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Sunday, January 23rd - Acts 27: 1

The Holy Spirit in the Book of Acts has recorded for us how Christ changed Saul the Pharisee into Paul the Apostle. We have seen Paul travelling extensively as a missionary and preaching the gospel. We have seen Paul as a debater in the Church (Acts 15) and as a defender of the faith before worldly rulers, shining gloriously as an ambassador in chains. Now in this 27th chapter of Acts we are shown yet another facet of Paul's Christian character, namely, the practical facet. It should not surprise us to discover that the man who is most heavenly minded is of most earthly good. Scripture informs us that it is the fear of the Lord which is the beginning of knowledge (Prov. 1:7), and that it is in Christ in which all treasures of wisdom and knowledge are found (Col. 2:3). Paul is not so practical in addition to, still less in spite of, his heavenly mindedness. Practical service issues as fruit from the root of true godliness. Hence, we shall see nothing less than the glory of God shining through His servant in the mundane mechanics and physical crises attending his voyage to Rome.

Monday, January 24th - Acts 27: 1, 2

Paul was, along with other prisoners, placed on a ship taking him on the first leg of his voyage to Rome. A remarkable mixture of men were gathered together on that ship. Paul and the other prisoners were in custody of Julius, a Roman centurion. But Paul, as we gather from the *we* reference in v.1, was accompanied by Luke, and perhaps other members of his missionary team. In addition, the apostle was accompanied by Aristarchus, who had been with Paul since his time in Macedonia (Acts 19:29), and perhaps was a convert of Paul's ministry in Philippi (Acts 16:9-12). Paul refers to Luke and Aristarchus as fellow workers (Philemon 24), and so they were. The cause of Christ had bound them together through thick and thin. Indeed, Aristarchus is further designated by Paul a fellow prisoner (Col. 4:10). As nothing could separate them from the love of God in Christ (Rom. 8:38,39), so nothing but Christ or death could separate them from each other in their pilgrimage through this life. These men were sacred treasures, travelling amidst the profane prisoners and pagan Romans on that ship—thus all together forming a microcosm of the world. We shall see who shines in this ship.

Tuesday, January 25th - Acts 27: 3

Servants of Christ are never without resources. When the ship put in at Sidon, we discover that Paul had caring friends there. That city, along with its equally commercially prosperous twin, Tyre, is never presented in Scripture in a very favorable spiritual light. Jesus pronounced warning woes against those cities (Lk. 10:13,14), and in the account of Acts we find the citizens of Tyre and Sidon groveling before wicked Herod, calling that worm host a god (Acts 12:20-22). Yet, by the grace and redeeming power of the true and holy God, there were believers in the dark city of Sidon, and they were desirous of ministering care to the apostle on this, very likely his first visit to them. The Lord has manna and men hidden not from his servants, but for them in every place they may go.

Wednesday, January 26th - Acts 27: 3

In addition to the saints at Sidon desiring to minister to Paul, the Lord moved the heart of the centurion, Julius, to let Paul go to his friends to receive such loving care. It is remarkable for us to note that the New Testament consistently commends Roman centurions. Perhaps because those men's lives depended so much upon their ability to discern and rely upon faithful character, they, more than other men, were especially fit to perceive and respect integrity as it was evident in the Lord and His servants. From this we should note how vital it is that we have and manifest in all places and before all people the virtue of Christian integrity. We never know who might be observing our deportment, so as to be drawn to the source of our light rightly shining, or to serve for our benefit.

Thursday, January 27th - Acts 27: 4

From Sidon the course was dictated by contrary winds. Here we note the first reference to that opposition of the elements which would grow in intensity against the ship carrying to Rome its mixed cargo of criminal dregs and precious trophies of divine grace. Significantly, at this early stage, the contrary winds forced the ship to sail close to Cyprus. It was on Cyprus where Paul began his first missionary journey, accompanied by his Cyprian brother, Barnabas (Acts 4:36; 13:4ff), and John Mark (Acts 13:5). When he saw that island, did the apostle recall those early labors and laborers? Did he recollect the proconsul there, Sergius Paulus, who was perhaps the sole convert of their missionary labors on Cyprus? I do not think it likely that the apostle would miss such significant reflection. Nor do I think he would be unaware of the truth, now reinforced to him, that God, who began a good work through Paul at Cyprus, would bring it to completion at Rome and to perfect completion at the last day (Phil. 1:6).

Friday, January 28th - Acts 27: 5, 6

The ship sailed between Cyprus and the southern coast of Asia Minor, another region in which Paul had ministered. At Myra the ship landed, and, due to that port's prominence in the grain trade between Egypt and Rome, a large grain ship was found to convey Paul and the other prisoners, as well as Paul's associates and the Roman guards all to Rome. Apparently, the grain ship was much larger and more seaworthy than the Adramyttian ship which had brought the party to Myra. Thus, Paul and those with him were set to make the last leg of their voyage to Rome. But what should have been a routine sailing turned out to be far otherwise. It is through many tribulations that the Lord's people enter not only the kingdom of God (Acts 14:22), but also the Lord's highest service.

Saturday, January 29th - Acts 27: 6, 7

From the first person plural references, we gather that Luke and Aristarchus still accompanied Paul. The increasing difficulty, if not danger of the voyage, is noted by Luke in v.7. By slow, hard progress they reached Cnidus, a port about 40 miles south of Miletus, the place from which Paul bid his moving farewell to the elders of the church at Ephesus (Acts 20:17ff). There were two large ports at Cnidus, and the ship's company could easily have stayed there until a favorable wind would let them go due west toward Greece. Yet, they did not wait, but pressed on, being forced to the south, toward Crete, an island they were obliged to use as a shelter against the adverse winds. This determination to press on without delay would head them for greater jeopardy and result in certain doom were it not for God's gracious planting of Paul in their midst (Acts 27:9,10, 21-24, 30-32). More often than not, worldly people press on for profit only to find themselves plunged into destruction.

Sunday, January 30th - Acts 27: 7, 8

The ship left Cnidus and made for Crete, located more than 100 miles to the south, southwest. Apparently, the winds were so strong and the sailing so rough, that the ship almost shot past Crete toward North Africa. But taking advantage of Crete's shelter, the ship turned due west along Crete's southern coast and was able to land at Fair Havens. The port there was not so ideal for the ship's wintering (v.12) as had been the ports at Cnidus. Therefore, the determination of the ship's captain to press on for the sake of profit, had landed them in a precarious situation. For them to stay where they were was not ideal; for them to press on may be worse (and, in the event, turned out to be worse). The profit motive blinds men to considerations necessary for them truly to profit. The way of the cross never does so.

Monday, January 31st - Acts 27: 9, 10

At Fair Havens, the conditions for sailing degenerated from being difficult to being dangerous. The reference to the Fast informs us that they stayed beyond the Day of Atonement, which in 59 A.D. was on 5 October. In their determination not to await favorable wind at Cnidus, they were forced to await favorable winds at Fair Havens. Haste made in the service of greed not only makes waste, but threatens life itself.

Tuesday, February 1st - Acts 27: 9, 10

Amidst the delay at Fair Havens, Paul speaks up, issuing an admonishment against their pressing on under the worsening weather conditions. His admonition forms one of the jewels of instruction for those spiritually wise enough to perceive such treasure in this otherwise mundane account of a sea voyage. Some scholars maintain that Paul's warning was issued in a ship's counsel, to which he, as an experienced sea traveler, had been invited. If this was so, it shows us how service for Christ incidentally fits us for service in many other realms. Those most heavenly minded become, amidst the training and trials of their pilgrimage, of most earthly good.

Wednesday, February 2nd - Acts 27: 9, 10

Paul may have been invited to a ship's counsel. On the other hand, he may simply have asserted himself, not as a prisoner, but as a virtual partner in the venture. Whether he was invited or whether he took godly initiative to speak such practical truth in love, what is certain is that the apostle was no sullen, disconsolate prisoner, going passively and begrudgingly along for a ride not of his choosing or to his liking. Rather, here he seeks to improve the situation and to make the most, not the least, of his circumstances over which he knew his Lord ruled sovereignly. Here is a practical demonstration of what it means for a Christian to be no victim of his circumstances, but more than a conqueror over them.

Thursday, February 3rd - Acts 27: 9, 10

Paul asserts himself with authority. He does not venture an opinion colored by fear. Rather, he issues an admonishment resulting from his pure-hearted and clear-minded consideration of their situation. The event vindicates his warning (vv.14ff). Yet, we must note Paul's motive in so speaking up. He was more than a conqueror through his caring service. He sought no mere personal benefit, but endeavored to save, by his counsel, the ship, its cargo, and the lives of all aboard. We would be bolder in our admonitions to others were our motive more purely that our words might serve to save others, rather than to secure our personal desires.

Friday, February 4th - Acts 27: 10

Paul here does not speak under divine inspiration. Hence he does not say that God revealed to him the disaster which he predicts. Rather, Paul expresses sanctified common sense. In the event, his prediction would have been literally true in every detail had it not been that the Lord graciously intervened to save the lives of all aboard the ship (vv.21-26). Here Paul was working out his salvation, employing his powers of perception, understanding, projection, and communication to serve for the good of others. Thus, his action here should be representative of our action in the mundane as well as critical situations in which we find ourselves. There is a sense in which the Christian in any situation is alone competent to sound the alarm as a faithful watchman.

Saturday, February 5th - Acts 27: 11

The decision as to whether or not the ship should leave Fair Havens rested with the centurion, Julius. This was due to the fact that the grain trade between Rome and Egypt was so vital to Rome that it was placed under Imperial administration. In his consideration of the counsel he received, Julius was more persuaded by the ship's captain and pilot—experts in sea navigation— than by Paul. Whereas Julius had earlier shown consideration to Paul (v.3), he was not prepared to rely upon the admonition of a preacher who was his prisoner. Instead, the centurion heeded the voice of worldly experts, whose counsel was tainted by their strong desire to increase profit by diminishing transport time, and to maximize personal ease by their making for a slightly better winter port. This led them to underestimate the dangers and overestimate their

own seafaring abilities. Here the centurion leans on the arm of flesh, the weakness of which will soon become frighteningly apparent.

Sunday, February 6th - Acts 27: 11

Why should a responsible government official heed a preacher instead of professional sailors, especially when the counsel had to do with maritime matters? People readily heed worldly experts and relegate preachers to the realm of arcane discourse and impractical speculation. Thus, we find men in such emergencies as the death of Jairus' daughter and the disciples' night on the stormy sea, referring to Jesus merely as *Teacher*, implying thereby that He was fine in an academic environment, but not in the real world (Mk. 4:38; 5:35). Men are prepared to let Jesus speak in a classroom; they are not prepared to acknowledge His rule over the cosmos. Jesus was a teacher, but also infinitely more than a teacher. Men of the world would only do themselves and others great favors were they to hear and heed the testimony of those who serve the One who made and who governs all things by the Word of His power. Jesus is the Master Teacher, who teaches His servants to master any situation (Ps. 119:97-100). Men do well to submit themselves to the counsel of those who submit themselves to the Ruler of heaven and earth and all that they contain.

Monday, February 7th - Acts 27: 12

According to the British yachtsman, James Smith, Fair Havens would have served as a very adequate winter harbor (*The Voyage and Shipwreck of St. Paul*. London, 1880, p.85). However, a better harbor was that of Phoenix, about 50 miles west, northwest of Fair Havens. The goal had now become that of sailing those 50 miles to winter in a slightly better port, meaning, slightly more diversionary for the ship's crew, but not really any safer for the ship. Worldly men will take awful chances and risk terrible loss only to gain slight advantage. How sad that they perpetually hazard so much to gain so little when the infinite gain of eternal life—which they ignore—may be had freely, safely, and satisfyingly.

Tuesday, February 8th - Acts 27: 12, 13

The centurion admired Paul, but placed practical confidence in the seafaring experts. His choice may appear logical, but man's finite, fallen reasoning has never been his safest guide through life. Thus did Julius, rejecting guidance from a spiritual man, lean on the arm of carnal men. At first, as is often the case, the counsel of the worldly experts seemed to be vindicated. The wind grew favorable in speed and direction. Still, they kept close to shore during their voyage, not trusting their own counsel or the promising conditions without reservation. Many a carnal venture begins well, only to meet with sudden and complete failure. Thankfully, He who began a good work in us will bring it to a perfect completion at last, pressing all things—even trials—into His service for our good along the way.

Wednesday, February 9th - Acts 27: 13-15

The clear sailing of the carnal man is often dramatically changed into a life or death struggle against a storm. This is what Asaph saw when he viewed from the Lord's sanctuary the prosperity and carnal security of the natural man (Ps. 73). So it was with this ship, that her clear sailing was suddenly and violently ruined by a dangerous storm. The velocity of the wind is indicated by the designation, *violent wind* (literally, *typhoon*, *tufwniko.j*), and its direction by the name, *Euraquilo*, meaning, a northeaster. Thus, from the direction of the land they were hugging for shelter came a wind so strong as to be irresistible, and from a direction that would drive them away from Crete, away from Rome, out to sea and likely to their deaths. We should not be surprised that men who would risk their immortal souls, taking from the Lord's good providence while refusing to thank, honor, or trust Him for eternal life, would risk

their possessions and lives to gain only slight, relative advantage in this life. Sin is reckless, as well as ruinous.

Thursday, February 10th - Acts 27: 16, 17

Due to no skill of the captain, pilot, or sailors, some small and short-lived relief was gained as the ship was driven just south of Clauda. The brief lessening of the storm's ferocity gave them no rest, no safety, only a little time in which to hoist on board the ship's boat, and run supporting cables under the ship to keep her planks from breaking apart. Yet, this little island, which afforded some small relief, could have been a target for their shipwreck had they not mercifully been blown just south of it. Thus, the sea anchor was dropped to slow their speed and, hopefully, afford them more control to avoid other potential shipwreck points, such as Syrtis. Land is a two-edged sword for a storm-driven ship. Similarly, friends can easily become dreaded foes for the man who is tossed about by Satan's wiles.

Friday, February 11th - Acts 27: 18, 19

Luke now details how the ship's crew sought desperately to simplify for their survival. The cargo—that source of potential profit which enticed the captain and pilot to counsel a hurried sailing—was now thrown into the sea. Let us observe how this storm reveals the truth that man cannot and should not seek to lay up for himself treasures on earth (Mt. 6:19). The man who has only an eye to profit materially, instead of his having a hunger and thirst for the kingdom of God, will find his idols eventually threatening his life, not enriching it (Jas. 5:1-3). In addition to the cargo being jettisoned, the ship's tackle, including possibly her main yard—a giant spar likely as long as the ship—was cast into the sea. Things depended upon as necessary blessings in the sunshine of life, are treated as cursed refuse in the valley of the shadow of death. Think of the worldly tackle men will jettison as useless in the dreadful divine judgment of the last day (Rev. 6:12-17).

Saturday, February 12th - Acts 27: 20

The clouds blotted out both sun and stars so that no one could tell where they were or in what direction they were headed. As the ship tossed in the sea, so the hearts of those aboard her contended with torrents of despair. The grim reality conveyed by this verse is that all on that ship lost hope of their surviving the storm. Yet Paul and his companions had a sure hope beyond this lost hope of earthly continuance. The same could not be said for the others on that ship.

Sunday, February 13th - Acts 27: 21-25

Many criticize Paul for what he says in v.21. They view his words as the outcry of bitter despair and angry recrimination. Such words, were they all we had in this account, could be rightly viewed in that way. However, these words form the prelude to an announcement of hope. Thus, so that they whom Paul knew would live might do so henceforth more carefully, the apostle speaks as a counselor, confronting these rash men with their responsibility for their own ruin. Sinful man is always responsible for his ruinous plight from which he can never extricate himself. Divine grace interposes to save those bound for death by their own folly and ignorance.

Monday, February 14th - Acts 27: 21-25

The ship's officers did not heed Paul's advice earlier and, consequently, ran into ruin. He reminds them of that costly mistake so that they might avoid making another mistake in their failing to heed his current

counsel. What the apostle had to share was a word of comfort, based upon divine revelation. Yet, divine decrees revealed do not preclude, but rather include, human responsibility. Therefore, Paul urged the men to keep up their courage in light of God's promise of life. Fears never serve or save anyone, while faith in divine promises does both.

Tuesday, February 15th - Acts 27: 22

Prior to their being caught in this storm, the ship was the life preserver for all on her; her cargo was the profit maker, for all but the soldiers and prisoners. The cargo had already been thrown overboard. Now Paul tells them that the ship would be lost. In a crisis, man cannot depend upon his own devices. We are not to trust in princes, horses, or swords (Ps. 33:16,17; 118:8,9), nor in houses or barns of our own making (Mt. 7:26,27; Lk. 12:15ff). It does not profit any man to gain the world, yet lose his soul. What are ships compared with souls? Would that we could keep this true priority in mind when we are not in threatening storms.

Wednesday, February 16th - Acts 27: 23, 24

Biblical exhortations to encouragement are always based upon the promises and provision of God. Thus, Paul, having urged the men to keep up their courage and committed endeavor, tells them that their hopes and labors will not be disappointed. The Lord's angel had given Paul assurance that he would indeed reach Rome, and that all travelling with him would survive the current ordeal. In declaring this to them, Paul testifies to the reality of his security in the Lord, saying that he both belonged to God as a beloved, precious possession, and served God from a loving heart and with faithful diligence. Paul's predicament at this point might not show so clearly the divine propriety in and protection of the apostle. Yet, the Lord's word of assurance would prove stronger than the storm in preserving the lives of all on that threatened ship.

Thursday, February 17th - Acts 27: 23, 24

Paul belonged to God by virtue of eternal, divine election wrought out by the infinitely costly redemption accomplished by Jesus and applied by the Holy Spirit. The application of that redemption made Paul a new man, one lovingly devoted to the Christ who had saved him. Yet, despite these magnificent realities, Paul found himself distracted by the stormy sea, much as Peter had been when he was walking on the water to Jesus (Mt. 14:30). The great apostle feared for his life, as the others feared for theirs. We know this because the prohibitive imperative, *Do not fear* (Mh. Fobou/), has the force of arresting a fear which was in operation. When Paul says that the angel told him in effect to stop fearing, the apostle confesses that he was not perfected in faith. In fact, his faith was severely tested and at the point of breaking up, like the cable bound ship on which he was being tossed by the fury of the wind and waves. Into this dark night of Paul's soul, the Lord sent the angel to vanquish fear and to fortify the apostle's faith. Our Good Shepherd knows how and when to restore our souls.

Friday, February 18th - Acts 27: 24

When Paul felt himself sinking into a watery tomb, his soul pounded by fears as the ship was pounded by the waves, the Lord's Word came to his rescue. The apostle had previously been told by the Lord that he must testify of Christ at Rome (Acts 23:11). The remembrance of that divine promise had been blown away by the winds and drowned by the heaving swells. All of this forgetfulness and dread the Lord removes by His telling Paul that he would not sink into the sea, as he feared, but that he would stand in Rome before Caesar. The Lord's Word, brought to our remembrance by the Holy Spirit, makes us to stand as more than conquerors amidst the most overwhelming circumstances.

Saturday, February 19th - Acts 27: 24

The Lord ever does more than we ask or think. He not only promised to spare the apostle, but also all who were sailing with him. The despised prisoner, therefore, is shown to be more precious than the cargo, more

life-preserving than the ship. Had Paul not been on that ship, it still would have sailed into this storm, and all aboard would have perished. But Paul, even with his faith having been severely tested, cried out to God for the lives of all who were with him, as well as for his own life. The howling winds and crashing waves could not drown out the cries of Paul, or prevent the attentive ear of his heavenly Father from hearing and answering such a prayer—even after Paul himself thought the answer to his prayers was negative. In his greatest extremity and at his weakest, the servant of Christ can and does render service vital to others.

Sunday, February 20th - Acts 27: 25, 26

Paul renews his call for his sailing companions to keep up their courage. He is not interested in their merely feeling cheered up, but they will need that courage to weather the remainder of their trial. The divine promise was for their survival, not for them to be spared all suffering, as the following account of their shipwreck makes clear (vv.29ff). Cowardice diminishes quality and duration of one's life, and has no place in the kingdom of God (Rev. 21:8).

Monday, February 21st - Acts 27: 25, 26

The Lord can still storms (Mk. 4:35-41), but He does not always do so. In this instance, the Lord issues fortifying grace to enable His servants to weather the storm. Our God will sovereignly ordain that thorns remain in the flesh (2 Cor. 12:7ff), and men remain in fiery furnaces (Dan. 3) or amidst stormy seas when such trials serve for His glory and for the good of His people. Our desire and determination to avoid all suffering and loss issue from fearful self-regard, not from faithful respect for our Lord.

Tuesday, February 22nd - Acts 27: 25, 26

Paul chided the men for their not having heeded his counsel to remain in Crete (v.21). He now urges them not to make the deadly mistake of failing to heed his counsel of encouragement. Had they heeded the sanctified common sense of the apostle, they never would have run into the storm. Now that they were in mortal peril, it was essential that they accept Paul's word, for it was based upon the Word of the God who alone could save them from death. Paul does not merely urge that they believe and act upon his communication; he sets the example, telling them that he believed God's Word himself. As these men were saved by their heeding God's Word through Paul, so are we saved and sanctified by our attention to and application of that Word through the writers of Scripture.

Wednesday, February 23rd - Acts 27: 27-29

In v. 27 we learn that the men had been tossed in the storm for two weeks. We do not know how much time passed between Paul's announcement that they would run aground and the observations that they were headed toward land. It would have been very trying had much time elapsed, while they were driven about the central Mediterranean (so called Adriatic Sea by the ancients). Paul received his vision on the night he related it (v.23), and it could well have been that it was at midnight of that very night when the soundings indicated their approach to land. Whether the time was long or short, things began shaping up according to God's word through Paul. The men feared running aground in the dark and took measures to slow their approach to land. There is nothing said about their thanking God, but we are told that they prayed for daylight, most of them, no doubt, reckoning that God could not save them in the dark. Those with little or no faith will always make the worst, not the best, of the promises and providence of God.

Thursday, February 24th - Acts 27: 30, 31

The sailors knew two critical things as their ship approached land. They knew the many hazards involved in beaching a large vessel, and they also knew better than anyone else aboard how best to beach the ship. They, however, show themselves heedless to the second consideration, and to how their departure would likely doom the others on board. Accordingly, they attempt an escape in the lifeboat, sneaking away under pretense of their laboring to make the crash landing as safe as possible. It was cowardly of them so to lie

and to take steps which would jeopardize so many others. Their sin was aggravated by the fact that they were acting so shamefully in light of God's word of salvation to them (v.22). Wickedness prompts these men to pervert the blessing of God into an occasion for them to steal their own salvation at the expense of their fellows. How different it is in Christ, wherein we each bear one another's burden with the result that we all together are preserved (Gal. 6:1,2).

Friday, February 25th - Acts 27: 30, 31

The faithless sailors reckoned not on the promise of God, but they did see and attempt to seize an opportunity to escape from what they deemed a death trap. They tried to cover their escape with lying pretense, saying that they were working to secure the ship for the benefit of all. Apparently, all on board were fooled, except the apostle, whose repeated counsel to believers that they maintain vigilance (1 Cor. 16:13; Eph. 6:18) he himself obviously practiced. None are so attuned to detect deceit as are believers who walk in the light of the Lord. They behold vital intelligence where others see only the fair mask of deceivers, which mask is designed to protect liars from detection. The mask of deceit does not, however, protect others from harm, but dulls their alertness to their own plight.

Saturday, February 26th - Acts 27: 30, 31

The sovereignty of God does not preclude, but rather includes man's responsibility. Therefore, those trusting most in divine sovereignty do not, as some would say, *Let go and let God*. Paul does not perceive what the sailors were up to and dismiss it with the thought that the Lord would somehow provide. The apostle rightly reckons that the Lord provided him with intelligence of the planned escape so that he might responsibly act concerning it. Accordingly, Paul appeals to the man in authority on the ship, namely, the centurion, and to the enforcing arm of that authority, the soldiers, telling them not only what was afoot, but also what would result should the sailors make good their escape. God shows His servants what is really happening around them so that they, even be they prisoners, might with authority savingly call the shots.

Sunday, February 27th - Acts 27: 31

Why were the sailors essential to the survival of all aboard the ship? In vv. 39, 40 we learn that the sailors' experience and knowledge would prove vital to the ship's beaching with relative safety. Those who seek first the kingdom of God realize what is essential in life and in every aspect thereof. Those who make it their business to see the Lord, see everything essential for life. Of all on board the ship, only the imprisoned apostle realized how critical the sailors were to the survival of all. Only he acted so as to use them and all things for the good of those in the company who loved God and were called according to His purpose (Rom. 8:28), as well as for the good of those for whose lives Paul had prayed (v.24).

Monday, February 28th - Acts 27: 32

The centurion had earlier failed to heed Paul's counsel (v.11), and was now deeply regretting it. This time when Paul spoke, Julius would not repeat his earlier mistake. Paul's reproof against those who had not followed his advice (v.21), Julius, at least, took to heart. With right resolution the centurion acted from that reproof which was given for the benefit of himself and all aboard that ship. Hence, the lifeboat, which would have been a means to save some at the expense of all others, was cut adrift, and the survival of the sailors was made dependent upon their maneuvering the ship for the safety of all. With the lifeboat cut loose, all were bound together in the promise of God's saving their lives (v.24).

Tuesday, February 29th - Acts 27: 33, 34

Paul's report and the centurion's orders to cut loose the lifeboat may have seemed cruel and self-serving, dooming the sailors who thought they stood a good chance to survive if they could take the smaller boat closer to shore than the great ship could have gone. But the lifeboat was not their way of salvation. Their lives were to be preserved on the ship through their hearing and heeding the encouragements of the servant

of the Lord of life. They would be saved, not through their despondent and desperate measures to save themselves, but through their nourishing their hearts with hope and their bodies with food so that they would be strengthened to work out their temporal—if not eternal—salvation (vv.39,40,43,44).

Wednesday, March 1st - Acts 27: 34

The sailors were essential to the saving of all aboard the ship (v.31), and the sailors' eating was essential to their having strength for their critical service. Thus, Paul does not despise means, but urges their use for vital ends. Yet, he does not offer them physical nourishment alone, but holds out hope for them as well. He had assurance that the Lord—who knew how to rescue men such as Daniel's friends from the fiery furnace (Dan. 3:17-30)—would also rescue them from the raging waters. Paul did not keep this assurance to himself, but declared it convincingly to all. Hence Paul offered food for their bodies and hope for their hearts. Both were necessary, but the latter was the more substantial and fortifying.

Thursday, March 2nd - Acts 27: 35, 36

Paul gives encouragement through deed as well as through word. The apostle sets before the discouraged company an example of gratitude to God. He who, years earlier, saw cause to praise God from the darkness of a dungeon in Philippi (Acts 16:25), saw cause this night to thank God amidst the tempestuous seas. Paul knew well that they were in serious trouble, having for two weeks been threatened constantly by death. He knew even better, however, that he and his fellows were in the care of Christ, who had loved him and had delivered Himself up for him (Gal. 2:20). Therefore, Paul gave public thanks to God, and by his eating bread demonstrated his confidence that his life would be spared and thus must be sustained. May our lives set for others similar heartening examples of godly gratitude and responsible living, especially amidst the crises of life.

Friday, March 3rd - Acts 27: 35-37

We should note how Paul exercised his apostleship even as a prisoner aboard a doomed ship. He did not keep the word of encouragement from God to himself, but shared it with all on that ship. In v.37 we learn the number of those to whom this messenger of salvation ministered. Paul was one among two hundred and seventy-six souls—a fair sized congregation—serving as a minister of life to the glory of God. How often do we find ourselves in a crisis, failing to perceive that we are, in fact, amidst a congregation drawn together by God so that we might serve for their good and His glory?

Saturday, March 4th - Acts 27: 38

We were told in v. 18 that at the beginning of the storm the cargo was jettisoned. Now we are informed that at least some of the grain had been kept aboard. In fact, quite a bit of wheat had been kept as we learn by the reason given for this final ditching. Enough of the precious, profit providing wheat had been kept to weigh the ship down appreciably. Now that golden grain had to be cast into the sea in order to lighten the ship, thus enabling her to get as close to land as possible before running aground. Even in their desperation, these men had held on to hopes for their material profit. Now they saw clearly how little such vain, worldly hopes mattered. Such hopes, which they jettisoned under compulsion, we should learn to cast away voluntarily, so that we may run the spiritual race set before us (Heb. 12: 1,2).

Sunday, March 5th - Acts 27: 39, 40

These verses tell us how, at the critical moment of their final approach to land, the sailors' skills were employed. Those skills proved vitally necessary. For the performance of their nautical feats, they needed much physical strength. They were on board the ship in fit condition for this task solely due to Paul's previous report to the centurion (v.31) and counsel for all on the ship to eat (vv.33,34). Faithful words fitly spoken can save literally hundreds of lives. Let us never fearfully hold back words which are good, right, and vitally necessary.

Monday, March 6th - Acts 27: 41

The word of God to Paul was that no life would be lost, but only the ship, which would run aground on an island (vv.22,26). By Paul's counsel the sailors were there on the ship, fit and experienced to run her onto the targeted sandy beach. All seemed to be going smoothly according to divine promise. Yet, as is often the case, there are trials embedded in the divine promises which only become obvious in the event. The ship suddenly came upon a place where opposing currents collided, thus forming a reef. The bow of the ship struck and was embedded in the reef, while the stern was battered and broken by the waves. Thus, the weary seafarers, coming so near to land, were in fresh danger of losing their lives. The promises of God can often seem to be irreparably dashed, only to emerge as solid as ever. As John Calvin well remarks, God "preferred to pull Paul and the others...from the broken ship, rather than bring it intact to the shore." (*New Testament Commentaries*, vol. 7, p.296).

Tuesday, March 7th - Acts 27: 42

The ship, which formed a mobile jail for the prisoners, was breaking apart. However, the prisoners did not appear to face a happy freedom. Even if they could escape from the sea they now find themselves plunged into immediate danger of death from the soldiers. Roman soldiers performing guard duty were obliged to keep prisoners confined or forfeit their own lives (cf. the Philippian jailer, Acts 16:17). Thus, for those soldiers it was better that they kill the prisoners than let them escape. Accordingly, from their suffering the life threatening buffeting of an impersonal storm, the prisoners suddenly become the special targets of men trained and well equipped to kill them. Could we imagine the lives of Paul and his co-laborers possibly being in greater jeopardy? Yet the servants of Christ are ever safe from fiery furnaces, dark dungeons, stormy seas, and men intent on killing them, for such servants are beloved sons of the God of deliverances to whom belong escapes from death (Ps. 68:20).

Wednesday, March 8th - Acts 27: 42, 43

Paul had repeatedly taken godly initiative in this crisis, having come forward with reports, counsel, and encouragement for those who appeared to have his life and liberty in their hands. The apostle's true and faithful words, his alert and responsible action, and his example of gratitude all had their effect, especially upon the centurion. Hence, Julius intervenes to prohibit his soldiers from killing Paul and the other prisoners to whom Paul's God had granted life in answer to Paul's petitions (v.24). The apostle's repeated service for the life and welfare of others, including his captors, is hereby rewarded. God moved this Roman officer to save Paul and the other prisoners from death by the soldiers. Julius further demonstrated his care for the prisoners by his orders that those who could swim should leave the doomed ship and make their way to the life-preserving shore. Paul was certainly one who could swim, he having spent at least a day and a night in the deep during one of his many afflictions borne in the service of Christ (2 Cor. 11:25). Faithful and loving deeds ever redound to God's glory and rebound to us for our good.

Thursday, March 9th - Acts 27: 42-44

The life-sparing agenda of the centurion conformed perfectly to the divine promise that all lives would be spared (v.24). Julius did not unthinkingly adopt this agenda. He was moved by the competence and compassion of Paul, and by the demonstrated truth of God's promised deliverance. He surely realized that he owed his life to the servant of Christ, and likely came to trust in the God who was providing their deliverance. Those properly affected by the care of Christ ministered through His servants, become themselves servants caring for others.

Friday, March 10th - Acts 27: 43, 44

Out of his grateful regard for Paul, the centurion spared not only the life of the apostle, but also the lives of all the prisoners. Every man on that ship owed his life to Paul's prevailing counsel, but the prisoners, some of whom were surely justly sentenced criminals, doubly owed their lives to the ambassador in chains.

Swimming prisoners were set free to swim to shore, while the others made their way to land on the remnants of the disintegrating ship. But v.44 does not say that they all saved themselves. It rather uses the passive, *all were brought safely* (diaswqh/nai) *to land*, indicating clearly that their preservation from that death into which their own folly had plunged them, was due instrumentally to Paul and ultimately to God.

Saturday, March 11th - Acts 28: 1

Luke once more stresses the agency of God in the men's survival of their shipwreck when he uses the passive participle translated, *they had been brought safely through* (diaswqe,ntej). Through chapter 27 we are told how God saved Paul and his two hundred seventy five shipmates from the stormy sea. Now in chapter 28 we go on to learn that for which God had spared Paul and his companions. The Lord had, through many tribulations, brought them to the island of Malta, located about fifty miles south of Sicily. The island was also named Melita by Phoenician sailors, the name coming from the Canaanite word meaning *refuge*. The island, so far as those survivors of the shipwreck were concerned, was well named. But we shall find Paul giving, as well as receiving, refuge on this island.

Sunday, March 12th - Acts 28: 2

The shipwreck survivors received a warm welcome from the residents of their refuge. It is the way of our Lord to provide relief for His servants after they sustain grueling tests. Nor is our God ever lacking instruments through which to provide such relief. Therefore, He who had used ravens and a poor widow to provide for His prophet (1 Ki.17), and who had dispatched angels to minister to His Son after His wilderness temptations (Mt. 4:11), here rouses the natives of Malta to care for His weary servants and their companions. Those companions were now not so much Paul's fellow prisoners or captors, as they were trophies of his prayers.

Monday, March 13th - Acts 28: 2, 3

Never does our Lord's blessing to His servants run one way. Those who minister to the Lord's servants, minister to the Lord and, accordingly, receive a servant's reward (Mt. 25:31ff). Thus, the widow of Zarephath, far from her dying because she gave her last morsel to Elijah, was sustained by the Lord's provision through His prophet (1 Ki. 17:8-16). Similarly here, we find Paul not only receiving God's blessing through the hospitality of the natives of Malta, but he is laboring to express his gratitude to them by helping them in the maintenance of their fire. In Christ, we receive blessing never so that it might terminate with us, but always so that we might pass it on to others.

Tuesday, March 14th - Acts 28: 3

The likeness of Christ continues to shine through the practical deeds of His servant, Paul. On the sea, the apostle had shown himself to be more than a conqueror in the crisis. Now, on land he demonstrates that essential humility which is a crowning virtue of the Christ-like. He takes initiative, this time not to advise a military commander, but to stoop and serve. If this champion apostle thinks it not beneath his dignity to gather sticks on the beach of his recent shipwreck, can any task, however small, be too lowly for us?

Wednesday, March 15th - Acts 28: 3

The apostle gives instructions to servants, as to how they could and should serve with diligent integrity, knowing that they were rendering service to Christ (Eph. 6:5-8; Col. 3:22-25). It was instruction which he himself followed as we see in this case where he gathers sticks for the fire. He does not consider himself a frazzled survivor due his rest, but a faithful servant looking for and finding opportunity to do his duty to God for the benefit of others. But, as with all true Christian service, there is great cost involved for the servant. In this case a viper, gathered up with the sticks, attacks Paul. The apostle never would have encountered this danger had he not been serving as he was. Hence, once more, the life of the servant of

Christ is threatened. Yet, he who serves the One who rose victorious from the grave need not fear many deaths, especially when they threaten in the course of godly service.

Thursday, March 16th - Acts 28: 3, 4

Paul was not only bitten by the viper, he was also censured by the natives. The people of Malta here demonstrate their knowledge of natural theology. They know rightly that the universe has a moral, not a mechanical, basis. They recognize that a deity made and governs the world (Rom. 1:18-23). Therefore, like Job's friends—who were in reality sorry comforters—they deem Paul a great sinner due to his suffering. Natural theology rightly apprehends that man is a sinner, without excuse for his sin and justly deserving divine punishment; but it never gives insight into the glorious good God accomplishes through the suffering of His servants or of His Son (Is. 53. 4-6).

Friday, March 17th - Acts 28: 4-6

By the preserving grace and power of God, Paul shook off the viper, killing it in the fire, while he himself remained unharmed. The natives witnessed Paul's sustaining of the viper attack without his suffering harm, and they radically changed their assessment of the apostle, calling him a god. The limits of natural theology are seen in this. It leads men to view others as either murderers or gods. Only the truth revealed in God's Word teaches that men are made in God's image, and that by their sin they all have become virtually murderers, deserving death (Rom. 3:10-18). Revealed theology goes on to teach that God saves sinners by the death of His Son, the God/man.

Saturday, March 18th - Acts 28: 7-10

The natives, though they were mistaken in their considering Paul a murderer or a god, were not far off on either count. Paul did bear guilt in the death of Stephen. Yet, by the grace of God he not only was saved, but was also sent to others with the message and power of salvation. As such, the people of Malta witnessed the grace and power of God working in and through this man, Paul. The divine grace and power were manifested in the preservation of Paul's life from the sea and the serpent, as well as through Paul's helping and miraculously healing others on the island. We may not have these miraculous powers, but the same Holy Spirit who indwelt Paul abides in us, prompting and enabling us to manifest deeds of love and to speak words of truth to the salvation of others.

Sunday, March 19th - Acts 7-10

It is clear that Paul proclaimed the gospel on Malta by his performing deeds of compassion and miraculous power. Thereby he richly repaid the natives on this refuge island, giving them refuge from their afflictions. Did Paul declare in words the gospel? He certainly must have. We read of his healing ministry being accompanied by prayer (v.8). Nor should we think that Paul would let himself be mistaken for a god. In this connection, we should recall the time he and Barnabas were mistaken for gods at Lystra (Acts 14:11-18). There they acted quickly and clearly to point the people to the one true God. Surely Paul did as much at Malta. At Lystra the crowds were swayed by the Jews to stone Paul (Acts 14:19). Here at Malta, they show him and his company all honor and respect, as ones grateful for their having been blessed by the power of the true, living God. It appears likely, then, that Malta served as the fruitful prelude to Paul's labors for Christ at Rome.

Monday, March 20th - Acts 28: 11

Paul and company spent the three winter months on Malta, wisely waiting for safe sailing winds. During that considerable amount of time, we should have no doubt that Paul continued to declare and demonstrate the saving power of God in Christ. When sailing was again safely possible, the prisoners and their guards, if not the whole company of two hundred seventy-six, boarded another grain ship bound for Rome. Luke takes special note of the idolatrous figurehead of the ship, namely, the Gemini, Castor and Pollux. These

twins, the imagined sons of the false god, Jupiter, were considered guardians of men at sea, especially in storms. Surely Paul, Luke, and Aristarchus found it sadly ironic that they, having just been saved from a savage tempest at sea by the grace and power of the living God, should now be conveyed to Rome in a vessel dedicated to vain and useless idols. Perhaps the centurion and some of the soldiers and other shipwreck survivors saw the same irony, their eyes having been opened to the Lord.

Tuesday, March 21st - Acts 28: 12-14

Luke records the stopping places during the voyage to Rome. Each stop marked safe progress to the place of Paul's final divinely given assignment. Syracuse is located on the east coast of Sicily; Rhegium on the southern boot tip of Italy; and Puteoli lies just one hundred miles southeast from Rome. It may be observed that Paul appears to have been granted considerable freedom, as Luke records that at Puteoli they found and stayed for a week with some brethren in Christ. It is not hard for us to imagine how mutually rich and refreshing such fellowship between Paul's company and the brethren in that Italian town would have been.

Wednesday, March 22nd - Acts 28: 14, 15

The brethren at Puteoli were a kind of first fruit of the crowds of Christians awaiting Paul at Rome. Thus, by the hand of God, they came to Rome buoyed by the saints at Puteoli. At last, Paul's prayerful and holy desire to visit Rome was satisfied (Rom. 1:10-13). The word of God's promise was also on the verge of fulfillment (Acts 23:11; 27:24). But Paul had never planned to visit Rome as a prisoner. Would his chains hamper his mission and would the saints at Rome be ashamed of this prisoner? If Paul entertained such questions they were soon put to rest for him when he saw believers from the church at Rome coming out to meet and greet him as he and his company approached the Imperial city. The welcoming brethren began appearing 43 miles from Rome, at the Appian Market, and continued showing themselves at Three Inns (33 miles from Rome) and all along the Appian Way into the seat of Caesar's power. Accordingly, without a hint of regret for his current status as a prisoner or all that he had suffered to reach this glorious welcome, Paul gave thanks to God and took to heart this singular manifestation of divine approval of his person and mission. So, too, in our own way, shall we each have cause only to thank our God, when he leads us not into Rome, but into that imperishable celestial city of His making.

Thursday, March 23rd - Acts 28: 16

That Luke stayed with Paul and arrived at Rome with the apostle is clear from the pronoun *we* in this verse. The prisoner of Christ was not obliged to make his voyage alone. He was accompanied by his faithful brethren and co-laborers. Though saints may be reduced to minorities, and sometimes isolated from men, they are never alone. Even when reduced to apparent solitude, they have One indwelling them who more than compensates for deprivation of human companionship. Paul had a few of his co-laborers with him. What he may have lacked in quantity he had abundantly in quality. Nor did Luke and his friends, notwithstanding the terrible storm at sea, find themselves less well off for their continued accompaniment of Paul. We too—who have Luke's detailed, encouraging, and edifying account of the trip to Rome—are better off for this arrangement. Let us learn to see how well equipped the Lord makes His servants in whatever circumstances they are.

Friday, March 24th - Acts 28: 16

Some texts contain the phrase, *the centurion delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard*. This makes explicit that Paul was distinguished from the mass of prisoners. The other prisoners were committed to the supervision of a captain and a company of soldiers. But Paul was allowed his own rented quarters, and was assigned to a single guard. The details of the Lord's providence, wrought out by Paul's faithful living amidst a severe trial at sea, manifested to the centurion how special Paul was. Accordingly, the apostle's imprisonment is mitigated proximately by an appreciative Julius, who owed Paul his life, and ultimately by Paul's merciful God.

Saturday, March 25th - Acts 28: 16

Paul's imprisonment at Rome was indeed but a momentary and light affliction for him. The barest traces that he was in custody of the civil authorities were evident. He was assigned to a single soldier, to whom he was attached by a light chain (v.20). While the soldier was no great curse to Paul, the apostle was an unimaginable source of blessing to the soldier. Tradition maintains that many such soldiers were, in succession, chained to Paul, and, by that attachment, brought to be united to Christ and to the apostle in Christ. Nothing can destroy the spread of the gospel, whereas the gospel has power to transform even that which would inhibit it.

Sunday, March 26th - Acts 28: 17-19

Paul consistently followed the example and direction of his Lord in delivering the gospel first to the Jews. Accordingly, as soon as Paul was settled in his own rented quarters, he invited the leading Jews then living in Rome to hear not only his defense but also his gospel. Here is the patient persistence of the Lord pleading with His ancient people through His apostle. God gave the Jews much time and many opportunities to embrace the substance of salvation promised in the prophecies, history, types, and shadows of Israel, and provided in Jesus. As our God is patient and persistent with wayward sinners, so should we be with our offering the gospel to those around us.

Monday, March 27th - Acts 17-19

Paul had an unceasing heart's desire and prayer to God for the salvation of his fellow Jews (Rom. 10:1). Therefore, he took pains to be, and to appear to be, innocent before them, so that they would give him an unprejudiced hearing. He addresses them with respectful affection, using the term, *brethren*. He asserts that he was innocent of offense against the people, law, or customs of the Jews. Yet he gives a candid account of his being there in Rome as a prisoner. He was not there, as it may have to them appeared, as a law-breaker or blasphemer. He had been charged, tried, and substantially acquitted by both ecclesiastical and civil courts. It was, he informs his hearers, the persistent malice of the Jews at Jerusalem that had entangled Paul in legalities and led to his appeal to Caesar. Paul makes the additional point that he was in Rome solely as an appellant in defense of his innocence, not as a complainant bringing a counter-charge against the Jews. When all facts are known, servants of Christ are clearly revealed to be harmless as doves, yet equipped with richest blessing to convey to their hearers.

Tuesday, March 28th - Acts 28: 20

The apostle makes clear to his fellow Jews that his imprisonment should not cause them to stumble. He was chained not because he represented a threat to men's welfare and was remanded for due punishment of deeds done against humanity. The apostle was before them in his chain not because he sought to undermine the religion of Israel, but rather as one who had entered into and offered to others the fulfillment of it. Thus, at Rome, as at Jerusalem (Acts 26:6), the apostle declares that the hope of Israel was not to be found in a works righteousness, but rather in the innocent suffering of the Lamb of God, here reflected in the afflictions of the apostle of Christ. We must not be ashamed of, but rather glory in our sufferings for the Lamb of God (Mt. 5:10-12).

Wednesday, March 29th - Acts 28: 21, 22

The response of the Jews at Rome to Paul's introduction is intriguing and instructive. They deny any prior knowledge of Paul or his case. This may be an indication that the persecuting malice of the Jerusalem Jews had its limit. Those Jews had been repeatedly frustrated in Judea in their attempts to have Paul put to death (either by assassination or by a rigged trial). Perhaps, therefore, they reasoned that they would only be further frustrated at the seat of Imperial Rome's justice. The devil and his helpers may persevere, but they never prevail.

Thursday, March 30th - Acts 28: 21, 22

The Jews at Rome denied having any report of Paul or his case. Their denial may have been true. However, they may also have been speaking from motives of political expediency. They may have been pleading their ignorance in an attempt to distance themselves from all parties in this case. It is quite likely that those Jews who had managed to live in the shadow of the Emperor's seat had learned to steer clear of troubles calling for Caesar's attention. If this was the case, it shows how useless the Roman Jews would have been in any further prosecution of Paul. By such ignorance, they declare no desire to offend Paul, the Jews at Jerusalem, or the Romans. Yet, ignorance of Christ and His claims will shield no one from that divine judgment at which all must give account. Professed ignorance or neutrality respecting Jesus Christ is really impossible (Mt. 12:30). It is also most offensive to God, who has installed His Son as King to be worshipped and lovingly served by all (Ps. 2:11,12).

Friday, March 31st - Acts 28: 21, 22

The Roman Jews may not have heard evil reports regarding Paul, but they knew that Paul was a Christian, and they had heard nothing but evil reports concerning Christianity. Nevertheless, they profess themselves interested in hearing Paul's presentation of the faith. No doubt his respect manifested in his request to see them and introduction to them won their hearing. If our attitude towards others is one of respectful consideration, we will usually win a hearing from them, if not win them to Christ. If we are rude and offensive we will win nothing, especially our Lord's approbation.

Saturday, April 1st - Acts 28: 22

It is incredible that these Jews in Rome should have heard nothing but evil reports against Christianity. There was a large church at Rome, and the gracious testimony of her members could not entirely have escaped the notice of these Jews. Unregenerate men hear what they want to hear and disregard the rest. That which they disregarded in this case was essential for their salvation. Satan not only blinds men to the light of the gospel, he also stops their ears from hearing anything except evil misrepresentations of it. Because of this, we must train ourselves to pray to God before we ever venture to speak to men about Christ.

Sunday, April 2nd - Acts 28: 23

The Jews at Rome kept their word and came to hear Paul's gospel presentation. The mention of large numbers indicates that more than those leaders Paul had invited earlier came at this appointed time (v.17). Apparently the apostle's respectful consideration and calm confidence had impressed the leaders who heard him previously so that they not only returned themselves, but brought others with them. People are often impressed with and intrigued by the man preaching the gospel and the men produced by it, while they themselves reject the message of the gospel. As we shall see, a sifting will take place with this crowd, as it always does when the message of salvation is faithfully proclaimed.

Monday, April 3rd - Acts 28: 23

The appointed place was Paul's rented lodging. There the apostle turned the place of his house arrest into a pulpit from which he declared the glorious message of salvation in Christ. Commodious and well-appointed buildings may attract people and make an audience comfortable, but such facilities are not necessary for the faithful proclamation of the gospel. God does not deposit His message of salvation in a lifeless edifice, but entrusts it to living ambassadors.

Tuesday, April 4th - Acts 28: 23

This verse tells us when, where and to whom Paul preached. It also informs us what and for how long the apostle preached. The message he declared had two parts. First, he gave an explanation regarding the kingdom of God. The false, carnal notion the Jews had fabricated and accepted regarding the kingdom of God was an impediment to their entering into the true kingdom. Their carnal notion blinded them to the deep spiritual reality, immeasurable power, and lasting glory of the true kingdom of God. It also made them stumble at the cross, the very foundation of and point of entry into the kingdom. Thus, Paul took pains to teach regarding the true character of the divine kingdom. His teaching was not the mere imparting of information, however; still less was it the sort of sentimental appeal and carnal entertainment so littering the Church in our day. He taught the truth, line upon line, precept upon precept. He also gave solemn testimony, the personal account of one who had tasted and seen that life in the kingdom of God was good and glorious. Here is the pattern for true gospel preaching, which needs no props such as fine buildings, beautiful music, and entertaining performances, but which can stand on its own and convict and convert sinners.

Wednesday, April 5th - Acts 28: 23

A clear and true defining of the kingdom of God was, especially for these Jews living amidst the worldly splendor of Rome, a necessary prelude. The second component of Paul's preaching was Christ crucified. The Redeemer was, in fact, the heart of his message. We read that Paul sought to persuade them concerning Jesus. What this means is that the apostle endeavored to convince them that the man Jesus was indeed the Messiah, the Son of God, the Savior and Lord of God's people. Moreover, Paul taught the necessity of the sacrificial death and atoning resurrection of Jesus not as mere information. The apostle urged it upon his hearers for their personal and vital acceptance. Ultimately, the gospel is not so much about principles as about a crucified and risen Person; not so much about a kingdom as about the King.

Thursday, April 6th - Acts 28: 23

We are told in this verse the authority by which Paul preached. His message and testimony were not cleverly devised tales, derived from his own wishful thinking. Nor was his doctrine novel. The apostle drew all that he preached regarding the character of the kingdom of God and the person and work of Christ from the Word of God. As the Master had done with His foolish and slow-hearted disciples on the Emmaus road (Lk. 24:25-27), so the servant here shows from Scripture how Jesus fulfilled the Law and the prophets. Jesus is not exotic or antithetical to the Law and prophets the Jews had in their hands, but not in their hearts. He is the One to whom the Law and the prophets point.

Friday, April 7th - Acts 28: 23

The final point we should note in this condensed verse is that Paul preached for a very long time. Since the verse refers to his explaining, solemnly testifying, and seeking to persuade, we should understand that the apostle did not deliver a twelve hour discourse so much as he engaged in a dialogue for much of that duration. Paul was, of course, capable of delivering some very long sermons, as he had done at Troas where poor Eutychus was overcome with sleep and fell to his death to be raised up by Paul (Acts 20:6-10). The point we should gather from these long gospel sermons and discussions is that the message of salvation is not a pill to be swallowed but a meal to be savored. The fixation with immediacy in our day has reduced much ministry to the miniscule proportions of a sound byte. Such reductions of the glorious message of salvation manifest ministers' concession to the popular demand that preaching be short and sweet so that the real interests of life are not unduly interrupted. No wonder there is widespread spiritual anemia in the Church!

Saturday, April 8th - Acts 28: 24

Jesus said that He came bringing a sword of division (Mt. 10:34-39). We see that Paul, wielding the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, creates a division amongst these Jews. Some believed; others did not. Those exalting uniformity may lament and deplore such divisiveness created by gospel preaching. Yet, whereas the Jews had previously all been united in sin and death, by the electing mercy and effectual calling of God through the preaching of the gospel, some were snatched from the perishing mass to be made new creatures in Christ, adopted sons of God, and inheritors of eternal life. The sword of the Spirit is that of a surgeon, operating to give life to the perishing.

Sunday, April 9th - Acts 28: 24

Luke records that some of the Jews listening to Paul's preaching were being persuaded. This implies their being convinced of the truth, the logic, the authority, and the blessedly desirable character of the message of salvation in Christ. It further implies, when contrasted with the unbelief of the rest, that those persuaded embraced the Savior by faith. Regarding the others, we are not told that they failed to be persuaded, but rather that they refused to believe. Men who refuse the gospel do so not because there is any defect in its veracity or precious character, but because they exercise their volition against the light of truth, and the beauty of God's holy grace and love. Jesus Himself spoke of men who would not believe, and therefore rendered themselves incapable of believing (Jn. 12: 36-39). Perverted volition leads to confirmed doom.

Monday, April 10th - Acts 28: 25-27

The division amongst the Jews manifested the gracious effectual calling of God on the part of those who believed, and the just reprobation of God on the part of those who would not believe. The apostle did not simply occasion and witness this division, he had a solemn pronouncement of judgement to declare with respect to those refusing to believe in Jesus. Thus, Paul's pacific and respectful manner gives way to a holy indignation. His declaration of judgment upon those Jews who refused Christ is a prelude to the Lord's dealings with such people. For God is commonly gracious to men in this life, causing His rain to fall on the just and unjust alike. However, those leaving this life without the blessing of Christ's redemption will perpetually feel the fires of divine wrath, thirsting, like the rich man in Hades, for a mere drop of grace from the God whom they have spurned in this world of His abounding common grace (Lk. 16:22-24).

Tuesday, April 11th - Acts 28: 25-27

The unbelieving Jews were themselves responsible for their refusal to trust Jesus for salvation. However, lest we think that these men frustrated the grace of God, the apostle declares the sovereignty of God over the situation. These unbelieving Jews—Jesus' own to whom He came, and they did not receive Him (Jn. 1:11)—were by the just and holy ordaining of God appointed to the end of condemnation (Rom. 9-11; 1 Pet. 2:8). When Paul states this, drawing directly from the prophet, Isaiah, he hammers at the perversity of the unbeliever, who deludes himself into thinking that he can resist God. Paul also fortifies the believer, showing him that the unbelief of others is no sign of defect in God's work, but is righteously and sinlessly encompassed by the divine work.

Wednesday, April 12th - Acts 28: 25-27

Paul is not petulant in citing this prophecy in application to those leaving him. Here he issues a final warning to the impenitent, and we may yet learn that some of those departing Jews took the warning to heart and were later converted to Christ. He also gives assurance to those new believers, now divided from their erstwhile Jewish brethren, that the Jews' rejection of God and His ordinances is no new or unexpected thing. What the prophet of God centuries earlier had predicted was then being fulfilled. We do well to remember that the gospel is a two-edged sword, beckoning some to life and confirming others in death. Thus, we must not be surprised or scandalized when men refuse our Savior.

Thursday, April 13th - Acts 28: 25-27

The passage cited by Paul is also cited in several other places in the New Testament. Jesus refers to it when He explains to His disciples the reason He taught in parables (Mt. 13:14,15; Mk. 4:12; Lk. 8:10). Our Lord also refers to this passage at His last public discourse, just after His triumphal entry into Jerusalem, when He appealed to a rejecting people to believe in the light while they had it among them (Jn. 12:35-43). The apostle Paul himself cites this passage not only here, but also in his letter to the Romans (Rom. 11:8). It is therefore a critical prophecy and thus a fitting passage of Scripture with which to begin the conclusion to this great Book of Acts. The instructive thing to note in a comparison of the various citations of this passage is that in some, the sovereignty of God in His ordaining that men be hardened in their unbelief is made more explicit (Jn. 12:40; Rom. 11:8), while in others, man's responsibility for his unbelief is more explicit (Mt. 13:14,15; Mk. 4:12; Lk. 8:10; Acts 28:26,27). There is, of course, no contradiction between these different emphases. God is sovereign over, and man is fully responsible for, man's unbelief. To the praise of God's justice, some are righteously confirmed in their unbelief (Rom. 9:14,22), while to the praise of God's mercy others are effectually called to new life in Christ (Rom. 9:15,16,23). The glory of God is manifested through His sovereign dealings with both believers and unbelievers. Thus, all praise is due His Name!

Friday, April 14th - Acts 28: 26

The Jews at Rome came to hear Paul's teaching. Some, and likely most of them, rejected it. They heard, but did not understand; they saw the apostle, chained to the Roman soldier, but did not perceive in the sight a reflection of the redeeming sufferings of Christ. In their natural state, men, being dead in sin (Eph. 2:1), hear without true comprehension, and see without true perception. It is only by the gracious operation of God that new life is given to and new powers employed by men of faith, who grow to hear the voice of God and to see His glory in all things.

Saturday, April 15th - Acts 28: 26, 27

Sin has rendered men walking corpses. They are biologically alive, but spiritually dead. Thus they see with eyes, hear with ears, but perceive not with their hearts. For this miserable state they are themselves responsible. They, by their suppressing the truth (Rom. 1:18), render their own hearts dull, their ears closed, and their eyes blind. By such perverse abuse of his senses of perception, sinful man does not attain life, freedom, and happiness, but cuts himself off from the blessed healing, restoration, and glorious exaltation of the Lord.

Sunday, April 16th - Acts 28: 28

The gospel, by the sovereign ordaining of God, was to come first to the Jew, but not stop with the Jew. The whole Old Testament demonstrates over centuries God's gracious coming to the children of Israel. But, as Jesus taught in the parable of the slighted marriage feast (Mt. 22:1-14), when the invited guests refuse to respond, the call goes out to others to come to the feast. Thus, as he had done at Pisidian Antioch (Acts 13:46), and at Corinth (Acts 18:6), so now at Rome Paul turns from the Jews who rejected the gospel to the Gentiles who were receiving it. Thanks be to God, that He sinlessly uses the sin of the Jews to bless immeasurably those of us who have been, as wild olive branches, grafted into the olive tree of the Church, the Bride and Body of Christ (Rom. 11:17).

Monday, April 17th - Acts 28: 29

Some versions omit this verse, but there is no good reason to do so. It informs us that, despite Paul's final solemn warning issued with the full authority of God's Word, many of the Jews were unhesitating in their determination to leave Paul, to withdraw from the truth, the good news of salvation, to flee from God in Christ. Instead of their coming to know the truth which alone would set them free, enlighten their eyes, and empower their hearts, they departed from Paul and Paul's God to dispute among themselves, as though they, being each one blind, would become guides to one another. Their darkened and proud cantankerousness continues to our day. How profoundly sad!

Tuesday, April 18th - Acts 28: 30

Paul's life seemed in great jeopardy in Jerusalem, and in greatest jeopardy on his voyage to Rome. Yet he arrived at Rome and was planted there for two years, all by the wise ordaining, sovereign authority, and almighty power of God. We read of Paul's staying in Rome for two years, not forever. We read of him dwelling in rented quarters, not in his own home. For Paul was in Rome on divine assignment, not at his final home with the Lord. Paul and all of those with him in Christ are ever in this world as sojourners. He and we are pilgrims, and our final destination is not the city of Caesar, but the celestial city which has glorious foundations, whose architect and builder is God (Heb. 11:10).

Wednesday, April 19th - Acts 28: 30

The prisoner of Christ was forsaken neither by the Lord nor His people. Many came to visit Paul, and he welcomed them all. And all who came to him were, indeed, well for their having come to visit this apostle. They came to this prisoner and found him to be a man not bemoaning his imprisonment, but acting the gracious host to his guests, blessing them with the glorious riches of the gospel. In short, they found in Paul no prisoner, but a prince of God, a son of the King of glory, and a man at liberty and at peace in Christ. May people find us to be so graciously welcoming in our homes, as we manifest Christ to them there.

Thursday, April 20th - Acts 28: 30, 31

Paul was not only a welcoming host to all who visited him, he was a diligent worker as well. He did not languish in his imprisonment but labored to redeem the time for the glory of God. Far from his being distracted with preparations for his appeal, and far from his determining to keep a low profile so as not to arouse further opposition against himself, the apostle rightly considered himself in all circumstances a herald of the glorious riches of God in Christ. Hence, he served, even in his imprisonment, as an ambassador in a chain. He preached the Word and taught men concerning redemption and the sovereign reign of Christ. He did this both by his speaking and by his writing. In the gracious providence of God, the Church in all ages has been instructed, comforted, and edified by the prison epistles of this man (cf., Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon). Paul, to the end of his days, served Christ as more than a conqueror in all circumstances.

Friday, April 21st - Acts 28: 30, 31

Luke does not end Acts by telling us of Paul's acquittal, release, and later re-arrest, imprisonment, and execution. The reason is that Luke, by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, is not writing the biography of a man, but rather the foundational history of the acts of the ascended God/man, Jesus Christ. This great account tells of the fulfillment of Acts 1:8, where Jesus charged His disciples to be His witnesses in Jerusalem, in Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. The account began with Jesus ascending to heaven. It concludes with the Lord's most able apostle—one dramatically converted from his persecuting to his preaching Christ—being nominally a prisoner, but really planted by God in Rome freely and extensively to proclaim Christ.

Therefore, the Book of Acts concludes with an example of the paradox which characterizes Christianity, namely, life being found in death. For Christ's sake Paul died to all of his natural endowments and attainments, as well as to all earthly comforts and freedoms. Yet through such deaths for Christ's sake, we find the apostle shining in and radiating from Rome, the Imperial City. Rome—the so-called eternal city and the glory of the world at that time—never was so truly great and glorious as when it had in its midst this preaching prisoner. This servant of Christ was not only innocent of any charges against him on earth, but also free of any condemnation from heaven's Judge. Rome had in Paul the greatest of treasures, namely, one who by the grace of God was redeemed from sin and made more than a conqueror. Yet this apostle was not only rich in himself, he was enriching to all who came to him then at his rented quarters, and thereafter via his writings. The man transformed by God from a proud Pharisee to a humble apostle, from a corrupt sinner, to an incorruptible son of God, from a persecutor of the Church to her greatest

champion, proclaimed freely to others the same gospel which had saved him. That gospel is the power of God unto salvation for all who believe anywhere in the world and in any age, to the end of time. All praise and glory be to God!

The Book of Ruth

Saturday, April 22nd - Ruth 1: 1

The Book of Ruth presents to us a brief slice of life during a grim period of Israel's history. We are told in this opening verse that the events recorded in Ruth took place during the period when judges ruled the covenant people who were newly settled in the promised land. It was a time when religious and civil chaos were increasing in Israel. Toward the end of Judges, this chaos grew so bad that we find Micah, a man of Ephraim, hiring a Levite to be his personal priest (Jud. 17:10-13), and to sanction his idolatry (Jud. 18:18,19). We learn of this Levite's concubine being brutally abused (Jud. 19:22-26), and of civil war amongst the tribes of Israel (Jud. 20). The Book of Judges records a pattern of Israel being faithless to the Lord, God judging them through pagan nations, Israel repenting, and God raising up a judge to deliver His people and establish peace. It was a dark and unsettled time, when increasingly every man did what was right in his own eyes. The Book of Ruth shows us sweetness and light amidst this bitter and brutal darkness. It reminds us that our Lord is ever at work, even in apostate times, preserving a faithful remnant for Himself.

Sunday, April 23rd - Ruth 1: 1

Ruth is more than a charming little personal story shining out of a grim period in Israel's history. As part of God's Word it teaches us important lessons about the Lord's redemption. We find, for example, the grace of God operating in His redeeming and preserving Boaz, the son of Rahab the harlot (Mt. 1:5), despite the prevailing currents of sin surrounding him. We behold the grace of God in His calling to Himself Ruth, a non-Israelite from Moab, and incorporating her into His covenant people, and even into the genealogy of Jesus (Mt. 1:5). The Book of Ruth teaches us about the responsibilities of the kinsman redeemer, thus pointing to our Savior. In Ruth we have a picture of the family life of King David's ancestors, showing us how they, through whom the great King of Israel would come, walked uprightly before God and man in true piety and purity. Thus, Ruth teaches us never to despise the day of small things.

Monday, April 24th - Ruth 1: 1, 2

The Book of Ruth records history. Some, however, noting the rather symbolic names of the characters (e.g. Mahlon, meaning *sickness*; Chilion, meaning *wasting*; Orpah meaning *stiff-necked*; and Naomi, meaning *my sweetness*) as well as the somewhat picturesque details of life once Naomi and Ruth return to Bethlehem, maintain that Ruth is allegory. In defense of Ruth's historicity we should note that it is written as history and there is nothing to refute it as such. Hebrew names tended to be intentionally symbolic (cf. Isaiah's son, Shearjashub, meaning *a remnant shall return*). Also, we have reference to a particular period of history (i.e., the time of the Judges), and genealogy leading up to King David (Ruth 4:18-22). The reference to David indicates that Ruth was written during or after David's reign, some one hundred and fifty years after the events portrayed in the Book. Some maintain that Samuel wrote Ruth (e.g. Matthew Henry). If Ruth seems too symbolic to be history, we should understand that far from such symbolism arguing against historicity, it alerts us to the fact that there is more spiritual meaning to all history, including our own lives, than we may realize.

Tuesday, April 25th - Ruth 1: 1

As the Book of Ruth opens, the civil, religious, and economic climate is set out. Judges governed God's people. There was no king in Israel, and every man increasingly was doing what was right in his own eyes. This meant that civil chaos was growing, and it was growing because God's people were turning from the

Lord's infinite wisdom, power, and love to their own finite, fallible, and sinful opinions. Spiritual chaos was the root of which civil chaos was the fruit. Economic diminishment was another fruit. Hence, we read of famine in Israel. This may have resulted from the Midianite raids in Gideon's days (Jud. 6:1-6). It certainly was part of the divine curse which God said would follow His people's disobedience (Dt. 28:15ff). When men turn from the heavenly manna they will never find their bellies filled with earthly bread.

Wednesday, April 26th - Ruth 1: 1, 2

We find sin greatly increased in these opening verses of Ruth. The famine in Israel led Elimelech to act so as to belie his name, which means *my God is king*, and to mock the name of his city, Bethlehem, meaning *house of bread*. So bitter must Elimelech's life have been in Israel that he gave grim names to his sons: Mahlon (*sickness*), and Chilion (*wasting*). Rather than endure the chastisement of the Lord in the land of divine promise, Elimelech left the house of bread and the authority of the Lord, Israel's true king, and went with his family into Moab. The Moabites issued from Lot's drunken incest with his daughters (Gen. 19:30-38), and were perpetually a snare to Israel (Num. 25:1-3). In the days of the judges, Eglon, the fat king of Moab, oppressed Israel for eighteen years (Jud. 3:12ff). When a man makes a god of his belly, he will invariably stray from the Lord, and from the Lord's people and ordinances, to his own ruin.

Thursday, April 27th - Ruth 1: 1, 2

We may sympathize with Elimelech taking his family from the famine in Israel to dwell in Moab. However, the Word of God tells us not to despise the discipline of the Lord (Prov. 3:11,12; Heb. 12:3-13). Every time the people of God took the path which enabled them to evade suffering in the short run, they found themselves suffering bitterly in the long run. Jacob and his sons went down to Egypt for food, and lived the rest of their lives there, landing their posterity in slavery (Gen. 46ff). The people of God refused to enter into Canaan at Kadesh, fearing that they and their children would suffer at the hands of the giants in the land, and they doomed themselves thereby to die in the wilderness (Num. 13,14). Those seeking to save themselves lose themselves, while those losing their lives for the Lord's sake gain abundant lives (Mt. 10:39; Mk. 8:35; Lk. 9:24).

Friday, April 28th - Ruth 1: 1-3

There is no evidence that Elimelech and his family were very godly. They did not faithfully endure divine chastisement in the promised land, but fearfully fled the prospect of death in Israel, only to find death claiming all of the male members of this household in Moab. This family was composed of sinners who sinned in their leaving Israel. Yet, we shall see God sinlessly using their sin to manifest His grace. Where man's sin increases, God's grace abounds all the more.

Saturday, April 29th - Ruth 1: 3, 4

Elimelech went to Moab to avoid death. There, he died. In his way, he resembled the rich fool, who tore down his barns to build bigger ones, thinking he would secure his life in comfortable abundance, only to find his soul required of him (Lk. 12:16-21). Man cannot escape the judgement of God. Furthermore, by his taking his family into Moab, Elimelech subjected them to spiritual deadening, as we see from his sons marrying Moabite women, in clear violation of God's Law (Dt. 7:3; 23:3). When the head of a family is disobedient to the Lord, he—by his actions, if not by his words—encourages his children to greater disobedience than what he himself has committed.

Sunday, April 30th - Ruth 1: 4, 5

The sons went farther into sin than did their father. Elimelech went into Moab to feed himself and his family; his sons gave their hearts, not just their bellies, to Moab when they married Moabite women. Thus, we should not be surprised to find the sons punished worse than the father. We do not know for how long

these sons lived in Moab before they married. We are told the entire sojourn lasted ten years. Whether they were married for much or little of that time, their disobedience singularly lacked divine sanction or blessing. Both sons died. They who went into a godless land to live were there overtaken by death as relatively young men. Nor did either son's marital union produce children. Seeds of disobedience yield no crop except barrenness and death. It would have been better for them to have suffered in Israel than for them to sin and die in the land of the godless. It is always better for us to suffer chastisement in the Church than to obey sin's urgings and find ourselves overcome by its bitter wages outside of the church.

Monday, May 1st - Ruth 1: 4, 5

Here is a beginning darkened by sinful disobedience and embittered by sin's wages, death. Men, by their leaving the ordinances of God, do nothing except ruin their lives. Yet, in this dark and deadly situation, where the sin of men increases, God's gracious providence abounds all the more (Rom. 5:20). For what one of Elimelech's sons did in his sinfully taking Ruth as his wife, God sinlessly overruled for the glory of His Name. Even in this awful situation characterized by sin and death, God was at work preparing to bless Bethlehem by sending His Son as the bread from heaven for men of every nation. The Messiah, through the gracious and holy providence of God, would come into the world at Bethlehem, having two Gentiles—Rahab and Ruth—in His genealogy. Surely we serve a God who brings light and life out of darkness and death.

Tuesday, May 2nd - Ruth 1: 5

We are not even told which of Elimelech's sons married Ruth. It is immaterial, for about all that the man of that family contributed was sin and death. Poor Naomi was bereft of all Israelite fellowship, imperfect as it had been. She was bereft of a husband's loving care and children's loving devotion. She may have agreed to the move to Moab. If so, she surely lived bitterly to regret it. She may have objected to the move, but rightly rendered submission to her husband. If so, poorly is she repaid for her obedience. Hers is a living death, one from which only the living God could raise her. Her tears only her Savior could wipe from her eyes. She would, in fact, be raised and her tears would be dried, but she barely, if at all, realized it when she was in the valley of the shadow of death.

Wednesday, May 3rd - Ruth 1: 5, 6

The darkest days, for even a weak believer, are not without consoling streaks of light. Naomi has lost her husband and her sons. What God had joined together, death had torn asunder. But Naomi was not completely bereft. She had two daughters-in-law, who seemed kindly devoted to her, and who were forged together with her in their common grief. The fact that they were Moabites, and thus incapable of sharing fellowship with her on the deepest level, God could and would soon change in the case of Ruth.

Thursday, May 4th - Ruth 1: 5, 6

The dark sadness oppressing Naomi was further relieved by the consolation of her true home. She who left Israel during its famine would not continue living outside its covenant borders. She who had lived on the husks of the far country for ten years, who had drunk deeply of the bitterness of sin and death, came to herself when she heard of the Lord's blessing upon His people in the promised land. In the depth of her suffering and grief she hears not simply that the famine had ended in Israel, but that the Lord had visited His people. It is the living Lord—here in v.6 mentioned for the first time in Ruth—who is prominent in Naomi's thinking. There was food in Moab and food in Israel. But the living bread was only to be had in Israel. Thus, Naomi responds by leaving Moab, prompted by her faith, however weak and imperfect, to return to the ordinances of and fellowship with the one true Lover of her soul.

Friday, May 5th - Ruth 1: 6

The sojourn in Moab had cost the lives of Elimelech and his sons. Famine, not faith, prompted the family to enter a godless nation. Death, not life, was the result of this poor choice. Naomi could not retrieve her husband and sons from their graves in Moab, but she could return to her true land and people. That land was once under divine chastisement, but now was abounding with the Lord's blessing. The anger of the Lord lasts but a season; His chastisements come to their end, yielding not death, but the peaceable fruit of righteousness (Heb. 12:11). Naomi may have left Israel for a bad reason, but once she came to herself she returned for a good reason, namely, to feed upon the mercies of the Lord which are new each day.

Saturday, May 6th - Ruth 1: 6-8

Perhaps if Naomi had returned to Israel after the death of her husband, the lives of her sons would have been spared. Now she is driven home by the application of several rods. She also is drawn home by the manifested mercy of the Lord. Instead of her sons, she has with her Moabite daughters-in-law. She is conscious of the fact that God had afflicted her (vv.13,20,21), and that may account for her seeking to have her daughters-in-law remain in Moab. Yet, it is infinitely better to be chastised with God's people than condemned apart from them, a truth which Ruth will see and seize by faith.

Sunday, May 7th - Ruth 1: 6-8

Despite Naomi's evident spiritual failures, it is clear that she enjoyed a relationship with her daughters-in-law which was mutually civil and caring. Obviously, there was sufficient grace in Naomi to manifest and maintain a loving unity in her family, and to engender in her daughters-in-law a reciprocated loving respect. Naomi's faith may have been compromised by her being in Moab, but it was not extinguished. She, like a bruised reed and smoking wick (Is. 42:3), retained a degree of obedience to the first great commandment, to love God, sufficient to motivate her to obey the second great commandment, to love others. Such a smoking wick our Lord would not extinguish, but fan to a brighter shining, and use for His gracious and glorious purposes.

Monday, May 8th - Ruth 1: 6-8

When Naomi tells her daughters-in-law to return to their families in Moab, we may detect both considerate affection and lack of pure, godly love issuing from her. A number of natural considerations would have stimulated Naomi lovingly to encourage Orpah and Ruth to return to Moab. Naomi was conscious of her affliction, and she wanted to spare the young women sharing her sufferings. She also had a tender regard, heightened by her sojourn in Moab, for the pain one feels being separated from one's natural home and family. But as commendable as her loving consideration may have been for these women who were following her to Israel, Naomi's endeavor to send them away from the covenant people, ordinances, and God, was a grave disservice. Naomi was a poor evangelist. She acted as though one's drawing near to God was bad news to be avoided. May our evangelism never be like that!

Tuesday, May 9th - Ruth 1: 8, 9

Naomi would send Orpah and Ruth away from the land and people of the Lord, but she would not send them back to Moab without the blessing of the Lord. Thus, whereas she tries to send them back to their pagan mothers (were their fathers dead?), she commends them to the Lord, asking His blessing upon their having dealt blessedly with her and her dead husband and sons. Naomi may have invoked this blessing with clear knowledge of the Word of God, which promised blessing to those who blessed Abraham and his descendants (Gen. 12:3), or that divine promise may simply have so pervaded her being that she instinctively acted on its basis. The significant point is that this blessing, issued through this weak, afflicted saint, had real effect, and, in the case of Ruth, would abound far beyond what Naomi asked or thought. Even a poor saint can give a rich blessing.

Wednesday, May 10th - Ruth 1: 9, 10

Naomi had graciously (if not by a pure faith) released her daughters-in-law from any obligation to tend and care for her in her bereavement and affliction. They sense the loving care in her gesture and returned that love with a refusal to leave her. It is never polite for us to grasp at a gift from another person, especially when our taking it would involve the giver's bearing a sacrificial cost. A loving competition of generosity thus takes place amongst these weaker vessels, these poor widows, this poor daughter of Israel and her Moabite daughters-in-law. They are each determined to prefer the other in honor. We, who have been infinitely enriched in Christ, should never act with less grace and generosity in our dealings with one another.

Thursday, May 11th - Ruth 1: 9, 10

The tender love and gracious consideration Naomi showed to her daughters-in-law was something no doubt rare in Moab. Even a poor saint shines amidst the darkness of the dead. Therefore, Orpah and Ruth weep at the thought of their parting from Naomi, and refuse her offer of release. These Moabite women rightly trace fruit to branch, if not to root. They want to be with the people of Israel, from whom such sweet fruit as Naomi issued.

Friday, May 12th - Ruth 1: 10-13

Naomi re-iterates her insistence that Orpah and Ruth return to Moab. The incentive of their mothers' houses failed to draw them back to Moab. So Naomi lists the liabilities of her situation as a disincentive for their carrying on with her to Israel. In her present state, she lacks what they most want and need, namely, other sons to be their husbands. Her future prospects for re-marriage are slight, for child-bearing more slight, and for their growing up and these young ladies waiting for them, seemingly impossible. Finally, she admits that she is subject to divine punishment. Such grim considerations are more than enough to serve as disincentive for anyone to seek the kingdom of God and fellowship with his people, unless one is effectually called by the Lord.

Saturday, May 13th - Ruth 1: 10-13

Naomi does not exaggerate the depth and dimension of her poverty and affliction. Nor does she overstate the case when she maintains that the hand of the Lord had gone forth against her. But in the soreness of her suffering and the weakness of her reawakening faith, she leaves vital things out of her consideration. For example, she does not mention the possibility that her daughters-in-law could find husbands in the land of Judah. To Naomi, that which Ruth eventually does find in Boaz is buried amidst ashes of unbelief. More importantly, Naomi fails to mention that while the hand of God was against her, the heart of the Lord was unchangeably for her. These vital blessings were hidden, but nonetheless present, in Naomi's life, and amongst her people. Faith alone could and would perceive them, seek them, and apply them.

Sunday, May 14th - Ruth 1: 10-14

Naomi's insistence that her daughters-in-law return to Moab was well-meant, but it issued from inadequate faith and love. When she represented God as being only against her, she misrepresented her heavenly Father. Yet, her sin was sinlessly overruled by the Lord, and used to test Orpah and Ruth. Through Naomi's grimly painted picture, Orpah saw sufficient cause to turn away from Naomi, the land, people, and God of Israel, and her fellow Moabite, Ruth. Orpah had loving admiration for her mother-in-law, but lacked faith to perceive the blessing of Naomi's heavenly Father. Ruth, on the other hand, sustained Naomi's discouragements and the divinely superintended test of her faith. She, like the Canaanite woman who came to Jesus (Mt. 15:22ff), withstood all rebuffs and determined to cling to the only manifestation of God's blessing she knew, Naomi. No amount of discouragement can overcome the effectual calling of the Lord, nor can any number of deaths hide from faith the blessing of glorious resurrection.

Monday, May 15th - Ruth 1: 14

Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, then departed from her. Ruth did not kiss Naomi, but did cling to her. Many will admire Christ-like virtues in believers, but refuse to join them in a committed walk with the Lord. It is not signs of affection and professions of love which mark true members of Christ's body, but rather vital commitment to the Church and its divine Head. Here Orpah and Ruth are separated. God calls one out of death and darkness and passes by the other. There is an infinite difference between the kissing and the clinging of these two Moabites.

Tuesday, May 16th - Ruth 1: 15

Naomi attempts one last time to have Ruth return to Moab. Now the urging of this poor evangelist is strengthened by the example of Ruth's fellow Moabite. Orpah has returned to all she had known and practically all she had loved in this world—her people and her gods. Ruth is thus urged to re-unite with her departed sister-in-law. Here is a final wave of the water of discouragement sufficient to drown any flame except that ignited and sustained by God.

Wednesday, May 17th - Ruth 1: 15-17

Ruth and Orpah both may have been born in Moab, but, by her declaration to Naomi, Ruth reveals herself to be truly circumcised in heart (Rom. 2:28,29), and thus an Israelite indeed, a citizen of heaven (Phil. 3:3,20), and a descendant of Abraham who, like him, was looking for the city whose builder is God (Heb. 11:10). With words of firmest determination, Ruth declares herself united to Naomi, to Naomi's people, and to Naomi's God. Despite all of her mother-in-law's discouragements, Ruth, by faith, beheld the precious promise of God, and she chose it as the one thing necessary of which she would never let go, and which would never be taken from her (Lk. 10:42).

Thursday, May 18th - Ruth 1: 15-17

We have seen that Naomi was a poor believer and a poor evangelist, there being nothing inviting in her circumstances, nothing encouraging in her words. Yet it is in Naomi that Ruth perceives all to which she would forever commit herself. Thus, one of the least in the kingdom of God is used to draw a soul into that kingdom. By God's grace, Ruth heard not Naomi's discouragements but God's invitation. Saving faith ever perceives in the apparent crumbs of the Lord a feast (Mt. 15:27), in the apparent curses of the Lord His blessing (Heb. 12:5,6), and in His apparent refusals and denials His prevailing yes and amen (2 Cor. 1:20).

Friday, May 19th - Ruth 1: 16, 17

Naomi saw herself smitten by the hand of the Lord (v.13). Ruth saw that and more. She saw in Naomi more than Naomi saw in herself. Ruth saw the treasure of God in this earthen vessel (2 Cor. 4:7). She also saw the covenant bonds which forged Naomi, her people, and her God into an organic unity. Thus, Ruth declares her resolve to be with Naomi, be she ever so afflicted and pessimistic, and to be with Naomi's people, to whom the Lord had shown singular favor, not only at that time (v.6), but throughout their history. Above all, she resolves to make the God of Israel's chastisement and blessing her God. Our commitment to the Lord, to His church, and to even the least member thereof should be no less absolute.

Saturday, May 20th - Ruth 1: 16, 17

Naomi saw only death at work in herself. Ruth saw both death and resurrection. Thus, the young Moabite declares not only that she will live with Naomi and her people in the land of Israel, but that she will also die and be buried there. Ruth invokes the covenant name of the Lord (hwh"hy>), thus vowing to Him that she would never let anything but death come between Naomi and herself, and thereby she commits herself to the Lord who raises even the dead.

Sunday, May 21st - Ruth 1: 16, 17

With these words, Ruth commits herself to Naomi, but rightly perceives that Naomi is indissolubly united with the people of Israel, who, in turn are together united to the Lord by His unbreakable, divine covenant promise. Therefore, Ruth commits herself entirely to the commonwealth of the family of faith, as well as to the guidance, help, correction, comfort, and manifold blessing of Israel's God. Ruth was seeing more in and through Naomi than Naomi saw in herself. Faith always perceives the treasures God has hidden not from His people, but for His people. The first recorded time Ruth invokes the name of the Lord, it is to seal her commitment with His divine sanction. Naomi left the promised land and smarted from divine sanction. Ruth was determined ever to seek first the kingdom of God, and the rest of this book tells us how she received that kingdom and all things with it (Mt. 6:33).

Monday, May 22nd - Ruth 1: 16-18

Naomi was not the most obedient and faithful evangelist, in her representing the salvation of the Lord. Yet, Ruth, by faith, perceived the Lord and His blessings in and through Naomi. Therefore, Ruth committed herself to cleave to the Lord by her cleaving to Naomi. In this, Ruth touches, as it were, the outer fringe of the Lord's garment. That touch is sufficient to seal her blessing for time and eternity. When Naomi saw Ruth's determination, she perceived in the young Moabitess that faithfulness to the Lord, His people, and His ordinances which had largely been lacking in herself. Hence, Naomi sought to discourage Ruth no longer from following her in her return to the land of Israel, the tabernacle of God, and the blessed communion of her living and worshipping amongst the redeemed.

Tuesday, May 23rd - Ruth 1: 19

Naomi and Ruth finally arrive in Bethlehem, no doubt wearied from the long journey. The ladies of Bethlehem are astir with Naomi's return and express astonishment at how greatly she had changed. That so many are excited at her return indicates that Naomi and her family had been well known by the citizens of Bethlehem. Yet, the years in Moab had wrought a remarkable change in her. She who had left Israel with a husband and two sons, returned a lonely widow, accompanied by a young Moabitess who was herself a widow. She who had fled to Moab to save her life and expand if not enrich her family, returned lonely and nearly destitute. A believer's flight from God leaves him nearly unrecognizable from his former self, if it leaves him alive at all.

Wednesday, May 24th - Ruth 1: 19-21

Naomi acknowledges how greatly she had changed during her sojourn in Moab. She says, in effect, that she no longer was Naomi (pleasant), but had become Mara (bitter). She recounts the proximate cause of her bitterness when she says that she went out full, having a husband, sons, and prospects for a comfortable living in Moab, but came back empty, having no possessions or living relatives, except Ruth. The ultimate cause for her bitterness is the Lord's hand of affliction having been brought against her. Those seeking to exempt themselves from divine discipline often find themselves made prominent examples of that discipline.

Thursday, May 25th - Ruth 1: 20, 21

Naomi does not claim to be the miserable victim of adverse circumstances. She rightly understood and here testifies to the truth that God's hand had stripped her of all that had been pleasant to her. She who had not trusted the mercy and might of the Lord to sustain her through Israel's famine, learned to her woe that the might of the Lord could blast her amidst the delusive security and plenty of Moab. Thus, Naomi became a living testimony to the truth that those who attempt to escape the hand of divine discipline render themselves subject to its long reach and heaviest blows.

Friday, May 26th - Ruth 1: 20, 21

Naomi's words are not ones of resentful compliant. They rather manifest her humble resignation to the discipline of the Lord. Her subdued humility may be noted in her twice referring to the Lord as *Almighty* (yD;v;). By her flight to Moab, she demonstrated her belief that human ingenuity could frustrate the operations of the hand of God. With her return, Naomi confesses by word and deed that God is omnipotent. Yet, her soul was not filled with the bitterness of a forced acquiescence, but rather a godly sorrow which is the fruit of repentance. This we may note from Naomi's twice using the gracious, covenant name of God, translated *Lord* (hw"hy>). Naomi had been sanctifyingly broken by the Lord, and her bitter, humble tears would soon give way to the sweet fruit of praise for and joy in the Lord.

Saturday, May 27th - Ruth 1: 21

Naomi declares that she went out full, but that the Lord had brought her back empty. The world can never provide a fullness sufficient to compensate for one's walking without the Lord. Naomi actively went out unaccompanied by the Lord, and thus stepped into true emptiness. She attributes her return to God. It was not she who came back so much as it was the Lord who brought her back, stripped of her carnal security, and thus ready to be filled with His precious blessings. It is ever better that we should be empty with our God than full without Him.

Sunday, May 28th - Ruth 1: 21, 22

Naomi was emptied while she was in Moab. By this, God witnessed to believers in every age that His children cannot be sustained apart from Him. Naomi was brought back by God to Israel, where she belonged. The Lord further brought her back at a propitious time: at the beginning of barley harvest. That coarse grain was used to make the bread consumed by the poorest of the people, such as Naomi. Her filling would begin with the bread of humility. But it would be a true filling, and would grow to be eventually a filling with the finest wheat. Let us learn, then, in the course of our own repentance, never to despise the day of small and humble beginnings.

Monday, May 29th - Ruth 2: 1

The blessing of God upon Naomi and Ruth would begin with grain and ascend to a groom. Barley would feed these two widows; Boaz would love them, taking Ruth for his wife, and providing through Ruth holy issue to be to them all a redeemer and restorer (Ruth 4:13-15). The Lord has stored for us treasures unimaginable to us in our waywardness and early repentance. As He showers these blessings upon us, all of our tears are dried and the bitterness of our souls is replaced by a sweet satisfaction and a loving gratitude.

Tuesday, May 30th - Ruth 2: 1

Our introduction to Boaz tells us two things about him: 1) that he was a kinsman to Naomi, through her deceased husband, and 2) that he was materially wealthy. Believers have far more of whatever they need at hand through their brethren in the commonwealth of the Church than ever they could find amongst strangers in the world.

Wednesday, May 31st - Ruth 2: 1

Boaz was not only rich and a kinsman to Naomi. He was also the son of Rahab the harlot, who had hidden Joshua's spies and had been rewarded for her faithfulness (Josh. 2; Mt. 1:5). It is remarkable to note how quickly and fully Rahab had been accepted into the covenant nation. Whether her husband, Salmon, was wealthy when she married him, or her son, Boaz quickly generated his wealth, or both, Rahab lived to enjoy both spiritual and material comfort and security far greater than that which she had enjoyed living on the wall of Jericho (Josh. 2:15). The piety of Rahab had brought her first into the kingdom of God, then added a blessed prosperity to her (Mt. 6:33). How fitting that we shall find the life of Ruth, soon to be

Rahab's daughter-in-law, set on the same course. Our God is the Master who has been at work here, fitting Boaz and Ruth and their families for each other.

Thursday, June 1st - Ruth 2: 1

There was more to Boaz than his material prosperity. The words translated *great wealth* (lyIx; rABGI) could also be translated *mighty strength*. We learn from the actions of Boaz that his strength, might, and prosperity all resulted from his utter dependence upon and trusting obedience to the Lord. All true power and authority and dominion come only from the Lord, and we can be strong and mighty only in Him (Eph. 6:10ff).

Friday, June 2nd - Ruth 2: 1, 2

Naomi was related to the mighty and prosperous Boaz through her marriage to the now deceased Elimelech. Ruth was also related to her through marriage to Naomi's now deceased son. Between these two—Ruth and Boaz—there was a relation so remote, and, through death, so tenuous, as practically to be no relation. Yet, by the superintending wisdom, grace, and power of God, these two would join together in the most intimate of human relationships. Through the plans and provision of God, it would be as though Naomi had been sent on a divine mission to Moab, to fetch for Boaz a bride. In fact, God did righteously and graciously cause all of Naomi's wandering and suffering to work together to this blessed end. What grim elements in our current circumstances are being made by God to work together for our good and the good of others?

Saturday, June 3rd - Ruth 2: 1, 2

Although the godly and generous Boaz would figure largely in their future, neither Naomi nor Ruth were upon their return to Bethlehem aware of him. Yet we find Ruth showing no signs of bitterness over their apparent lack of prospects. Instead, Ruth proposes to Naomi, with a respect which was no doubt her accustomed attitude, that she, the sojourning Moabitess, be allowed to glean in the fields of Israel for their sustenance. In this proposal, Ruth manifests her humility, diligence, and faithful determination to use the means of God's grace. The allowance of the poor to glean the fields of Israel was instituted by the gracious God of Israel (Lev. 19: 9, 10). Ruth humbly sought to make use of this gracious provision, which would nevertheless entail her committing herself to hard work. Such work she undertakes not only for herself, but graciously for her mother-in-law. It is a mark of lively faith in a soul when that soul knows how to use the provisions of divine grace to do well, and does not grow weary in well-doing.

Sunday, June 4th - Ruth 2: 2, 3

Ruth humbles herself. Like the Canaanite woman who showed herself content to feed as a dog on the crumbs that fell from the table spread by Jesus (Mt. 15:21-28), so this young Moabitess stooped to get barley from the gleanings left by Israelite reapers. Although she was involved in a most humble pursuit, one which portrayed a complete dependence upon grace, there was nothing demeaning, but rather ennobling in her activity. For all who labor for themselves and for others in the name and by the provision of Christ, there is a similarly ennobling quality about their service. That is because it was the way of the Lord to render such humble service (Phil. 2:5-11), and those following His lead cannot help but manifest the sweetness of His grace and enrich themselves by His glorious reward.

Monday, June 5th - Ruth 2: 3

In the path of loving duty, in the pursuit of loving service for her mother-in-law, and in the course of the gracious provision of God, Ruth finds herself gleaning in a field belonging to Boaz. Only the blind and perverse could fail to see the wonderful, gracious, and loving providence of God in this. Only those blinded by pre-occupation with self-service could fail to see how it is in the path of loving, godly, duty that Ruth

encounters divine blessing above what she could have asked or thought. God's Word led her to expect barley gleanings, but God's saving work, and her own working out of that salvation, brought her to Boaz, a man who would fill her heart and home with his love.

Tuesday, June 6th - Ruth 2: 4

Scripture introduces Boaz speaking for the first time in this verse. He is not calling out orders to his workers so as to increase his material prosperity. Instead, he speaks words of gracious benediction, calling for the blessing of the Lord to be upon his workers. Such a godly and generous soul will not find his words returning to him void. Accordingly, his workers return the blessing. All Christian industry should be characterized by such mutual determination to serve for the common good by each one knowing and sharing the blessing of the Lord.

Wednesday, June 7th - Ruth 2: 4, 5

As Boaz concerns himself first with the kingdom of God, giving and receiving blessing from the Lord, he notices Ruth and inquires concerning her. Those who are most heavenly minded, who have the eyes of their hearts most focused upon the God of heaven, can best and soonest see the treasures which the Lord has bidden not from them, but for them on this earth. However, at first sight of Ruth, it was unlikely that Boaz had any idea how wonderfully great a part she would thereafter play in his life. Here Boaz is simply manifesting that considerate care for the stranger which God had demonstrated for His people, telling them likewise to show practical mercy to strangers (Ex. 22:21, 23:29; Lev. 19:34). We never know when our exercise of the common courtesies of grace will lead to things unimaginably wonderful for us.

Thursday, June 8th - Ruth 2: 6, 7

The first impression Boaz received of Ruth was not very favorable. To his inquiry he was told that she was a Moabitess, and thus one naturally a stranger to Israel and Israel's God. We further deduce from v. 7 that when Boaz first saw Ruth, she was sitting in the house, a position which could well have been construed by Boaz as laziness. To counter these unfavorable impressions, the servant in charge of the reapers adds that Ruth is not just any Moabitess, but *the* Moabitess who accompanied Naomi from her sojourn in Moab. Regarding her resting position, the servant tells how long and diligently Ruth had been working that day. First impressions are often misleading. We do well both to tell and to hear the whole truth so far as character description is concerned.

Friday, June 9th - Ruth 2: 6, 7

There is not a hint that Ruth is embarrassed or ashamed of her nationality or of her service in the field. By her regeneration she had become a citizen of the commonwealth of the true Israel. She also was motivated to work, not rendering eye-service, as one ever calculating to make the best impression upon men, but rather she worked heartily, as serving the Lord, and accordingly she had a clear conscience and enjoyed sweet rest amidst her labors (Col. 3: 22-25). As Ruth drew nearer to the true, living God, she became truer herself, and had no need artificially to calculate how to appear to be true. The light of Christ shining through her could not be hidden by initial appearances which an uncharitable soul could misconstrue.

Saturday, June 10th - Ruth 2: 7

The servant is careful to give a faithful report of Ruth's demeanor. Thus, he tells how she humbly and respectfully asked permission to glean in the field of Boaz. There was nothing forward or pushy in Ruth, except in her dogged determination to remain with Naomi and live among Naomi's people and serve Naomi's God. We must strive to enter into the Lord's rest (Heb. 4:11), but once we are in it, we find all yokes to be easy, all burdens light because Christ is with us in them (Mt. 11:28-30). Thus, we need not be strident, but should ever be humble and patient in His service.

Sunday, June 11th - Ruth 2: 8, 9

Ruth had sought humbly to glean after one in whose sight she would find favor (Ruth 2:2). She was not going to claim the provision of Leviticus 19:9,10 as a right. Instead, she sought to reap after one who, by his own submission to divine grace, would truly and generously allow her to glean. She was not disappointed in her humble determination. Boaz addresses her with consideration and chaste affection. He urges her not only securely to glean in his field, but also to partake of the refreshment of his servants. That which we seek by God's grace we shall find, and find it to be greater than we had asked or expected.

Monday, June 12th - Ruth 2: 10

Here is a response of one humble enough to receive grace. Ruth prostrates herself in gratitude for all of the kindness shown her by Boaz. She acknowledges her unworthiness and surprise at the reception of such kindness. She who was a foreigner should not expect to receive such consideration. Yet, she would not magnify her unworthiness to the point of her not receiving his favor. That would be to insult and dishonor him. Here is the attitude of the Christian with respect to blessings received great and small. We cannot but be surprised that we who are so unworthy receive such reward (Mt. 25:34-40). Yet, while we cannot stop thinking of our sin, which alienated us from the Lord, we think more of that grace by which the Lord covers our sin and treats us not as ruined sinners but as rewarded sons.

Tuesday, June 13th - Ruth 2: 11

Here we learn that although Ruth was initially a stranger to the sight of Boaz, the report of her good deeds had preceded her. The fact that Ruth's lovingkindness had been fully reported to Boaz speaks well of him and of her. It speaks well of Boaz, alerting us to the fact that he was a man known for his godliness and goodness and his appreciation of it in others. Thus the reports were carried to one whom the bearers knew would have appreciative ears. The fact that there is such remarkable love and fidelity to report of one from Moab speaks highly of Ruth. Whether they realized it at their first meeting or not, Ruth and Boaz were made for each other, for each was pursuing the Lord as the one thing necessary. There is no greater compatibility than that between true soul mates in Christ.

Wednesday, June 14th - Ruth 2: 12

The first time Ruth invoked the name of the Lord, it was calling upon Him to sanction her vow never to leave Naomi (Ruth 1:17). The first time Ruth heard the name of the Lord uttered from the lips of Boaz, it was as a general benediction upon all of the field workers (Ruth 2:4). Now Ruth hears Boaz invoke the blessing of the Lord specifically upon herself. He invokes the abundant blessing of the Lord upon Ruth's labors of love for Naomi. Moreover, he is the first rightly to see and say that the ultimate motivation prompting Ruth to accompany Naomi to Israel was Ruth's seeking the salvation of Israel's God. She who loved the Lord God with all of her heart, soul, strength, and mind, would not be disappointed in the quality and fullness of His blessing. She who through her apprehension of the love of God, is filled with exclusive love for Him, is directed and empowered to give love of remarkable quality to others. In this, she will not fail to receive love from others.

Thursday, June 15th - Ruth 2: 12

Nothing in the story of Ruth up to this point indicates that Ruth left Moab as a refugee. She apparently had been on good terms with her family, friends, and neighbors in Moab. Yet, Ruth had become conscious of her need for salvation—a need which neither family, friends, nor her native country could meet. Hence, she came to Israel seeking refuge under the protective and loving wings of the merciful God of Israel. In the days of Jesus, the Jews largely refused to be gathered under the wings of their own God (Mt. 23:37). It is not natural proximity to the ordinances of God's grace, but spiritual affinity for the living God Himself that determines those who seek and find refuge in the Redeemer.

Friday, June 16th - Ruth 2: 13

The kind words and provision of Boaz do not go unacknowledged by Ruth. She expresses her deepest gratitude, saying that his words have brought her comfort and spoken literally to her heart (ble-1[;). Gracious and loving words and works are sharper than any sword. They can penetrate the heart, resulting not in destruction but in delight for the recipient of them. We have many great and precious words of promise from our Lord. These should penetrate our hearts and release many expressions of gratitude from us.

Saturday, June 17th - Ruth 2: 14

Grace and love grow in their exercise. Boaz not only allowed Ruth to glean in his field and drink of his well, he honored her with a personal invitation to join the reapers for their meal. Thus, Boaz provided for her not only the refreshment of water, but also the nourishment of bread. Nor was it plain bread, but was seasoned in vinegar. The provision of God's grace is never merely adequate, but is seasoned to give delight to those partaking of it. Yet, the most delightful food she received was the roasted grain, held out to her by the hand of Boaz himself. Likewise does our heavenly Redeemer nourish us with grace upon grace, feeding us by His own hand, giving us for our bread His body, for our drink His blood.

Sunday, June 18th - Ruth 2: 15, 16

Even when the munificent provision of Boaz seems to end, it does not end. With his permission for her gleaning and his provision for her food and drink, Boaz made explicit provision for Ruth. With these orders to his servants that they should let her glean even among the gathered sheaves and pull out grain from the sheaves for her to gather, he makes a provision hidden from her except in its issue. Hereby Boaz provides graciously and generously for Ruth, but not in a way to undermine her diligent industry. No less does our Jesus make hidden provision for us (Rev. 2:17), ordering all things to serve for our good (Rom. 8:28), although precisely how these divine orders for our blessing are given and carried out is hidden from us.

Monday, June 19th - Ruth 2: 17, 18

The gracious provision of Boaz did not discourage, but rather encouraged the diligent labors of Ruth. The result was an abundance of barley, about 50 pounds, from a day's gleaning. Such an abundance would not have resulted had Ruth been indolent or had Boaz been miserly. But both gracious provision and diligent industry resulted in more than enough for Ruth and Naomi. Similarly, we should know that our diligent labors in and for the Lord of grace will not be in vain (1 Cor. 15:58).

Tuesday, June 20th - Ruth 2: 19

Naomi recognizes in the great abundance gleaned by Ruth the hand of a gracious provider. Accordingly, she who received blessing from that providing hand, returns blessing to him. Far more enriching to Boaz was this blessing from these two widows than possibly could have been the 50 pounds of barley his generosity bestowed upon them. Those who determine to bless others find blessing rebounding upon themselves. No wonder the Word of God speaks of one who scatters, yet increases all the more (Pr. 11:24).

Wednesday, June 21st - Ruth 2: 19, 20

Naomi may have been weak in faith, but she did have faith. That faith led her back to Israel, and, once in Israel, her faith was nurtured by the blessing of God. Faith does not make something of nothing. It rather sees things which are hidden from the darkened perspective of unbelief. Thus, Naomi's faith rightly sees not simply a singular blessing in the barley, but a potential source of blessing in Boaz. It is not presumption, but rather is an honor to God and to the godly, when needy souls see in one deed of kindness a pledge and token of more blessing to come.

Thursday, June 22nd - Ruth 2: 20

Naomi sees the hand of God's blessing in the barley Ruth brought home. Naomi's emptiness is already beginning to be filled. Her faith is returning, and with that return she sees that life back in Israel is not so grim and empty as she had feared. Our fears will never be realized when we walk amidst the Lord's people and according to His ordinances. Our Good Shepherd ever leads us beside quiet waters and restores our souls (Ps. 23: 2,3).

Friday, June 23rd - Ruth 2: 21

Ruth does not simply let the barley speak for itself, but she goes on to relate to Naomi the gracious consideration shown her by Boaz. A meal for the stomach is one sort of blessing; a man's care for one's soul is a much higher blessing. Boaz had directed Ruth to stay close to his servants. By her doing so, she would draw ever closer to Boaz himself, until the two of them would be united as one in loving, holy matrimony. It is for our blessing that our Redeemer directs us to keep close to His servants, and we should see his direction as a blessing and relate it to others as such.

Saturday, June 24th - Ruth 2: 21, 22

Naomi recognizes and confirms that the direction of Boaz telling Ruth to stay with his servants was a blessing. According to the proposal of Boaz, Ruth's nearness to his servants would be for her good. According to Naomi, the proposal would keep her from evil. The bitterness of Naomi may have made her unduly insecure in Israel, but it is not unthinkable that Ruth could have been vulnerable to attack had she ventured away from the care and protection of Boaz. Even within Israel, there were wicked men who would harm the unwary. Likewise, in the Church there are tares growing amongst the wheat, and, therefore, we all do well to keep close to those whom we know will shelter us from harm.

Sunday, June 25th - Ruth 2: 23

Godly submission is always the wisest, safest, and most beneficial policy. Accordingly, we find Ruth submitting herself to the good counsel of both Boaz and Naomi. The result was that she remained safe and secure. She also was further blessed by the fruits of her diligent labor and the gracious provision of Boaz. Not only did she glean the rough barley, but she continued her gleaning into the wheat harvest. Nor did her gathering an abundance of that finer grain lead her to seek independence from her mother-in-law. Ruth sustained her caring commitment to Naomi, and, as she reaped grain, Ruth cultivated in her heart a state of contented gratitude. The young widow aspired for no more than she had. Such godly contentment, as we shall see, does not confine one to low prospects, but rather prepares one for inconceivably high prospects.

Monday, June 26th - Ruth 3: 1

As a spiritual babe, Ruth had learned the secret of contentment (Phil. 4:11-13). There is every indication that she intended to spend the remainder of her life devoted to and providing for Naomi. It is, however, one of the blessed paradoxes of life in the kingdom of God that when one is content with a low place, he is promoted to a higher place, therein to find even greater contentment. Hence, we find that Ruth, who preferred Naomi in honor to herself, was in turn cared for by Naomi. The Israelite mother-in-law accordingly makes it her business to seek relational and material security for the Moabitess daughter-in-law. When we deny ourselves for others in Christ, our Lord will prompt others to serve for our advancement.

Tuesday, June 27th - Ruth 3: 1, 2

Naomi declared that the Lord had brought her back to Israel empty (Ruth 1:21). Yet she did not remain empty for long. The Lord empties us only to fill us to overflowing. Thus, we find that Naomi's house is

soon full of grain. Further, we find her heart full of loving care for Ruth, and her mind full of plans and apprehending resources for Ruth's future welfare. What the Lord had really emptied Naomi of was self-regard. With that blinder removed, Naomi found herself full of resources to give for the blessing of others.

Wednesday, June 28th - Ruth 3: 1, 2

Before Naomi returned to Israel, she could conceive of no way in which she could provide a husband for the widowed Ruth (Ruth 1:11-13). Now that she was once more dwelling in the covenant nation she saw a way to facilitate for Ruth lasting peace and security (literally, *rest*, *x;Anm*¹). It is the blessing of the Lord that makes one rich without sorrow or greedy insecurity (Pr. 10:22). That blessing is found abundantly in the Church, not away from it.

Thursday, June 29th - Ruth 3: 1, 2

Naomi's love for Ruth makes her sympathize with her young, widowed daughter-in-law. However, those in Christ not only sympathize with those in need, but also are enabled to help, as does our great High Priest (Heb. 4:15,16). Therefore, Naomi begins to formulate a plan and to give counsel to Ruth according to the provisions of the Word of her sympathetic and helping God. Two legal relationships, both based on God's gracious provision and regulation of life within His kingdom, form the basis for Naomi's plan. The first had to do with the right and responsibility of one's kinsman to redeem one's land (Lev. 25:23-25). The other had to do with the right and responsibility of one's kinsman to marry his deceased brother's wife, if she had no children, so as to raise up descendants for the deceased brother (Dt. 25:5-10). The counsel of Naomi which follows may appear cunning, but it is based on these provisions of God's Word, and relies, for its effect, upon the gracious divine operations in the heart of Boaz. No policy is more sure and satisfying than that which is based on the principles of Scripture.

Friday, June 30th - Ruth 3: 2, 3

Naomi made it her business to understand the rights and responsibilities of her kinsman. She also gathered intelligence as to where Boaz would be at the time she rightly deemed to be critical. Then she gave prudent counsel to Ruth, telling her how and when to go to Boaz. Every detail is considered, not in a way intrusively controlling, but rather in a way guided by sanctified love and sweet reason. In this, Naomi is guided by the superintending hand of God, who leaves no detail to chance. His ways with us are sure, yet also excitingly spontaneous.

Saturday, July 1st - Ruth 3: 2, 3

Naomi instructs Ruth to prepare herself to appear before Boaz. The young lady is not to make her approach casually. She must be clean and fragrant—in every way at her best and most appealing. This is good counsel for anyone preparing to appear before a person of significance. It is a dishonor when we approach someone in a way demonstrating our being careless of whether they take offense at our slovenly attire, or find delight in our decent appearance. If it is right that we honor important men in this way, how much more is it right that we make every effort to prepare our hearts, minds, and bodies as well before we approach our God. He may graciously accept us as we are, but that does not give us license to presume on His grace and deprive Him of the delight of His seeing the image of His beloved Son increasingly reflected in us.

Sunday, July 2nd - Ruth 3: 2-4

We must consider closely and seek rightly to understand the counsel Naomi gives to Ruth in these verses. Her counsel may appear questionable, but if we ask the right questions and, more importantly, seek the answers in Scripture, we shall find Naomi vindicated in her directions. Let us ask, then, why Naomi, who knew something of the Scriptural provisions regarding the rights and responsibilities of her kinsman,

should approach him via Ruth in such a secretive, indirect way? In answer, we find that, while she began with law, something higher than law motivated Naomi. She was prompted by love to ask, seek, and knock for a loving match for her daughter-in-law. Such a loving match would not undermine the law, but rather most perfectly fulfill it. In short, she rightly sensed that Boaz would make a most godly and loving husband for Ruth. Yet, according to the strict provisions of the law, there was a kinsman nearer in relation to Naomi—and hence, to Ruth—than Boaz (Ruth 3:12), one who would show himself unwilling to fulfill God’s law when asked to do so openly and directly (Ruth 4:1-6). Hence, the indirect approach is employed by Naomi to get the better man. Seemingly weak means often prove necessary and effectual for our securing greatest blessings. So it is, for example, with the foolishness of preaching and the secret operations of God’s Holy Spirit, instead of compelling words of reason and worldly wisdom, in the calling and converting of lost souls (1 Cor. 2:1-5).

Monday, July 3rd - Ruth 3: 2-4

Ruth manifestly had a contented disposition. She may very well have been willing to live the rest of her days caring for Naomi, or settling for a marriage to the leas loving nearer kinsman (Ruth 3:12). Yet, Naomi, as Ruth’s loving advocate, has her sights set higher for Ruth’s deeper and more enduring welfare. It is not unusual that we find our brethren in Christ more intent on promoting us than we are intent on promoting ourselves (Phil. 2: 3,4). Our heavenly Advocate certainly cares for us infinitely above the degree to which we care for ourselves, and He counsels us accordingly.

Tuesday, July 4th - Ruth 3: 2-4

Another reason for this secret and indirect approach to Boaz is that Naomi designed plenty of room in the venture for love to take initiative. Had Boaz decided to reject Ruth’s overture, she would have been shielded by the night from open shame, and he would have been saved from open embarrassment. In short, each partner had clear and ample opportunity to decline a commitment to greater intimacy with the other. According to this exceedingly sensitive arrangement, the only thing which would prompt mutual commitment would be love, the greatest force of all.

Wednesday, July 5th - Ruth 3: 2-4

The detailed instructions Naomi gives to Ruth, and the assurance with which the reaction of Boaz is predicted lead some to suspect that Naomi and Boaz had been together making prior arrangements for this critical night. However, there is no biblical evidence of such conspiracy between Naomi and Boaz. Instead, Naomi appears to demonstrate that quality so much more clearly manifested in the women of the Bible than the men, namely, the quality of one’s faithfully waiting for the divine initiative. Naomi, like Esther (Esth. 5-7), put her case forward, but not in a manner so direct and demanding as to compel compliance. In this way, she and Ruth put themselves in the position of requesting loving grace from Boaz, not legal acquiescence, and a lovingly gracious gift from the Lord, instead of the fulfillment of a legal contract. Those humbly seeking the gracious gifts of the Lord, who trustingly await the divine initiative, rather than seeking to force their petition, will ever receive better than they asked or could have attained by their demanding.

Thursday, July 6th - Ruth 3: 2-4

It may seem that Naomi’s counsel was questionable and risky. She was making Ruth vulnerable to a man alone at night. Such vulnerability would have been risky had Naomi not possessed warranted confidence in the godly integrity of Boaz. He had shown himself to be a man of true commitment to the all-seeing God. Accordingly, Naomi knew that Boaz would do nothing unseemly, taking advantage of Ruth under cover of

darkness. The event proves that her confidence was well placed. The godly man may be trusted to know and to do right in every circumstance—even the most secret. Such a man would never exploit the vulnerability of another, but rather do all in his power lovingly and honorably to give comforting help with discretion and respect. Such a Man is Jesus (Heb. 4:15,16), in whom we may ever confide. May we who are in Christ become increasingly like that as well.

Friday, July 7th - Ruth 3: 5

Without question or hesitation Ruth submits herself to the instructions of her mother-in-law. The young Moabitess here demonstrates her complete trusting confidence in Naomi, in Boaz, but above all, in the God of Israel under whose wings she had come to seek refuge (Ruth 2:12). Our lives would be more simple, straightforward, and satisfyingly fruitful if we had such complete trust in and unhesitating obedience for our Lord's instructions (Prov. 3:5,6).

Saturday, July 8th - Ruth 3: 5

In response to Naomi's counsel, Ruth offers no objections, refusals, or refinements. Instead, the young Moabitess expresses her complete commitment to Naomi's plan. Ruth will do not merely some of what her mother-in-law counseled, but all of it. What confidence and trusting determination the Moabitess shows to her Israelite counselor. What honor the daughter-in-law gives to her mother-in-law. If this babe in Christ affords such honor and demonstrates such trusting confidence in her imperfect mother-in-law's counsel, which contains elements apparently questionable, should the honor and trusting confidence we have in the wisdom, love, and power of our heavenly Counselor be less?

Sunday, July 9th - Ruth 3: 5, 6

Ruth not only said the trusting and honoring thing in response to Naomi's instructions, but she carried her verbal commitment into action. Our Lord warns us against the too common temptation of our thinking that our saying the right thing, but not doing it, is enough. Think of the two brothers ordered by their father into the vineyard (Mt. 21:28-31), only one of whom actually went in compliance with his father's will. Or recall what Jesus says in the conclusion to the Sermon on the Mount, about those hearing His words and not doing them being like those building their houses on sand, while those hearing and obeying were as ones building on the rock (Mt. 7:24-27; Lk. 6:47-49). Ruth sets for us a good example of one offering works to match her words. Such faithful profession and performance never goes unnoticed or unrewarded by our Lord.

Monday, July 10th - Ruth 3: 6-8

Ruth carried out Naomi's instructions to the letter. That to which Ruth had committed herself in the light and security of her home, where she was fortified and instructed in her fellowship with Naomi, she performed in every detail when she was alone in the dark that night at the threshing floor. Godly plans adopted in the light should never be altered in the dark.

Tuesday, July 11th - Ruth 3: 6-8

All that Boaz enjoyed that evening at the threshing floor made him happy. A good harvest was safely in. The profitable grain had been beaten from its husks. Good food, good fellowship, and wine had all blessedly conspired to make Boaz joyful. Yet, a joy beyond what he dared ask or think came to him mysteriously in the middle of the night, as Ruth uncovered his feet so as to disturb his comfortable sleep,

and placed herself at his feet where he would find her when he awakened. The blessings we expect and see are good; those we do not expect and which are unseen by us until they are revealed to us are better. Our Lord prepares His best wine and saves it for us until last.

Wednesday, July 12th - Ruth 3: 8, 9

Perhaps Boaz thought, as he drifted off to sleep, that he could not have been happier. His joyful gratitude to God warmed his heart as the blanket covering him warmed his body. However, Ruth had disturbed his physical comfort when she uncovered his feet, exposing them to the night's cold. When this aroused Boaz, he was surprised to find a woman at his feet. When he inquired as to who she was, he was more surprised to learn that it was Ruth. The blessings of the Lord are often surprising to us, and the more we inquire into them, the more we are filled with wonder.

Thursday, July 13th - Ruth 3: 8, 9

As surprised as Boaz was to find Ruth lying at his feet, he was far more surprised by her request. Scripture does not tell us that Naomi had instructed Ruth to make this request for the application of the authority, protection, and provision of Boaz. Indeed, Ruth virtually proposes marriage to the man. Here we should see and marvel at the wisdom of Naomi, in her giving detailed instructions sufficient to bring Ruth and Boaz together, but also allowing for love's initiative. Ruth takes a bold initiative in making her request. The graciousness of Boaz and Ruth's love for him made her bold, and she would not be disappointed in the result of her boldness. The grace and love of our heavenly Redeemer should make us less retiring and more bold in what we ask and expect of Him.

Friday, July 14th - Ruth 3: 9

Naomi gave Ruth her instructions and said that Boaz would tell Ruth what to do (v.4). In the event, it is Boaz asking the question regarding Ruth's identity, then Ruth making a bold request as to what he should do. Had Ruth exceeded her instructions? No. She who submitted to the counsel of her mother-in-law did not thereby abdicate her powers of faithful discretion. Therefore, as Ruth had uncovered the feet of Boaz with her hand, she goes on to uncover the deepest desires of her heart with her words of endearing request. Such tenderly loving vulnerability facilitates Boaz's knowing and doing the right and loving thing. Were we to be less self-protective and, instead, honestly and humbly to make our requests known to godly brethren, and, above all, to the Lord Himself, we would surely experience increased, not diminished, blessing.

Saturday, July 15th - Ruth 3: 10

Far from his being offended by Ruth's bold request, Boaz is grateful for the sweet honor and loving blessing Ruth's asking had bestowed upon him. Accordingly, Boaz blesses rather than chides Ruth. He who is like Boaz, whose heart is pure due to its being fixed on the Lord, will detect and rejoice in holy blessing even when it comes surprisingly and boldly in the darkest night.

Sunday, July 16th - Ruth 3: 9, 10

To the pure, all things are pure (Titus 1:15). Therefore, Boaz quickly and rightly detects holy and happy blessing in the surprising nocturnal appearance of Ruth. Yet, we should observe that there is a progressive revelation to Boaz of this blessing. A woman at his feet in the night is in itself a strange, if not unseemly phenomenon. That the woman revealed herself to be Ruth would at the same time have alleviated the strangeness, since he knew and admired her, and intensified the strangeness, since he had never known her to act this way. But when she requested the covering of his loving protection, the pure, loving, and holy blessedness of her visitation was clearly perceived by Boaz. The words of Ruth give Boaz the right interpretation for her actions. Were our faith deeper and our hearts purer we would behold more wonderful

things in the Word of God (Ps. 119:18), and in that light see more of the light and loving blessing of our Lord in His providential visitations to us (Ps. 36:9).

Monday, July 17th - Ruth 3: 10, 11

This is the second time Boaz has pronounced a specific blessing upon Ruth. The first time was when Ruth had manifested by her commitment and diligent kindness to Naomi that she sought refuge under the wings of the Lord, the God of Israel (Ruth 2:12). All those seeking such blessing will surely find it, as the benediction of Boaz and his subsequent favors to Ruth indicate. Now Ruth reveals that she seeks under God the refuge of Boaz. The godly man would no more turn away such a request for the blessing which was in his power to grant than would His Lord. Therefore, a second benediction is pronounced, and Ruth receives blessing upon blessing. There are manifold blessings awaiting our discovery and enjoyment in Christ (Eph. 1:3). They are ours for the asking.

Tuesday, July 18th - Ruth 3: 10, 11

The words of Boaz indicate that he was appreciably if not considerably older than Ruth. He refers to her not having gone after young men (presumably her contemporaries), and addresses her as *daughter*. Boaz and Ruth had, until their meeting, spent their lives separated from each other by distance, nationality, and religion (he in Israel, she in Moab). Even when they met, there was still an obvious age difference potentially separating them. Yet, the Lord and the love He gives wonderfully bridges all separations. If the holy and eternal God could, by His love, overcome the great incompatibility between Himself and His sinful and finite people, He can and does help us to transcend our differences with each other in Christ.

Wednesday, July 19th - Ruth 3: 10, 11

Boaz declares that Ruth's last kindness, in her offering herself to him in holy love and matrimony, was better than her first kindness in her cleaving to and caring for Naomi. How gracious the man is to say this. For Ruth surely bore more cost and had less apparently to gain through her commitment to Naomi than she did through her commitment to Boaz. Yet, the gracious and mature man of God speaks as though poor, Moabite Ruth had everything to give and little to gain by her commitment to him. The love of Christ treats poor, needy sinners with such graciously respectful and ennobling consideration. Yet, Boaz is not only being gracious, regarding this poor widow's offer of herself as though it were the greatest treasure. Boaz rightly perceived and rejoiced in the blessing of the Lord in Ruth. As Adam rejoiced to behold Eve after God had fashioned her and brought her to him, so Boaz rejoices in Ruth, seeing in her the blessing of God, who always saves the best blessing for last.

Thursday, July 20th - Ruth 3: 11

Ruth had lovingly made herself vulnerable to Boaz. In this fallen world, even such precious offering as love can be, and often is, rejected. Thus, there was some anxiety in Ruth as she awaited the response of Boaz to her overture. Boaz, with the infallible discernment of love, perceives and hastens to relieve Ruth's fears. He then positively promises her that he would fulfill for her all that she asked. Never could a woman have been more secure than Ruth when she made herself vulnerable to this loving saint, Boaz. Our heavenly Redeemer is the source of such comforting words which tell us to cease fearing and know that He will accomplish the loving and prevailing performance of all necessary to secure our abundant and abiding blessing.

Friday, July 21st - Ruth 3: 11

With Ruth and Boaz deep called unto deep. She saw in his words and actions the excellence of godliness. He saw in her words and actions the same excellence of godliness. Nor did either Ruth or Boaz have lights of godly character which were hidden under bushels. True godliness shines abroad in word and deed with such solid credibility that people behold and appreciate it, especially people of spiritual discernment like the many relatives, workers, and friends of Boaz. The best way for us to establish deep, lasting, and loving friendships and marriages is for us to know, love, and diligently serve our Lord. Those with eyes and hearts fixed on Him are never blind to the godly and supremely attractive excellencies in others who likewise love, pursue, and serve the Lord with all of their heart, soul, strength, and mind.

Saturday, July 22nd - Ruth 3: 12

A major if not the supreme theme in the Book of Ruth is the character and action of the kinsman redeemer (laegO). One, such as Ruth, left in poverty and childlessness by the death of her Israelite husband, could turn for relief to one related to her deceased husband. That relative had imposed upon him by the law of God responsibilities to help relieve various plights into which his kinsman had fallen (Lev. 25:48,49; Dt. 25:5ff). Key features of the kinsman redeemer were:

a natural relation to the needy one; ability to help; and willingness to help, not merely by occasional gifts of charity, but by a continual commitment. Boaz was such a kinsman redeemer to Ruth, and she recognized and called upon him as such. Our Lord Jesus, related to us through His humanity, and richly able and lovingly willing to embrace and enrich us through His divinity, is our Kinsman Redeemer, who procured for us eternal and abundant life by His death.

Sunday, July 23rd - Ruth 3: 12

While Boaz is gladly willing to marry Ruth, he recognizes and informs her that she has a kinsman redeemer nearer to her than he stands. He does not tell her this to shirk his duty or to deny his love for her. Rather, he expresses a recognition of the rights and responsibilities of all concerned in Ruth's proposal. As our God never treats us independently of our various roles and relationships, so the godly should give due attention to all parties who may have some degree of propriety in a matter. Godly love neither despises nor dispenses with the provisions of the law. Instead, godly love takes pains and bears cost to fulfill the law.

Monday, July 24th - Ruth 3: 12, 13

Boaz mentions the kinsman redeemer closer to Ruth than himself not to relieve himself of responsibility towards Ruth. He had already undertaken a generous care for her. Nor was the mention of the other relative any kind of testimony that Boaz lacked love for Ruth. The nearer relative to Ruth is not brought into the picture by the words of Boaz, but rather is recognized as being already in the picture as a legal impediment to the desire of Boaz's heart. The godly Boaz does not ignore this truth, however contrary it may have been to his loving desire for Ruth. But while he acknowledges this other relative, he determines to act so as either to engage that relative for Ruth's welfare or remove him as a legal impediment. Godly love is not reckless, inconsiderate emotion which is heedless of all but its own ardor; it is passion guided and thereby deepened by godly principles.

Tuesday, July 25th - Ruth 3: 13

Ruth's request to Boaz will not return to her void. At the worst, her words have engaged Boaz to be her advocate, whose judicious and resolute action would serve to prompt the nearer relative to redeem Ruth. Boaz declares that if the nearer kinsman were to redeem Ruth, that would be good. But if the nearer relative renounced his loving responsibilities and rights toward Ruth, it would clear the way for something better, namely, the material and matrimonial performance of Boaz. Thus, Boaz will be at least Ruth's advocate, at most her loving husband. Our heavenly kinsman Redeemer is both to us.

Wednesday, July 26th - Ruth 3: 13

Boaz reveals his decisive determination to Ruth. With the dawn of the coming day, he will act in love and according to the provisions of God's law so as to procure the lasting security and happiness of Ruth. Yet, while Boaz is decisive, he expresses his willingness to wait upon his Lord to dispose of all things according to His wise, loving, and good providence. Boaz will not take Ruth in violation of the provisions of God's law. Accordingly, he will offer the kinsman nearer to Ruth an opportunity to redeem her from her poor and childless plight. Should that nearer kinsman so choose to act, Boaz would accept it as the good and loving provision of God for Ruth. The deepest and truest love always enables those possessing it to act with confident determination and wait with trusting submission for the movement of the hand of the Lord's providence. It is evident from his actions that Boaz has more trust in the holy love and disposing wisdom of God than he does in his own love for Ruth or hers for him. Such a man, who loves his God and his God's dealings above all else, is enabled to love and cherish others truly, deeply, and lastingly.

Thursday, July 27th - Ruth 3: 13

Boaz makes his plans to have Ruth contingent upon the action of that relative nearer to her. At first glance, this would seem to show us that he had less than a perfect love for Ruth. Yet, Boaz does not commit his way to that nearer relative so much as he commits it to the sovereign providence of his living God. As Ruth had made herself vulnerable to Boaz by her coming to him and requesting that he cover her (v.9), so Boaz makes his aspirations and plans, indeed, makes himself and Ruth together to be vulnerable to the Lord. Such laying of one's hopes, plans, and life before the godly—as Ruth had done earlier with Boaz—and before God—as does Boaz here—results never in regret but always in reward.

Friday, July 28th - Ruth 3: 13, 14

Boaz enwraps Ruth in his loving care and consideration in every detail of his dealings with her. Hence, we find him instructing her with loving wisdom as he tells her when and how to depart from their nocturnal meeting. He tells her to stay close to him that night, for in the dark he would be her safety. Yet, he sent her off at earliest dawn, lest in the light of day anyone should see and draw wrong conclusions about Ruth's having been through the night with Boaz. The dawn gave sufficient light to allow Ruth to travel home in safety, but not so great light that she could easily be identified by others. Boaz also told those who may have recognized Ruth to be discreet, thus adding his verbal shield to protect her reputation. How polite and practical is godly love!

Saturday, July 29th - Ruth 3: 14

Despite Ruth's departing from the threshing floor at dawn, some of the workers there apparently recognized her as having been at the threshing floor the previous night. Boaz binds them to silence, not because he is ashamed or embarrassed over Ruth's having come to him, but out of consideration for her reputation. Furthermore, he would not want careless chatter about Ruth's visit to jeopardize the dealings he had in mind for the coming day. Hence, he pleads for those knowing something of Ruth's visit to be discreet. Holy discretion is not a vice which violates our duty to tell the truth. Unless we are called upon to give formal testimony in a court of law, we have discretionary power and godly obligation to disclose what we know only to those who have proper need to know, and, even then, to do so lovingly so as not to injure any innocent party. There are times when our silence is as critical as our speech.

Sunday, July 30th - Ruth 3: 15

Boaz continues to exercise that kind generosity towards Ruth which he began to show when they first met (2: 8,9,14-16). Her request of him did not diminish, but intensified, his generosity towards her. In this way, Boaz was acting like a kinsman redeemer even before he was openly recognized to stand in that relation to Ruth. The sort of practical care and sensitive consideration Boaz shows Ruth is appropriate for our imitation, and opportunities for our exercise of such caring virtues abound for us all. If we have eyes

enlightened by the directives of Scripture (Phil. 2:4ff) and the love of God filling our new hearts, we shall see and seize such opportunities.

Monday, July 31st - Ruth 3: 15

Even in his sending Ruth away, Boaz blesses and makes generous provision for her. She came to Boaz in the night with a full heart, and she departed from Boaz at dawn carrying a full load of grain which betokened his loving determination ever to provide for her welfare. It is like that with our heavenly Kinsman Redeemer. We come to Him with our requests, and He sends us forth each day bearing the blessed burden of His loving pledge and token.

Tuesday, August 1st - Ruth 3: 16

Ruth returns and reports to Naomi. It is right that Ruth consider her mission incomplete until she report the outcome to her mother-in-law who had counseled her to go to Boaz. Many faithful counselors, alas, send forth people on missions which prove successful, but then are left in suspense as to the outcome, due to those having been so counseled failing to report the success to their counselors. Let none of us be guilty of such inconsideration and ingratitude.

Wednesday, August 2nd - Ruth 3: 17

Boaz shows himself to be a man not content merely to promise blessing. His loving heart prompted him to provide Ruth with a token of his loving intentions. Thus, Ruth is not sent away empty handed, nor would she speak to Naomi only of his promise, but would also show her mother-in-law the pledge of his provision. Our Lord gives us not only the Word of His promise, but also such wonderful tokens of His provision as His indwelling Holy Spirit (Eph. 1:13, 14). We should be happy to testify to others of our Redeemer's great and precious promises and abundant provision in our lives.

Thursday, August 3rd - Ruth 3: 18

Surely Ruth, having directly received the pledge and promise of Boaz, knew that he would not fail in his performance. However, it is Naomi who rightly reads Boaz through the words and tokens he had delivered, and the mother-in-law lovingly shares her reading of the man with her daughter-in-law in order that Ruth's assurance might be strengthened. We do well to share with one another our apprehensions of the Lord's blessed character and blessing action which we derive from His Word and from His providential works.

Friday, August 4th - Ruth 3: 18

Naomi told Ruth to wait in the full assurance that Boaz would work on her behalf. If Ruth did not know, Naomi certainly knew that Boaz would be serving Ruth and, indeed, ransoming her that day. It is remarkable to note that poor Naomi's faith had recovered to the point where she could know and testify to the working of a godly man. She rightly sensed that the mark of the Redeemer of Israel was that He would stoop to serve and ransom His people (Mk. 10:45), and she further sensed and said that the mark of those truly standing and serving in the gracious redemption of the Lord would do likewise (Phil. 2:5ff).

Saturday, August 5th - Ruth 3: 18

Because Boaz would not rest until he concluded the matter of Ruth's redemption, Naomi told Ruth that she could and should rest. Ruth had been busy the previous night, carrying out Naomi's instructions. With the dawn of day she was told to wait while Boaz worked on her behalf. We, too, should strive to enter into the rest our Lord has procured for us by His work (Heb. 4:11). Thus, this chapter concludes on a note of waiting hope, rather than fulfillment. Such hope is certain and satisfying, yet it is not as wonderful as will be the fulfillment. We, too, must now live in hope (Rom. 8:24,25), of that blessed day when at the marriage

feast of the Lamb of God hope will give way to possession, faith to sight, suffering to glory (Rom. 8:18; 2 Cor. 4:16-18). Then our serving will be transformed into our reigning with our sovereign Redeemer forever (Rev. 22:3-5).

Sunday, August 6th - Ruth 3: 18

In these words, Naomi accurately sums up the character of Boaz and his affection for Ruth. His loving commitment is evident from Boaz not resting; his commitment to God's law is evident from his determination to settle the matter according to God's law. Here is true romance guided and deepened by divine regulation. Human love is submitted to the law of the Lord of love. Whenever we so submit our strongest and best human aspirations to the Lord, neither do we, nor does anyone our dealings affect, suffer want.

Monday, August 7th - Ruth 3: 18

True godliness is manifested through three characters in this verse. Naomi's faith is evident by her sure and accurate understanding of what Boaz would do and what Ruth should do. Ruth's loving patience and trust in Naomi, Boaz, and in her Lord are evident in her submitting herself to Naomi's counsel to wait while Boaz worked. The godliness of Boaz is evident in his principled passion. His love impelled him to make it his work that day to settle Ruth's future securely and happily. His commitment to the principles of God's Word is seen in his knowing and following the right procedure for Ruth's redemption. Here is a beautiful coalescence of godly characters who were made godly and brought together by the grace, love, and power of the Lord. Is it not wonderful that we serve such a God who works to bring us into concerts of mutually loving and righteous actions?

Tuesday, August 8th - Ruth 4: 1

Naomi rightly reckoned that Boaz would set about the work of Ruth's redemption and keep at it until it was completed. The first half of this last chapter of Ruth shows us how Boaz went about his work. In contrast to the first chapter of this book, wherein we see disobedience and grim judgement, this final chapter is full of hearty obedience to God's law and the blessed fruit which issues from such obedience. The difference in the lives of the main characters of this book was made by a gracious and sovereign God, who works all things for His glory and for the good of His people.

Wednesday, August 9th - Ruth 4: 1

The work of Boaz began with his waiting at the city gate—the place where business and legal transactions took place. There Boaz invited the passing nearer relative to Ruth to stop and join him. The need of Ruth occasioned both men stopping the regular courses of their lives that day in order that they might attend to that need for which the gracious provisions of God's Word made them responsible. That day would be a day of reckoning for these two men, and a day of redemption for Ruth. Our heavenly Redeemer sits, not at a city gate, but at the right hand of God's throne, from which He applies to us the fruit of His redeeming work.

Thursday, August 10th - Ruth 4: 1, 2

Boaz formally convenes a court of elders so that they might judge and witness the transaction. This circumspect man will have Ruth's redemption to be an open and righteous affair. He will in the light of day, before the watching world, perform that which he promised and pledged to Ruth when they were alone together in the dark of the previous night. It is a mark of true love and genuine godliness in a man's soul when he does all things, especially those things nearest to his own heart, decently and in order (1 Cor. 14:40).

Friday, August 11th - Ruth 4: 1, 2

We shall learn from the proceedings which Boaz initiates that redemption is not a matter of mere sentiment. It is a highly legal and very costly matter. Our redemption in Christ, to which this redemption points, results not only from the loving sympathy of the Savior, but also from the exercise of that love in His bearing an infinite cost in proper, legal form in order to deliver us from our bondage to sin. Thus, we should never think of our redemption in merely sentimental terms. It is an awesome objective reality whereby real sin was removed, and, in its place we have received a new status, a new relationship with God, a new nature, and a new and glorious destiny.

Saturday, August 12th - Ruth 4: 3, 4

Boaz begins by making the land, not the lass, the issue. He distinguishes the right and responsibility of the kinsman redeemer to redeem his relative's land (Lev. 25:25) from his right and responsibility to raise up children through his deceased relative's wife (Dt. 25:5). In this, Boaz is not so much being shrewd, as he is openly demonstrating that the redemption of Naomi's land would be considered by this relative a desired blessing, but that the marriage to Ruth would be by him considered a cursed encumbrance. It is precisely that which men may consider an encumbrance to be avoided which Boaz loves and desires to have as his treasure. This, too, shows us how our heavenly Redeemer is far more interested in us than He is in anything pertaining to us, such as our possessions.

Sunday, August 13th - Ruth 4: 5, 6

For the man who was a nearer relative to Ruth than Boaz, Ruth was considered an encumbrance he could not or would not bear. For Boaz, the more remote relative, she was the treasure hidden in the field (Mt. 13:44) for which he was willing to sell all he had in order to buy the field and so possess the treasure. This shows us something of how steep the cost of redemption is. It was infinitely steep for Jesus. It also shows us that we sinners are the blight on otherwise good land (Gen. 3:17). However, through the love and redeeming work of Christ, both we and the land will be redeemed (Rom. 8:19-23). We are the blight on the land, but at the same time, the apple of our Redeemer's eye (Song of Sol. 4:7).

Monday, August 14th - Ruth 4: 5, 6

The near relative had not only responsibilities, but also rights in this case. Were he to redeem Naomi's land, he would by right receive some of its produce. But with Ruth encumbering the transaction, the near relative would bear the cost of redemption and raise up children through Ruth, not for himself, but for another, namely, for the deceased husband of Ruth. The nearest relative shows himself unwilling to incur the cost for the sake of another, while Boaz shows himself willing and very desirous of paying the price. The difference was that Boaz loved Ruth, and loved his God, and due to such love, Boaz would neither ignore Ruth's plight nor neglect the responsibilities God's law placed upon him respecting his relative's being in need of redemption. Likewise, Christ has redeemed His people out of love for them and love for His Father who planned and purposed their redemption.

Tuesday, August 15th - Ruth 4: 5, 6

Near relatives are fine, and may do us some good. But the perfect Redeemer may not appear to be our nearest relative. Who naturally would think that his welfare would depend upon, and the deepest satisfaction of his soul be found in a Jewish Man who lived and died and was raised from the dead in Judea nearly 2,000 years ago? But so it is.

Wednesday, August 16th - Ruth 4: 7, 8

The redemption of the land and of Ruth is by Boaz justly and openly settled, secured, and witnessed. Scripture tells us of the nearest relative removing his sandal in token of his refusing the rights and responsibilities involved in this redemption. In Dt. 25:5-10, especially vv.8-10, we have the background to this custom. The full procedure called for the widow to spit in the face of the near relative refusing to fulfill the obligations of familial redemption. Yet here, since Elimelech may not have been a very near relative, and since Ruth was a Moabitess, having at best, in the eyes of most within Israel, a questionable right to press in this case, the symbol of shame—Ruth's spitting in his face—is omitted. The nearer relative did not so much fail in his duty as he failed in his love—a failure of which neither Boaz would be guilty, nor would that perfect Redeemer whom Boaz typifies.

Thursday, August 17th - Ruth 4: 9

Boaz declares that he bought from Naomi's hand all that belonged to her dead husband and sons. Here is a redemption which, in a way, restores the fortunes of these dead Israelites. It is a type of our redemption in Christ. In that substantial redemption, of which this one was but a shadow, Jesus took unto Himself our sin and all its consequences, including death. He redeems us from sin, death, and hell, restoring to us life, health, peace, and adding to us glory.

Friday, August 18th - Ruth 4: 10

To Boaz, Ruth is the jewel in the crown, the joy set before him, inducing him to pay the price of redemption. We should marvel at the deep and vast love of Boaz when, as this verse points out, we note that Ruth herself was not pristine. She was a Moabitess, and she had been previously married to a spiritually disobedient and now deceased man. Boaz freely acknowledges these defects, and he voluntarily owns them all as that which he undertakes to redeem. We, and all pertaining to us, form no great treasure for our heavenly Redeemer. Yet, despite what we have been and are now, Christ loved us and gave Himself for us. His love does not discover but deposits beauty in us.

Saturday, August 19th - Ruth 4: 11

The appropriateness of Boaz having fulfilled the law's requirements is attested by all of the witnesses. The beauty of his love for Ruth is also recognized and celebrated as these witnesses pronounce a richly manifold benediction upon Boaz and Ruth. There is joy, not only in the Savior's heart, but also in all of heaven, when the redemption of Christ is applied to sinners.

Sunday, August 20th - Ruth 4: 11

We are told that *all* of the people and elders acknowledge the blessedness and would, by their benediction, add to that blessedness of the union between Boaz and Ruth. There shall be a universal acclaim of the justice and mercy manifested in Christ's redemption of His bride, the Church.

Monday, August 21st - Ruth 4: 11

Those who witness this blessed redemption and the ensuing union between Boaz and Ruth wish it well. They would add their blessing to that blessedness inherent in the marriage of Ruth and Boaz. These elders and witnesses join in pronouncing a manifold blessing upon the happy couple. They pray that the holy intimacy binding Boaz and Ruth together would result in holy fruitfulness. They pray for Ruth, who was manifestly an excellent character (3:11), and this teaches us that all in the Church, even the most godly, are in need of prayer. They pray that Ruth would be like Rachel and Leah, each of whom had several children,

all of whom were in the Church, unlike, say, Sarah, who had only one son, or Rebekah, who had two sons, one of whom was rejected by God (Mal. 1:2,3). We are not told how many sons Ruth had, but we are told that her offspring formed the line for great king David (v.22), and for great David's greater Son (Mt. 1:1-5ff). We, like Ruth and Boaz at this point in their lives, have but begun to taste the deep, rich, manifold, and lasting blessings of our redemption.

THE BOOK OF PROVERBS

(These Notes were first published in December 1990)

Tuesday, August 22nd - 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.

Wednesday, August 23rd - 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.

Thursday, August 24th - 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 undergirded 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.

Friday, August 25th - 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.

Saturday, August 26th - 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.

Sunday, August 27th - 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 to a Teacher who discerns and knows all things (Heb. 4:12,13).

Monday, August 28th - 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 great, extinguishing desire. 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.

Tuesday, August 29th - 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.

Wednesday, August 30th - 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.

Thursday, August 31st - 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.

Friday, September 1st - 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.

Saturday, September 2nd - 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.

Sunday, September 3rd - 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 suicidally 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.

Monday, September 4th - 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.

Tuesday, September 5th - 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 naivete 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 spiritually ignorant and weak 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).

Wednesday, September 6th - 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 rejectors 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.

Thursday, September 7th - 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.

Friday, September 8th - 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).

Saturday, September 9th - 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).

Sunday, September 10th - 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.

Monday, September 11th - 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.

Tuesday, September 12th - 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.

Wednesday, September 13th - 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.

Thursday, September 14th - Proverbs 2: 12-15

Here are some of the awful dangers from which wisdom saves us. The way of evil is wide and greatly travelled, 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 may indulge in 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.

Friday, September 15th - 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.

Saturday, September 16th - 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.

Sunday, September 17th - 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, and will add up to a long and happy life.

Monday, September 18th - 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. For 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.

Tuesday, September 19th - 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 hearts, being deceitful, 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).

Wednesday, September 20th - 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.

Thursday, September 21st - 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. But we give to One who has given us not only the least of His mercies, but in Christ, the best. Thus our giving to Him tends ever to enrich rather than impoverish us.

Friday, September 22nd - 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 reproves 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).

Saturday, September 23rd - 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 over-value it. Instead, we must guard against under-valuing it, lest we find ourselves distracted by the cheap glitter of this world, which is cold, dead, and deadening.

Sunday, September 24th - 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 so equips her possessors with knowledge, skill, courageous confidence, and grace 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. But we must hold her fast to be so blessed by her.

Monday, September 25th - 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 of 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 atom, every mountain, every star, every river, every aspect of creation cries out with testimony to 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 can not only recognize but also rejoice in the truth that every iota of this world of time and space is established and governed by his Lord.

Tuesday, September 26th - 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 into our soul His life, with all of its wonder and glory. That life also shines out of us, thus adorning us with heavenly beauty amidst even the most mundane circumstances here below.

Wednesday, September 27th - 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, 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).

Thursday, September 28th - 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).

Friday, September 29th - 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.

Saturday, September 30th - Proverbs 3: 29-33

Our withholding good due to others is a form of sin which godly wisdom will not allow us to indulge. The evil of 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 subjects of His curse.

Sunday, October 1st - 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 most 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 the tower of Babel (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 did to himself with the gallows he proudly built for Mordecai (Esth. 7:10). But those who embrace the crucified Redeemer and His cross never fail to inherit a matchless crown.

Monday, October 2nd - Proverbs 4: 1-9

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

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.

Tuesday, October 3rd - 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.

Wednesday, October 4th - 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 it and maintain our grasp of it. If we let this treasure slip away, we let our lives go with it.

Thursday, October 5th - 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.

Friday, October 6th - Proverbs 4: 18,19

What a contrast 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 form 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.

Saturday, October 7th - 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.

Sunday, October 8th - 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 only to evil.

Monday, October 9th - 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—our own spouse, and in a higher sense, 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. Knowing this, let us beware!

Tuesday, October 10th - 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.

Wednesday, October 11th - 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!

Thursday, October 12th - 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. Yet notice that a man's joy is found not only in his receiving his wife's love, but also in giving his love to her. We and our partner are both blessed when we maintain godly relationships; no one is blessed when we do not.

Friday, October 13th - 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.

Saturday, October 14th - 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 good and joy.

Sunday, October 15th - 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. Thus rash commitments are made, from which we do well to extricate ourselves as soon as possible. Better for us, for our neighbor, and for the honor of the Lord to admit our mistake as soon as possible, than to prove ourselves eventually to be deceptive clouds without water.

Monday, October 16th - 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.

Tuesday, October 17th - 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.

Wednesday, October 18th - Proverbs 6: 9-11

The sluggard does not invest his time and energy in preparation for anything. He cares only about present comforts. He will not stand to walk or unfold his hands to work. His limbs hang as useless burdens which drain his energies. He reasons that the resultant weariness justifies his pleas for a little more slumber. He asks only for a little more sleep, but when that little bit is used he wants a little more. He deceives himself into thinking that his disgraceful repose may be protracted indefinitely without consequence. But his failure responsibly to redeem his allotted time will bring upon him most dire consequences. His refusal to walk does nothing to stop the advancing steps of poverty, which threatens to overtake him; his refusal to work will not stop need from robbing even current ease. Indolence is no precious luxury, but is a life-destroying sin of omission.

Thursday, October 19th - Proverbs 6: 12-15

The indolence of the sluggard renders him worthless. The activity of the wicked man does likewise and worse. For his mobility serves only to spread evil and strife. All of his faculties are pressed into the perverted use of nefarious and stealthy communication. His wicked heart drives such expressions, the design of which is to confuse and destroy others. But although he injures others, in the end it is he himself who is damaged beyond repair. We certainly should not be such, and we should also avoid being in the company of such mischief makers.

Friday, October 20th - Proverbs 6: 16

The fool's opinion is that there is no God (Ps. 14:1). But there is a God, and He has definite opinions about man. The closer He examines depraved humanity, the more things He finds to hate, until the measure is filled to perfect hatred. How fearful to be the object of such perfectly deserved divine wrath! How wonderful is our salvation from it!

Saturday, October 21st - Proverbs 6: 17-19

Behold the portrait composed of those attitudes and actions which are abominable in the sight of the Lord. He hates people who look down on others, who lie to others, and who injure the innocent. God abhors an evil heart which feeds pride and directs the feet to hasten in their carrying out of the heart's wicked dictates. He hates that man who, through carelessness or malice, serves by his false testimony not to heal wounds between differing parties, but rather to deepen them, contributing to decided division and strife, even amongst brothers. In contrast, the Lord loves those who count others as better than themselves, treating them accordingly (Phil. 2:3,4), and who desire above all to be sanctified in the truth (Jn. 17:17).

Sunday, October 22nd - Proverbs 6: 16-19

The Bible teaches that we are all by nature (though differing in degrees), children of divine wrath (Eph. 2:1-3). We are all born with bad hearts, which manifest such fruits as are in this passage counted abominable by the Lord. Read further about such divinely condemned works of the flesh in Gal. 5:19-21. How eternally grateful we should be for the interposed blood of Jesus, which cancels sin, and removes our condemnation (Rom. 8:1), and for the indwelling Holy Spirit, who transforms our hearts into soil bearing godly fruits (Gal. 5:22-25).

Monday, October 23rd - Ruth 4: 11, 12

Once the costly redemption of Ruth had been accomplished by Boaz, its application immediately followed. That application was witnessed by many elders and people in the gate (the place for official and public transactions). Neither is Ruth's redemption by Boaz, nor is ours by Jesus, an individual and private affair. It can and will stand the open scrutiny of men and angels. However, these witnesses add manifold blessing to Boaz and Ruth, asking that the Lord make Ruth fruitful in Israel. Ruth was redeemed to be blessed in and by the covenant community. She was also redeemed to help build up that covenant people by her own

fruitfulness. Likewise, we are blessed in and by the Church, and should bear spiritual fruit for her edification.

Tuesday, October 24th - Ruth 4: 10, 11

The people pronounce a manifold benediction upon Boaz and Ruth. She is to be a fruitful and godly mother, bearing children and raising them in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. The blessing pronounced upon Boaz is that he attain power and prosperity in Ephrathah and fame in Bethlehem. He is to grow from strength to strength in his native city, Bethlehem Ephrathah (as distinguished from the other Bethlehem in Zebulunite territory, seven miles northwest of Nazareth). Blessings for Ruth in the private and domestic sphere and blessings for Boaz in the public sphere are called upon them by the people. The people do not despise Ruth because she was a foreigner, but embrace her and pray for her fruitfulness to build up with living stones the house and people of God. Nor do they hate Boaz for his marrying this woman from Moab, but honor him with a name above other names. More high, holy, and extensive acceptance of us and acclamation for Jesus result from His redeeming us to be His bride.

Wednesday, October 25th - Ruth 4: 11, 12

Not only are manifold blessings pronounced upon Ruth and Boaz (v.11), but their household is blessed as well. Far from Boaz jeopardizing his future because of this marriage to Ruth, he secures its fruitfulness and perpetuity. The blessing calls for the house of Boaz to be like the house of Perez, one of the forebears of Boaz (v.18), and a house so numerous that it was divided into distinct branches (Num. 26:21). This manifold benediction came to be in fullest measure. Not only did the family of Boaz and Ruth prosper and grow numerically, but in quality these two were incorporated into, and contributed to, the line of Christ. Ruth, the poor widow from pagan Moab, was accordingly made rich by her marriage to Boaz. The fruit of their love enriched Israel through its issuing Obed, Jesse, David, and great David's greater Son, Jesus. Ruth was brought into the royal line of Judah by her marriage to Boaz, and she bore a son whose future generations would bring into the world the King of kings. We can never overestimate the rich and empowering blessing of the Lord in our redemption from sin and death.

Thursday, October 26th - Ruth 4: 13

In vv. 11, 12, blessings are pronounced upon Boaz and Ruth. In this and the following verses, we learn that those blessings were wonderfully fulfilled. Although the redemption of Ruth by Boaz was a costly and highly legal matter (recall 4:1-9), its prompting and perfection were not of law but of love. Thus, in chaste but clear terms, this verse tells us that Boaz and Ruth blessedly consummated their marriage, with the result that they had a son. The blessings of God, called down by the intercessory prayers of the people of God upon their brethren, are never empty, but always bear richest fruit.

Friday, October 27th - Ruth 4: 14

Naomi returns to the picture here. She who had lost her husband and sons by death in Moab, and one daughter-in-law, who had returned to Moab, does not lose Ruth by this marriage. Rather, she gains immeasurably by this union. The women who were amazed at Naomi's impoverished return to Israel and whom Naomi had instructed to call her Mara (meaning bitter), now see the blessing of the sovereign Lord upon her life. Thus, they bless the Lord, the Giver of all blessing, no doubt joining Naomi in her own blessing of the heavenly God and Father who had so blessed her. By the blessed ordaining and orchestration of God, Naomi did not lose Ruth, but kept her, gaining Boaz with her and a grandson, Obed, as well. The bitter tears we cry in the night of our affliction will be turned to shouts of joy and songs of praises to God in the morning of His blessing.

Saturday, October 28th - Ruth 4: 14, 15

Ruth's union to Boaz did not result in her severing her ties to Naomi. She who became the wife of Boaz did not cease to be in name or nature the daughter-in-law of Naomi. Indeed, the women observe that Ruth's love to Naomi is better to her than would be the love of a perfect complement of sons. Naomi lost none of her daughter-in-law's affection through Ruth's marriage to Boaz, but gained greatly instead. Similarly, no family member loses anything of value when another in the family embraces Jesus as Redeemer and devotedly follows Christ as Lord. Those who love the Lord with all their hearts, can and do love their neighbors and relatives far better than they ever could otherwise love them (Mk. 12: 30, 31).

Sunday, October 29th - Ruth 4: 14, 15

While Ruth is commended in these verses, it is the son of Boaz and Ruth who is the main focus of this dual benediction. The women first bless the Lord as the gracious Giver of this son to Ruth and her extended family. Then, they call for blessing upon the son, and, through him, upon Naomi. This son is therefore practically viewed as a Jacob's ladder, upon which the angels of God ascend and descend—carrying prayers and praises up to God, and conveying the Lord's blessings down to His people. Our Redeemer is certainly such a ladder.

Monday, October 30th - Ruth 4: 14, 15

The potential of this son is expressed by these women in highest terms. He is referred to as Naomi's redeemer, one who takes away the reproach of Naomi's childlessness. He is a living replacement for her two deceased sons. The women then invoke the benediction of God upon this son, asking that his name be made famous in Israel. They are not asking that he be merely widely recognized, but that he have the character and perform such deeds as would gain men's respect, admiration, and righteous praise. Our Redeemer, by who He is and what He has done for us, has earned a name above every name in heaven or earth (Phil. 2: 9-11).

Tuesday, October 31st - Ruth 4: 14, 15

The benediction invoked from God upon Ruth's son develops in v.15 in terms of the blessed deeds he will perform for Naomi. He will be to Naomi a restorer of life. His life will replace for Naomi the sore loss to death she had suffered with her two sons. He will also restore to her life in the fullest sense. He will be to her such a bright blessing that she will come to see that he restored to her sweetness, gratitude, and joy—all of which the grim years in Moab had taken from her. Yet, this son is but an imperfect type of our Redeemer, who not only restores to us all which our child's mistake fancies as lost, but infinitely improves all which He restores to us.

Wednesday, November 1st - Ruth 4: 14, 15

This son will not only restore to Naomi all she had lost, he will preserve and sustain her so that she would live to enjoy the abundant life he would provide for her. All of this blessing the women declared would issue from Ruth's son. The basis for their assurance in their pronouncing of this manifold blessing was that God had graciously given this son to Ruth, and Ruth had demonstrated a love for Naomi which would never deprive her of anything which Ruth possessed. The warrant we have for our assurance is even greater. For God has not only given for us His Son, but the Son has given for us His life, so that we, who were dead in trespasses and sins, might have abundant and eternal life.

Thursday, November 2nd - 14, 15

It may seem to us extravagant that these women should view Ruth's son as being such a source of manifold blessing. How could one child, even with all of the prayers and benedictions of God's people, possibly perform all that is in these verses attributed to him? Could the love of one daughter-in-law more than compensate for the loss of Naomi's two sons? Could this child restore to Naomi all she had lost, and preserve her to enjoy her restored fortunes? Scripture does not tell us how this child, Obed, actually

performed in Naomi's case. Yet, we are told that from him descended David and great David's greater Son, the Lord Jesus. In Christ we have every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places (Eph. 1:3), and we are protected by the power of God through faith so that we might have and enjoy a glorious inheritance (1 Pet. 1:5). The son of Ruth points to the Son of God, our Redeemer. That Son infinitely compensates for all that may have been lost or broken in our lives.

Friday, November 3rd - Ruth 4: 16

This verse indicates to us that Ruth freely and lovingly shared her son with Naomi. The love which Ruth had for Boaz, her husband, and for Obed, her son, was not exclusive, but inclusive. Furthermore, we are told in this verse that Naomi gratefully accepted the precious expressions and tokens of love offered to her. She did not consider this child a poor and inadequate consolation for all of her loss. Rather, she embraced him as being all of that blessing for her which the women had invoked upon the child in the previous verses. Let us never forget what our God takes away from us, He gives back better. And let us never despise the day of small things given to us by Him.

Saturday, November 4th - Ruth 4: 17

The women reckon Ruth's child to be the son of Naomi. This is not to diminish the loving claim and maternal propriety Ruth had in her son. Rather, it is an acknowledgement of Ruth's generous love and unselfish sharing of the blessing with which the Lord had blessed her. The natural relation Naomi had with Ruth's son was weak. Not a drop of Naomi's blood flowed in Obed's veins, for he was the son of neither her son nor her daughter, but of her Moabite daughter-in-law and Boaz. Yet by the provision of God's law with respect to the kinsman redeemer, a living son was raised up to carry on the name of Naomi's deceased husband and son. By God's grace, all parties in this matter recognized and respected this provision. In all of this, Boaz especially shows himself to be a man having godly respect for the dead (Ruth's first husband) and love for the living (Ruth and Naomi). His reward is that he is honored with a place in the line of the Savior, who binds all whom He redeems more closely and strongly together than any natural relationship ever could.

Sunday, November 5th - Ruth 4: 17

The women remark that Ruth's son had been born to console Naomi. The gifts of God ever overflow those receiving them, such as Ruth, and the excess can fill to overflowing others in need, such as Naomi. That his parents recognized the giving hand of God in their having received this son is evident by the name they gave him. Obed means worshipper. Ruth, Boaz, Naomi, and the women all were not only happy because of this child, they were grateful to God for him and all he represented. Thus, they named him in accordance with the response they had to this divine gift, and with a faithful expectation of what he would become. Obed evoked worship of God from his parents, grandmother, and neighbors, and he would himself grow to be a worshipper of God. The gifts our Lord showers upon us should also serve to make us worshippers.

Monday, November 6th - Ruth 4: 17

Obed is not only the tangible and living fruit issuing from the love shared by Boaz and Ruth, he is part of a line leading to the man after God's own heart, namely, the righteous and royal David. However, the line does not terminate with David, but goes through him to great David's greater Son. Obed was the fruit of Boaz and Ruth's love, but he was also part of a line which would produce the human nature of the Son of God, who is not only the fruit of God's love for man, but also the foundation and source of love. Our loving of one another in Christ produces fruit far more significant and extensive than we can ask or think.

Tuesday, November 7th - Ruth 4: 18-22

In these closing verses of this wonderful little Book of Ruth we learn that the Perez referred to by the women in their blessing (v.12) was actually an ancestor of Boaz. Seven generations after Judah sinfully

begot the twins, Perez and Zerah, by his daughter-in-law, Tamar (Gen. 38), Boaz was born of the union between Salmon and Rahab the harlot (Mt. 1:5). Boaz took unto himself a Moabitess, Ruth, and begot Obed. This line is laced with sin, sinners, and irregularities, but over and through it all is the guiding hand of our gracious God. Seven generations after Judah's sin came Boaz; three generations after Boaz came David. From David to the Babylonian Captivity there were fourteen generations, and from the Captivity to Christ there were fourteen generations (Mt. 1:17). There is a divine order to what appears to us chaotic. Where the of man sin increases, the grace of God abounds all the more.

Wednesday, November 8th - Ruth 4: 18-22

This list goes back seven generations from Boaz and ahead three generations after Boaz, the kinsman redeemer of Ruth. The spiritual line of those in Jesus extends back to Adam (Lk. 3:23-38), and stretches to the end of time (1 Thess. 4:15). Redemption by Christ is retroactive as well as prospective.

Thursday, November 9th - Ruth 4: 18-22

Ruth began her life in the land of Moab; she lived her best years and died in the promised land and amongst the covenant people of Israel. She was born an unbeliever in a pagan nation; by God's grace, she came to be among God's redeemed and beloved people. She married a godly, gracious, and loving man who was of the royal tribe of Judah. The fruit of her love for Boaz and his for her was a son from whom David and Jesus were descended. She received manifold and enduring blessing, and became a channel through whom the source and substance of all blessing came into the world for the redemption of His people from all ages, including ourselves. Let us marvel at the magnitude of God's blessing. Let us never forget that the same divine hand which guided Ruth, overruling all for her good, and providing for and through her far above what she asked or thought, is the hand of our heavenly Father, who has demonstrated His love for us through His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, and whose Holy Spirit guides and empowers us in our pilgrimage from death to life, and from grace to glory.

The Letter to the Hebrews

Friday, November 10th - Hebrews 1: 2

The form of the letter to the Hebrews is unlike that of any other New Testament letter. There is no opening greeting, the writer nowhere in the letter indicates his name, nor are the persons addressed identified. The opening of the letter is as timeless and universal as is the opening of John's first letter, or indeed, of John's Gospel. However, it is unlikely that John wrote this letter, as the subject matter and the Greek writing are very unlike what John has produced elsewhere in the Bible. Scholars speculate over who wrote this letter. The guesses range from Paul, Luke, and Apollos, to Priscilla and Aquila. Nor do we know who were the originally intended readers of this letter. Its title, *Epistles to the Hebrews*, is derived from the internal subject matter, which deals with Old Testament sacrifice, law, and ritual. Even the date of this letter is unknown, though it must have been written during a time of persecution. There are references to the readers having suffered persecution (Heb. 10:32-34), and to Timothy's release from prison (Heb. 13:23). Thus, the time of writing may have been either during the persecutions of Nero in 64 A.D., or during the persecutions of Domitian in 81-96 A.D. With so many unknown factors in this letter, we may wonder how it got into the Bible. The answer is its subject matter. This letter is self-authenticating divine revelation. It speaks to believers of all generations regarding God's revelation and accomplishment of redemption. We may want to know by whom and to whom this letter was written, but we do not need to know such things. What we do need to know and what is very clear in this letter is that God the Holy Spirit inspired it, Christ the Redeemer is exalted in it, and Christians everywhere and in all times are instructed, challenged, encouraged, and edified by it.

Saturday, November 11th - Hebrews 1: 1, 2

This letter is profound, detailed, and somewhat complex, just like our redemption. Perhaps an introductory word regarding its structure will help us understand the unfolding of its contents. The first section (chs. 1-10) proclaims the uniqueness, supremacy, and finality of Jesus Christ. Our Redeemer is shown to be superior to angels (chs. 1,2), to Moses (chs. 3,4), to Aaron (ch.5), to Melchizedek (chs. 6,7), and to the ritual of the Old Testament economy (chs. 8-10). Faith is the subject of the second section (ch.11). But the letter does not develop faith as a concept so much as portray it in the living examples of representative heroes of the faith. Finally, the third section (chs. 12,13) speaks of Christ applied by faith and lived out in practice. This letter magnifies Christ and edifies those reading and heeding its teaching about the Savior.

Sunday, November 12th - Hebrews 1: 1, 2

These verses speak of the exalted, divine, redeeming Christ. Yet they tell us that Christ was the One through whom God made the world. The notion that those who are most conscious of the risen and exalted Christ are of least practical good in this world is a fallacy. In this letter which is so Christ centered we find challenging teaching addressed to a host of practical needs and deficiencies. A representative list of such needs would be: spiritual drifting (2:1-3); the danger of unbelief (3:12); failure to rest in Christ (4:1ff); failure to grow spiritually (5:11-14); forsaking public worship (10:25); loss of spiritual zeal (10:32ff); the need to understand and submit to discipline (12:4ff); and such practical matters as hospitality, marriage, greed, guarding against false teaching, and submission to spiritual leaders (ch.13). Our Lord does not address our practical needs and problems with the earthly techniques of men, but with divine teaching about Christ. When we lose sight of Christ, and when our sense of being mastered by Him weakens, all sorts of practical and spiritual problems develop in our lives.

Monday, November 13th - Hebrews 1: 1

We are told in this verse that God is. The author does not debate God's existence but confidently declares it. We are also told that God is not silent. He has spoken. God has revealed Himself in the created order (Ps. 19:1-4), and in the conscience of men (Rom. 2:12-16); yet, our writer has particularly in mind not general but special revelation. General revelation tells us that God exists, and that we are without excuse for our sinful rebellion and alienation from Him. Special revelation tells us that God is merciful, and that He has planned, promised, and provided salvation for His people. How profoundly thankful we should be that God is, and that He reveals Himself to us supremely in His Word and works of salvation.

Tuesday, November 14th - Hebrews 1: 1

From the beginning God has spoken savingly to sinful man. He gave His covenant promise to Abraham, spoke to the other patriarchs, and manifested Himself in Word and deed in Israel's exodus under Moses from Egypt, in the wilderness miracles, such as the provision of manna, and in the conquest of Canaan under Joshua. God also revealed the promise of salvation through the prophets, as well as through the history, poetry, and wisdom literature of the Old Testament. In every age prior to Christ's coming, many times and in many ways God spoke to man through His Word and works, causing light to shine into man's dark world, mind, and heart. The way to God and to glory is well marked by frequent and clear testimonies from God Himself.

Wednesday, November 15th - Hebrews 1: 1, 2

All of the words and works of God in Old Testament time were sure, reliable, and sufficient for men to know the way of salvation. Indeed, we may be tempted to think that the days when the people of God had living prophets like Isaiah and Jeremiah, prophetic wonder workers such as Elijah and Elisha, and substantial religious ritual such as was seen, heard, smelled, felt, and tasted in the Jewish sacrificial system were days superior to our own in terms of divine revelation. However, the older economy was partial and anticipatory. What we have in Christ is complete and final.

Thursday, November 16th - Hebrews 1: 1, 2

Prior to the coming of Jesus, God spoke through men who were themselves sinners in need of salvation, and through a sacrificial system which clearly pointed beyond itself, for no essential moral virtue can be found in foods and animals offered in sacrifice. The older revelation of God was partial; that in Christ is complete. The older revelation was through sinful men and morally void sacrifices; that in Christ is through the infinite, eternal, holy Son of God. The older revelation was promise; that through Christ is provision. The older was shadow; that through Christ is substance. In every way, what we have now in Jesus Christ is superior to what men had prior to Christ's coming. We have the substance of a perfect and perpetual fruition of that which had been a fragmentary system of signs.

Friday, November 17th - Hebrews 1: 1, 2

Though Christ is the supreme revelation of God, being superior to the fragmentary and anticipatory revelation in the Old Testament, there is an essential continuity between the two revelations. Therefore, the author of this letter writes that what God revealed in previous days prepared His people for this final revelation in the last days. There are no days of revelation beyond the days of Christ and His apostles. That is because in Christ God has spoken His final Word. We have all we need in the perfect and final revelation of God in Christ recorded in Scripture. We have the best wine, which has been saved until the last days.

Saturday, November 18th - Hebrews 1: 1-4

Christ is God's last Word to man because there is perfection in Christ that was in nothing or no one coming before Him. The writer draws our attention to this perfection by his referring to Christ as the Son eternally begotten of the perfect Father. Then he asserts seven things about Christ in vv.2-7. Three of these things pertain to who Christ is, while four of them pertain to what He has done. In the total of seven, we have a number of perfection. In the component parts we have the number for God in the number three, and the number for the world in the number four (cf., the four corners of the world, four points of the compass, four seasons, etc.). Christ is the creating God who assumed by His incarnation the nature of man, the crown of creation. In this God/man we find perfection.

Sunday, November 19th - Hebrews 1: 1-4

The first thing attributed to Christ is that He is heir of all things. Jesus Christ has the legal title to and right in all things. He has received this from the Father, not only by virtue of Christ's being God's Son, but especially by virtue of what the Son of God accomplished as the Son of man. Because of His sinless life, substitutionary death, and justifying resurrection, no property is exempt from His ownership, there is no time that does not belong to Him, and no persons who do not owe Him all praise. Furthermore, Christ is not only legal heir, but reigning Lord over all. He is no impotent titleholder. He exercises His sovereign authority and power over all things (Mt. 28:18) for His glory and for the good of His people.

Monday, November 20th - Hebrews 1: 1-4

The second of the three things the writer asserts about the person of Christ (in distinction from what He has done) is that Christ is the radiance of God's glory. This teaches us that if we perceive Christ, we perceive the very essence of God's glory. In the Old Testament tabernacle and, later, in the temple, God manifested His presence through the Shekinah glory. But those blazing manifestations were but traces of the fullness of divine glory. Now, in Jesus Christ, this glory in its fullness has come into the world to God's people (Jn. 1:1-5, 14-18). Some mistakenly think that the glory of God was veiled in the humanity of Jesus. In fact, the full measure of the glory of God was not shown to men or even to angels until our God in Christ graciously condescended to assume our human nature, live perfectly as a man, and then offer that perfection freely for His undeserving people, as He ransomed them by His dying for them. Divine grace magnifies, it does not diminish, divine glory.

Tuesday, November 21st - Hebrews 1: 1-4

The third thing the writer attributes to the person of Christ is that He is the exact representation of God's nature. The word translated *exact representation* also means the perfect likeness and full expression of something, or in this case someone. Our word, *character*, comes straight from this Greek word (*carakth.r*). Here we are being told two important things: 1) that Christ is distinct from God, thus revealing to us the character of the divine essence (*th/j u`posta,sewj aurtou/*); and 2) that Christ is God, for a perfect representation of God could be nothing other than God. What the Father is, has, and does, the Son is, has, and does. As Jesus Himself told Philip: "He who has seen Me has seen the Father." (Jn. 14:9). For men to say that they perceive or know God apart from Jesus Christ is nonsense, for there is no God apart from Jesus Christ. Men may perceive aspects of God apart from Christ, but that is not them knowing God as we do, savingly in the person and through the work of His Son.

Wednesday, November 22nd - Hebrews 1: 1-4

In addition to the three things the writer asserts regarding the person of Christ, four things are declared regarding Christ's work. The first dimension of the work of Christ has to do with creation. The Son of God was the effective agent of creation (Prov. 8:22-31). This great work of divine wisdom and power is mentioned almost casually as though it were no great feat for the Son to create the world. In fact, the first creation, accomplished by God speaking, was infinitely less arduous in comparison with the new creation which cost the Son of God His life. The extent of Christ's work in creation is alluded to by the word the writer chooses to designate what Christ created. That word, which our English versions translate, *world*, literally means *the ages* (*tou.j aivw/naj*). Our Redeemer created the universe of matter, space, and time. As Paul writes, "in Him all things were created, in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities..." (Col. 1:16). There is nothing in existence which Christ does not understand perfectly, for He created it all.

Thursday, November 23rd - Hebrews 1: 1-4

The writer designates Christ as heir of all things before he says that Christ was God's agent of creation. This indicates to us that Christ is the One for whom and from whom are all things (Rom. 11:36; Col. 1:16,17). It should amaze us that such a magnificent creator and heir of all things regards His people as His beloved bride. The redeeming Lover of our souls is humble, but He is infinitely exalted at the same time. And if we are His bride, He makes what is His to be ours—which is everything!

Friday, November 24th - Hebrews 1: 1-4

That Christ is heir and maker of all things speaks of His wisdom, power, worthiness, and right of possession. It also speaks of His knowledge of all things. Nothing is mysterious to Him; nothing hidden or unknown; nothing imagined, or merely potential. It is no wonder, then, that those maintaining a loving communion with Him become wiser than their teachers, than the aged, and certainly wiser than their enemies (Ps. 119:98-100).

Saturday, November 25th - Hebrews 1: 1-4

The second thing the writer declares regarding the work of Christ is that He upholds all things. Christ not only created, but He also sustains all things. He governs effectively—with nothing excluded or exempted from His sovereign will and almighty power. We ascribe changes and consequences in our world to secondary causes. Christ is the ultimate cause, preserver, and guide of all things. When His Word tells us that He causes all things to serve for our good (Rom. 8:28), we can believe it with all of our hearts. What may at times appear to us as threatening chaos is ever, only, and always under the gracious and glorious governing of our Christ.

Sunday, November 26th - Hebrews 1: 1-4

We are told that Christ upholds all things. We are further told how He exercises His sovereign preservation and government of all things. He does so by the word of His power. So perfect, so effective is His rule, so great His power, that He speaks and it is done. The wicked may think they resist Him, but He who sits in the heavens laughs to scorn their ignorant and impotent resistance (Ps. 2:1-6). This word of Christ is not to be conceived of as a random and changeable string of sayings. He does not uphold all things by words (lo.goi) spoken in response to developing circumstances. Rather, He preserves and governs by a coherent counsel (r'h,mati) communicated in Scripture and wrought out in events. Unlike our words, which often express boasts, vain wishes, feeble intentions, or lies, the word of Christ is pure and powerful so that His holy thoughts and intentions are effected in perfect deeds.

Monday, November 27th - Hebrews 1: 1-4

The third aspect of the work of Christ of which our writer speaks is purification of sins. The Son of God is Creator and Redeemer. When man, the crown of the first creation, sinfully rebelled against God, falling into consequent guilt, corruption, and misery, Christ redeemed His people, thus ushering into the world a new creation, consisting of redeemed people. The first two works of Christ our writer mentioned pertained to His cosmic functions. Here our Lord is portrayed in that more intimate work of His personal relations with men. With this third aspect of His work, we are moving from the glorious grandeur of His power to the more glorious wonder of His grace.

Tuesday, November 28th - Hebrews 1: 1-4

We should understand when we are told that Christ made purification of sins, that only Christ could do this. No sinful man could purify himself from his own sins, let alone purify others from theirs. Nor could one or even a host of the holy angels purify men from their sins, for angels are not men, having affinity of nature with and federal relation to sinful men. Nor are angels eternal, but are themselves creatures. Therefore, they could never make satisfaction for man's offense against the eternal God. Had Christ not undertaken the work of purifying us of our sins, no one could have done it. But He did volunteer to accomplish our cleansing and restoration to God. Let us wonder, love, and adore Him for it.

Wednesday, November 29th - Hebrews 1: 1-4

Christ made purification of sins. The deed has been done perfectly. There is nothing for us to add, nor is there any deficiency in His saving work. He has satisfied God's righteous wrath against sin, and, at the same time, removed from us all guilt for actual transgressions, past, present, and future. We can and do still sin, but forgiveness is granted to us by God when we ask it (1 Jn. 1:9) because Christ has washed us by His redeeming atonement. As Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego emerged from the fiery furnace without so much as the smell of fire upon them, because the Son of Man had been for them and with them in the blaze, so we shall emerge from our pilgrimage in this fallen, sinful, cursed world without a trace of sin in or on us, due to the purifying work of the Lord (Jude 24).

Thursday, November 30th - Hebrews 1: 1-4

The work of purification accomplished by Christ was infinitely costly to God, though free to us. It cost the Father the life of His Son. The Father did not *send* His only begotten and beloved Son into the world; He *gave* Him as a sacrifice for our sin. The cost borne by the Son was His assuming a human nature with all of its limitations, His living a life of humiliation in this fallen, cursed world, His suffering, His being made sin, His sensing the dereliction of God, and His death. The Holy Spirit bore cost in our redemption as well. He empowered Christ to give Himself as the atoning sacrifice for man (Heb. 9:14). It is hard, indeed, impossible, for us fully to conceive of or appreciate the magnitude of the task of this purification of sins, or its infinite cost, or the immeasurable greatness of the Christ who has accomplished this for us. Suffice it to say that we shall never be able to thank and praise our Savior enough for His having done this.

Friday, December 1st - Hebrews 1: 1-4

If the cost to God for our purification from sins is infinite, the blessing to us is immeasurably precious. We have been purified not by a finite and fallible creature who lacks ability to accomplish the task. We have been purified by the Son of God, who knows perfectly the true extent of our need for cleansing. Not a deed, word, or thought of ours which is sinful by either omission or commission has escaped His purifying work. Nor are we made pure only before men, who only see us occasionally, and then only behold our outward appearance. We are purified in the sight of the living, all knowing, holy God. If God has justified us in Christ, who can bring a charge against us? If God can find no sin in us, no one can (Rom. 8:33,34).

Saturday, December 2nd - Hebrews 1: 1-4

The fourth thing the writer tells us about the work of Christ is that He sat down at the right hand of God. This tells us that the Savior completed His redeeming work for His people. One does not sit down until his work is finished. A slacker may sit down before his work is completed, but he does so stealthily, hiding from his master or employer. Christ sat down neither out of weariness nor slackness. He sat down at the right hand of God—the hand of all power and authority. He sat on a par with the Father, with whom the Son is co-equal. He sat down at the administrating hand of the God of highest majesty, who validated the perfection of Christ's saving work by raising Him from the dead and seating Christ at His right hand. If Christ were up and active, we should have cause to think His justifying work incomplete. However, our Redeemer sits in heaven with His Father, who is well pleased not only with the person of His Son, but also with His perfect work of purification of our sins.

Sunday, December 3rd - Hebrews 1: 1-4

Because Christ sits at God's right hand in the heavens, He is secure from all enemies and all sufferings. We, in Him, are likewise secure from our enemies and sufferings, for our saving Head ever lives to make prevailing intercession for the members of His body. Our Christ dwells far above all rule, authority, power, and dominion, and God has given Him to us as such that we might be secure in the knowledge that He shall cause all things to work together, not for our harm, but for our good (Eph. 1:20-23; Rom. 8:28).

Monday, December 4th - Hebrews 1: 1-4

Aaron and all earthly priests stood before God. Christ sits with Him at His right hand. Such a posture and position maintained by our Redeemer in the presence of the Father shows Christ to be infinitely superior to all earthly priests. In fact, this posture shows Christ to be equal in glory, power, and dominion with the Father. What a Savior we have!

Tuesday, December 5th - Hebrews 1: 1-4

The Son of God was always better than the angels. By virtue of His divine nature, He was infinitely more excellent than any or all of them ever could be. But by His saving work, Christ demonstrated His excellence over the angels as the Son of God and Son of Man. Jesus is the perfect prophet, infallibly revealing God to us; He is the effectual priest, sacrificing Himself for us, and is now interceding for us; and He is the King of kings, reigning over all things for His glory and our good. No angel could ever have and perfectly exercise any one, let alone all, of those offices. Our Savior is supremely above the most excellent beings.

Wednesday, December 6th - Hebrews 1: 4

The author of our salvation is both officially and essentially superior to angels. The holy angels are so glorious and excellent that whenever they appear to men they inspire a profound sense of awe in those perceiving them (Lk. 2:9; Rev. 19:10; 22:8,9). Yet, angels are essentially messengers (aggeloi) serving

God by conveying to men announcements from God. Christ is essentially the Son of God, and by His saving work He is also essentially the message which angelic messengers declare.

Thursday, December 7th - Hebrews 1: 4,5

The writer has declared that Christ is essentially much better than the angels, and that by His incarnation and saving work He has inherited a more excellent name than they. The degree of Christ's superiority over the angels is declared throughout the remainder of this first chapter. When it is said that Christ is better than *the* angels, that definite article indicates Christ's superiority not simply over angels in general, but over all of them taken together. Christ is qualitatively more excellent than the angels. He stands eternally in a unique relationship to God. Angels are creatures of God. Christ is the eternally begotten Son of God.

Friday, December 8th - Hebrews 1: 5

The writer cites Ps. 2:7 in the first part of this verse. The main thrust of that citation is that Christ is the begotten Son of God. However, some have focused on the word, *today*, and inferred that it implies a time when the Son of God did not exist. The question here is whether *today* refers to time or to eternity. Since God speaks, and from His eternal perspective it is ever and always today, we should conclude that there never was a time when the Son of God was not. Furthermore, since the Son is begotten, not created, He is of the same essence as the Father, and is therefore eternal. Our Savior is Lord of all time and eternity.

Saturday, December 9th - Hebrews 1: 5

One creates something unlike himself; one begets another of his own kind. God created the angels and begot His Son. Accordingly, Christ is divine, being of the same divine essence as God the Father. Not only do the first and second persons of the Trinity have the same essence, but they are distinct, being Father and Son. Yet, their distinction will never result in separation, for they are bound together not only essentially, but also with bonds of perfect affection. The Father has paternal love for His Son, and the Son maintains filial love for the Father. This is the deep, strong, eternal bond within the Godhead into which Christ brings His people.

Sunday, December 10th - Hebrews 1: 5-14

In these verses, the writer sets out the testimony of Scripture to support the assertions he has made about Christ. His citations form the basis from which he has previously made his seven assertions about the person and work of Christ. Verses 5 and 6 speak to the three assertions made concerning the person of Christ, while vv. 8-13 speak to the four assertions made concerning His work. The person and work of Christ are testified to throughout Scripture (Lk. 24:27), if we had but eyes to see. Now, since Christ has ascended to heaven and His work has been accomplished, we incidentally see the necessity of Scripture for God to reveal His Son to us. That God is the inspiring author of Scripture is evident from vv. 5-8, 13, when the writer declares that God said those things recorded in His Word. The Word perfectly testifies to our perfect Christ.

Monday, December 11th - Hebrews 1: 6

In this verse, Christ is called the *first-born*. We are to understand this not as though there were a time when the Son was not begotten of the Father, but rather in terms of the Son's eternal preexistence to all creational things. The preexisting Son of God was brought into the world by the Father's appointment, an appointment which the Son freely undertook. Though Christ manifested Himself prior to His incarnation, it is with particular reference to the birth of the God/Man that the writer speaks of the angels worshipping Him. At the birth of Jesus, heavenly angels saw more in the babe than did his own parents, and thus, by divine direction, the angels worshipped Him and praised God for Him (Lk. 2:13,14).

Tuesday, December 12th - Hebrews 1: 6

So far is Christ superior to angels that Scripture tells us the angels are to worship Him, and not to stand equal to or superior over Him. Christ is infinitely greater than any angel and than all angels together. Thus, all angels are called by God to worship His Son. The writer, in this verse, actually cites from the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Old Testament Hebrew), and even then does so loosely. It is something he does in other places of this letter. It is not that he misquotes Scripture in his doing this, but rather, by divine inspiration, he emphasizes the implicit content of what he cites in the light of Christ. Those who see most truly and understand most deeply know that Christ is to be worshipped by beings of highest celestial splendor. The glorious exaltation of angels lies not so much in their persons as it does in their subservience to Christ. The highest place of the angels is their lying low at Christ's feet. That same place is likewise our most exalted place.

Wednesday, December 13th - Hebrews 1: 7, 8

These verses set out in close compass a comparison between Christ and the angels. We learn that the angels are great and exalted creatures. They are designated *winds*, meaning that they move with swiftness, efficiency, and obedience to God, who makes them so to move in His service. They are further designated the Lord's ministers. They do not sit at God's right hand, as does the Son (v.3), but stand to render service for God. That they are referred to *as a flame of fire* indicates to us that they are powerful and purifying in their service. It is no wonder that men are at times tempted to worship the holy angels (Rev. 19:10; 22:8). There are more and greater things in heaven and earth than is dreamt of in any man's philosophy.

Thursday, December 14th - Hebrews 1: 7, 8

Angels render quick and efficient service for God. Yet, the Son of God sits at God's right hand (v.3), being co-equal with the Father in majesty, power, authority, and dominion. The Son reigns over all, and has done so from eternity and to eternity. As excellent as the angels may be in their potent persons and efficient service, the Son, whom they serve, is infinitely more excellent and exalted than they.

Friday, December 15th - Hebrews 1: 8, 9

These verses tell us not only that Christ reigns over all things, but also that He reigns righteously. There is innate holiness in the Son of God which is expressed in how He exercises His sovereign rule. Because He is holy, all of His acts are right. There is a positive dimension to His holy reign, as we are told that He loved righteousness. There is also a negative dimension in that He hated lawlessness. The extent of His commitment to this righteousness is seen in the cross. He loved righteousness and hated lawlessness unto death—His own death. Christ would die and did die before He countenanced the slightest degree of lawlessness, for when He who knew no sin became sin for us (2 Cor. 5:21), He laid down His life to pay the penalty due for our sin, thus dying to sin and for sin (Rom. 6:10).

Saturday, December 16th - Hebrews 1: 8, 9

Although Christ's commitment to accomplish a righteous atonement for His people resulted in His death, the ultimate fruit issuing to Him from that commitment was not grief, but gladness. Indeed, since his commitment to righteousness was greater than that of any of His creatures, including the holy angels, His joy is higher and greater than theirs. True happiness always attends holiness, and righteous deeds, however costly they may be, inevitably bring their own joy-inspiring reward.

Sunday, December 17th - Hebrews 1: 10-12

These verses expand upon Christ's role in His having created all things, as was mentioned in v.2. Christ is declared by Scripture to have created the deepest and most hidden forces and substances of the world. He

set the foundation for all things. He also is declared to have created the highest and most sublime realms and beings. Our Christ made the heavens—not only the stars throughout the universe, but the realm of heaven and its angelic inhabitants. No angel or host of angels could begin to compete with such an immense and amazing accomplishment.

Monday, December 18th - Hebrews 1: 10-12

These verses tell us more than simply that Christ is creator of the world, including the angels. We are additionally informed of the preexistence of the Son of God. He who was at the beginning existed before the beginning. Furthermore, all that is in creation is subject to constant change, while the Son of God is immutably the same yesterday, today, and forever. Finally, as enduring as the cosmos may seem, it will come to an end, whereas the Son of God shall live eternally. Such is the frailty of man who lives amidst perishing surroundings that he can never be secure apart from a saving interest in the eternal, omnipotent, and sovereign Son of God. Thanks be to God that we have such a Savior.

Tuesday, December 19th - Hebrews 1: 13

In this verse, the writer cites Ps. 110:1. That psalm prophecies that which Christ has accomplished, namely, the purification of sins mentioned in Heb. 1:3. We are to understand this invitation from God the Father to apply not to God the Son in His pre-incarnate divinity. The Son, being of the same essence as the Father, has been eternally co-equal with the Father in majesty and authority. It is the God/Man here addressed by the Father. That humanity assumed by the Son of God and designated the Son of Man is thus—on the basis of His having completed His atoning work on earth—exalted to the place of highest honor and glory. That exaltation raises Him securely above His enemies, which enemies God subdues to the service of Christ. Indeed, even now, as the ascended Christ sits enthroned with the Father, ever living to make intercession for us, those enemies common to Christ and to us are being subdued to work together for the good of Christ's body, the Church (Rom. 8:28). Thus, sin's increase is overcome by grace abounding (Rom. 5:20); the world, even and especially in its opposition to members of Christ's body, serves as the training ground where saints become servants and soldiers through their pilgrimage; and Satan's sinful temptations and attacks are sinlessly overruled by God to serve for His glory and our good.

Wednesday, December 20th - Hebrews 1: 14

The angels are ministers; Christ is the Majesty (v.3). The angels serve; Christ is sovereign. The angels are sent throughout the world; Christ issues their sending orders. The honor of the angels is found in their service rendered for Christ; while the honor of Christ consists in His employing them for His glory and for the good of His people. In every way it should be clear that Christ is infinitely superior to angels.

Thursday, December 21st - Hebrews 1: 14

The angels are by no means lowly creatures. They are beings of excellence and exceeding great power (v.7). The humility of Jesus, and especially His death could lead us to think that the angels are wiser and more powerful than is our Savior. Yet this verse makes clear that the angels are ministers to us, and that we are attended to by them because we are objects of Christ's gracious work of salvation. Thus, Christ is exalted above all, while we who are in Him are exalted above even the angels, who employ their mighty service for our good. We are very well protected and provided for by such a Savior and His holy servants. But let us never regard the celestial servants above either the Savior or the adopted sons of His salvation.

Friday, December 22nd - Hebrews 2: 1-4

The writer of this letter has laid in the first chapter the solid foundation of Christ's supreme superiority. He has, as it were, painted a magnificent picture of our Savior, and for a vital and necessary reason. In the second chapter the writer erects upon the foundation the first of his admonishing challenges. The glorious Savior had grown small and irrelevant, not in fact, but in the esteem of those who received this letter. Their

spiritual sight had grown dim, as they had allowed themselves to be distracted from Christ by things of lesser worthiness and which have no power to provide what they and we most vitally need, namely, salvation. Such spiritual drifting is not confined to the original recipients of this letter. Let us take constant heed to our great salvation and glorious Savior, lest we, too, drift from them.

Saturday, December 23rd - Hebrews 2: 1

The indicatives of the first chapter are followed with imperatives in the second chapter. A response to the reality of Christ's supremacy is called for as being appropriate and vitally necessary. We must not allow ourselves to become spiritually complacent, especially in our communion with Christ. Yet we do well to note the priority of these two chapters. It is consistently found in the Word of God that the indicatives precede the imperatives. We are not exhorted to bestir ourselves and discover Christ; rather we are exhorted to return to the Christ we have known and loved because He has first known and loved us. We do not exercise ourselves spiritually so that we might be saved; we work out that salvation which has been granted to us by our gracious God.

Sunday, December 24th - Hebrews 2: 1

The reason for this call to spiritual attentiveness is the supremacy of the person and work of Christ. When the writer employs the pronoun, *we*, as the subject of this call to attention, he alerts us to the fact that the recipients of this letter had grown spiritually complacent. Yet he further alerts us to the fact that he, too, was capable of such complacency. Thus, he addresses to himself, and indeed to all believers, this exhortation. Those who have been regenerated, who by faith have been made recipients of Christ, His salvation, and of angelic ministry, must ever guard the treasure they have received. In spite of the inherent worthiness of the person and work of Christ, and their meaning to us, the sobering truth is that we can and do let ourselves drift from these infinitely precious treasures unless we are called to attention by the Word and Spirit of God.

Monday, December 25th - Hebrews 2: 1

This exhortation makes plain that our maintaining our spiritual focus on Christ is a vital necessity (*dei*). We *must* pay attention to biblical teaching about our Redeemer and His saving work. The alternative to such spiritual concentration is unthinkable. Such concentration does not occur automatically. It entails exertion on our part. The Scriptures never countenance our having a casually passive attitude toward our salvation. We who have been raised from spiritual death are called to exercise the new life we have in the Lord.

Tuesday, December 26th - Hebrews 2: 1

One coin is presented in this verse. The positive side is our paying increasingly close attention to the things pertaining to our salvation. The negative side is our drifting from a vital grasp of those things. There are no other options. Our failure to exercise the positive will by default bring us into the negative. Are we today paying closer attention to the things of the Lord, or drifting from them?

Wednesday, December 27th - Hebrews 2: 1

The paying of attention involves watchfulness, discernment, discrimination, and commitment. It essentially entails our selecting to have before us (prose, cein h`ma/j) one thing to the exclusion of others. Perhaps the best living example of this can be found in the incident with Mary and Martha (Lk. 10:38-42). Mary chose the one thing necessary, the good part, while Martha was distracted by many things. Mary paid much closer attention to that which warranted such attention, while Martha misspent her energies on trivial things.

Thursday, December 28th - Hebrews 2: 1

The degree of attention we are to afford the things pertaining to our salvation is said in this verse to be much more (perissote,rwj) than that which was being afforded by the recipients of this letter. They and we are called to focus on Christ in depth and detail. Vague notions about salvation, a shallow grasp of Christ, casual and occasional awareness of the gospel, are all inappropriate to and insufficient for our salvation. However well we currently understand biblical doctrine, we are called to grow much more in the grace and knowledge of Christ.

Friday, December 29th - Hebrews 2: 1

What we are called to concentrate upon are the things we have heard. This is a shorthand way of saying that faith comes and grows by our hearing the Word of God read, taught, and preached. Our own *Larger Catechism* question 160 answers thusly the question of how we are to hear the Word preached:

It is required of those that hear the Word preached, that they attend upon it with diligence, preparation, and prayer; examine what they hear by the Scriptures; receive the truth with faith, love, meekness, and readiness of mind, as the Word of God; meditate, and confer of it; hide it in their hearts, and bring forth the fruit of it in their lives.

We can never be too attentive to Christ as He is presented to us in the gospel.

Saturday, December 30th - Hebrews 2: 1

By our paying such close attention to the things written in Scripture and declared in the preaching of the gospel, we are making in our hearts a highway for our God (Ps. 84:5; Is. 40:3; Mt. 3:3). It is not that without such a smooth highway God would be unable to traverse the pitfalls and obstacles we allow to accumulate in our hearts. Rather, our failure to make straight the way for the Lord in our hearts betrays our disrespect for Him, and results in injury to ourselves.

Sunday, December 31st - Hebrews 2: 1

Our failure to pay increasingly close attention to the things of the Lord will invariably result in our drifting. The Christian life is not a drifting affair (Eph. 4:14), but a directed walk upon the solid ground of sound doctrine. The Greek word translated *drift* (pararuw/men) has the connotation of flowing past something. Those who drift may not be aware that they are moving, for they will be carried along with the flow of worldly fashion and trivial matters of this life. However, they will find themselves loosed from the moorings of, and being carried ever farther away from, the one thing necessary.

Monday, January 1st - Hebrews 2: 2, 3

These verses give us additional reasons to induce us to maintain, if we have it, and recover, if we have lost it, our vibrant devotion to the Lord. They describe what we may term the dark side of God's love, namely, His jealousy. If we drift from the teaching of salvation, we not only lose the benefits of that teaching, but we also incur the discipline of the God whom we grieve, offend, and dishonor by our not deeming Him or His salvation worthy of our fullest attention. Behind and above the principles of salvation there stands the person of the Savior, and He will not passively suffer our neglecting Him or His ordinances.

Tuesday, January 2nd - Hebrews 2: 2, 3

Old Testament saints were taught by the hand of God that they disregarded His Word at their peril. Lot's wife suffered when she disobeyed the angels' instruction (Gen. 19:17,26), and foolish Balaam would have suffered had his donkey been as blind to angels as he was (Num. 22:21ff). If, in the age of promise, shadows, and types, one's attitude towards God's Word determined whether he lived or died, how much more seriously should we now take the Word of provision and substance?

Wednesday, January 3rd - Hebrews 2: 2, 3

Sanctions were added to the ritual law governing God's people prior to the coming of Christ. Violators of God's Law were to be put to death for a variety of offenses. At times, the covenant people, after due process of a trial, would be the executioners, and, at other times, God Himself put to death transgressors, such as in the case of Aaron's sons, Nadab and Abihu, who offered strange fire before the Lord (Lev. 10:1-3). The writer, in these verses, is making an argument from the lesser to the greater. If the Word spoken through angels carried capital sanctions, if the Law, which is but a tutor to lead men to Christ, invariably punished offenders, how much more serious are those offenses against the Word spoken through the life and lips of the Lord Jesus?

Thursday, January 4th - Hebrews 2: 2, 3

Once again the writer employs first person plural pronouns in his exhortation. The Word was confirmed to *us*. How shall *we* escape if we neglect this salvation? These things are written not only for the original recipients of this letter, but also for our admonition. If we neglect this great salvation, we shall be ungrateful fools, unable to escape the bitter consequences of our drifting from the one thing necessary; we shall be guilty fugitives, unable to escape from the punitive sanctions of the God whose promise and provision we have despised.

Friday, January 5th - Hebrews 2: 2, 3

These verses cast the matter of spiritual complacency in most accurate terms. Neglect of most things begets mere deprivation. If we neglect to maintain our cars, we shall sooner, rather than later, be without them. But neglect of this great salvation results not only in our deprivation, but also in divine discipline. The writer, therefore, does not put his question: "How shall we avoid loss?" Nor does he ask: "How can we be really happy without this?" Instead, he employs the language pertaining to legal offenders and their guilty and futile flight: *How shall we escape?* By this he means that consequential ruin, circumstantial misery, and, above all, divine discipline will invariably apprehend those who flaunt and presume upon the grace of God in Christ Jesus.

Saturday, January 6th - Hebrews 2: 3, 4

More reasons are given to evoke our attentiveness to the substance of our salvation, namely, the instrumental sources of the revelation we have from God regarding Christ and His saving work. First, and foremost, the content of this revelation was spoken through the lips and manifested through the life of our Lord Himself. Then, it was confirmed to us by those who witnessed the life, death, and resurrection of the Savior, specifically our Lord's apostles (Eph. 2:20). The Father also confirmed the words and works of Jesus with His own words, such as were spoken at the baptism and the transfiguration of Jesus: *This is My beloved Son*. The Father also added confirming testimony through the work of His raising Jesus from death. Such a divine work validated all that Jesus had said and done during His earthly life. Finally, the Holy Spirit contributed His witness to the saving words and works of Jesus by His empowering Jesus to offer Himself for His people (Heb. 9:14), and by His empowering the apostles with extraordinary gifts and miraculous powers. With so many impeccable witnesses, we are without excuse for our having any attitude other than that of highest reverential regard for this Savior and His salvation.

Sunday, January 7th - Hebrews 2: 5

To this point, the writer has been dealing with the necessity for believers to concentrate their faith and lives upon the Son of God. Now the writer begins to deal with the same necessity as it pertains to the Son of Man. He begins to develop this dimension of his teaching by returning to the question of the place of angels. He has already stated that Christ is superior to angels (1:5ff). Now he asserts that man in Christ is destined by God to be superior to angels. God did not subject the inhabited world (oivkoume, nhn), namely, the earth, to angels. Those glorious creatures with whom the Hebrews were apparently so fascinated are

neither heirs nor administrators of the earth. If they are not, the question is, who is? That question is worked out in following verses, and we shall see that it is men in Christ who inherit the earth. Therefore, when men give more attention to angels than to Jesus, they not only offend the Son of God, but they demote themselves and injure their own interests. When we glorify God we also serve our own highest good.

Monday, January 8th - Hebrews 2: 5-8

Believing men who regard angels above Christ not only offend the Son of God, but they also act contrary to their own high calling and higher destiny. While it is true that angels had a prominent part to play in the administration of the Old Testament world, they had that part by default, more than by original or ultimate divine design. It is due to man's faulty speculation that he gives exaggerated esteem to angels. Scripture clearly teaches that angels are not to be worshipped as though they were God, or held in regard higher than man, who is the crown of God's creation and who will inherit the earth (Mt. 5:5).

Tuesday, January 9th - Hebrews 2: 5-8

Man was made as the crown of God's creation. Adam was made in the image of God (Gen. 1:27), and while what we know about angels from Scripture informs us that they are mighty and glorious creatures (the holy ones, that is), we are never told that they were made in God's image. Nor are we told that they should rule over the earth and subdue it (Gen. 1:28). But in one respect, Adam was made lower by a slight degree than the holy angels. Adam was subject to a probation which he violated when he sinned. By his sin, Adam fell, and his vice-regency over the earth was lost. However, the original and ultimate divine design for man would not be frustrated. God would yet crown man with glory and honor and put all things in subjection to him. This would be accomplished not by angels, but by the second Adam, the God/Man whom we should worship and adore above the glorious angelic host.

Wednesday, January 10th - Hebrews 2: 5-8

The Scripture cited here (Ps. 8:4-6) tells us three things about man: 1) that God crowned him with glory and honor; 2) that God made him heir of creation; and 3) that God appointed Him ruler over creation. Not one of these high offices is attributed to angels. Yet, the writer, in the latter part of v. 8 realistically acknowledges that man's condition in the world seems very different from the high place of great authority and power ascribed to man by the Word of God. We do not, in fact, see all things subjected to man. In truth, we see few things so subjected to him. How are we to resolve this apparent contradiction? Certainly not by man's foolish speculation and feeble actions, nor by our devotion to angels. The promise and provision of God for resolving this tension is found only in Christ Jesus. He alone holds our every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, by which blessing we shall reign with Him over the new heaven and earth (Eph. 1:3; Rev. 22:5).

Thursday, January 11th - Hebrews 2: 8, 9

These verses emphasize the fact that God has subjected all things to man. But there is tension between that assertion and man's experience as a fallen being in a cursed world, being himself vulnerable to demonic exploitation. The tension between Scripture's claim and man's condition is resolved in Christ. We do not yet see all things subjected to man, but we do see the Son of Man having attained the first of the three things mentioned in vv. 6-8. Jesus is crowned with glory and honor. We do not see all things subjected to us, but that does not mean that they are not now being subjected to any Man (Ps. 110:1; Heb. 1:13). There is a Man on the heavenly throne, and He is the head of His body, the Church. Where the head is, the body shall eventually be.

Friday, January 12th - Hebrews 2: 8, 9

We do not see from experience that all things are subjected to man, even to redeemed man. Yet, we do, by faith, see Jesus, the Son of God, who by His incarnation became the Son of Man. He assumed our humanity, with its limitations and penal deprivations. Thus, He, who came sinlessly in the likeness of sinful flesh (Rom. 8:3), was in that condition made lower than the angels. This humiliation He voluntarily assumed for His people, who were born in bondage to sin and its consequences. Jesus, as the Son of Man, not only lived a life of humiliation, but He willingly submitted Himself to an excruciating death for the sins of His people. In doing so, He vanquished sin, for He Himself was sinless, and by His penal sufferings He paid for the sins of His people. Therefore, He was raised up by God the Father and crowned with glory and honor. Read more about this in Phil. 2:5-11. There is a Man on the throne of heaven, having all things subjected to Him. He is our head, and where the head is, the body will follow.

Saturday, January 13th - Hebrews 2: 8, 9

Jesus assumed human nature with its less than angelic limitations precisely so that He might suffer death. As the Son of God He could not have died, but as the Son of Man He could and did give His life as a ransom for His people. The arrangement for this redeeming work was designed and promoted through the grace of God the Father. For His service, the Son of Man was not only raised from the dead, but exalted to the highest throne of heaven. The Son of God has eternally been crowned with glory, but as the Son of Man He earned His honors by what He suffered. We must never forget that while Jesus did this for His own glory, He also did it for our good.

Sunday, January 14th - Hebrews 2: 9

The Son of God assumed our human nature, thus becoming the Son of Man. He did not cease to be the Son of God, but He did become what He had not been before, namely, a Man. He did this so that He might die, yet not as we die. Our lives are forfeited because of our sin. We must die. He did not have to die, but chose voluntarily to lay down His life. By His doing this, He drank death, the wages of sin, to the dregs for His people. We who are in Christ will pass from this life, but we shall never know what it is like to die as sinners, to be thrust into eternity heavy laden with our sins, having no Advocate with the Father, no joyful reception by and commendation from the Father. The death of Christ has made death for us to be but the portal into our glorious perfection and endless joy.

Monday, January 15th - Hebrews 2: 9

We must note that in this verse, the writer is not saying that Christ's death saved all men. The author of this letter is not here dealing with the extent of the atonement. What he is saying is that Jesus tasted death for every one of His people. His death effectually saves from death's torments and from the second death, after final judgment, each and every one of His people. Not one of us will perish (Jn. 17:12). Not one of us will know the full horrors of death.

Tuesday, January 16th - Hebrews 2: 8, 9

There is a great practical truth conveyed to us in these verses. It is that we should not look to ourselves—to our current lowly condition—for our hope, peace, security, and joy. Rather, we are by faith to look to Jesus, reigning gloriously above, and doing so for our good (Rom. 8:28). When we behold the Son of Man sovereignly ruling over all things, we are taught by Scripture to behold our own destiny. Not that we become divine, as He is, but that we are engaged to be His bride, and thus with Him we inherit all that is His. In His death, we are to behold our own death to sin (Rom. 6:3-13). In His resurrected and ascended life, we are to see our own eternal, abundant, and triumphant lives (Eph. 2:4-6; Col. 2:10-15; 3:1-4). Let us, then look to Him who has suffered and who is crowned with glory and honor for us.

Wednesday, January 17th - Hebrews 2: 10

From this verse to the end of this second chapter the writer expands the truth that the Son of Man attained for man what man had lost. We are told why the Son of God became the Son of Man, how He achieved His victorious work, and what the results of that achievement are. In sum, vv. 10-18 deal with the necessity and perfection of the incarnation and atonement of Christ. We learn that what the Son of God became and attained in His incarnation was for our salvation. The glory of God and the good of man coalesce in the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus as they do nowhere else. The study of our Savior is the study of our own highest good.

Thursday, January 18th - Hebrews 2: 10

Why did the Son of God become Man? He did not need to perfect Himself in any way, nor could He attain more than He by right had. For all things were created by Him, thus giving Him absolute propriety in all things. All things exist for Him. He is the source and goal of all things. What more could be added? In answer, this verse tells us that the Son of God became Man for man. God was incarnate in Jesus in order to beget through Jesus many new creatures—men, women, and children redeemed from their sins. Nor would they be merely new creatures; they would be adopted sons destined for glory. In order that this might be accomplished, the Son of God had to condescend to become a Man, to pay the penalty for man's sins. This amazing condescension into our humiliation and misery He willingly undertook to glorify His Father (Jn. 17:1,4), and to raise us up from our degradation to His glory (Jn. 17:22-24). Thus our highest good has been served by his stooping so low to save us.

Friday, January 19th - Hebrews 2: 10

The Son of God was incapable of improvement, for He is eternally perfect. However, by His incarnation He could and did grow and develop as the Son of Man into the perfect author of our salvation and adoption into glory. His sufferings, accumulated throughout His life, began with His conception in the womb of a sinful woman. He was born in most miserable and humiliating circumstances, began to shed His blood for our salvation on the eighth day of His life when He was circumcised, grew up as a humble carpenter's Son, served three years as an itinerant preacher, was betrayed, abandoned, and denied by His own closest disciples, was arrested, abused, crucified, and buried in a borrowed tomb. Not one of these accumulated sufferings was deserved by the sinless Son of Man; not one of them was superfluous in making Him the perfect Redeemer of those who deserved all He suffered. His perfection through sufferings is our salvation (Is. 53:4-6).

Saturday, January 20th - Hebrews 2: 10

When the writer speaks of Jesus being perfected, he does not insinuate that our Lord was ever imperfect in Himself. Rather, it is with reference to Christ's work of redemption that a process of development to the point of perfection is spoken of. In Heb. 5:8,9 this thought is repeated. As the Son of God, He knew only of His giving holy commands. As the Son of Man, He experienced the rendering of obedience to the Law of God. More precisely, He experienced the value of obedience and the cost of disobedience by His bearing the cost of our disobedience. This course of development perfected Him as the source of our salvation. The full measure of our sins was borne by Him, so that in His perfectly bearing those sins away for us, we are made perfect in Him (2 Cor. 5:21).

Sunday, January 21st - Hebrews 2: 10

The goal of the incarnation was the bringing of many sons to glory. These sons are inherently sinful. They could not, apart from a perfect Mediator, be brought into the glorious presence of the holy God. To make this mismatch fit was the purpose of Christ's incarnation and sufferings, culminating in the cross. In Christ, God, the offended party, is represented in the person of His Son; while man, the offending party, is represented by the Son of Man. In the person and by the work of this Mediator, holy God and sinful man are reconciled as Father and son bound together in immeasurable, holy love. Thus, did the Mediator author our salvation.