommodate these higher creatures. God always prepares life-supporting circumstances before He places His living creatures within those circumstances.

Sunday, September 14th - Genesis 1: 20, 21

We are told that the Lord created every kind of sea creature, including those called great sea monsters. Nothing, however great or small, has come into being apart from the creating hand of God. The Lord also, we are told, created every winged bird after its kind. The variety in species and genera among the lower creatures results from the wonderfully rich and bountifully blessing hand of God. These creatures, in their way, manifest the glory of the richness and abundance of the life our God has made and sustains (Ps. 19:1).

Monday, September 15th - Genesis 1: 22, 23

In these verses we have the first of three divine blessings pronounced upon creation (cf. also 2:28 and 3:3). God blessed these animate creatures with an impulse to reproduce their kind. By their propagation, the many fish and fowl created by divine fiat would multiply into the great abundance that would fill the earth and seas. These animate creatures had a higher sentience, rendering them more capable of receiving the blessing of God than did the lower capacities of the plants render them capable of receiving such blessing. The animate creatures were to propagate not by seeds, but by the bearing of living offspring. The conceiving of such offspring would necessitate that these animate creatures employ their powers of movement to draw together, rather than to fight or flee from mates of their own kind. Thus, this blessing shows us the benefit of cooperation over the bane of competition.

Tuesday, September 16th - Genesis 1: 24, 25

The sixth day of creation was the one most full of divine activity of greatest import. The creative results of this day correspond to the divine work performed on the third day, when God made the land surface of the earth habitable for man and beast. The creative activity of the Lord began on the sixth day with Him calling forth from the earth animals, reptiles, and insects to fill the earth's land with animated life. This production of roaming beasts and domesticated animals, such as cattle, as well as creeping things, whether reptile or insect, was a divine provision upon the land already filled with stationary vegetation that God regarded as good. Clearly, our Lord delights to improve the good things of His providence with better things of higher perfection, fullness, and variety.

Wednesday, September 17th - Genesis 1: 26, 27

The second act of God on the sixth day of creation was to make man. By all that Scripture records of this divine activity, we are to perceive the high honor and

exaltation of man over all the lower creatures. For example, with man, there is recorded a unique engagement of the thought and counsel of God. From the Lord's commanding, He turns to consultation. The plural, Let us make..., has been variously interpreted, but we need not be embarrassed to perceive here the reflective harmony of the three persons of the Trinity. As John Calvin rightly wrote, when it came to the creation of man, God summoned no foreign counselor for the production of the crown of creation (Commentary on Genesis, p.92). With man, the higher thought and planning of God is evident in the words that precede His work. Nor has our God ever ceased to think specially of man (Ps. 40:5).

Thursday, September 18th - Genesis 1: 26, 27

The being of man is unique among the creatures of God. The Lord determined to make and did make man in His own image. No other creature was made with such special resemblance to the likeness of God. The powers man possesses of thought, reflection, recollection, as well as his moral nature—all exalt him above the lower creatures and draw him ever into special affinity with his divine Creator in whose image he has been made.

Friday, September 19th - Genesis 1: 26, 27

Man was not only most highly honored and exalted in his being made in the likeness of God, he was also given by God a rank and calling to rule over the lower creatures. The sovereign Lord granted to the man of His making dominion over all things, including not only the more easily domesticated animals, such as cattle, but also the more free ranging fish, birds, and creeping things. For this high calling—requiring immense powers of perception, understanding, wisdom, and practicality—man's having been made in the upright image of God would equip him. How inconceivably excellent in being and capable in doing must have been our first parents before their fall!

Saturday, September 20th - Genesis 1: 26, 27

We have the mental reflection of God in v.26 and its realization in v.27. The words of v.27 are, especially in the original Hebrew, exalted and poetic. The way God's creation of man is recorded in His Word emphasizes the marvelous truth that man bore the very image of God, which is exalted, beautiful, and glorious. The additional note, telling us that God made them male and female, informs us that it was not only Adam, the first man, who was made with a character resembling the divine, but all of mankind, derived from Adam, whether by special act of divine formation, as in the case of Eve, or by natural generation from our first parents. The original state and status of mankind was second only to that of God Himself.

Sunday, September 21st - Genesis 1: 28

This is the second blessing God pronounced upon His creation. It is similar to the first blessing that was pronounced upon the fish and fowl (v.22), in that it calls for and conferred upon man a desire to produce offspring through intimacy with his mate. However, this blessing is superior to the first in that man is directed and empowered also to have dominion over all creation. That which God determined for man in v.26, He delivers to man through this benediction. Before sin entered the world through man, causing man to fall from his exalted blessedness and prompting God to curse the lower creation, man had affinity with and exercised a rule over the lower creatures that harmonized its diverse elements and members. The Paradise we have lost because of our sin is practically inconceivable to us now.

Monday, September 22nd - Genesis 1: 29, 30

In these verses, the Lord communicates directly to man, telling him that He has made abundant provision for his feeding, as well as for the feeding of the lower creatures. This marks the third time Scripture mentions God being specially engaged with man, the crown of His creation (cf., v.26 and v.28). Also, at this point, we learn the highest use for which God had created the earth's vegetation. It served a more vital function than simply covering the barren soil with a pleasing variety of verdure for man's aesthetic delight. All of the seed bearing plants of the earth were given by God as food for man. In the pre-lapsed Paradise, no plant had revolting taste or qualities harmful to man, except for the one tree with divinely forbidden fruit (2:17). This gives us a glimpse of the new creation of God, where the glorified saints are saved from the presence and possibility of sin. The leaves—let alone the fruit—of that new creation will serve for man's health (Rev.22:2).

Tuesday, September 23rd - Genesis 1: 31

God has pronounced each stage of creation good. When the work of the six days of creation was completed, the Lord surveyed the entirety of His creative work and pronounced it very good. With our God, there is ever more excellency to the totality of His works than merely the sum of their components. We should be sobered to realize, however, that this very good world is to us a Paradise lost. No man after Adam has ever experienced a world without the thorns and thistles of the divine curse. Thanks be to God for His saving mercy, whereby He is preparing a new heaven and earth in which man reigns with holy felicity and delight.

Wednesday, September 24th - Genesis 2: 1-3

These verses give a summary of God's work of creation and tell of the institution of the Sabbath on the seventh day of the first week of the world's history. In v.1 we are told

of the completion of the creation of the heavens and the earth. That which God began by calling forth light, He completed by His creation of our first parents. With the culminating making of man and woman, a harmonious, whole system existed that manifested the wisdom, power, and goodness of God, who made the universe in its entirety as well as each individual component of it. These first three verses of the second chapter again focus our attention upon the truth that God made the world. Our universe did not result from random forces working over ages of time. Three times in these verses we read of *His work which He had done*. Our God is not just one among many forces in the universe; He created and He sustains all things for His glory.

Thursday, September 25th - Genesis 2: 1-3

We commonly speak of the six days of creation. It is true that all things in heaven and earth God fashioned in six days. However, creation was not perfected only by the working of God. Therefore, on the seventh day God instituted a perpetual component of creation's history that foreshadows the eternal Sabbath of the redeemed in glory. God blessed and made holy the seventh day by that which He said and did on that day. It is wrong for us to think that creation was complete without the Sabbath. The creation of God extends to His instituting a day of holy rest and worship for man, the crown of His creation.

Friday, September 26th – Genesis 2: 1-3

God may not have been fashioning components of creation on the seventh day, but He was creating a holy day by what He did and said on that day. The action of God on the seventh day was both negative and positive. Negatively, the Lord rested. We should not understand by the term, *rested*, that God recuperated from his exertions, but rather that He ceased His creative work because it had reached completion. Positively, the Lord refreshed Himself by taking delight in all that He had made. Read Ex. 20:11; 31:17 to see this positive element more clearly. Nor did God lose sight of the fact that all of creation is to serve for His glory. The Sabbath was instituted by God so that man might lead all of creation in the undistracted worship of the divine Creator.

Saturday, September 27th - Genesis 2: 1-3

God's action of cessation from His creative working on the seventh day does not imply that God was totally inactive on that day. We read of the Lord speaking and blessing the seventh day, sanctifying it, or making a separation of it from the other days by His so blessing it. This is the third divine blessing pronounced upon creation (cf., Gen. 1:22 and 1:28). This threefold blessing ascends in degree of significance. The fish and fowl were blessed with fruitfulness; man was blessed with fruitfulness and was exalted spiritually by his being made in God's image and thereby having dominion over all creation; while the Sabbath blessing is entirely spiritual and oriented towards God.

Sunday, September 28th - Genesis 2: 1-3

A word should be said regarding what is and is not written in these verses. What is written is that God sanctified, or made holy, the seventh day. This is the first time in the Bible the term *holy* is mentioned. It indicates to us that the goal of creation, and especially the chief end of man, is to hallow God's name. What is not mentioned in these verses is the evening and morning formula marking the days preceding the seventh. This is not to say that there was no beginning and ending of the seventh day, but rather the omission of the mention of those components of a day points to the eternal Sabbath to be enjoyed by the redeemed in glory to come.

Monday, September 29th - Genesis 2: 4-6

These verses introduce a more detailed recapitulation of the activity of God on the sixth day of creation, particularly with attention being focused on the creation of man. This second chapter of Genesis does not give a second creation account, but instead returns to give a more full account of the divine making of the crown of creation. There is also in vv.4-6 an anticipatory note of the coming (and now current) imperfection of creation. In v.4 we have a bridge that alerts us to the fact that further information will follow regarding the creation of man and the impact man will have on the world. The first hint of that impact is the notice given that there was, when man was created, no shrub of the field yet on the earth. That assertion seems to contradict Gen. 1:11, but the Hebrew words used there in and v.5 of our current passage differ. In Gen. 1:11 the word is for vegetation, and in Gen. 2:5 it is the same word used in Gen. 3:18, translated *thorns*. Thus, v. 5 gives acknowledgement that the world created by God differed from the world all men since Adam have known. In v.6 we are told that God created a world not having waters descend, producing floods or, by their not falling, droughts. The thorns and floods of our world came as a divine curse upon God's good world as a result of man's sin. This immensely ruinous impact man will have on God's good creation will become apparent in Gen. 3 and is apparent in all the world now.

Tuesday, September 30th - Genesis 2: 7

In Gen. 1:26ff we are told of the exalted nature and vocation of man. Adam was made in God's image and given, by God, dominion over all of the lower creation. Now, in this current verse, we learn that this high exaltation of man is not an essential attribute of man, but rather results from God's impartation of life and honor to man. Essentially, man is dust (Gen. 3:19, Ps. 103:14). God formed man's physical being, not from malleable clay, but from the unlikely, humble, and easily scattered dust of the earth. What made man to be animated and exalted was that God breathed into him the breath of His own divine life. Accordingly, as the Word of God holds the elements of creation together (Col. 1:17; Heb. 1:3), so the Spirit of God, breathed by God uniquely into man, gave cohesion to the essentially dispersive components of his physical being, while imparting to him a soul capable of apprehending the God who is its source. Man truly is fearfully and wonderfully made (Ps. 139:14).

Wednesday, October 1st - Genesis 2: 7

Man was not called by divine fiat from the earth, as were the animals, but was formed by God from the earth's dust. Then God breathed into man, making him a living soul. This is how God made the first man, Adam. Eve was made differently by God, but no less miraculously. All other men have been born into the world through their parents. Adam's physical component gave him affinity with the lower creation, while the animating breath of God gave him affinity with his Maker. So long as man maintained his affinity with God, he would not revert to his essential state of scattered, dry, lifeless, dust, and he would have authority and power to have dominion over the lower creation.

Thursday, October 2nd - Genesis 2: 8, 9

Chronologically, God made the garden before He made man. That chronological order is given in outline form in Gen. 1. Here in Gen. 2, the arrangement is more thematic. Thus, after we are given further details regarding man's creation, we are told more about the local environment God had made for man. The immediate environment of man was especially suited to sustain his life and provide him with delight. In fact, delight, in Paradise, has a priority over mere existence. The trees, we are told, were first *pleasing to the sight*, as well as being *good for food*. God made man's environment to be a perfect balance between the pleasing and the practical. We should note, however, that the garden was the garden of God (Ez. 28:13; 31:9), and not in the first instance an abode for man. It was a perfect environment for the reception and nurture of man into fellowship with his God. Man's life was to be God-centered (Rev. 2:7).

Friday, October 3rd - Genesis 2: 8, 9

Our attention is drawn in v.9 to two special trees God planted in the garden. The tree of life was a tree sacramentally conveying to man the potency not only to sustain, but also to advance man's life. By Adam's partaking of this sacramental provision of God, he would live forever and with increasing, not diminishing, vigor and blessing. Once man fell by his sin, God drove him from this sacramental tree, mercifully depriving him of the possibility of his living forever as a fallen sinner (Gen. 3:22, 23). Now, for those in Christ, death serves to usher them into the gain of perfection and glory (Phil. 1:21).

Saturday, October 4th – Genesis 2: 8, 9

The other special, sacramental tree God planted in the garden was the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. This tree contained fruit that would impart to man intellectual and moral development. However, as we shall see, man's right moral and intellectual development would take place through his submission to his God, not through his autonomous partaking of things that, apart from God's giving, would result not only in man's becoming intellectually and morally darkened, but also would result in his death. Man is blessed by what God gives to him, as well as by what God withholds from him (Job 1:21). It was for Adam, as it is for us, that the way to life and abundance was through trusting the Lord and not leaning on his own understanding (Ps. 3:5,6).

Sunday, October 5th - Genesis 2: 10-14

These verses inform us that the garden was well watered and contained beautiful and precious metals and gem stones. There were four branches flowing from the single water source from Eden. Some of these rivers, such as the Tigris and Euphrates, we can identify in our world today. Others we cannot. The intention of this description is not that we identify the geographical location of Eden, for, since the fall, Eden has ceased to exist in this world. However, some of the remaining remnants of Eden's river serve to remind us of the perpetually refreshed state of the Paradise man has lost, and point us to the glorified state of the redeemed (Ps. 46:4,5; Rev. 22:1-4). Likewise, the precious metals and stones find themselves later employed in the ephod and breast piece of Israel's high priest (Ex. 28:9,12,17-20; 29:10-13) as well as in prophetic symbolism (Ezek. 28:13; Rev. 21:19-21). These tokens also point back to Paradise lost and forward to the glory of the new creation. Our pilgrimage in this life is from our self-caused ruin to the glorious restoration our God has graciously granted to us in Christ.

Monday, October 6th - Genesis 2: 7-14

We should understand from this passage that a divinely cultivated environment is best for a divinely created man. The environment of Eden has been lost by man's choosing, although some traces of its precious and delightful character remain in our world. Men universally appreciate water supplies for their cities and gold and jewels for their adornment. These trace treasures, however, will be restored in perfection and abundance by God for His people. Although fallen man thinks his great need is for more natural resources and rare minerals, the great object of God's reclaiming, restoring, and transforming work is man himself. By faith in Christ, men can find rivers of living water issuing from their own hearts (Jn. 7:38), as they proceed through this world's wilderness, not to a garden, but to the glorious city of God.

Tuesday, October 7th - Genesis 2: 15

Work is commonly conceived by man as a curse to be avoided, or as an idol to produce one's wealth and enhance one's prestige. The Word of God, however, teaches us that work is a gift of God, given to man for his own good. This verse teaches us that God not only made a place for man, but also that God gave man responsibilities to work out in that place. The Lord God put man in the garden for a purpose. That purpose was not so that man might indulge in autonomous living or godless discovery and exploitation of creation. Rather, the Lord issued Adam two directives so that man would maintain his affinity with the lower creation and realize that his highest blessing was dependent upon his knowing and doing God's expressed will. The vocations to which our God calls us ever serve our welfare so long as we fulfill them by His enabling grace and for His glory.

Wednesday, October 8th - Genesis 2: 15

The first directive God gave Adam was that he should cultivate the garden. The cultivation of the garden neither involved arduous labor nor strenuous tilling and planting. These laborious features came later, in consequence of man's sin and God's resultant curse on the earth (Gen. 3:17,23). What Adam was engaged to do was to dress

and nurture the plants of the garden. He was to employ his superior powers to care for and cultivate the growing vegetation of the garden to higher perfection than the plants would have attained had they not been nurtured by man. Fallen man ruins his environment, due to his greedy exploitation of natural resources and his short-sighted and prodigal use thereof. Sinless man is a benefit, not a bane, to his environment.

Thursday, October 9th - Genesis 2: 15

God charged Adam to keep as well as to cultivate the garden. This term translated, *to keep*, contains the notion of consecrating, separating, and even guarding, the contents of the garden from inappropriate elements. What would those elements have been? God knew before Adam knew, and the success of Adam's keeping of the garden would rise or fall as he kept his mind and heart fixed on his God. At this point, the divine directive to guard the garden was intended to forewarn and forearm Adam against the sort of subtle intrusion that we find taking place in Gen. 3. We ignore or make light of God's calling us to vigilance to our own peril.

Friday, October 10th - Genesis 2: 15, 16

The words of v.15 express the intention of God when he placed Adam in the garden. However, the first word of command spoken by God to Adam is not a call for the man to bear responsibility, but rather to partake of divinely granted resources. In v.16 we learn that God commanded man to experience and enjoy a vast freedom. Adam's warrant to partake of the fruit of any tree of the garden resulted not from his own working or deserving, but from God's gracious giving. This first command of God to man in the Bible, that directs man to enjoy fully the bountiful provision of God, reveals the essential character of all of God's commands to man, namely, that they lead us to life, liberty, and joy (Ps. 19:8-11).

Saturday, October 11th - Genesis 2: 16

This verse speaks not only with respect to the vastly generous provision of God for Adam's physical food. It implies an almost limitless freedom to man. Before his fall, Adam could partake mentally and physically of practically everything in creation. It was almost impossible for man to sin in Paradise. Everything—the fruit of one tree excepted—was granted to him by God. Now, in our cursed world, occasions for sin surround us and dwell within us. How far we have fallen! Yet, in heaven, we shall be saved from the power, presence, and possibility of sin. Then we shall be free indeed!

Sunday, October 12th - Genesis 2: 16, 17

The bounteous provision God made for Adam was not, however, limitless. There were boundaries set to righteous living. These boundaries were set by God, who is essentially righteous, and thus the source and standard for righteousness. In all of creation, Adam could only transgress in one place, by doing one thing there, and that being an action that was legitimate and necessary for man in any other place in the

world. The command of God to Adam was exceedingly generous in its positive dimension, and exceedingly miniscule in its negative dimension. Both aspects of the divine command, however, served for the preservation and enhancement of Adam's life.

Monday, October 13th - Genesis 2: 17

The prohibition God gave to man was exceedingly small, but vitally significant. Adam was forbidden by God to eat from a single tree. That tree was like all other trees in that it bore fruit, seemingly good for food and pleasing to the sight (2:9; 3:6). Its fruit, however, sacramentally contained the knowledge of good and evil. Knowledge here means mental cognition joined with moral approbation. It was the knowledge of good in distinction from evil. So far, Adam had only knowledge of good, because he was made good and knew only the God of all goodness. The Lord prohibited man to know evil in distinction from this good; or to develop moral affinity with evil in distinction from the good with which he had moral affinity. What God grants *and* what he denies is for our good.

Tuesday, October 14th - Genesis 2: 17

By God's forbidding man to partake of the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, we are to understand that man's true moral and intellectual development would rightly take place by his submission to God, and not by his own efforts. Our highest good is always served by our obeying the prohibitions as well as the things permitted by our Lord. All that the Lord gives us is life, and all that He withholds from us is death.

Wednesday, October 15th - Genesis 2: 17

It is significant that the single prohibition God gave to man had to do with something that man could eat. The fact that man must eat should make it obvious that he is a dependent being. Man lives or dies by what he consumes. The prohibition was to afford man the opportunity freely to submit to the truth that his life consisted not in what he ate alone, but by every word that proceeded from the mouth of the Lord God—even when that word was one of forbidding. Adam and Eve would have lived and grown in happiness and holiness had they refused to feed upon that which was counter to what God had spoken. We, too, grow in every blessed way when we feed on God's Word, and refuse to partake of what now are the many things He has forbidden us to consume.

Thursday, October 16th - Genesis 2: 17

The sanction God added to His prohibition was death. Adam's partaking of the fruit from all trees except the forbidden one would sustain and enhance his life. His eating from this single, forbidden tree would destroy his life. The immediate and irreversible effect of his eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil would be his death. God does not define what He means by death, but Adam must have known. We, by bitter experience, know something of this death. It would be, for Adam, immediate separation

from God, whom to know is eternal life (Jn. 17:3), resulting in man's eventual but inevitable death, which would be not merely cessation of his being—a return to the non-existence that preceded his life—but would be his condemnation by the holy justice of God, and his confinement in eternal fire prepared for the devil and his unholy angels (Mt. 25: 41).

Friday, October 17th - Genesis 2: 18

The provision God made for Adam in his exalted vocation and lavish sustenance was countered by a single prohibition. Man needed what the tree of the knowledge of good and evil symbolized, but he was to have it supplied to him by God, not by the taking of his own hand. There were other needs in Adam, as well, that were more obvious to God than to Adam himself. Hence, for the first time in the Bible, God proclaims that something was not good, namely, that man should be alone, having no companion of his species. Our God always knows our deepest needs before we do, and He is best able to fulfill them.

Saturday, October 18th - Genesis 2: 18

It was not good for man to be alone for reasons obvious and not so obvious. Regarding the obvious reasons why Adam should not remain alone, the first is that a solitary Adam was a defective man. As God made Adam for fellowship with Himself, so He made Adam for fellowship with his own kind. But if Adam remained alone, there would be no human fellowship. Had God made another man, that man and Adam could have had fellowship, but there would have been no increase and propagation of the human race. A less obvious reason why it was not good for man to be alone is that as there was fellowship in the distinction of persons of the Trinity, so a family consisting of husband, wife, and children would reflect that blessed fellowship and serve for man's greater felicity. The wisdom and goodness of God can be seen in His creation of woman for man.

Sunday, October 19th - Genesis 2: 18-20

God not only perceived the need in Adam, but also determined to provide for that need. It would not be man's aspiration or accomplishment that would supply this need, but God's gracious giving. What he needed, and what God would supply, would be one who could provide the help that Adam, in particular, needed. The Hebrew word translated, *helper*, has the connotation of one who confronts, like a mirror confronts a man, showing him his own self. It also has the connotation of one who completes, or complements. This helper would be *for* Adam, namely, one of suitable affinity committed to cooperation with Adam, not competition against him. As vv.19,20 indicate, no such creature existed for Adam on the sixth day of creation, before God created this unique helper. Men will always be frustrated so long as they seek their fulfillment in things other than the glory of God and His gracious gifts.

Monday, October 20th - Genesis 2: 18-20

It was not good for the first man to be alone. Therefore, God provided for Adam at first a limited fulfillment of his need through his career. In keeping with his blessed vocation of having dominion over the lower creation, Adam named all of the animals. He did not search for them, but God brought them to Adam, indicating that man best exercises his dominion when he waits on the Lord. Adam's naming the animals is an act of authority, for to know the name of something is to exercise authority over it (Jud. 13:18; Lk. 8:30). It was also an exercise that demonstrated the inconceivably great wisdom and intelligence of the sinless first man, for the names given reflected Adam's discernment of the essence of the animals' nature. Ever since the fall, man has tried laboriously to discover, analyze, and classify the elements of his world—all of which Adam did infallibly on the first day of his being.

Tuesday, October 21st - Genesis 2: 20

Despite the limited fulfillment of Adam's vocation, we learn that what he needed even more than a career was a suitable companion. This need would have become increasingly apparent to Adam himself during the course of his naming the animals. He would have become ever more aware of his solitary state as he saw the animals, with each kind containing mated pairs. But neither any of the animals nor all of them together could fill the need and growing longing Adam had for human companionship. The supply for that need would come not from Adam's efforts but from God's giving. Our deepest and truest needs are prophetic of God's good supply in our lives.

Wednesday, October 22nd - Genesis 2: 21, 22

These verses tell us not only that God provided for Adam's need, but also how the Lord made that provision. God took the initiative, as He always does, first rendering Adam passive by sleep, death's imitator. God makes Adam unconscious so that he might awaken to be conscious of the perfect provision of God for his life, a helper having perfect affinity with him. Our tendency is to resist the divine efforts to humble us and to reduce us to helplessness and total dependence upon the Lord. Yet, God makes His best provision for us when we are least expecting, deserving, and able to have it.

Thursday, October 23rd - Genesis 2: 21, 22

God not only caused Adam to sleep, but the Lord wounded the man, opening his flesh to remove a rib. The rib, from Adam's side, would be used by God to form Eve. That a rib, rather than a toe bone or head bone, was used to fashion Eve indicates to us that woman, before sin, was essentially equal with man, neither having rule over him, nor being under his domination. Sin has spoiled this arrangement of essential equality, but we find a hint of its restoration for those in Christ in such verses that tell us that in Christ there is neither male nor female (Gal. 3:28), and that husbands and wives are fellow heirs of grace in Christ (1 Pet. 3:7). All that sin has ruined, God restores in Christ in a way better than it was before it was spoiled.

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Friday, October 24th - Proverbs 3: 1,2

The giver of wisdom is not a begrudging miser or a harsh instructor. Rather, He is our heavenly Father. He addresses us in terms not only true and faithful, but also tenderly loving. Here we are taught not to begin the gradual departure from His way of blessing by our forgetting His teaching, but positively to embrace His directives with our whole heart. This is not only proper considering who gives these commandments and our relation to Him, but also in view of the blessing which attends our obedience. Our days will be full, productive, and gratifying, adding up to a long and happy life.

Saturday, October 25th - Proverbs 3: 3,4

In contrast with the devious destructiveness of evil, we are urged to embrace and exercise mercy and truth, which please both God and man. But notice that this kindness, or love, and truth are set before us as two harmonious parts of one beautiful and blessed whole. Kindness without truth is a weak sentimentality which confirms people in their sin, rather than helping them out of it. Likewise, truth without love can be cold and cutting without ministering comfort. Thus we are to speak the truth in love (Eph. 4:15), and before we can do that we must apply kindness and truth as permanent adornments to our outer life and as permanent engravings upon our hearts.

Sunday, October 26th - Proverbs 3: 5,6

We are directed to place supreme confidence in the Lord. Ours is to be a wholehearted trust in Him, without any reservation wherein we rely upon our own finite and fallible reasoning. Our deceitful hearts corrupt our understanding and lead us into devious and devastating paths (Jer. 17:5,9). Thus, our entire and exclusive trust is to be in the One who would never deceive or disappoint us. This attitude of confidence we are to live out in action, seeking our guidance and our motivating power from the Lord, whose actions toward us demonstrate His trustworthiness while bringing certitude to His promise to lead us in straight and successful paths (Rom. 8:32).

Monday, October 27th - Proverbs 3: 7,8

The person aiming to be wise in his own eyes deceives himself. His standards of wisdom are not only too low and erroneous, but they are ever changing. A higher and truer standard should be our aim. Our reverent submission to the Lord, far from being

irrational and intellectually suicidal, is the most reasonable and wise thing we could do. Where such godly fear prevails, we are enabled to discern, hate, and turn from all evil. Such turning from evil to the Lord brings refreshment and invigoration to us outwardly and inwardly. His joy and peace impart strength which more than vindicates the wisdom of our choosing His way.

Tuesday, October 28th - Proverbs 3: 9,10

The forsaking of our finite, fallen understanding in order to embrace the perfect wisdom of the Lord with its salubrious powers makes perfect sense. However, the call to part with the first and best of our wealth in service to the Lord may seem less sensible. Thus, the rich young ruler departed sorrowfully from Jesus (Lk. 18:18-23), reckoning the apparently sacrificial cost of discipleship greater than he was willing to bear. Yet, we give to One who has given us not only the least of His mercies, but in Christ, the greatest. Therefore, our giving to Him tends ever to enrich rather than impoverish us.

Wednesday, October 29th - Proverbs 3: 11, 12

The discipline of the Lord is administered through His Word and works. The aspect of that discipline we are most likely to reject is when the Lord reproveth our waywardness through His providentially ordaining a course of suffering for us. We can see no farther than the unwanted pain we feel in affliction, and hence we see no good purpose superintending or issuing from our trials. But we should ever reckon the hand of our loving heavenly Father to be using our afflictions for our good. Far from our rejecting His discipline, we should embrace it as a proof of our adoption (Heb. 12:4-11), as a means to save us from greater harm while at the same time forcing us to rely more completely on divine grace (2 Cor. 12:7-10), as an instrument for the refinement of our faith (1 Pet. 1:6,7), and as a servant working to produce for us an eternal weight of glory (2 Cor. 4:17,18).

Thursday, October 30th - Proverbs 3: 13-15

Divine wisdom is incomparably precious, as it confers delight and blessing which nothing else can even remotely provide. Sometimes men find such wisdom, as though accidentally running across it, and sometimes they must search diligently for it. The word translated *gains* in most English versions of v.13 has the idea of drawing out some hidden treasure. However we come to possess this pearl of greatest price, we should know that we can never overvalue it. Instead, we must guard against our undervaluing it, lest we find ourselves distracted by the cheap glitter of this world, which is cold, dead, and deadening.

Friday, October 31st - Proverbs 3: 16-18

In contrast to the lifeless riches of this world, wisdom is personified as a living, life-giving and empowering force. She not only dispenses long life, but equips her possessors with knowledge, skill, courageous confidence, and grace so that they avoid needless conflicts, with the stress and concern which accompany them. When conflict is unavoidable, she inspires peace within, thus fortifying us so that we weather the storms. This adds delight to the duration of life. Nor are true riches ever lacking. For wisdom enables us to perceive, pursue, and attain solid joys and lasting treasures. However, we must hold her fast to be so blessed by her.

Saturday, November 1st - Proverbs 3: 19,20

Paul tells us that every man perceives the eternal power and divine nature of God through the created order (Rom. 1:19,20), while David declares that the heavens are telling the glory of God (Ps. 19:1). These things are evident to man because the Lord employed wisdom in creating the earth and sky. The universe is no lifeless assortment of random forces. Every aspect of creation—every atom, every mountain, every star, every river—cries out with testimony of divine plan, purpose, and skill. The world was not only established, but it is now upheld by the word of Christ's power (Col. 1:16,17). The redeemed soul not only recognizes but also rejoices in the truth that every iota of this world of time and space is established and governed by his Lord.

Sunday, November 2nd - Proverbs 3: 21,22

Once more, with a Father's love, the Lord admonishes His children to attend diligently to the cultivation of godly wisdom and that discretion which acts in accordance with it. Such wisdom and discretion are not to be sought out only occasionally; instead, they are to be ever our focus. We are constantly to attend to them not only because our heavenly Father bids us do so, but also because they transfuse His life into our souls, with all of the wonder and glory of the divine life. That life also shines out of us, thus adorning us with heavenly beauty amidst even the most mundane circumstances here below.

Monday, November 3rd - Proverbs 3: 23,24

Godly wisdom fills our lives with beautiful heavenly glory. It also enlightens and empowers us to live in the most secure and fruitful way here on earth. The wisdom of God enables us to make progress in our way, however difficult that way may at times

become. Whatever obstacles we encounter, this wisdom provides such a true and deep and expansive context of understanding, making us all the while conscious of manifold divine resources, that we continue taking steps when progress seems impossible. Those steps prove to be sure, too! Likewise, when the time comes to wait and to rest, we do so without fear of being overtaken by evil, even when it surrounds us with gathering strength as a storm. Think of Peter sleeping in prison (Acts 12:6), or Jesus asleep in the storm-tossed boat (Mk. 4:38).

Tuesday, November 4th - Proverbs 3: 25,26

To the indicatives of vv.22-24 is now added an imperative. Those possessing and pursuing divine wisdom are directed not to fear. When we fear God, we shall have no other fear. He will ever be with us to fortify us within and to serve as a shield and refuge without. He can never be caught by surprise, so we need not fear sudden threats. He cannot be overpowered by hosts of the wicked, hence we need not fear overwhelming odds against us. He has various ways of enabling us to escape danger (e.g., David eluding Saul), or to neutralize threats (e.g., Elisha's dealings with the Syrian armies in 2 Kings 6:15-23).

Wednesday, November 5th - Proverbs 3: 27,28

Divine wisdom not only protects us from the attacks of evil, it also directs and empowers us to do good to all men, so that we overcome evil with good. Godly confidence begets magnanimous living. We should not seek selfishly to hoard our powers or possessions, even when we are able to do so, and certainly never when what we have we owe to another as his due. Nor are we to procrastinate in our giving. Needless delay is in the eyes of the Lord equivalent to unrighteous denial.

Thursday, November 6th - Proverbs 3: 29-33

Our withholding good due to others is but one form of sin which godly wisdom forbids. The evil of our doing our neighbor harm is also prohibited. We must neither contend with him without just cause, nor mentally devise ways to hurt him. We can only consider such harmful attitudes and actions when we remove our focus from the Lord and look enviously upon ruthless pragmatists, who advance themselves at the expense of others. But such men of violence, far from being strong and truly enviable, are crooked and cursed. They not only are strangers to the blessed intimacy with the Lord which the upright enjoy, but also render themselves and their households abominable objects of His curse.

Friday, November 7th - Proverbs 3: 34,35

Selfish pride puffs up a man so that he thinks and acts contemptuously toward others, including the Lord. Furthermore, pride is a dynamic force, which does not stop with scoffing, but goes on, if unchecked, to murder. Such a destructive evil is opposed most consistently and righteously by our just and loving God. Scripture clearly reiterates this truth, not only in the expressions of James (Jas. 4:6) and Peter (1 Pet. 5:5), but also through the examples of God's dealings with Satan (Is. 14:12-15), with the builders of Babel's tower (Gen. 11:4-9), with Pharaoh (Ex. 3:19,20), and many other such proud opponents throughout history. Yet, to those humbled by their afflictions and the consequent awareness of their need, the Lord gives grace which powerfully transforms them from being puffed up, self-deceived fools, who glory in their shame, to being inheritors of the honor and glory of the Lord.

Those who would erect their own thrones will find their efforts serving to dishonor and destroy themselves, as Haman's gallows destroyed Haman himself, not Mordecai (Esth. 7:10). But those who embrace the crucified Redeemer and His cross never fail to inherit a matchless crown.

Saturday, November 8th - Proverbs 4: 1-9

To the words of the divine Father respecting the virtues and powers of wisdom is now added the testimony of an earthly father, Solomon. He tells us that from his own experience he has discovered the truth of the claims of God's Word and wisdom, and has enjoyed the reward thereof. Such blessed experience he desires to see being repeated in the lives of all those spiritually akin to himself.

The written Word of God repeatedly urges us to pursue the narrow way which leads to life and blessing. The Word made flesh in the lives and experiences of God's people does likewise. No one who in good faith and resolute commitment has submitted himself to learn the lessons of divine discipleship has ever stood to testify of disappointment.

Sunday, November 9th - Proverbs 4: 4-9

Godly and loving fathers should aim not primarily at the head of their children (i.e., their mental education), nor at their hands (i.e., their outward behavior), but at their hearts. We should never rest until our children embrace with true, inner conviction and delight, the glorious revelation of God in the gospel. Only as they treasure the fear of the Lord, and love His Word because they love Him, will they be properly motivated to learn more about Him and themselves and the world in which they live, acquiring the gracious,

noble, and beautiful mind of Christ as the fruit of such edifying endeavor. The ring of truth comes through such penetrating urgings to our children only when Christ is truly treasured in our own hearts.

Monday, November 10th - Proverbs 4: 10-13

The invitation becomes more personal here. From sons in v.1, Solomon addresses us as individuals, as though each one sat before him hearing the call, *My son*. Such an earnest call is not issued for our harm, but for our good. The Lord and His servants call us to pursue a wise, righteous and life-bestowing course. The godly path into which we are summoned is also the only way of true efficiency and felicity through our pilgrimage here and now. For when we are equipped with the wisdom of the Almighty, nothing can stop our progress or even slow it when the pace quickens. Because this wisdom is so valuable and potent, we should spare no effort in our quest to attain and maintain our grasp of it. If we let this treasure slip away, we let our lives go with it.

Tuesday, November 11th - Proverbs 4: 14-17

Wickedness and wisdom are mutually exclusive. To choose one is to forsake the other. Of course wicked men attempt to appear wise and would thus entice us into their way. But the Word of God in strongest, reiterated, and categorical terms tells us to avoid the path of the wicked, which, as we proceed on it, opens up into an engulfing way. For wickedness is a destructive obsession which we do well to resist, to reject, to avoid altogether, as a wise seafarer would give wide berth to a maelstrom, the force of which intensifies as one is drawn nearer to its center.

Wednesday, November 12th - Proverbs 4: 18,19

What a contrast there is between the way of the righteous and that of the wicked. The righteous proceed in a narrow path as opposed to a wide way. Yet each step the godly man takes in obedience to the Lord empowers him to go on in that way which leads to life. His path grows brighter and more blessed with each step, as the brightness of God's Word and the energizing ministry of His Spirit increase towards perfection. Yet the seemingly wide way of the wicked is dark and dangerous. The godless do not see the obstacles strewn in their way, and thus they constantly are stumbling. The righteous may have their wills crossed by the narrow confines of God's path, but that path directs to blessing. The wicked likewise have their wills crossed by things in their way, yet those things are not the confines of a path leading somewhere, but rather are a random assortment of pitfalls which the wicked do not see, which lead to nowhere, and from which the wicked, even once they fall into them, learn nothing.

Thursday, November 13th - Proverbs 4: 20-22

The steps of the righteous are confirmed by repeated instruction and admonition from God's Word. We are to hear and heed the sayings of the Lord. We are to make His Word the constant focus of our attention, and we must be satisfied with nothing short of the deepest recesses of our being longing for and living out that Word. Heart and head, attitude and action must ever go together in the school of discipleship. The result is that we are made alive and whole in every level of our being, by the pure, powerful, and everlasting life of God growing in our souls.

Friday, November 14th - Proverbs 4: 23-27

Pretend piety is concerned only with outward appearance. True piety is concerned with reality. As a man thinks in his heart, so is he. Hence, the Word of God places priority upon the condition of the inner man. When we successfully guard our hearts from Satan's attacks and from the seductions of the world, it then naturally follows that our outer life will testify to the inner victory. Our words will be true, our faculties will be concentrated upon godly responsibilities, our actions will be in accordance therewith, and our accomplishments will be many and enduring. Where there is a godly will, the way will be godly. Yet, though the spirit may be willing, the flesh remains weak. Thus, we must guard not only our hearts, but also our walk, resisting the distractions and deviations which lead ever and only to evil.

Saturday, November 15th - Proverbs 5: 1-6

Here is a warning against adultery which we may apply either literally, spiritually, or both. We should remain faithful to our own—to our own spouse, and in a higher sense, to our own Lord. There are for all of us powerful and seductive temptations toward infidelity. Our only hope of resistance is in our attending to God's Word, which not only warns us, but forearms us with a true and penetrating sketch of the tactics and true nature of such seducers. The adulteress sweetly and smoothly promises intimate enjoyment, but she essentially remains a strange woman, seeking to allure us from those who love us purely, legitimately, and with true intimacy. Despite all she promises, she can only provide bitterness, destruction, death. Her nature and ways are essentially opposed to the life and solidifying integrity which we seek in Christ. We, knowing this, should beware!

Sunday, November 16th - Proverbs 5: 7-14

Solomon knew from experience something of the bitter fruit of infidelity

(1 Kings 11:1-8). He would spare us the same experience by urging us to stay as far as possible away from the bewitching spells of seduction. For loss of happiness and honor await all who succumb to the strange woman. We lose our strength and our years, not to find them as when we lose our lives for Christ's sake (Mt. 10:39), but only to lament their irretrievable loss. The seducer promises gain, only to provide wasteful loss. The strange woman draws us into a company of strangers who loot us and leave us. When we have nothing more to give, we are abandoned by them, left only with the tormenting thoughts of our determined and perverse refusal to profit from the godly warning and instruction offered to us by true and loving teachers, who sought only to enrich us with the Word of life and health and peace.

Monday, November 17th - Proverbs 5: 15

Godly warnings against adultery deprive us of nothing but bitterness, loss, harm, destruction, and death. At the same time they prompt us to reflect upon and enjoy the pure, refreshing and invigorating joys which the Lord has given us in our own spouse, and, in the highest sense, in Himself. Can anyone who is unfaithful testify of receiving true and lasting delight? Can anyone faithful to the Lord and the life's partner given by Him tell of lasting disappointment? Never in both cases!

Tuesday, November 18th - Proverbs 5: 15-18

From the more still and passive cistern and well, signifying a man's wife, the image changes to springs, streams, and fountain—active sources of water, signifying the husband. Whereas v.15 contemplates the man's enjoyments of pure refreshment when he remains faithful, vv.16-18 consider the loss a man inflicts upon his wife when he is unfaithful. She, too, is refreshed by his love, and he should reserve for her that most intimate dimension of his love which is, by God's institution, rightly due her. Note that a man's joy is found not only in his receiving his wife's love, but also in giving his love to her. Man and wife are both blessed when they maintain godly relationships; no one is blessed when they do not.

Wednesday, November 19th - Proverbs 5: 18,19

If men would discipline themselves to concentrate upon and cultivate contentment with what the Lord has given them, they would find a far greater source of delight than they have capacity to enjoy. This is particularly true in human marriage, but it also applies to friendships and situations which we all have, including the unmarried, in the Lord. His gifts always look better on closer inspection. This is especially true when we contemplate the Lord Himself. He and His gifts are truly best and most delightful for us.

Thursday, November 20th - Proverbs 5: 20-23

Why do men exchange the pure and purifying pleasures afforded them in the provision of the Lord, for a wayward and wearisome pursuit, which leads only to bondage and death? The answer is that they despise the Lord. When we do not consider the hurt we cause others by our unfaithfulness, and the damage we inflict upon ourselves thereby, it is because we have ceased considering the Lord, who knows and considers our every action and attitude. Yet when we care supremely for Him, we find His watching and weighing of our lives to be loving watch-care for our highest good and inexpressible joy.

Friday, November 21st - Proverbs 6: 1-5

In our fallen world, we must guard against not only the enticements of enemies, but also the unwarranted and unwise entanglements of friends. It is not that we are never to become surety for a neighbor. The good Samaritan, commended by Jesus, did that (Lk. 10:35). But the younger and more inexperienced a person is, the more likely he is to feel that the range of his good will is equal to the wherewithal which may be required to pay a debt. Therefore, rash commitments are made, from which we do well to extricate ourselves as soon as possible. It is better for us, for our neighbor, and for the honor of the Lord, that we admit our mistake as soon as possible, than prove ourselves eventually to be deceptive clouds without water.

Saturday, November 22nd - Proverbs 6: 1-5

We are not the Lord, who with His infinite store of grace and power can and did stand as surety for those in infinite debt. Although He spurs us to express generosity, He also warns us against making commitments which the limitations of His providence for us will not allow us to keep. Thus, if we overreach in our commitments, divine wisdom dictates that we humbly admit our mistake, informing our neighbor that we are not the Lord, whom we to some degree impersonate by our grand, unwarranted promises, and beg our leave from that which would bind us and, if applicable, our families, to crushing loss.

Sunday, November 23rd - Proverbs 6: 6-8

If one desires truly to be generous, he will do well not to offer vain, ill-considered promises to his neighbor, but rather to work diligently so that he will acquire resources to share with those in need (Eph. 4:28). It is a shame that indolence reduces a man to the

point where even a small insect, by its instinct, lives more wisely, responsibly, and fruitfully than he. But if a man is willing to humble and apply himself, he may learn valuable lessons even from the tiniest aspects of God's creation, and profit immeasurably thereby.

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

God took something from Adam, neither to diminish the man nor to ruin his life. Rather, the Lord removed Adam's rib to return it to him inconceivably improved. The Lord often takes from us only to give back to us better than what He took. The boy's lunch of fish and bread was miraculously multiplied, not when he had it in his own possession, but when he yielded it into the miraculously multiplying hand of Jesus (Jn. 6:1-14). Whether our God takes from us our lunch or our lives, He does so not to impoverish us, but infinitely to enrich us.

Tuesday, November 25th - Genesis 2: 21, 22

The language of v.21 indicates that the Lord opened Adam's side to remove his rib, then closed the opening He had made in the man. The sleep God caused to overcome Adam spared him the physical pain of this procedure. The hand of God, healing the man's wounded side, restored Adam so that he would have hardly known, if he knew at all, that God had removed something from him. Our Lord does not inflict pain or impose cost upon us greater than we can bear, and most of the time His dealings with us are so tender and considerate that we are hardly aware of any loss.

Wednesday, November 26th – Genesis 2: 21,22

God certainly could have fashioned Eve from dust as He had done with Adam. However, the Lord sovereignly chose to use part of man's anatomy as the material from which He would form Adam's helpmeet. By this mode of God's making Eve from man, it is made clear to us not only that it was not good for man to be alone, but also that woman forms the compliment and completion of man. Woman was made by God from man and for man, and both man and woman are incomplete apart from that union for which God made them. That is why Paul can write that he who loves his wife loves himself (Eph. 5:28).

Thursday, November 27th - Genesis 2: 22

As God took the initiative in seeing and providing for Adam's need, so He took the initiative in bringing to Adam the woman He had fashioned for the man. The best and most necessary things of our lives are not those things we discover or manufacture, but rather are the things our God prepares and fashions for us and brings to us. That is why it is for believers a virtue not only to work for the Lord, but also to wait upon Him.

Friday, November 28th - Genesis 2: 23

Adam immediately and rightly recognizes in the woman, made by God from Adam and for Adam, one with whom he had greatest affinity among all of creation, and one with whom he could share deepest intimacy and find his highest earthly completion. With his declaration, Adam first recognizes the physical affinity he shared with the woman. She was bone and flesh of his bone and flesh. But more deeply, Adam sees and accepts the woman as his true soul mate, calling her woman, a term derived from man. By this declaration, Adam conferred his name and all that pertained to him upon the woman. Finally, Adam, as in his naming all of the animals, displays the astonishing insight, knowledge, and wisdom inherent in his unfallen humanity when he declares that the woman was taken out of man. This verse does not say that God informed Adam of Eve's origin, but rather that upon his seeing her, Adam correctly and gratefully perceived that she was formed by God out of his own substance and for his greatest satisfaction. How fearfully and wonderfully God made our first parents!

Saturday, November 29th - Genesis 2: 24

From Adam's proclamation regarding Eve, a pattern is set for all men whom the Lord would call into the estate of holy matrimony. A man is deemed the family head once he marries a wife. Prior to his marriage, he is considered part of his father's household. Yet, marriage obliges him to leave the intimate relation with his parents, as well as his father's authority, to form a more intimate relation with his wife, and to serve as her head, provider, and protector. There is no human relationship that is more intimate than that which exists between a man and his wife.

Sunday, November 30th - Genesis 2: 24

The reference to a man and his wife becoming one flesh has several connotations. It refers to the supreme, loving intimacy that should obtain between a husband and wife—each one knowing and regarding the other as part of his own body. It also refers to sexual union between a husband and his wife—a union that God never intended for any except those united in holy matrimony to experience. It also refers to the children issuing from the loving intimacy of a man and his wife, the offspring of a man and his wife being

physically composed of genes from both their father and mother. The loving provision of God bears manifold fruit and satisfaction for those participating rightly in that divine provision. It is sin that separates people, destroys intimacy, and leaves sinners barren and miserable.

Monday, December 1st - Genesis 2: 25

The pristine purity of our first parents is noted in this verse. Their utter transparency before God and before each other extended to the outer traces of their being. They needed clothing neither for protection nor as a mask for defects, of which neither of them had any. The feelings of shame and self-consciousness result from one's consciousness that he has sin and guilt to hide. So long as man remained upright, he knew his wife and revealed his whole being to her without any shred of impediment. The sinner, however, dons not only clothing but various emotional guises and intellectual postures that project an untrue image of who he is. Consequently, he neither knows nor is known by anyone.

Tuesday, December 2nd - Genesis 3: 1

This verse demonstrates the principle that at times more can be less. Here our attention is drawn to the serpent in the garden. This reptile becomes the focus not due to any inherent excellence it possessed, but because of the part it played in luring our first parents into sin. The fact that this serpent spoke is in itself remarkable. The content of what it spoke alerts us—and should have alerted Adam and Eve—to the fact that this reptile manifested power greater than that possessed by any other serpent, and a power that was perversely absurd, since the snake asserted that it knew more than both man and God. This creature, appearing to be more than it should have been, was actually reduced and defiled by its having been possessed by Satan, who was about to puff our first parents up with pride and overarching ambition, in order to accomplish their great fall.

Wednesday, December 3rd - Genesis 3: 1

The serpent was a creature of God, made good, like all other things God had made. Yet, there are three remarkable things about the particular serpent mentioned in this verse: 1) he was crafty; 2) he spoke; 3) he questioned the Word of God. At least some, if not all of these things, indicated that a higher power was using the serpent for nefarious purposes. When something appears higher than nature, it remains for us to determine whether it is supernaturally evil or good. It is not the mere fact that the snake spoke that decides this question, but rather the content of what it spoke. Many professed servants of Christ may dazzle us with their miraculous gifts and superhuman zeal, but they do not fool the Lord who calls them workers of iniquity (Mt. 7:23).

Thursday, December 4th – Genesis 3: 1

The first thing we are told about this particular serpent is that he was crafty. The word, *crafty*, is set in deliberate contrast to the word, *naked*, in 2:25. Whereas Adam and Eve were standing before God and all of creation being completely open and transparent, the serpent was serving as a guise for Satan. The man and his wife, prior to their fall, manifested candor; the serpent, once in Satan's power, manifested cunning. Satan and sin must clothe themselves in craftiness, even in the lowly garb of a snake or a herd of swine (Mt. 8:30 ff), lest men, seeing them in their true colors, recoil at their monstrousness.

Friday, December 5th - Genesis 3: 1

The crafty character of the serpent soon revealed itself in the snake's actions. The serpent spoke. This power of speech may have been possessed by all animate creatures prior to man's fall and God's consequent cursing of the creation, wherein the Lord subjected the lower creation to vanity (Rom. 8:20). If this had been the case, it was not so much that the serpent spoke, but rather what it spoke that should have alarmed Eve. However, if the lower creatures, even prior to man's fall and God's curse, could not speak, then the articulation of this snake should have alerted Eve that something was amiss. By the way the woman casually converses with the serpent, however, it appears that rather than her being alarmed by its speech, she was attracted by it, perhaps thinking that as this snake had acquired higher powers, so could she. After all, if a snake could become like a man, what was to stop a man becoming like God?

Saturday, December 6th - Genesis 3: 1

The most clearly alarming thing the serpent does is to employ its power of speech to question God's Word. With this question, the serpent displays a knowledge of the divine prohibition under which Adam and Eve lived. The snake questions whether God had really issued such a prohibition, and subtly plants in Eve not only seeds of doubt, but also seeds of resentment with the implication that God might yet extend His prohibition to include fruit from any, or even every, tree of the garden. If a morally upright woman could be seduced by such sinister and subtle words, surely we who are born in sin are no match for Satan's wiles. That is why we are told to resist, not to reason with, the devil (Jas. 4:7).

Sunday, December 7th - Genesis 3: 1

Satan, clothed in the serpent, targeted not Adam, who had named all of the animals, perceiving their true character, and had received directly from God the command not to eat the fruit of the forbidden tree. It was the woman, whose knowledge of both creation's character and God's command was mediated to her through her husband, whom Satan temptingly approached. The enemy of our souls knows our weaknesses better than do we. It should be to us no wonder, then, that God's Word instructs us to ask the Lord to search us and try us, showing us if there is any weak or wicked way in us (Ps. 139:23,24).

Monday, December 8th - Genesis 3: 1-3

When the serpent questioned God's Word, he did so fishing for ignorance, misunderstanding, or resentment within the woman. Whatever weakness he found in her, he would quickly exploit. Eve answered well at first, citing God's generous provision of fruit from all of the trees of the garden. However, from what she says in v.3, Eve reveals to Satan all that he needs to know to further his wiles to the point of his securing her fall. It is not their fine beginnings that win spiritual victories for the Lord's people, but rather it is how they faithfully adhere to the Word of the Lord to the end.

Tuesday, December 9th - Genesis 3: 2, 3

The answer the woman gives in v.2 seems to express her accurate understanding of God's generous allowance. But this understanding and her submission to it is seen to be clouded by what she says in v.3. First, she refers to the forbidden tree not according to its character (the knowledge of good and evil) but according to its prominent placement in the middle of the garden. This would seem to indicate that in Eve's thinking at this point, there was no qualitative difference between the fruit of the forbidden tree and that of all the other trees. According to this understanding, the prohibition of God is conceived to be arbitrary, rather than reasonable. If our worship and devotion to God is considered by us to be anything less than reasonable service (Rom. 12:1), we become easy prey for the devil's devices.

Wednesday, December 10th - Genesis 3: 3

When Eve stated that God had instructed the man and his wife not to touch the forbidden tree, she added something that Scripture does not record regarding the divine prohibition. Her assertion may have been a reasonable inference from what God had said. It also may have been an expression of resentment over her growing perception that God was overly restrictive. When we draw good and necessary consequences from God's Word, we do well so to think and act accordingly. However, whenever we add to

God's Word what the teaching of Scripture will not support, we undo the authority and power of the Word in our lives by our overdoing its teaching.

Thursday, December 11th - Genesis 3: 3

With her words, *lest you die*, Eve expresses her understanding of the sanction God had added to His prohibition. The woman manifests a weak conception of the divine sanction, as though death were merely a possibility, however likely or unlikely. In fact, God stated that death would follow disobedience as a certainty. Here we should see that Eve had gone far into temptation. Her weak conception of the sanction revealed her weak resolution to resist and an openness to her being led to a tearing asunder of what God had joined together, namely, His command and the consequent reward for obedience and punishment for disobedience. It is in this way that the supposed blessings we delude ourselves into thinking we may have by our disobedience to our God become bitter curses to us.

Friday, December 12th - Genesis 3: 4

For Eve, the primary, if not the sole impediment to her disobedience was the sanction of God wherein the Lord had told our parents that their violating His prohibition would result in their death. The serpent seizes upon Eve's weak conception of this divine sanction. He no longer needed to be so crafty and appear reasonable. Instead, with bold bluntness, he emphatically denies that Eve's death would follow her disobedience. This denial on the part of the serpent declared God to be a liar or an impotent bluffer or both. With this lying declaration, Satan boldly commits himself to a position where Eve would have to decide whether he or God were the liar. Weak moral resolution in us always invites the devil's most confident approaches to us.

Saturday, December 13th - Genesis 3: 4, 5

Satan follows his bold lie, in which he claimed that the divine sanction would have no effect, with a series of specious reasons to support his lie. He begins by claiming to know the mind and intentions of God, and declares to Eve that her Maker and Lord was petty, jealous, and determined to deprive her of the expansive perception that her partaking of the forbidden fruit would provide for her. The serpent then inflates the potencies he claimed for the fruit, saying that it had power to make Eve like God. Little did Satan or Eve realize that God, who had given both of them life, would indeed make His chosen people to be like Himself, though not through their disobedience, but by His graciously giving His only begotten Son.

Sunday, December 14th - Genesis 3: 4, 5

Satan declared to Eve that she would not die, thereby calling God a liar. Then he promised Eve what he knew to be false when he said that by her disobedience she would become like God. The devil knew from his own experience that his disobedience neither made him like God nor saved him from a living death. Who here is the liar and murderer?

Monday, December 15th - Genesis 3: 4, 5

Satan, through the serpent, is near to Eve, speaking, advising, and making claims bold and subtle. We may wonder where the Lord is in this encounter. Why is God silent before all of Satan's lies? The answer is that God is neither absent nor silent. The Lord had already spoken clearly and truthfully, and not all of the claims of the serpent could change or diminish the veracity and vitality of His Word. The Word of the Lord is ever true, relevant, and sufficient to enlighten our every step and empower us to know and to do His good pleasure. In contrast to the vanity of the incessant chatter of wicked men and devils, it is God's Word that contains liberating truth and never failing power.

Tuesday, December 16th - Genesis 3: 6

This verse records in brief, rapid, and devastating fashion the sin and consequent fall of Adam and Eve. All of the sin and misery in the history of the world traces back to this sad, swiftly accomplished, and immensely significant event. Here our first parents crossed a line that did not make them like God, but rather reduced them to being less than human. Nor could they return across that line and undo the appalling consequences of their disobedience. Not only did Adam and Eve die as a result of this sin, but their disobedient deed necessitated the death of the Son of God in order that sin and death might be vanquished for the Lord's people. The grim significance of sin, especially original sin, is impossible for us to overestimate.

Wednesday, December 17th - Genesis 3: 6

The progression of Eve's deception and disobedience is first detailed in this verse. She saw that the tree was good for food. To her perception and reasoning the forbidden fruit was not inherently harmful. Eve saw further a delightful attractiveness in the appearance of the tree and its fruit. She was not seeing with spiritual eyes. Her perception was sensual and superficial. Even in the garden, before man's fall, the correct

sense for man's detecting the truth and direction of the Lord was not visual but auditory. God's Word will never lead us astray, where man's seeing and speculation always will (1 Jn. 2:16).

Thursday, December 18th - Genesis 3: 6

From visual delight, Eve passed on to intellectual desire. How did she know the fruit of this tree was desirable to make one wise? It was the serpent's lies that fostered this delusive desire in the woman. The devil's tempting deceptions, when not resisted by Eve, ignited in her excessive and misplaced desire, and fed in her a growing determination to empower herself not by the gracious supply of God, measured out by His infallible wisdom and holy love, but by the direct and swift taking of and feeding from her own hand. Disaster, not delight and fulfillment of godly desire, ever, only, and always results from such a course. As this was true for Eve, so it remains invariably true for us all.

Friday, December 19th - Genesis 3: 6

The serpent's tempting led to Eve's wrong thinking, which, in turn, led to her taking the forbidden fruit with her hand. As a person thinks, so he will act. In fact, three quick, sinful actions followed the woman's sinful thinking in rapid succession: she *took*, she *ate*, and she *gave* the forbidden fruit to Adam. Thus was the helpmeet created by God for the blessing of the man transformed by her sin into her husband's temptress. Sin is a dynamically destructive power. It consumes ever more of the sinner's own life, and reaches out to ruin the lives of others.

Saturday, December 20th - Genesis 3: 6

The action of Adam in this verse is related in the short phrase, *and he ate*. Yet, Adam's sin was more heinous and significant than was the sin of Eve. Satan deceived Eve, whereas Adam committed his sin without his being deceived. He chose to heed the voice of his sinful wife, rather than the righteous Word of God. Adam's was a clear and conscious choice to regard more highly the gift of God over the divine Giver. He did this not out of loving commitment to his wife, so much as from his own ignited desire to be like God in His wisdom and power. The awful significance of Adam's sin is that he, being the natural and federal head of the human race, transferred this original sin to all of his descendants. In Adam's fall, we sinned all.

Sunday, December 21st - Genesis 3: 7

This verse records the beginning of the fallen status and state into which the sin of our first parents landed them and us. Their partaking of the forbidden fruit did open their eyes, but instead of their being like God, they perceived how they had, by their disobedience to God, rendered themselves less than the very good, upright creatures God had made them when He made them in His image. They became self-conscious, and, because of their sin, they became conscious of their sin and were ashamed. Quickly then, did their hands, that had just fed their mouths the forbidden fruit, pluck fig leaves to fashion into crude and ineffectual coverings for their sinful shame. They who had been so exalted by God, and who had been blessed so richly by their Maker, disobeyed Him and began immediately to live in death, being alienated from God, the source of life, and from each other. Their monumental sin and fall deserved divine judgment, but would receive divine mercy. Their sin would not be covered by leaves of their own picking, but would be washed away by blood of God's providing. They who deserved to be cast from the garden would, by God's grace, inherit eternal life and dwell in the heavenly city of God, the leaves of its trees serving not to cover, but to cure the ills of the world and heal the nations of sinful but redeemed men (Rev. 22:2).

Monday, December 22nd - Genesis 3: 7, 8

The fall of Adam and Eve from godly life into sinful death is apparent not only from their self-consciousness and shame before one another. When they perceive God approaching them, rather than their being filled with the love, joy, and gratitude that had been hallmarks of their communion with their Lord, they were filled with a new, evil emotion—fear (v.10). The wicked flee when no one pursues (Pr. 28:1). Man was made by God to experience reverent rejoicing before Him, not guilty dread. Man's sin banished the happiness he had with his God, leaving in its place an inescapable horror at the thought of his accountability to the God against whom he had sinned.

Tuesday, December 23rd - Genesis 3: 7, 8

The wicked flee when no one is in pursuit (Pr. 28:1), for sin makes a man loath himself and fear his circumstances. Yet, when the sinner perceives the approach of God, he will throw himself into bushes or into caves, calling on the rocks and mountains to fall upon him and hide him from the wrath of God (Rev. 6:15-17). There is only one tree wherein the sinner may find safety. It is neither the tree of the knowledge of good and evil nor the trees of the garden in Paradise. The only tree where the sinner finds safety is the cross. There is only one Rock wherein he may find security, namely, Christ.

Wednesday, December 24th - Genesis 3: 8, 9

Our first parents grasped for gain and gained only loss. Man's fall began when he thought and acted by guidance, not from God's Word, but from the suggestions of a snake and from his own seeing and desiring (v.6). It is not true that seeing is believing, for seeing apprehends only surface appearance, whereas hearing apprehends the deeper heart of the matter. After man's fall, the fallout was immediate and radical. Adam and his wife became self conscious and, being filled with shame, they resorted to desperate and feeble devices to hide their shame. When they heard the Lord coming to them, they sought to hide from His omniscient gaze amongst the garden's trees. The Lord penetrated the sinful guise of Adam with His Word, when He called to Adam, asking him: *Where are you?* That question may at first appear to indicate that Adam's newly gained wisdom had enabled him to hide from God. Yet, the question is really a hauntingly convicting call for Adam to realize that he had fallen from the high place God had made him to occupy. Even the Lord wonders at the movement of Adam from his high uprightness into the depths of depravity. He calls on Adam to recognize his sinful alienation. The Lord is ever asking each of us at any given time: *Where are you?*

Thursday, December 25th - Genesis 3: 8, 9

Adam and Eve heard the sound of the Lord God's movement. God was moving not away from the fallen pair, but towards them. Our Lord never forsakes the work of His hand, even when that work is shattered by sin.

Friday, December 26th – Genesis 3: 9, 10

Adam's sin shattered in him the image of God in which he had been made. His goodness was now gone, and guilt, corruption, and misery characterized him in his being and in all of his relationships. We see the corruption in his relationship with God when the man hides from his approaching Maker, and when he says, in response to the Lord's question as to where Adam was, that he was afraid of God. The pleasure of holy and loving communion with his God had, in consequence of his sin, become pain and horror for Adam. Sin is an alienating force, that first and foremost separates a man from his God, and from all of the loving goodness that God would lavish upon him.

Saturday, December 27th - Genesis 3: 9, 10

Though it was Eve who first sinned, it was from Adam that God first sought an account for the sin of our first parents. This was so not only because Adam was first created by God, but even more so because Adam was the natural and federal head of the human race. Vestiges of this headship remain in a man's being regarded by God as the head of his wife and children (1 Cor. 11:3, Eph. 5:22-33). Men in sin shirk their responsibility of spiritual headship over their wives, while women in sin deny and defy that headship. Yet, the God who instituted it will demand from all men an accounting for how they performed in that capacity.

Sunday, December 28th - Genesis 3: 9, 10

To the Lord's question, Adam gives a strange and telling answer in which he does not speak the truth in any regard. He does not say immediately that he was hiding amongst the trees of the garden, thus confessing his physical location. Nor does he disclose his spiritual fall by confessing his sin. Instead, Adam seeks to evade the question and extenuate his responsibility for his radically altered relationship with his God. The man declares that the sound of God filled him with fear. This is not a confession of reverence, but of dread. It implies a defect in God, as though the wisdom Adam gained by his disobedience opened his eyes to behold horrible features in his Lord. Secondly, Adam declares that he was naked, thus implying a defect in his being—one not of his own making, but rather due to the way God had made him. This wisdom which prompts Adam to behold defects all around, with none of it being his responsibility, is not from above but is earthly and demonic (Jas 3:15).

Monday, December 29th - Genesis 3: 10

Adam implies that with his eyes now opened to know good and evil, he perceives dreadful attributes in God and defective provision for himself. From these two faulty premises, the man declares that his hiding himself from God was a reasonable action. Sin flatters man into thinking himself a wise logician, when, in fact, he is a guilty, irrational, and cowardly fugitive from his God.

Tuesday, December 30th - Genesis 3: 11

The Lord responds to Adam's evasions and implied charges with further questions. Again, the interrogation does not indicate that God has no knowledge of the matter into which He inquires, but is designed to bring Adam to a sense of conviction and to confession. God knows that only a malignant, sinful personality would perceive a defect in Adam's nakedness. Thus, the Lord asks regarding *who* told Adam of his innocent transparency in such a way as to make him ashamed of it, or resentful of it, as though God had poorly provided for the crown of His creation. This question is quickly followed by inquiry into Adam's sin, by which he and Eve had joined Satan in his sinful rebellion against God, and by consequence of which our first parents lost their love for God and were filled with loathing for the Lord and for themselves. The destructive power of sin is what is truly dreadful.

Wednesday, December 31st - Genesis 3: 12

Adam refuses to confess his sin. Rather, he gives a begrudging and resentful account of his eating of the forbidden fruit. His account continues to be filled with evasion of personal responsibility and implied charges against God. Adam blames Eve, not referring to her by name or by the designation, *my wife*, acknowledging her part in their bond of loving, holy matrimony. With blunt ingratitude and disgust he refers to her as *the woman*. Here we perceive how sin corrupts not only the relation between a man and his God, but also the relation between a man and his wife, and, as will prove to be the case, between a man and all other men. Sin disintegrates a man's wholeness and severs him from bonds of love.

Thursday, January 1st - Genesis 3: 12

While Adam sins against his wife when he seeks to blame her and disown her by his calling her *the woman*, his sin—indeed, all sin—is first and foremost against God. We see this in Adam’s connecting his newly experienced grief over his wife with the giving of God. She is, according to Adam, not only *the woman*, but this afflicting partner had been given to him by God, as though the Lord intended her to be no helpmeet for Adam, but rather the instrument of his fall. The last thing the sinner ever conceives of is that he—not his wife, father, mother, brothers, sisters, children, neighbor, or God—is the one solely responsible for his sin, guilt, and misery.

Friday, January 2nd - Genesis 3: 12, 13

From Adam’s admission that he had eaten the forbidden fruit, the Lord turns to interrogate the woman. This turn occurs not because Adam had pointed to her as the mitigation for his sin, but rather because she, as the other half of the human pair who had been created in God’s image, owed an accounting of herself as a morally responsible agent before God. Eve, too, seeks to evade her responsibility. Her confession, like Adam’s, does not come forth nakedly, but rather clothed in the fig leaves of excuses. Thus, Eve points to the serpent and his cunning deception before she admits that she had eaten the forbidden fruit. Both Adam and Eve hereby claim victim status before God. Every sinner since them has sought to claim the same status, to no avail. God does not ask for excuses because there are no excuses for sin.

Saturday, January 3rd - Genesis 3: 12, 13

Our first parents, willingly chose to feed themselves with deceptive promises by their eating that which God had commanded them not to eat (v.11). They thereby plunged themselves and all of humanity into the dominion and bondage of sin, wherein not one of us would have the desire or ability to do anything except sin. God could have executed this wretched pair, these infectors of His good creation, these embracers and harbingers of all the sin, evil, and misery of the world. Yet, He did not so execute them, but followed His convicting work in them with words and deeds of redeeming comfort.

Sunday, January 4th – Genesis 3: 14

From our sinful and evasive first parents, the Lord turned to confront the serpent. No accounting is asked by God from the reptile. Immediately does the Lord curse the instrument of evil, and then, through the snake’s curse, He curses the devil who had possessed the serpent in order to accomplish this nefarious deed. No more shall this cunning creature entice men to feed their souls the miserable fare of disobedience against God. Instead, the serpent was reduced to the lowest form of living, slithering on its belly and filling with the earth’s dust its mouth that had spoken so deceptively to man. Forever would this reptilian class of creatures remind men that those who yield their bodies to sin will be punished accordingly (2 Cor. 5:10). There is divine justice in this curse, but also divine grace. For by its being so reduced, the serpent would serve as a living lesson to

man of the degrading power of sin, so that man should learn not to yield his body as an instrument of sin (Rom. 6: 12,13).

Monday, January 5th - Genesis 3: 14, 15

The serpent is cursed as an instrument of evil. However, it is clear from v.15 that God pronounced a far greater curse upon Satan, who had possessed and used the serpent. While the snake was reduced to a lowly and miserable existence, it still would live and serve the useful purpose of warning man of the degrading effects of sin. For Satan, there is the sentence of a perpetual enmity and an eternal death. Far from Satan's temptation having enlisted the sons of men into his evil company, God would overrule so that enmity was perpetually between the devil and all of mankind. Sinful men may serve Satan, but they loathe the miserable service and hate their oppressing, demonic master.

Tuesday, January 6th - Genesis 3: 15

The serpent was demoted, but his animating possessor, Satan, was doomed. Though the satanic enemy of God thought that he had successfully ensnared man into his rebellious crew, the Lord quickly declares to the devil that from the ashes of fallen humanity one would arise to destroy not only the works of the devil (1 Jn. 3:8), but the devil himself (Rev. 20:10). The success Satan had with our first parents secured his ultimate failure and occasioned the manifestation of the glory of God's grace in His redemption of sinners.

Wednesday, January 7th - Genesis 3: 15

This verse is referred to as the proto-gospel, or the first proclamation of the gospel. Where man's sin enters the world, God counters it with His abounding grace. This verse is the theme of the Bible, telling of Christ's victory over sin and Satan for God's glory and man's good. It alerts us to the reality that man's salvation is accomplished through bruises. The promised Savior would be bruised on his heel—a symbol of a wound that is not fatal. Through Satan's machinations with Judas, the Jews, and the Romans, Jesus would shed His blood and die. But death would not be able to hold Him. He would rise again ever to live to God and ever to live for His people, making constant intercessions for them. Satan, however, would receive the head wound that would be mortal. Through Christ's cross, Satan and all of his principalities and powers were disarmed and bound for their living death in the lake of fire (Col. 2:14,15).

Thursday, January 8th - Genesis 3: 15

Adam and Eve claimed that they were helpless victims of Satan's temptation. Their claim reveals their desperate depravity. Yet, God manifests His grace amidst His judgment here. The Lord promises One who would yield Himself as a willing, submissive victim to the righteous judgment and wrath of God against man's sin. Through the work of that victim victory would be wrought for man.

Friday, January 9th - Genesis 3: 16

Adam and Eve had already shown how corrupted by the fall they were in their relations to God and to each other. Though they were alive, they were dead spiritually and decaying as a consequence of their sin. Yet death is not the ultimate consequence of sin, for after death comes judgment before God (Heb. 9:27). Therefore, the Lord proceeds to add to our first parents' corruption His righteous curse. The order of this divine cursing begins with the serpent—the least significant recipient of the divine curse—and concludes with Adam, who is the most significant member of this sinful trio. After the serpent is cursed, God metes out His judgment upon Eve. She is asked no questions, as Adam had been asked, but simply is punished with magnified pain in childbirth. Thus, the Lord curses what is the most blessed and productive process for a woman. The pain, however, would not prevent her from conceiving children, as her desire would remain strong for intimacy with her husband. Eve sought pleasure in the delightful appearance of the forbidden fruit (v.6); she received pain instead. Sin always promises pleasure but can only deliver pain.

Saturday, January 10th - Genesis 3: 16

Eve saw desirability in the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (v.6). God punished her disobedience with pain, and made that pain inescapable for her by stirring her desire for her husband. The woman had influenced her husband to do as she wished, through her wishing was sinful. God consigned her to desire to follow her husband as the body follows the head. Eve had the love of an upright Adam, and, by her tempting him, she served to corrupt him. Now she would desire Adam as her head, although he was a ruined head—one having already shown his lack of love in his referring to her as *the woman* and blaming her for his fall. This less desirable and capable Adam would have increased powers over his wife. Sin had transformed loving submission into painful subjection.

Sunday, January 11th - Genesis 3: 16

As the serpent's curse contained a blessed component in the proto-evangel (v.15), so Eve's curse is laced with promised blessing. She would bear children, and through those children would eventually arise the One who would bruise the head of Satan and propitiate the wrath of God's judgment (1 Jn. 2:1,2).

Monday, January 12th - Genesis 3: 17-19

Adam's curse came last, not simply because he was the last to sin, but more so because he was the most significant sinner amongst those here cursed by God. Adam was not only the natural head of the human race, but also, in the economy of God, he was the federal head of the race, representing the fortunes of all who would come from him, as David represented all Israel in his fight with Goliath. Therefore, his curse is the most extensive and complex. To whom much is entrusted by God, much will be expected in the day of reckoning.

Tuesday, January 13th - Genesis 3: 17

The charges against Adam are manifold. He had sinned with his ears and with his mouth. Adam regarded not the Lord his God, but Eve as his guide in the matter of the fruit. He sinned by his giving Eve a hearing, when her proposal was clearly against the commandment of God. Sin does not begin with our actions, but with our giving audience to sinful communications.

Wednesday, January 14th - Genesis 3: 17

Adam sinned by his listening to Eve's tempting guidance. He also sinned when he acted in accordance with her words, taking from creation what he wanted, despite the fact that his taking contradicted the prohibition of the Creator. We may think it incredible that a man would act on the mere words of another finite and fallible human in stark disregard for the sure Word of the Lord, but, alas, we ourselves too often are similarly lured by the enticing promises of sin's momentary pleasures.

Thursday, January 15th - Genesis 3: 17, 18

Eve's curse pertained to her domestic and maternal sphere, while Adam's pertains to his occupation whereby he would provide for himself and his family. His dominion over the creation is cursed, by the creation being divinely subjected to futility (Rom. 8:20,21). God cursed the ground from which Adam was made and from which the forbidden tree had grown. As man had rebelled against his divine Maker, so God ordained that the earth, over which man was to have had dominion, would manifest its rebellion against man. The earth's productive power was reduced, and what had been pleasant, fruitful work for Adam would become painful and often futile toil. When we turn against God, all things are turned by God against us.

Friday, January 16th - Genesis 3: 18

The earth would produce not only less fruit, but it would also produce fruitless and painful nuisance plants. Those plants would threaten the production of food, requiring man to cultivate ground and battle against the encroachment of weeds so that he could grow the grain (here termed *plants of the field*) that would replace fruit from the garden as man's staple food. In this, the earth would reflect man's sinful state, wherein he is not only fruitless in godliness, but positively thorny and thus obnoxious to God and injurious to his fellow man.

Saturday, January 17th - Genesis 3: 19

The toil of man, mentioned in v.17, is here elaborated. Man would, in his chosen alienation from God, be obliged to expend himself to feed himself. He would sweat, or lose vital energy from himself, as he labored with exertion that would be required for him to produce his food. The painful and protracted toil would prove ultimately to be a losing venture, as man, despite his greatest exertions, would inevitably die. Sinful man would

not have dominion over creation, nor would he rise to confirmation in holiness; instead, he would sink back into the lowly and disintegrated essence of what he is without his God. Time reduces all men to dust. God reminds Adam and all men of the truth of their being, namely, that without the Lord they not only can *do* nothing, but they *are* nothing.

Sunday, January 18th - Genesis 3: 20

We can scarcely conceive the palpable grief that filled Adam when he received his justly deserved curse from God. However, our first father did not sink into despair, but manifests, instead, that his conviction had wrought a conversion in him. No longer would he disregard God's Word, thinking that he could become like God thereby. He accepts his punishment with grieving resignation, yet he does not grieve without hope. Adam begins to fulfill his God-given role of his ruling over Eve (v.16) when he names her. She is no longer to him *the woman* (v.12), but is named *Eve*. Nor was her naming arbitrary. The Hebrew word translated *Eve* is derived from the Hebrew word, *living*. By faith, Adam takes God at His Word, not only accepting his justly deserved curse, but looking beyond it to the comfort God promised through the coming seed of the woman (vv. 15,16). Likewise, when we submit to the Lord's discipline we shall find a hope of blessed life, and not despair in cursed death.

Monday, January 19th - Genesis 3: 21

The grace of God further interlaces His judgment in this verse. The Lord God Himself clothes the sinful, cursed, yet chosen pair. It is not with fig leaves that God covers the nakedness of these sinful and now shameful people. Man's devices are ever inadequate to cover his guilty shame. Instead, God uses animal skins to clothe Adam and Eve, thus shedding the first blood and causing the first death in creation. Surely this action by God points to the shedding of the blood of the Lamb of God whereby His people are clothed in His perfect righteousness.

Tuesday, January 20th - Genesis 3: 21

John Calvin comments on our first parents' animal skin clothing:

...it was a sad and horrid spectacle; that he, in whom recently the glory of the Divine image was shining, should lie hidden under fetid skins to cover his own disgrace, and that there should be more comeliness in a dead animal than in a living man.

Yet, this clothing was provisional, pointing to the glorious righteousness of Jesus. Even now, we who are in Christ are directed by God to clothe ourselves in humility prior to our glorious exaltation (1 Pet. 5: 5,6).

Wednesday, January 21st - Genesis 3: 22-24

In these verses, we learn that God drove our first parents out of the garden, and sealed the garden from their ever being able to return into it. This divine act was accomplished not only by God sending the pair forth from the garden to cultivate the soil in accordance with the curse pronounced in vv.17-19. The Lord actually had to drive Adam and Eve from the garden into the now cursed wilderness that their sin had made of the world. Our parents never would have left the Paradise of God of their own accord. Yet, there is a blessing in this banishment. Were men to remain in the garden, having access to the tree of life, they would live forever, being sustained in their sinful cursedness. Man was driven out of the blessed ordinance of the Lord so that in the far country he might come to himself and learn not to sin; so that in the desert he would learn to hunger and thirst for righteousness; and so that in the wilderness of the world he had ruined by his sin he would learn to seek the city of God. Man would be driven out to face his own death, which, in Christ, is not loss, but infinite gain (Phil. 1:21). The curses of God contain our true blessings; the crosses He lays upon us contain our crowns.

Thursday, January 22nd - Genesis 4: 1

With chaste expression this verse informs us of Adam's intimacy with Eve whereby a son was conceived. Literally, and most meaningfully, we are told that Adam *knew* Eve. They who had covered themselves in a vain attempt to hide their shame from each other and from God, were enabled by the Lord's provisional covering, and by His promises, to be for a time lovingly transparent with one another, with fruitful issue resulting. Thus, the first man to be born of woman was delivered into the world. He was named Cain by his parents, the name being related to the Hebrew verb translated *I have gotten*. Eve acknowledges the Lord's enabling grace in the birth of this child, thus demonstrating her exercise of faith. It may be likely that Adam and Eve both entertained hopes that this would be the child of their redemption (3:15), but that promised seed would come centuries later. It is not our fond hopes, but the Lord's perfect timing that determines when His promise will be fulfilled.

Friday, January 23rd - Genesis 4: 2

With less descriptive details than were associated with the birth of Cain, the birth of Abel is recorded. No mention is made of the name of the Lord, and Abel's name, related to the Hebrew word, *breath*, is indicative of some degree of pessimism on the part of his parents. His is a name indicating the brevity of human life (Job 32:8), and, in his case, it proves to be prophetic. Parents naturally pin their hopes on their first born child. Yet, more often than not, it is the youngest that is chosen by God, that salvation may be shown to be of God's gracious choosing, not of man's deserving, hoping, or striving.