

APRIL

Birthdays & Anniversaries

- | | |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1 Hamilton Donnelly (B) | 22 Pastor Ben (B) |
| 2 McKenzie Donnelly (B) | Kim Meddaugh (B) |
| 3 Delia Donnelly (B) | Suzanne Kasper (B) |
| 4 Liz Garner (B) | 23 Irene Riechers (B) |
| 6 Gary Roofner (B) | 29 George Segedi (B) |
| 11 Kelly Rockwell (B) | 30 Gene Conrad (B) |
| Mark Rockwell (B) | Fred Giessman (B) |
| 13 Brian & Irene Riechers (A) | |
| 14 Justin Donnelly (B) | |
| 15 Shane Davey (B) | |
| Judy Doyle (B) | |
| Dennis Spencer (B) | |
| 19 Marie Ketchum (B) | |
| Warren Smith (B) | |



Not “we hope”, or “we think”, or “we wish”

*“By this we know that we have come to know Him...
By this we know that we are in Him”.*
1John 2:3a, 5b

In his deeply profound treatise on Christian assurance, Heaven on Earth, the English Puritan Thomas Brooks once wrote, “Assurance is a reflex act of a gracious soul, whereby he clearly and evidently sees himself in a gracious, blessed, and happy state; it is a sensible feeling, and an experimental [experiential] discerning of a man’s being in a state of grace...assurance is a believer’s ark, where he sits, Noah-like, quiet and still in the midst of all distractions and destructions, commotion and confusions.”

Assurance causes believers to rejoice with the hymn writer, “Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine! O what a foretaste of glory divine!” To possess assurance is, in a sense, to experience heaven on earth. Sadly, Brooks continues with this lament:

“Assurance is a pearl that most want, a crown that few wear.... Little well-grounded assurance is to be found among most Christians. Most Christians live between fears and hopes, and hang, as it were, between heaven and hell, sometimes they hope that their state is good, at other times they fear that their state is bad: now they hope that all is well, and that it shall go well with them forever; shortly they fear that they shall perish by the hand of such a corruption, or by the prevalency of such or such a temptation; and so they are like a ship in a storm, tossed here and there.”

Assurance is not only a privilege; it is also a birthright that Christians possess as members of the body of Christ. Though the assurance of salvation is part of redemption and vital to joy and comfort, God’s Word teaches that it is possible to forfeit it, unless one pursues it. The Apostle Peter wrote, “Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you” (2 Peter 1:10a). Peter revealed that this certainty comes to those who pursue all the features of holiness with increasing diligence (vv.5-8).

– Chuck Wetzel, April 2021

Steps:

1. Pray for focus.
2. Read twice.
3. Mark key words, repeated words, mark what seems to JUMP OUT at you as important, and write down questions you have over words or phrases.

Answer questions using connected scripture and study Bible notes.

5. What does this teach me about God?

6. Application:

1. How do I need to think differently?

2. What behavior(s) do I need to stop doing?

3. What behavior(s) do I need to start doing?

Friday April 30th

This week we referenced this section when we discussed our focus in the Christian life. This passage clearly shows how we should approach life after we have become a Christian. Feel free to ask many questions as this section has a lot of great theology.

Romans 6:1-11

1 What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? 2 By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? 3 Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 4 We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

5 For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. 6 We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. 7 For one who has died has been set free from sin. 8 Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. 9 We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. 10 For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. 11 So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

It's Already Happened by Dan Baker

Typical conversation in the Baker household:

"What do you want for dinner?"

"Haven't had beef stew in a long time."

"We just had it."

"It's been over a month!"

"That's not long!"

"How long is too long for no chocolate?"

"Three hours."

"I rest my case!"

It appears time is often relative. As we get older, it certainly seems to speed up. Not so with God. In Genesis 1 He created it for mankind. He eternally existed before He instituted time. I don't understand, but Psalm 90:2b helps: "From everlasting to everlasting you are God." The Hebrew meaning of everlasting is 'time out of mind,' 'vanishing point.' Eternity past, the present, and eternity future are all before God at the same time. To my way of thinking, to God the present and future are something that have already happened. Isn't that what prophecy is? Meditate on the implications of that! It helps us understand why God is immutable; how can God change if He is eternal and to Him everything has already happened? Thus nothing can take Him by surprise. God is forever the same. Malachi 3:6: "For I am the Lord, I change not." Change is impossible in a perfect being. "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever," Hebrews 13:8. "But you (God) remain the same, and your years will never end," Psalm 102:27.

Richard De Haan, in his pamphlet Has God Changed, states "God always knows in advance what His creatures will do, but the Bible pictures Him in human terms as responding to man's actions, that we may be assured of His tender love and abundant mercy."

Our supplications and speaking to God are to transform our minds to think like Him; to say, "Not my will but Thine be done." "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts," Isaiah 55:9.

Women Who Worship

Greater than Solomon!

"His name shall endure forever; His name shall continue as long as the sun.

And men shall be blessed in Him; all nations shall call Him blessed."

Psalm 72 is apparently a psalm written by David for his son Solomon, the next king of Israel. It's a prayer asking that Solomon might rule righteously and that prosperity, glory, and blessing might come to the people through his reign. In wishful thinking, David said, "All kings shall fall down before him; all nations shall serve him. He shall deliver the needy when he cries, and the poor also, and the one who has no helper." Little did David realize that Solomon would not fulfill these expectations, but Another.

Solomon never lived up to the hopes of his father. While his kingdom did enjoy prosperity and exert control over some of the surrounding nations, Solomon had personal weaknesses that were eventually exposed. He multiplied wives in disobedience to God (Deuteronomy 17:17). He taxed his people heavily. Worst of all, He turned his heart away from God (1 Kings 11:9, 10). If hope hung on Solomon, there was sore disappointment. In the end, "he slept with his fathers, and was buried in the city of David his father" (1 Kings 12:43).

Many centuries later, Jesus of Nazareth was born. He grew up in obscurity and when He began to minister to the needy multitudes, "there was no beauty in Him that we should desire Him" (Isaiah 53:2). But at one point He said of Himself, "A greater than Solomon is here" (Luke 11:31). He did not fail. He lived in perfect obedience to God, and His heart was steadfast. He walked in love and cared for those having no help. He died as the sacrifice for sin, but though He was buried, He rose from death and ascended to heaven to sit at His Father's right hand in glory. Psalm 72 fits Him perfectly: David's later son, Jesus Christ. We await His earthly kingdom when "His Name shall be blessed and all people shall be blessed in Him!" Praise our Risen and glorious Lord!

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Thursday April 29th Paul's Description of the Gospel

Galatians 3:1 "... It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified."

This phrase caught me off guard when I read it. The Galatians didn't see Jesus crucified, and what does "publicly portrayed" mean? My research revealed that Paul is describing the clarity in which he explained the crucifixion of Christ to the Galatians. Paul's gospel message was so clear it is as if the Galatians could see it. Remember that Paul spent time with Jesus' family and the apostles. He would have heard the first person accounts of what it was like through the tears of those closest to Christ. Paul had crafted his retelling of the story so well, it as if we were there.

I was challenged once, "Write out the gospel message in a 100 words or less and memorize it." Today, I challenge you to do the same. Make sure you get all the elements of salvation in there. make it personal. Tell it in such a way we can "see it." Memorize it and be ready to share it with those around you!

What parts of the crucifixion of Christ always stick out to you?

What would you have done if you were there watching Jesus crucified?

Today, PRAISE THE LORD for what He did for you.

Wednesday April 28th
Bewitched You

Galatians 3:1-2 "O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you?....
1 Corinthians 10:20; 2 Corinthians 4:4; 11:12-15

The focus of the book of Galatians now pivots back to the Galatians themselves. Paul has just explained at length in chapter two the false ways of looking at the gospel and Christ. Here he uses this word bewitched. This word has a figurative and literal meaning. Figuratively it means "to trick" or to "hurt someone by words." Literally it can refer to someone who uses magic to over power someone. In context here I believe Paul is referring to the figurative sense, the Judaizers had tricked them into a false gospel.

We may scoff at the idea of magic and an evil realm, but it is real and should not be ignored. Paul told the Corinthians that some of the false religions they were dealing with were Satanic. Today, there many cults and religions that are controlled by Satan. These even use the terms we see in scripture, but Satan and his demons control people and convince them they are experiencing God. Thankfully, God is more powerful than Satan and can free people from Satan's grip..

Think of some of the BIG religions out there today. Discuss why they don't lead to God.

Who in your life may be bewitched by Satan. What can you do to help free them?

This subject can cause fear in us. Spend time thanking God for His promise of protection over us (1 John 4:4).

Connie's Corner

No matter how long the winter, Spring is sure to follow! A new season signifies the Lord of the mornings is the Lord of the seasons and still sovereign over the world! Are we ready to celebrate this day, this season, this gift? Are you looking forward to spending more time outdoors and delighting in the rebirth of the earth? As the sunlight touches your face, that moment you close your eyes, thank the Lord for new life and sun-kissed days.

The following recipe is one you can enjoy while having your coffee or tea outside on your porch, deck, or patio while enjoying the gift of Spring! Psalm 5:3 In the morning I lay my requests before You and wait in expectation!

Apple Cinnamon Coffee (or tea) Cake

Cake: 1 cup butter at room temperature, 1 cup sugar, 2/3 cup brown sugar, 3 eggs, 1 TBSP Vanilla extract, 3/4 cup sour cream or Greek yogurt, 3 2/3 cup flour, 1 tsp salt, 3 tsp baking powder, 1 1/4 cups milk, 2 medium apples (peeled and diced), 2 TBSP flour

Streusel: 1 1/2 cups flour, 1 cup brown sugar, 2 tsp cinnamon, 3/4 cup cold butter (diced), chopped nuts if desired. You can double the topping if you wish.

Glaze: 1 cup powdered sugar, 2-3 TBSP milk, 1/2 tsp vanilla or almond extract.

1. Toss diced apples with 2 TBSP flour; set aside.
2. In a large bowl, cream butter and sugars until light and fluffy. Mix in eggs, vanilla, and sour cream.
3. Separately, whisk 3 2/3 cups flour, salt, and baking powder.
4. Add 1/2 the flour mixture to the wet ingredients and mix until just combined. Mix in 1/2 the milk, then remaining flour mixture, then remaining milk. Do not overmix at any point.
5. Gently stir apples into the cake batter. Spread batter in a greased 9 x 12 pan and sprinkle streusel over the top.
6. Bake 40-45 minutes at 350°.
7. Whisk glaze and drizzle over cooled cake.

Why is a loving God allowing all the bad things to happen? Why are there shooting of police and people, terrorism, and racial tensions?

The question you ask is a loaded question and very heavy on our hearts in these days. I think Jesus' words in the Gospel of John are very insightful into the mindset for the Wicked One. "You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him" (John 8:44). From the beginning he is a murderer. For some reason the Devil is interested in destroying as many human lives as possible.

Human life is uniquely different from all other created creatures. God has made man in the image and likeness of God and because of this, those who 'do murder' are destroying a life that is made in God's image. Therefore, they are to pay the ultimate price of their own life. (Genesis 9:5-6) The 'image and likeness of God' has to do with peoples' ability to reason and think creatively. This ability carries with it the responsibility of knowing the difference between right and wrong or good and harm. Humans are not merely a hybrid animal. Humans can form values, calculate decisions and actions and as a result they are responsible if those actions and decisions whether they are right or wrong.

In Ephesians 2:2-3, Satan is called "the prince of the power of the air". The same verses go on to say that, his "spirit now works in the sons of disobedience." The unsaved do the actions that reflect the life and character of the 'prince of the power of the air' such as murder, or terrorism.

God who is all powerful could stop anyone's actions, but we do not understand God's actions or His inactions. Job poses the question this way: "Can you search out the deep things of God? Can you find out the limits of the Almighty? They are higher than heaven — what can you do? Deeper than Sheol — what can you know? Their measure is longer than the earth and broader than the sea." (Job 11:7-9) God Himself tells Abraham "shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" (Genesis 18:25) Moses told the children of Israel "For I proclaim the name of the LORD: ascribe greatness to our God. He is the Rock, His work is perfect; For all His ways are justice, A God of truth and without injustice; righteous and upright is He." Deuteronomy 32:3-4

2 Corinthians 5:14-15 "For the love of Christ controls us..."
Hebrews 9:14; 1 Peter 4:2

Today we are going to cover again our freedom in Christ by discussing License vs. Liberty. Warren Wiersbe here explains, "*Liberty does not mean license; rather, it means the freedom in Christ to enjoy Him and to become what He has determined for us to become (Ephesians 2:10). It is not only "freedom to do" but also "freedom not to do." We are no longer in bondage to sin and the law. As Paul will explain in the practical section of this letter (Galatians 5—6), we obey God because of love and not because of law. Christians enjoy a wonderful liberty in Christ. Am I enjoying it?*" Just because Christ promises forgiveness does not mean we have a "license to sin." Forgiveness liberates us from our sin to find our joy in God alone.

What sins, either moral actions you *do* or godly actions you *don't do*, fail to affect your conscience as they ought?

What do you need to do to view holiness as freedom?

Pray for the power of the Spirit to work in your, and your families life, to make holiness your desire and goal.

Monday April 26th
Christ a Servant of Sin?

Galatians 2:17-20 "But if, in our endeavor to be justified in Christ, we too were found to be sinners, is Christ then a servant of sin?..."

Romans 6:1-14; 1 John 5:3

Word of the day - "antinomianism." No, it is not a group opposed to lawn ornaments. The word is a belief that Christians are *released by grace from the obligation of observing the moral law*. Basically, because Christ forgives everything and the Mosaic law doesn't need to be followed, we are free to do whatever want and it will be forgiven! Paul anticipated that his opponents would accuse him of this belief. Paul explains here that Christ does not free us up to sin, Christ frees us to live in God.

Your views may need to be corrected here also. First, you may be an antinomianist. You may believe you can do whatever you want because Jesus forgives. This shows your desire is not on God but on pleasing yourself. Secondly, you may feel every time we discuss grace we MUST make sure people understand they can't go on and sin. This shows some underlying legalism in your heart. Grace is free, grace is freeing, and grace reveals God's ultimate love for you despite our failures! Encourage people to enjoy grace, and they will obey God out of love.

What is your motivation to love God? Is it because it is what is expected of you or because you want to grow closer to God?

When you see others sin, do you feel angry at the sinful actions or do you feel sad for them that they aren't enjoying God?

Continued from page 6

There are circumstances in which God did not act immediately, but rather waited for His own purposes to be accomplished. The Minor Prophet Habakkuk asks God "Why aren't you standing up for your people and stop the oppressing nation, the Chaldeans?" God's answer was He was raising up another nation to punish the Chaldeans.

God only does what is right and never is responsible for causing evil actions or sin. I wish he would act to prevent the injustices and evil deeds. People who cause these harmful actions will receive the full wrath of God at the appropriate time. Murderous acts and evil cruelties are not new. Remember Cain and Abel; Pharaoh and Jewish male babies; offering children to the burning fires of gods (2 Kings 16-17); the sufferings of those crucified by Rome and the sufferings of Jesus on the cross.

We do not know why God does not stop these actions but we do know, all who do these action will answer to God for their sin.

How do we pray when an event happens? Pray for: Law Enforcement – solid intelligence and information, plenty of manpower and resources, good coordination between agencies. Medical Personnel: physical and emotional strength, adequate supplies and properly working resources, wisdom for quick assessment, and proper decisions. The Injured: quick help, presence of calm workers, presence of believers who pray and ease their fear. Families Involved: comfort, support for families of the injured, calmness for those waiting to hear. Rescue Workers: protection, physical and emotional strength, good coordination and communications, their necessary food and water.

Thanks for asking!

Easter Sunday April 4th Sermon Notes

Series or Message Title: _____

List all Scripture Used: _____

Notes:

What is ONE THING you took away from today's sermon:

Prayer and Meditation

What scripture has been on your heart that you should memorize and meditate on? Write out:

Adoration: This week I am praising God for His

Confession: This week I need to work on....

Thanksgiving: This week I thank God for ...

Stuff: These things are on my hear this week...

Sunday April 25th Sermon Notes

Series or Message Title: _____

List all Scripture Used: _____

Notes:

What is ONE THING you took away from today's sermon:

Prayer and Meditation

What scripture has been on your heart that you should memorize and meditate on? Write out:

Adoration: This week I am praising God for His

Confession: This week I need to work on....

Thanksgiving: This week I thank God for ...

Stuff: These things are on my heart this week...

Monday April 5th
Christian Disagreement

Acts 15:1-5 "...And after Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and debate with them..."

James 3:13-18

This week we are going to explore an important event in the early church called the Jerusalem Council. This council was held in Jerusalem and would clarify if non-Jews could be saved. Today we look at a discussion that happened in Antioch before delegates were sent to Jerusalem for the big council. We see here that Paul and Barnabas had a rather big "discussion" with people who claimed circumcision was necessary for salvation.

This brings up a good question, should Christians argue? The word "dissension" above can mean a heated and violent argument. However, it can also mean standing firm or a firm stance. The word "debate" usually means an argument over opinions, not a search for truth. The text in James is HUGE when it comes to putting parameters around our discussions. We must discuss in a way that is open to reason, peaceful, and brings spiritual fruit. Therefore we can gather that the disagreement in Antioch between Paul, Barnabas, and the circumcision party could not be resolved. They both "stood firm" and didn't budge. They had to find a higher authority to resolve this matter, that is why the matter is taken to Jerusalem with the Apostles.

In your past, can you think of discussions between Christians that were not godly? What was the result?

In your past, can you think of discussions between Christians that followed the parameters of James 3, what were the results?

Pray for the ability to discuss as James 3 outlines.

Steps:

1. Pray for focus.
2. Read twice.
3. Mark key words, repeated words, mark what seems to JUMP OUT at you as important, and write down questions you have over words or phrases.

4. Answer questions using connected scripture and study Bible notes.

5. What does this teach me about God?

6. Application:

1. How do I need to think differently?

2. What behavior(s) do I need to stop doing?

3. What behavior(s) do I need to start doing?

Friday April 23rd
Justification by Faith

We are about to move into the technical part of the book of Galatians. The key theme of justification is the foundation for all other truths found in this book. Paul, here in the book of Romans, explains to a Jewish audience that faith was always the key part of a relationship with God.

Romans 4:1-8

What then shall we say was gained by Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh? 2 For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. 3 For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness." 4 Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due. 5 And to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness, 6 just as David also speaks of the blessing of the one to whom God counts righteousness apart from works:

7 "Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven,
and whose sins are covered;

8 blessed is the man against whom the Lord will not count his sin."

Tuesday April 6th
Peter's Statement

Acts 15:6-11 "... and God, who knows the heart, bore witness to them, by giving them the Holy Spirit just as he did to us..."

Acts 10:9-36

Have you ever had to find references for a job application? You think of the most important people you know that may say something nice about you. By their position and reputation you hope they will persuade someone. Peter was the early leader of the early church. By this time his position was sort of a "director of gospel promotion" and James, the brother of Jesus, was the new leader of the Jerusalem church. When Peter opened his mouth, what came out made a difference.

Peter references an event from what some believe to be 10 years earlier (Acts 10) where God told him the Gentiles were now to be accepted as fully saved. This makes me wonder, *why did it take Peter ten years to be an advocate for the Gentiles?! As we will see when we head back to Galatians, Peter struggled to allow grace to control his thoughts. Though we shake our head at Peter, we tend to do the same thing.*

Who in your life do you look to for godly advice? What do you need to do to become more like them?

What groups of people do you struggle to extend grace too?

As you pray, thank the Lord for godly people that are bold. Also ask for strength to be more bold in your life.

Wednesday April 7th
Success = Spiritual Fruit

Acts 15:3-4, 12 "... And all the assembly fell silent, and they listened to Barnabas and Paul as they related what signs and wonders God had done through them among the Gentiles."

John 15:1-4; Colossians 1:3-10

What does a successful church look like? Everyone has a different answer. You may say, "Preaching the word!" or "Doesn't compromise its doctrine!" or "Having young people!" or "It just feels alive!" I am going to make a bold statement, but the New Testament backs it up. *A successful church sees people responding to the gospel in salvation AND growing significantly.* Paul and Barnabas PROVED they were correct by showing changed lives. Jesus tells us in John 15 that those who are truly abiding in Him will change drastically. Paul in Colossians says that the gospel produces an increase.

We as Christians need to stop making excuses for the lack of spiritual growth in our lives and ministries. If a ministry, event, or service isn't getting results we need to evaluate what we are doing wrong. Many times we do things because a Christian we respected in our past told us *"God blesses churches that do _____."*

Do you feel like you have grown significantly in the last few months? If not, what do you need to *change* about your daily routine?

Think of your involvement with the church. If you aren't involved, what can you do or who can you talk to about getting more involved? If you are involved, what can you do to get better results in your ministries?

Pray that God will use you and your ministry to bring many people closer to Him!

Thursday April 22nd
Justification

Galatians 2:15-16 "... we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ..."

Psalms 32:1-2; Romans 3:21-24

This is THE theme of Galatians. Here are some explanations of justification by smart people. Expositors Bible commentary states, "Justification is the act of God whereby He declares the believing sinner righteous in Jesus Christ." Warren Wiersbe notes, *"Justification is not simply 'forgiveness,' because a person could be forgiven and then go out and sin and become guilty. Once you have been 'justified by faith' you can never be held guilty before God."* He also states, *"Justification is also different from 'pardon,' because a pardoned criminal still has a record. When the sinner is justified by faith, his past sins are remembered against him no more, and God no longer puts his sins on record."* *It has often been said, that "justified" means "just as if I'd never sinned."*

Looking at the phrase above, "God no longer puts his sins on record," how does this truth about God's view of you change your view of yourself?

Spend time meditating and thanking God for this great truth!

Wednesday April 21st
Paul's Discernment

Galatians 2:14 "But when I saw that their conduct was not in step with the gospel..."

1 Corinthians 2:14; Hebrews 4:12, 5:14

Have you ever been in an environment where all of a sudden you had the thought, "Wait a minute... this isn't right, we shouldn't be doing this." You look around the room to see if anyone else has had the same thought you just had. No one seems to be troubled, so you make a decision to be quiet or speak up. Paul had this same situation. He noticed something wrong with Peter's, Barnabas', and the other Jews' actions. He saw that it was wrong and spoke up.

What is happening behind the scenes is that the Holy Spirit is prompting us to do the right thing. He puts a thought in our mind that something isn't right and something needs to be done. He will usually use scripture to remind us of the right thing to do. We have a responsibility to react in a godly way. We speak up, stop something, take someone aside, or walk away.

Can you think of a situation where the Holy Spirit prompted you to do something about sin around you?

Is there something in your marriage, family, or friend group that you need to address?

Thank the Lord for the Holy Spirit that guides us!

Thursday April 8th
Basic Guidelines for Unity

Acts 15:12-20, 28-29 "... It is my judgment, therefore, that we should not make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to God (NIV)."

John 17:20-21; Romans 14:20-23

The conclusion of the Jerusalem council is also the key theme of the book of Galatians, grace is extended to all freely. What we have in vs. 19-20 is a great recipe for church unity. In every church you have people coming from two main backgrounds, a legalistic background and an unchurched background. Each group needs to understand the other. Vs. 19 is directed to the legalistic group - *Do not add anything to salvation!* Salvation is freely given and do not confuse those who are coming from a background unfamiliar with church tradition.

Vs. 20 is directed to the Gentiles, or the unchurch crowd. *Be sensitive to the legalistic mindset and don't intentionally offend.* Back then Jewish people would find it difficult to approve of practices Jesus allowed but that the Law had forbidden. Verse 21 refers to this. The law would be read often and people would have trouble filtering what was now allowed. Today, we have people who grew up in a legalistic culture that added moral standards to what Jesus states. For some, certain activities may bring "doubts (Romans 14:23)." For those who embrace the freedom we have, we need to make sure we don't flaunt it, and pray for others to realize it.

Can you clearly explain the gospel without adding any *requirements* that come after salvation?

Why is unity in a church so important?

Friday April 9th

Yesterday we talked about Church unity. The basis for church unity is good theology. Good theology is also the foundation for a good Christian life. The passage we alluded to yesterday we are going to study today. There are some strange instructions you should look up, and some great applications for you. Pay special attention to VSS. 21-23.

Romans 14:13-23

13 Therefore let us not pass judgment on one another any longer, but rather decide never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of a brother. 14 I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself, but it is unclean for anyone who thinks it unclean. 15 For if your brother is grieved by what you eat, you are no longer walking in love. By what you eat, do not destroy the one for whom Christ died. 16 So do not let what you regard as good be spoken of as evil. 17 For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. 18 Whoever thus serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men. 19 So then let us pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding. 20 Do not, for the sake of food, destroy the work of God. Everything is indeed clean, but it is wrong for anyone to make another stumble by what he eats. 21 It is good not to eat meat or drink wine or do anything that causes your brother to stumble. 22 The faith that you have, keep between yourself and God. Blessed is the one who has no reason to pass judgment on himself for what he approves. 23 But whoever has doubts is condemned if he eats, because the eating is not from faith. For whatever does not proceed from faith is sin.

Tuesday April 20th Fear/Faith Motivation

Galatians 5:1 "For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery."

John 8:31-32; 2 Corinthians 3:17

Before we move on to another theme in this passage, I want to look at Peter's fear from one more perspective. Here is a comment from Warren Wiersbe, *"Peter pretended that his actions were motivated by faithfulness, when they were really motivated by fear. How easy it is to use "Bible doctrine" to cover up our disobedience."* This convicted me. How many times do we make "excuses" for not doing what we know we ought to be doing? We don't pray because we are too busy. We don't read the Bible for ourselves because we listen to sermons or podcasts. We pray for unsaved family/friends and never reach out. We feel God wants us to stop doing something but we do it because He forgives. Or to fit the context, we restrict ourselves or others from enjoying what God says is good because someone once told us we shouldn't.

Don't settle. Do your homework. Make sure you strive to be faithful to God instead of just doing what other Christians around you are doing.

Can you think of an area of your life where you aren't sure what God instructs?

What three things can you do to understand what God says to do in that area?

Thank the Lord for the freedom we have to enjoy God's creation.

Monday April 19th
Peter's Struggle with Fear

Matthew 14:22-36; Luke 22:54-62; John 21:19-23 "... O you of little faith, why did you doubt?..."

O. Cullmann has observed that *"Peter's conduct in this situation was a throwback to his earlier pattern of vacillation and denial that marked his character during the earthly ministry of Jesus. On three separate occasions Peter fell into serious trouble when his devotion to Christ was detracted by other factors. First, when he took his eyes off Jesus and began to look at the circumstances of the storm, he started to sink into the lake; then, when he took his eyes off Jesus and started to focus on himself, in a moment of pressure he denied that he had ever known the Lord; and, finally, when he took his eyes off Jesus and began to look at other people, notably John, Christ had to recall him to the first imperative of discipleship, "Follow me!"*"

Fear, doubt, and failure is part of our stories. Peter was a man that seemed to struggle to overcome his need for the affirmation of others, but Jesus routinely forgave him and empowered him to do incredible things for the early church.

What areas do you find yourself afraid to stand for God most often?

Who is someone in your life that stands well for the Lord, how did they become so rooted?

Pray for strength in the midst of spiritual adversity this week!

Steps:

1. Pray for focus.
2. Read twice.
3. Mark key words, repeated words, mark what seems to JUMP OUT at you as important, and write down questions you have over words or phrases.

4. Answer questions using connected scripture and study Bible notes.

5. What does this teach me about God?

6. Application:

1. How do I need to think differently?

2. What behavior(s) do I need to stop doing?

3. What behavior(s) do I need to start doing?

Monday April 12th
Judging One Another

Matthew 7:1-5 "... For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged (NIV)..."

Romans 2:1-5; 14:10-12

Next Sunday we are going to look at a confrontation between Paul and Peter. Confrontation is never fun, but is very important. We often don't think confrontation is Biblical, we should just "extend grace and mercy." Though there are times for grace and mercy, the Bible speaks to the value in confronting one another. This week we will look at a number of passages on what the Bible has to say on confrontation.

I believe Matthew 7:1 is the most semi-known verse by those far from God. How many times have you been told, "*The Bible says not to judge!*" We often let sin go, but shouldn't! This verse is clear, we shouldn't judge UNLESS we are ready to receive judgment back in return. This passage goes on to say that we need to be aware of and be working on our sin issues before we go confronting people on their issues. The reality is, you will never be free from sin. So, be ready for someone to deflect their guilt by calling you out for your sin. It's ok, you are a big boy, you can take it.

What are some sin issues in your life that you need to confess and begin working through?

Who in your life do you need to confront that is living in sin?

Pray for your own sinfulness, and the sinfulness of others.

Steps:

1. Pray for focus.
2. Read twice.
3. Mark key words, repeated words, mark what seems to JUMP OUT at you as important, and write down questions you have over words or phrases.

4. Answer questions using connected scripture and study Bible notes.

5. What does this teach me about God?

6. Application:

1. How do I need to think differently?

2. What behavior(s) do I need to stop doing?

3. What behavior(s) do I need to start doing?

Friday April 16th
Process of Confrontation

After this week of looking at various teachings on confrontation, let's look at the proper order of how to confront someone. Evaluate whether this is the way you deal with sin and conflict in your life.

Matthew 18:15-20

15 "If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother.

16 But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. 17 If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And

if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. 18 Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on

earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. 19 Again I say to you, if two of you agree

on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. 20 For where two or three are gathered in my name,

there am I among them."

Tuesday April 13th
Nathan and David

2 Samuel 11:1-5; 12:1-15 "... You are the man!..."
If you have time, the rest of 2 Samuel 11 & 12.

David is a famous Old Testament character. He is a *"man after God's own heart"* and has been a spiritual guide to many through the Psalms he writes. However, he was a man with a sin nature just like ours. Nathan was a prophet with a tough calling. The Lord sent him into the throne room of the King to publicly confront David in a way that would humiliate him. This could have been the end of Nathan's life. Look at his boldness and clarity in the midst of such a serious situation.

When we confront others there will always be the chance of negative reactions. However, remember Proverbs 12:1, *"Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge, but he who hates reproof is stupid."* If someone is godly they will accept your confrontation. If they get mad at you, they are stupid. I didn't say it, God did!

Think of the last few times people have critiqued or confronted you, how did *you respond*?

What needs to be true of us in order for us to be bold enough to confront others?

As you pray tonight, ask for humility to accept the confrontations and critiques of others.

Wednesday April 14th
Joseph and His Brothers

Genesis 45:1-15 "... Do not be distressed or angry with yourselves because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life..."

Genesis 37:25-28, 50:20; Romans 2:4

Joseph's story is unique, he is someone who *absolutely* forgives who was in a position to *absolutely* destroy. There will be times you will be able to do the same thing. You will have employees, kids, grandkids, or people who look up to you that you could confront and bring the full force of the punishment they deserve. Joseph here confronts, but quickly chooses to extend mercy. Why? Because he was wise enough to see why God allowed their sin - "*God sent me before you to preserve life.*"

When you confront those "less than you" consider your next steps. Do they need punishment? Is awareness of their sin enough? Would mercy be a chance to restore the relationship and point to Jesus? There is no right answer for every situation. We must follow the Holy Spirit's leading as we confront those around us.

When did someone extend mercy to you when they could have brought punishment? How was this helpful?

When did someone punish you when they could have brought mercy? How was this helpful?

As you pray as a family, pray for wisdom as you interact with those around you.

Thursday April 15th
Confronting "Believers"

1 Corinthians 5:9-13; Titus 3:8-10 "...purge the evil person from among you... have nothing more to do with him..."

A common misunderstanding of confrontation is that we are to make clear with unbelievers what they are doing wrong, and extend grace and mercy to believers. Interesting that these two passages say the opposite. The Corinthian passage makes clear that God judges "outsiders," and we are to focus on judging insiders.

The purity and unity of the church are incredibly important. In response to this week I am going to ask you to do a few things. 1) Pray for your pastors and deacons to have boldness in love to confront and disciple those in the church who struggle with sin. 2) Pray for wisdom as the pastors and deacons often discuss how to best help someone overcome sin. 3) Pray for the church members themselves to hold each other accountable. 4) Pray that every church member yields to the Holy Spirit.

What have you felt most convicted to do this week?

What can you do to change your perspective on who to judge?

Pray for the things mentioned above.