

# ONE WITH HIM



**7**

*devotions on our union with Christ*  
&  
*holy week readings*



**FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH · Devotions**  
**LINDALE, TX**

*One with Him: 7 Devotions on Our Union with Christ & Holy Week Readings*

Copyright © 2023 by David Attebury

Published by First Baptist Church Lindale  
103 East Van Street  
Lindale, Texas 75771

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, distributed, or transmitted in any form or by any means, or stored in a database or retrieval system, without the prior written permission of the publisher.

Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations are from the LSB™ Bible, copyright © 2021 by The Lockman Foundation. The Legacy Standard Bible is adapted from the New American Standard Bible Copyright © 1960, 1971, 1977, 1995 by the Lockman Foundation. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

*Buried with Christ and raised with Him too,  
What is there left for me to do?  
Simply to cease from struggling and strife,  
Simply to walk in newness of life.*

*Buried with Christ and dead unto sin;  
Dying but living, Jesus within;  
Ruling and reigning day after day,  
Guiding and keeping all of the way.*

*Living with Christ, who dieth no more,  
Following Christ, who goeth before;  
Not under law, I'm now under grace,  
Sin is dethroned, and Christ takes its place.*

Thomas Ryder, 1877



# Contents

## **ONE WITH HIM**

1	A Legal Union	15
2	A Vital Union	19
3	An Unmerited Union	23
4	An Organic Union	27
5	A Spiritual Union	33
6	A Corporate Union	37
7	A Permanent Union	41
	<i>Going Deeper: Christ our Hope in Life and Death</i>	47

## **HOLY WEEK READINGS - MATTHEW**

1	Palm Sunday (21:1-22)	63
2	Monday (21:23-46)	69
3	Tuesday (23:1-36)	75
4	Wednesday (26:1-19)	81
5	Thursday (26:20-75)	87
6	Friday (27:1-56)	93
7	Saturday (27:57-61)	99
8	Easter Sunday (28:1-20)	103





## Preface: I Am My Beloved's

---

We may seem to ourselves to be united to Christ only by an external bond, while after all it is an inward and spiritual bond that makes us His. God often reveals to the Christian the mystery of the gospel, which is Christ *in* him the hope of glory, at the very time that he is seeking only some nearer access to a Redeemer outside of him. Trying to find a union of cooperation or of sympathy, he is amazed to learn that there is already established a union with Christ more glorious and blessed, namely, a union of life; and so, like the miners in the Rocky Mountains, while he is looking only for silver, he finds gold. Christ and the believer have the same life. They are not...linked together by some temporary bond or friendship; they are united by a tie as close and indissoluble as if the same blood ran in their veins. Yet the Christian may never have suspected how intimate a union he has with his Savior; and the first understanding of this truth may be the gateway through which he passes into a holier and happier stage of the Christian life.<sup>1</sup>

It is my prayer that this devotional will help you pass into a holier and happier stage of your Christian life by knowing more deeply how you have been united with Christ. The doctrine of union with Christ is not one part of your Christian life—it is the vital thread and reason for your salvation.

Our union with Christ, as John Owen wrote, “is the cause of all other graces that we are made partakers of; they are all communicated unto us by virtue of our union with Christ. Hence our adoption, our justification, our sanctification, our fruitfulness, our perseverance,

---

<sup>1</sup> Augustus Hopkins Strong, *Systematic Theology* (Judson Press, 1960), 802.

our resurrection, our glory.”<sup>2</sup>

As we read Scripture, we discover that the “union of the saints with Christ comprehends every aspect of salvation from their election to their glorification...Scripture describes the saints as predestined in Christ (Eph 1:4-5), called in Christ (2 Tim 1:9), regenerated in Christ (Eph 2:10), justified in Christ (Rom 8:1), sanctified in Christ (1 Cor 1:4-5), and glorified in Christ (Rom 8:17).”<sup>3</sup>

This is because the blessing of Abraham is only through the seed and heir of Abraham, Jesus Christ. If we are in Him, then we may receive His blessing. “If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed, heirs according to promise” (Gal 3:29). There is not one room or chamber in the heavenly realms that are closed to you if you are in Christ. All of heaven’s blessings belong to you, because Christ belongs to you, and all belongs to Him. It was the Father who “blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places *in Christ*” (Eph 1:3).

As John MacArthur wrote, “It is only as we share in Christ that we have a share in what is His. No spiritual blessing in all the world is found anywhere but in Jesus. Therefore, if we are to have an interest in Christ’s blessing, we must have an interest in His person. The gifts are wrapped up only in the Giver.”<sup>4</sup>

### **Salvation is *in Christ***

Union with Christ is the unifying principle in the doctrine of salvation, from eternity past to eternity future. The doctrine of salvation, also called *soteriology*, is really just the detailing of the doctrine of our union with Christ. “That is because it is not merely another phase in the application of redemption, like regeneration, faith, or justification. Instead, union with Christ is the matrix out of which all other soteriological doctrines flow. Indeed, as Paul says in Ephesians 1:3, our union with Christ is the source of every spiritual blessing we receive—from the Father’s election in eternity past—to the Son’s

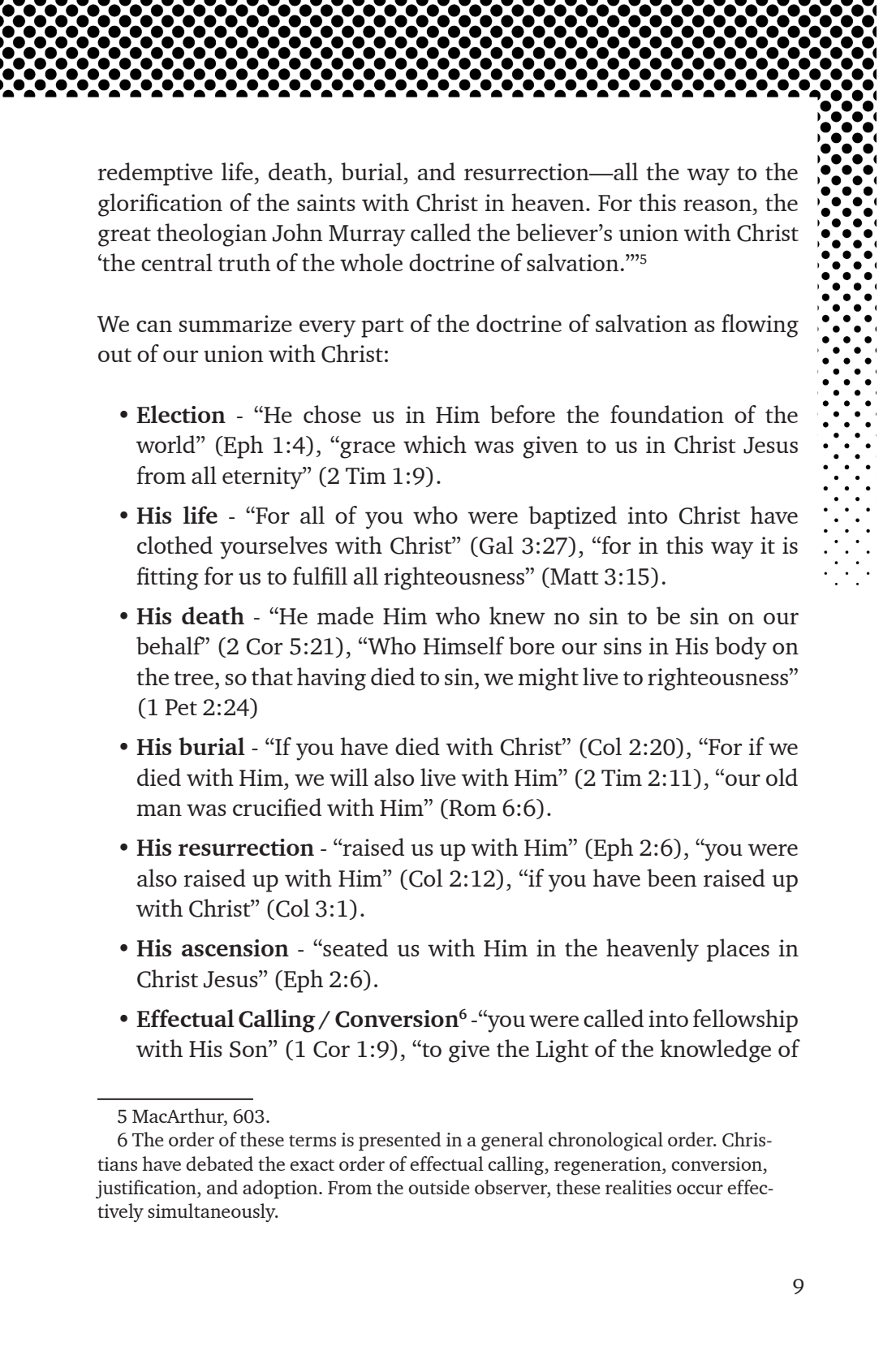
---

2 John Owen, *An Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews*, vol 21 in *The Works of John Owen*, 150.

3 Bruce Demarest, *The Cross and Salvation* (Crossway, 1997), 319.

4 John MacArthur and Richard Mayhue, *Biblical Doctrine* (Crossway, 2017), 609.





redemptive life, death, burial, and resurrection—all the way to the glorification of the saints with Christ in heaven. For this reason, the great theologian John Murray called the believer’s union with Christ ‘the central truth of the whole doctrine of salvation.’”<sup>5</sup>

We can summarize every part of the doctrine of salvation as flowing out of our union with Christ:

- **Election** - “He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world” (Eph 1:4), “grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus from all eternity” (2 Tim 1:9).
- **His life** - “For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ” (Gal 3:27), “for in this way it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness” (Matt 3:15).
- **His death** - “He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf” (2 Cor 5:21), “Who Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree, so that having died to sin, we might live to righteousness” (1 Pet 2:24)
- **His burial** - “If you have died with Christ” (Col 2:20), “For if we died with Him, we will also live with Him” (2 Tim 2:11), “our old man was crucified with Him” (Rom 6:6).
- **His resurrection** - “raised us up with Him” (Eph 2:6), “you were also raised up with Him” (Col 2:12), “if you have been raised up with Christ” (Col 3:1).
- **His ascension** - “seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus” (Eph 2:6).
- **Effectual Calling / Conversion**<sup>6</sup> - “you were called into fellowship with His Son” (1 Cor 1:9), “to give the Light of the knowledge of

---

<sup>5</sup> MacArthur, 603.

<sup>6</sup> The order of these terms is presented in a general chronological order. Christians have debated the exact order of effectual calling, regeneration, conversion, justification, and adoption. From the outside observer, these realities occur effectively simultaneously.

the glory of God in the face of Christ” (2 Cor 4:6).

- **Regeneration** - “made us alive together with Christ” (Eph 2:5), “if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation” (2 Cor 5:17).
- **Justification** - “and be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own which is from the Law” (Phil 3:9), “justified in Christ” (Gal 2:17), “Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (Rom 8:1).
- **Adoption** - “predestining us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ” (Eph 1:5), “For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus” (Gal 3:26).
- **Sanctification** - “sanctified in Christ Jesus” (1 Cor 1:2), “I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing” (John 15:4-5), “you also were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ” (Rom 7:4).
- **Perseverance** - “All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will never cast out” (John 6:37-40), “He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus” (Phil 1:6), “you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise” (Eph 1:13-14).
- **Resurrection** - “For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive” (1 Cor 15:22), “united with Him...in the likeness of His resurrection” (Rom 6:5).
- **Glorification** - “we may also be glorified with Him” (Rom 8:17).

When we understand union with Christ as not merely one step in the order of salvation, but as the umbrella which covers it all, then we can see how union with Christ is the story and summary of our salvation. “It embraces the wide span of salvation from the ultimate source in the eternal election of God to its final fruition in the glorification of the elect.” It “brings together every aspect of the plan of salvation,

past, present, and future.”<sup>7</sup>

The application of Christ’s sinless life, atoning death, and resurrection come to us only in relation to our union with Him. The French theologian John Calvin wrote, “As long as Christ remains outside of us, and we are separated from him, all that he has suffered and done for the salvation of the human race remains useless and of no value to us.”<sup>8</sup>

If we are to receive the perfect righteousness of Christ, then we must be reckoned as in Christ. The very logic of imputation—our sins becoming His, and His righteousness becoming ours—assumes the existence of a tether connecting our life to His. Why else would undeserving sinners be counted as justified in God’s sight? We are righteous because our lives have been folded into the life of Christ. The Baptist theologian Andrew Fuller wrote, “I have no doubt that the imputation of Christ’s righteousness presupposes a union with him; since there is no perceivable fitness in bestowing benefits on one for another’s sake, where there is no union or relation between.”<sup>9</sup>

### **Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners**

The Baptist pastor John Bunyan, who wrote *Pilgrim’s Progress*, struggled with assurance of salvation when he was a new believer. His tender conscience afflicted him when he thought about his own sins. He was afraid he would be like Esau and lose his inheritance because of his besetting sins. Bunyan read God’s promises in the Word, and at times he believed these promises were for him, but many times he doubted. “Satan greatly labored to pull this promise from me—telling me that Christ did not mean me and those like me, but He meant sinners of a lower rank, who had not done what I had.”

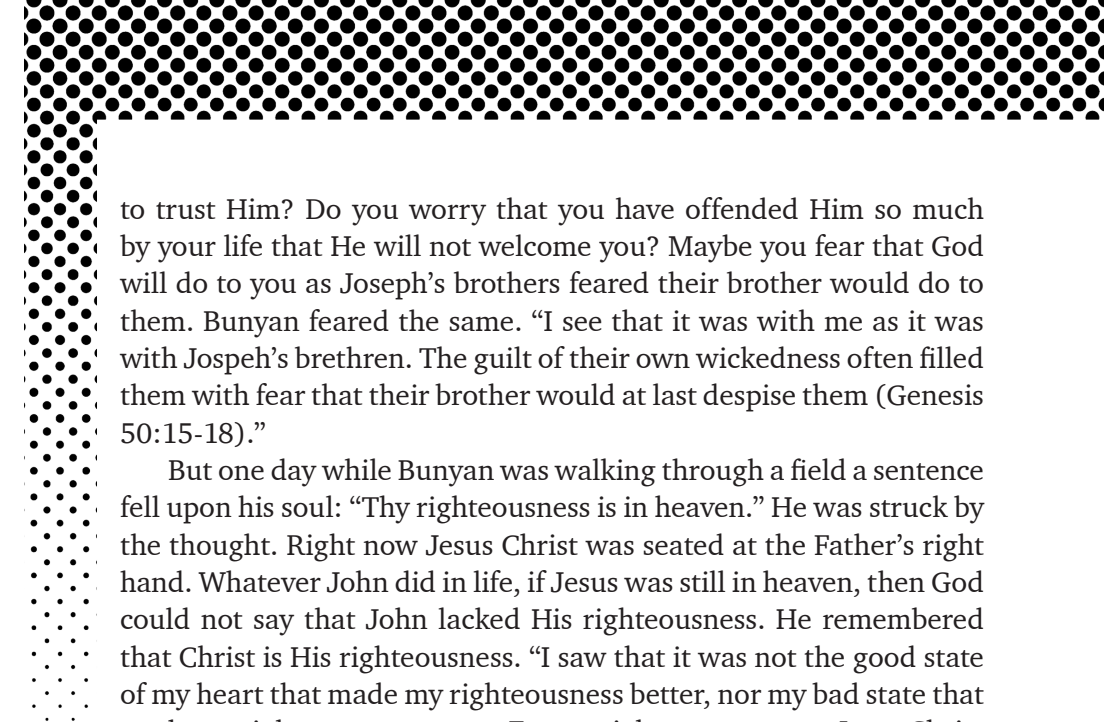
Perhaps you too have felt like Bunyan, as a sinner of great rank. Maybe you sometimes dwell on the question of whether God will truly receive you. Like Bunyan, do you sometimes think that God’s promises are for someone else and not for you? Do you find it hard

---

7 John Murray, *Redemption Accomplished and Applied* (Eerdmans, 1955), 165.

8 John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, III 1.1.

9 Andrew Fuller, *Works*, Conversation I: On Imputation, 1823.



to trust Him? Do you worry that you have offended Him so much by your life that He will not welcome you? Maybe you fear that God will do to you as Joseph's brothers feared their brother would do to them. Bunyan feared the same. "I see that it was with me as it was with Joseph's brethren. The guilt of their own wickedness often filled them with fear that their brother would at last despise them (Genesis 50:15-18)."

But one day while Bunyan was walking through a field a sentence fell upon his soul: "Thy righteousness is in heaven." He was struck by the thought. Right now Jesus Christ was seated at the Father's right hand. Whatever John did in life, if Jesus was still in heaven, then God could not say that John lacked His righteousness. He remembered that Christ is His righteousness. "I saw that it was not the good state of my heart that made my righteousness better, nor my bad state that made my righteousness worse. For my righteousness was Jesus Christ himself, 'the same yesterday, and today, and forever' (Heb 13:8)."

He ran home and searched his Bible to see if this was true. He found this verse, "Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption" (1 Cor 1:30). He realized that if he was in Christ, then he did not lack Christ's righteousness. Christ Jesus was *made* unto us righteousness. Although John Bunyan was on earth, his good standing was always before God, living at the Father's right hand.

The one thing that soothed his troubled soul was the doctrine of union with Christ:

Then my chains fell off my legs. Indeed, I was loosed from my affliction and irons...Here, therefore, I lived for some time, very sweetly at peace with God through Christ. 'Oh,' I thought, 'Christ! Christ!' There was nothing but Christ that was before my eyes...I could look away from myself to Him.

John may have been poor in righteousness by his works, like a man with only a few pennies in his pockets, but at home, he had abundant treasure safely placed in storage. "I saw that my gold was in

my chest at home—in Christ, my Lord and Savior!”

It did not matter *how much* faith he had, but *that* his faith was in Christ, who is all-sufficient.

Furthermore, the Lord also led me into knowledge of the mystery of union with the Son of God—that I was joined to Him, and that I was flesh of His flesh and bone of His bone. And now was that word sweet to me in Ephesians 5:30 [KJV: *because we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones*]. By this also was my faith in Him, as my righteousness, the more confirmed in me. For if He and I were one, then His righteousness was mine. His merits mine. His victory also mine. Now could I see myself in heaven and earth at once—in heaven by my Christ, my head, my righteousness, and my life, though on earth by my body or person.<sup>10</sup>

All the righteousness God required He has already provided for us in His Son. But we are deprived of all of this good until Christ is made ours. We must be joined together as Head and body, and Christ must dwell in our hearts by faith. Only when we put on Christ can we be engrafted into His body. Only then can we have fellowship of righteousness with Him and share in His gifts. It is through faith alone that we can be forever secure in Christ. “*In Him*, you also, after listening to the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also *believed*, you were sealed *in Him* with the Holy Spirit of promise” (Eph 1:13). Believe, and be one with Him. And ever after rest, and rejoice in His life.

---

<sup>10</sup> John Bunyan, *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*, 1666, §232-233.



# 1 | A Legal Union

---

Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.<sup>2</sup> For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death.<sup>3</sup> For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh,<sup>4</sup> so that the righteous requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

Romans 8:1-4

## Reflection Questions

1. How has the Christian been set free?
2. How can the verdict “no condemnation” help us when our own conscience and Satan accuse us?
3. How does this passage teach us that Jesus “paid it all”?

*If you're reading this devotion with your family, then now is a good opportunity to ask them if they have any other questions about this passage. Ask if they have any thoughts or insights, or if a certain phrase stood out to them.*

Our right legal standing before God as those who are no longer condemned is only because of our union with Jesus and His unique accomplishment that no other man through the Law could achieve.

But why do we need to be in Christ in order to avoid condemnation? Can we not avoid the wrath of God another way? No. Paul wrote that

every person is held captive under a universal principle—what Paul called the law of sin and death (8:2). This power enslaves us in a cycle we can never escape. We are told by our own consciences and by the Law of God that we must obey and honor the Lord. We sometimes try to live a good life, improving ourselves and making new resolutions for good.

But in the end, we find that we are deep down willingly disobedient and rebellious against God. Paul said that although he knew that God’s Law was right, there was a different law at work in his own self. And this same law is at work in our own selves, too. This law wages war against the Law of God, “making me a captive to the law of sin which is in my members” (7:23).

Can we not find life by just trying harder to obey God’s Law? After all, when God gave the Law, He told His people that it would be their life. They were commanded to “place in your heart all the words with which I am warning you today, which you shall command your sons to be careful to do, even all the words of this law. For it is not an idle word for you; indeed it is your life” (Deut 32:46–47).

But has anyone found life through the Law? No. That which was promised to be our life has become an occasion for us to rebel against God. Therefore, “this commandment, which was to lead to life, was found to lead to death for me” (7:10).

Furthermore, we are held liable and found as lawbreakers through the Law. “Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are in the Law so that every mouth may be shut and all the world may become accountable to God; because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin” (3:19–20).

Did God give us a bad and broken Law? No. The Law is not the problem—we are (7:13). God’s Law simply exposed what was already bad inside us.

As we read the book of Romans, we discover we have two problems. First, we need a righteous life. We need to walk in a way pleasing to God and glorifying to Him. The Law was supposed to lead us in the way of righteousness. But we have not been able to receive



life through the Law because we are sinners. That which promised life brought death. Therefore, Paul called the Law weak and unable to save us (8:3).

The second problem we have is that because we have broken God's Law we are now deserving of punishment. As lawbreakers we are guilty, and a sentence of death hangs over us.

Through the book of Romans, we learn of our terrible problem: we have no life of righteousness, and we have a price to pay. The Law couldn't give us life, and the Law condemns us to death.

But the good news of the gospel is that God fixed both of our problems—and He did it through the Law.

*First*, Jesus lived a perfect life. Christ came into the world looking like us—"in the likeness of sinful flesh" (8:3). But Jesus was not a sinner. He lived a perfectly righteous life. He was born as a man and lived a normal, Jewish life under the Law—and He never sinned. He never gave in to temptation. Under a lifetime of accumulated pressure to sin, He never buckled. What a great accomplishment!

*Second*, Jesus died for our sins. He bore our punishment under the Law. Although He did not sin, God "condemned sin in the flesh" (8:3)—that is, *our* sin in *His* flesh. Jesus faced the full wrath of God in His human soul and accomplished redemption on the cross as an offering for sin. Jesus became like one of the Old Testament sacrifices, bearing the sin of another. He was the Lamb of God who took away our sins. What a great sacrifice!

What is the result of these great accomplishments of Jesus? The result is that the righteous requirement of the Law is now fulfilled in us (8:4). The word Paul uses in Romans to describe this reality is that we are "justified." What does it mean to be justified? It means that we are made right before God. (For more on this see *Going Deeper: Christ our Hope in Life and Death*, page 57, Question 60)

Therefore, for the Christian, there is now no condemnation. There is no fear of God—no fear of the Law—no fear of hell. We have perfect standing before God.

We know that Christ stands righteous before the Father. And if we are in Christ, then we stand righteous before the Father. No shame.

No doubt. No guilt. No wrath. No anger. No regret. All that remains is perfect and full acceptance and love—joy inexpressible and full of glory—adopted and loved by the Father fully as His child.

*If you're reading this devotion with your family, then now is a good opportunity to ask if they have any more questions or comments about the passage before you pray together.*

I can pray...

- Thank You, Jesus, for paying for all my sins with Your precious blood.
- Thank You that I can stand without fear before You, God, because You see Jesus' good deeds as completely mine.
- Please help this truth of justification—being right with you—to be the reason for my joy and my songs.
- Help me to believe, Father, that You are no longer angry with me because Jesus took my place on the cross.

## 2 | A Vital Union

---

I have been crucified with Christ, and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. And the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.

Galatians 2:20

### Reflection Questions

1. What characterizes the life of the person who had died and been raised with Christ?
2. Why is baptism the best picture of this new, spiritual reality?
3. Why is it important to keep in view the personal nature of salvation as Christians—that Jesus “loved *me* and gave Himself up for *me*”?

*For family devotion: any other questions or insights about this passage?*

The death and resurrection of Jesus was the dawning of the new age. Paul began his letter to the Galatians reminding them that Christ “gave Himself for our sins so that He might rescue us from the present evil age” (1:4). In Him the old passes away, and the new has (and will) come. Therefore as believers, we too have passed out of the old order and into the new age of salvation. Our union with Christ in His death marks the beginning of a new life for us. We can say with Paul “I have been crucified with Christ, and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me.”

For all those who are united with Christ by faith, we have been given a new life that is fully immersed in God. We have a vital union with Him—meaning our very life and vitality have been connected with Him. There has been a total renovation, down to our vital core.

Our lives have been so totally submerged in the life of Christ that even our past is no longer identified as being “us.” In one sense, our “old self” is not here anymore. There only exists now the “us” that is in Christ. As Paul said, “it is no longer *I* who live.”

When Christ was on the cross, *we* were there on the cross. When Christ was placed in the tomb, *we* were placed in the tomb. When Christ rose from the dead, our new life emerged with our risen Lord, and our old self was left behind next to the burial clothes.

However, this does not mean that sin and evil have disappeared. Like Paul, we still live in this body—in the flesh. Our lives are marked by the weakness of the present evil age. Yet we know that there is a new age that will come—one that exists inside us already.

What defines the life of the new age? How do we live our lives now that we have died to the Law and our old self was left behind in the empty tomb? Like Paul, the life we live in the flesh, here now on this earth, we live by faith in the Son of God (2:20). The distinguishing mark of the believer is embracing and receiving Jesus. We are those who live by faith.

What does that look like? It means that we know and believe down to our core that we will only get to heaven because of what Jesus did—not what we did. The gospel teaches us that nothing we do will make us righteous before God.

As Tom Schreiner wrote, “There is nothing we can contribute—nothing at all. We must acknowledge that we are naked, miserable, poor, and weak. We live by faith alone, casting ourselves entirely on the grace of God in Jesus Christ our Lord. Christ is our righteousness; His cross our only hope in the day of judgment. We look away from ourselves and what we have accomplished and cling to Christ alone for salvation”<sup>1</sup>

This is what sustains us while we live in the flesh. This is the paradox of the Christian life: we are weak and dying on the outside—still living a life in the flesh—but we are triumphant and full of vitality on the inside, because of the life of Christ, received by faith alone.

---

<sup>1</sup> Tom Schreiner, *Exegetical Commentary: Galatians* (Zondervan, 2010), 175.

As the Scottish Pastor Alexander Maclaren wrote, “The life that I live in the flesh is poor, limited, tortured with anxiety, weighed upon by sore distress, becoming dark and gray and dreary often as we travel nearer the end, and is always full of miseries and of pains. But if within that life in the flesh there be a life of faith, which is the life of Christ Himself brought to us through our faith—that life will be triumphant, quiet, patient, aspiring, noble, hopeful, gentle, strong, Godlike—being the life of Christ Himself within us.”<sup>2</sup>

The storms may disturb the boat, but deep underneath on the sea floor is an anchor that will not be moved by the storm. Christ is our anchor, and faith is the tie that binds us. The boat may rise and fall with the storm—on the surface, we are subject to the shifting waters. But deep down we are rooted in God.

What carries us forward in this life we now live in the flesh is the same thing that carried Paul forward: faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me (2:20). Like Paul, let us embrace by faith the truth that fills us with wonder and amazement: He died for me! He loved me! It was for me that Jesus was crucified!

We are not lost among the crowd of the redeemed. He knows our name. For me! For me, He died! What else but love and gratitude could be our proper response? This amazement and love are the fuel of our faith.

*For family devotion: any other questions or comments before we pray?*

I can pray...

- Thank you, Father, that You buried all my sins and the person I once was in the tomb of Christ.
- Help me to put to death what is already dead—to believe that “those who belong to Christ Jesus crucified the flesh with its passions and desires” (5:24).
- Enable me to walk by the Spirit and to produce much fruit—“love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness,

---

<sup>2</sup> Alexander Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture*, Galatians 2:20, 1907.

self-control. (5:22-23).

- Increase my gratitude that I have been set free from what once enslaved me (4:3).

## 3 | An Unmerited Union

---

But God, being rich in mercy because of His great love with which He loved us, <sup>5</sup> even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—<sup>6</sup> and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, <sup>7</sup> so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. <sup>8</sup> For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; <sup>9</sup> not of works, so that no one may boast.

Ephesians 2:4-9

### Reflection Questions

1. What are the things that God did for us “in Christ” or “with Christ”?
2. How do these things follow the pattern of Christ's life, as told at the end of the Gospels?
3. How can focus on these things—instead of focusing on our circumstances—change the outlook of our days? What might they produce in us?

*For family devotion: any other questions or insights about this passage?*

As believers, we have been united to Christ in a legal union—giving us the full and complete righteousness of Christ—and in a vital union—giving us life in Christ's eternal life and resurrection. But why have we been united to Christ at all? What reason can we give for why the Father would bless us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ (Eph 1:3)?

Was it because we were so good? No. Because if we were good, then we wouldn't need Christ's good standing before God. Was it because we were so devoted to God in our lives? No. We were those who were dead in our transgressions, alienated from the life of God (2:5). We were cold, unresponsive, unfeeling, unmoving, and unloving.

For what reason did God choose to unite us to Christ? Did He foresee some future good in us? Some usefulness? No. We are told that no one has any reason to boast (2:9).

The only reason we can find is that God united us to Christ and saved us for His own glory. The Father "chose us in Him...*to the praise of the glory of His grace*" (1:4, 6) "In Him we have redemption through His blood...*to the praise of His glory*" (1:7, 12). "In Him...having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit...*to the praise of His glory*" (1:13-14). God's work of uniting us to Christ was a work of each member of the Trinity, and all to the praise of God's glory.

We were saved in order to be a display of His greatness. We were put on a pedestal of unmerited grace to highlight to the universe how worthy of praise our God is.

Ephesians 2:4-9, quoted above, can be simplified to say this: But God made us alive together with Christ, and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him, so that He might show the riches of His grace toward us in Christ Jesus.

Paul describes for us the activity of God: He made us alive, raised us, and seated us. For what reason? Paul gives the purpose: it was so that He might show the riches of His grace. It is precisely *because* we are unworthy that we were saved. If we deserved God's kindness, then He would not be glorified as merciful. It was all so that His grace might be magnified.

But does this make God vain? Is God seeking His own glory a sign that He is lonely, empty, or needy? Should we embrace the miserable idea that C.S. Lewis once embraced when he was an atheist, that God should in any sense need, or crave for, our worship like a vain woman



seeking compliments?<sup>1</sup>

Did God save us because He was lonely? No. In the words of Jonathan Edwards, “It is no argument of the emptiness or deficiency of a fountain that it is inclined to overflow.”<sup>2</sup> We have not been saved out of God’s emptiness but out of God’s great abundance.

God made the world so that His glory and goodness could be seen and enjoyed. He is the perfection and source of all good things. In Him is perfect wisdom, love, holiness, mercy, and patience. Like a fountain that is filled to the brim, His glory is seen in His abundant streams. He chose to create a glorious society of creatures to see and know His goodness. Therefore, when God seeks His own glory, He seeks your happiness because you were made for happiness in God.

And not only did God *make* you for His glory, but He also *saved* you for His glory. What else could exalt as highly as possible the goodness of this God except that He would redeem those who have rejected His glory? What else could highlight His patience but to endure the hate and abuse of a sinful world? What else could highlight His mercy but to forgive rebels? What else could highlight His love but to love those who have no loveliness in themselves? What else could display the magnificence of His character except to raise them up and unite them to Himself in His Son?

God saved you by sheer grace alone so that He could display His glory—and so that your happiness would be *in* His glory. We have been saved in order that we may live in an eternal world of joy—made alive, raised up, and seated with Christ. What better outcome could we imagine? What better world could be created? What truth could fill us with more staggering wonder? This gives us even more reason to praise Him.

We will never exhaust the praise God deserves. In the ages to come, the refrain of our song will never fade. We will never run out of things for which to thank Him. Because the wonder of it all is that He saved you in such a way that would both magnify *His* own glory and achieve *your* eternal happiness in Him. Which is to say, He has united

---

1 C.S. Lewis, *Reflections on the Psalms*, 1958, 92.

2 Jonathan Edwards, *The End for Which God Created the World*, 1765, §87.

you to Christ.

*For family devotion: any other questions or comments before we pray?*

I can pray...

- Thank You for creating me with a purpose—the greatest reason for existence—which is to know and enjoy You forever.
- Help the story of the gospel—that I have been crucified, buried, made alive, raised up, and seated with Christ—be my focus each day.
- Increase my joy each Lord's Day on Sundays as I meditate and sing of the gospel
- Give me boldness to proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called me out of darkness into His marvelous light (1 Peter 2:9).

## 4 | An Organic Union

---

Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord. <sup>23</sup> For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body. <sup>24</sup> But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything.

<sup>25</sup> Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, <sup>26</sup> so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, <sup>27</sup> that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she would be holy and blameless. <sup>28</sup> So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; <sup>29</sup> for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church, <sup>30</sup> because we are members of His body. <sup>31</sup> For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. <sup>32</sup> This mystery is great, but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church. <sup>33</sup> Nevertheless, each individual among you also is to love his own wife even as himself, and the wife must see to it that she respects her husband.

Ephesians 5:22-33

### Reflection Questions

1. Which came first: God's plan to save His people from their sins or the marriage of Adam and Eve?
2. What are the ways that marriage is intended to point to Christ and His church?

3. How should these truths control (1) the way men and women evaluate their future spouses? (2) the way a person should pray for themselves now as a husband or wife?

*For family devotion: any other questions or insights about this passage?*

The images of Christ's union to His church teach us that our union with Him is so intimate and close that it is like a marriage, or like how a head and a body are attached. As believers, God has grafted us to Christ in an organic union in at least three ways.

*First*, like a husband to his bride, so we are bound to Him forever in covenant. He took the initiative to pursue us, and He has won our love at great cost to Himself. Paul said that Christ loved the church and therefore gave Himself up for her. His humbling sacrifice is the example that all husbands should follow. The One who was deserving of all things chose to become a servant.

And what was His act of service? In dying on the cross, He washed us clean. Our sins and faults were covered over by His blood. By His Word we are renewed, having our spots and wrinkles transformed into the beauty of holiness. So also husbands should seek the good of their own wives through the washing and cleansing power of the Word so that her inner life would become more radiant.

As the perfect husband, Jesus Christ has pledged to provide all that we need. We are one flesh with Him (5:30), and therefore just as no man ever hated his own body or denied it what it needed, so also Christ is abundant and lavish in His provision because of His tender care and deep connection with us.

*Second*, like a body is attached to the head, so we have been knitted to Christ. Just how closely and deeply and irreversibly has Christ bound Himself to the church? He has become one flesh with her. Jesus so closely identifies Himself with His church that when Saul persecuted Christians the risen Lord asked him, "Saul, why are you persecuting *me*?" (Acts 9:4)

We mysteriously and mystically share vital life in the Godhead. He nourishes and cherishes us from hidden wells of grace. The vital

blood that flows between the head and body is a tie that none can sever. Therefore, as His body, we must follow His leadership as a wife follows and submits to her husband. Christ gives us direction as the head directs the limbs. The purposes, desires, and aims that come from the head become the aim of the body. We live now not for our own desires and purposes but for His.

*Third*, like a faithful and sympathetic priest to the people of God, so we have a share in Christ, who chose to share in our own flesh and blood. How was it possible that we could be “holy and blameless” as His bride? It was only because the One who was Himself blameless took our blame. How was it possible that the Son, who from time eternal had no body, could become one body with us? It was only because the One who was from the beginning entered into time and added to Himself a human nature.

As our covenant head, Jesus represents us. But He could not fulfill that role without becoming like us. He took on human flesh to redeem us to Himself. “Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same...He had to be made like His brothers in all things so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people” (Heb 2:14, 17). It was through His suffering in His human body and in His human soul that He was able to represent us before God as man, as the perfect high priest (Heb 5:7-9).

The eternal Son was so committed to our redemption that He added to Himself a human nature—a process that will never be undone. Even now the Son of God has a human body, now glorified. Even now He bears the scars of His love. Even now He lives between the curtains of heaven, ready to return in that same body the disciples saw ascend to heaven. The eternal Son irreversibly became man for us.

What other words can we use to describe this great reality of union with Christ? It is the story of a great King who chose to set His love on an unlovely bride, sacrificing Himself on her behalf, washing and purifying her with His gifts and presenting her to Himself in splendor.

It is the story of a marriage between an unlikely pair.

Never has there been a more worthy bridegroom. Never has a man sacrificed more for his beloved. Never has a man gone to greater lengths, humbled himself more, endured more, or accomplished more in the great task of winning his bride... Never has a prince with more authority taken a bride with less standing. Never has a bride had her prince die for her, rise from the dead for her, and give to her his own standing before the Father...Isn't it astonishing that such a bridegroom would give himself to us? We don't deserve to have him help us cross the street. And he gave everything. He left Heaven, walked dusty roads, endured the cross, rose from the dead, poured out the Spirit, accomplished redemption for us. It is almost too good to be true. But it *is* true. Wonder of wonders.<sup>1</sup>

In fact, Paul writes that every marriage exists to be a living parable of the sacrificial love of Christ for His church. Marriage points to the mystery and wonder of union to Christ in the gospel.

We'll close with the words from the German reformer Martin Luther:

Through faith you are so entirely and nearly joined unto Christ, that you may boldly say: I am now one with Christ—that is to say, Christ's righteousness, victory, and life are mine. And again, Christ may say: I am that sinner—that is, his sins, death, etc. are Mine, because he is united and joined unto Me, and I unto him. For by faith we are so joined together, that we are become one flesh and one bone, as Ephesians 5:30: 'We are the members of Christ's body...' So that this faith couples Christ and me more near together, than the husband is coupled to his wife.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Jim Hamilton, *Revelation: The Spirit Speaks to the Churches* (Crossway, 2012), 351-352.

<sup>2</sup> Luther, *Lectures on Galatians*, 1531, 2:20.

*For family devotion: any other questions or comments before we pray?*

I can pray...

- Thank You, Jesus, for thinking of me before I even existed, and for providing all that I need now.
- Thank You that You were not half-hearted in Your commitment to save us.
- Help me to be like You, living a life of sacrifice for others, so that they would be washed by the Word.
- Help me, God, to rest in the joy of Jesus' eternal love for His church and for me.





## 5 | A Spiritual Union

---

However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him. <sup>10</sup> But if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness. <sup>11</sup> But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you. <sup>12</sup> So then, brothers, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh—<sup>13</sup> for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die, but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the practices of the body, you will live. <sup>14</sup> For as many as are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. <sup>15</sup> For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons by whom we cry out, “Abba! Father!” <sup>16</sup> The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God.”

Romans 8:9-16

### Reflection Questions

1. Where did Jesus cry out, “Abba! Father!”? (See Mark 14:36).
2. How does Jesus’ agonizing in the Garden of Gethsemane inform the type of prayer Paul has in mind in Romans 8:15? (See also the “sufferings of this present time” in 8:18 and the three groanings of 8:22, 23, and 26).
3. Many people assume that suffering is a sign that we are not God’s children. But what did Paul say was the sign that we are led by the Spirit within our suffering? (See 8:15-16).

*For family devotion: any other questions or insights about this passage?*

As Christians, we are no longer to be known as those who are in the flesh but as those who are in the Spirit. A new, fundamental reality defines and controls our lives. We are not dead but alive. Our future is not in the grave but in the resurrection. We are not children of the world but children of the Father. We do not have a spirit of fear but the Spirit of adoption.

Why were we given such heavenly treasures? It is all because we share a spiritual union with Christ by the Spirit of God. Indeed our fellowship is with God Himself. Therefore we share in a deep and abiding fellowship with all the Persons of the Trinity.

We are told by Paul about three aspects of the dwelling of the Spirit. *First*, as Christians, the “Spirit of God dwells in you” (8:9). This refers to the Person of the Holy Spirit who indwells us. God Himself, in the Person of the Spirit, lives inside the believer.

*Second*, those who have the “Spirit of Christ” are those who belong to Him. This refers to how the Holy Spirit mediates to us the benefits of the Person of the Son, who indwells us so that we can even say “Christ is in you” (8:10). Though the body may be ‘dead,’ our inner self is alive because of ‘righteousness.’ Whose righteousness? The righteousness of Christ, given to us because of our connection to Him through the Spirit. If Christ is our head, and we His body, then the Spirit is the life-giving channel of blood and vitality that flows between us. The Spirit carries all that belongs to Christ and gives them to us.

*Third*, we are told that those who have the Spirit of God are the sons of God. He is the Spirit of adoption, in Whom we are enabled to cry out to the Father (8:15). The Spirit of God that lives inside of us is the One who has made us the children of the Father. If God is our Father, and we are His children, then the Spirit is the family tie that binds us together, and He is the very breath of our prayers to Him. Though we are orphans, outcasts, and rebels, if God dwells within us, then we can say with true faith that the Father is ours—heaven is our home—and Christ is our brother.

But how do we know we have this fellowship with God? If the Spirit really indwells believers, then how do we see Him working?

God is by nature spirit, and therefore not visible. What is the evidence that we share in a spiritual union with Christ? The answer to how we can have such assurance is that “as many as are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God” (8:14). The sons of God hate sin. They put to death the old practices of the body, their former life (8:13). They have a new life, new tastes, new purposes, and new affections.

The children of God are remade in every part. In the words of one Puritan author, conversion turns the bias of the will. The Christian has new ends and designs. He wants God above all and desires nothing in all the world so much as that Christ may be magnified in him. Conversion turns the bent of the affections. The river now runs backward. His joys are changed. His cares are altered. His fears are not so much of suffering as they are now of sinning. He is willing to throw all overboard like a merchant in the storm, but only that he may keep this jewel of Christ.

His eye, which was once covetous, now weeps over sin. His ear, once open to Satan’s call and the laughter of fools, is now opened for God’s Word. His head, once full of worldly designs, is now filled with care of how he may please God and flee sin. His heart, once a filthy pigpen of sin, is now an altar of incense. His mouth, once full of flattery, boasting, and backbiting, is now a well of life.<sup>1</sup>

But sometimes we as Christians fall into sin, and we struggle with loving God and His ways. How should we think about this conflict between the flesh and the Spirit? The evidence that we have been born again and share in the fellowship of the triune God is also that we cry out to the Father in our groaning with the voice of the Spirit.

In the words of Matthew Henry, “When the soul is brought to mourn for sin, to groan under the burden of corruption, to breathe after Christ, to cry Abba—Father, then we hear the sound of the Spirit, we find He is at work. Just as Christ in His human nature was given life, so we too as Christians have experienced a resurrection from the dead” (Matthew Henry, *Commentary on John 3:8*).

We must submit our will to the Father, as Jesus did in the garden.

---

<sup>1</sup> Summary of Joseph Alleine, *Alarm to the Unconverted*, “The Nature of Conversion,” 1671

“And He was saying, ‘Abba! Father! All things are possible for You; remove this cup from Me; yet not what I will, but what You will’” (Mark 14:36). It is only in the power of the Spirit we are able to cry the same. Only through His help are we able to submit our will to the divine will. Though we may groan and suffer, we cry out as children to our Father for help. This is the sign of the children of God.

It is through the Spirit that we belong to the Son, whom the Father raised from the dead by the Spirit, so that we too may have life through Him. We are new creations in our souls. And we long for the new creation to be finally accomplished so that that sin will be no more, our hearts will be made pure, and we will have unbroken fellowship with God.

*For family devotion: any other questions or comments before we pray?*

I can pray...

- Thank You for the Spirit who lives inside us, who helps our weakness, who intercedes for us.
- Enable me to turn first to prayer in my troubles, not to complaint.
- Help me to hate my sin more and more.
- Please, Jesus, return soon so that I may be finally free from my sin and from the suffering of this world. But I take comfort in knowing that as I cry out for deliverance, it is a sign that I am a child of God.

## 6 | A Corporate Union

---

And coming to Him as to a living stone which has been rejected by men, but is choice and precious in the sight of God, <sup>5</sup> you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ...<sup>9</sup> But you are a chosen family, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; <sup>10</sup> for you once were not a people, but now you are the people of God; you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

1 Peter 2:4-5, 9-10

### Reflection Questions

1. What sorts of things describe the life of a Christian before they were saved?
2. What does Peter say about those who have now been saved?
3. Since everything Peter describes is corporate, or communal identities, then how should this shape our view of the local church? How would this change our practices?

*For family devotion: any other questions or insights about this passage?*

As those who have been born again and united in a legal, vital, unmerited, organic, and spiritual union to Christ, we must also see that we have been united as a part of His body. As Christians, we must come to Christ alone, as individuals, but we do not remain alone as individuals. To be united to the Head is to be united to the members

of His body. We share the same story, the same status, and the same song as all the redeemed from all ages as members of the universal Church.

The story of our salvation is the same. Although the details differ, we all came to faith in the same Christ in the same way. We understood how we were sinners, condemned by the Law. Whether we first realized this when we were young or when we were old, we all came to feel our need for a Savior. All of us, as Christians, called upon the name of the Lord to be saved. We put no trust in ourselves but only in our perfect Savior. We believed in His death and resurrection, and we received Him as our Lord.

Our salvation may have been dramatic like a sudden turning on of a light in a dark room, or it may have been like the rising of the sun, and slowly we realized we were standing in the light, though we could not say when exactly it happened. Our story, though different in the details, is all the same—we have been “born again...through the living and enduring word of God” (1:23). All of us “believe in Him,” though we have never seen Him with our eyes (1:8), and we all have been redeemed “with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ” (1:19).

And having the same story, we also as believers have been given the same elevated status. We have been raised up to a new, forever family. We share an identity as the people who were once “not” but now “are.” Once we were *not* God’s people, but now we *are*. Once we were *not* in the light, but now we *are*. Once we were *not* the objects of His mercy, but now we *are*. Once we were *not* God’s chosen possession, but now we *are*.

In Christ, we have been raised up to a position of great privilege. We have followed our Lord into His excellence and gained His status before the Father. Because *He* is the living stone that was rejected by men but precious in the sight of God, so also *we* as living stones experience rejection but can know we are chosen and precious in the sight of God.

Because He is the great high priest, we also are priests. Because He is the king, we also are royal. Because He is the true Son of God,

we also are a chosen family and God's sons. Because He is the true temple, being the special place where God and man can meet and be reconciled, we also are stones in the new, spiritual temple.

And just have we have the same story in the gospel and the same blessed status as His people, so also we share the same song of praise. As those who have been redeemed by Jesus, born again unto a living hope, and formed together as a temple, what else can we do but to praise His name? In fact, we were gathered together for this very purpose. It was to "offer up spiritual sacrifices" and to "proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness" (2:5, 9).

Every individual Christian has their own unique gifting and purpose from God, but we cannot take our place as God's corporate temple unless we gather together with other Christians in a church. By God's plan, we are being built up *together* as a spiritual house. We are united *together* in the same salvation. We are participants *together* in a brotherhood of faith and doctrine. How good it is to be united as one people!

What is it that we are supposed to do together? We are to offer up sacrifices and praise to our God. We are to declare the excellency and glory of the One who saved us. What a glorious thing it is for those who once had nothing in their hands to now be able to offer up praise! Those who once had no family or home can find their place in the people of God, and we remember together how He had mercy on us.

And God is continuing to build us together. How wonderful it is to see new believers being added like new bricks to the structure. Each one takes their place and joins in the song.

There is a special beauty in the shared life of the saints in a local church. As we share in the life of Christ our head, we are connected together as His body. The tie that binds us together as Christians is more enduring than the ties of nation or blood. We share the song of the redeemed. We share the status of God's chosen people. We share the story of salvation. Each Lord's Day we should look around at our fellow saints and say with quiet amazement, "This is truly the loveliest place."

*For family devotion: any other questions or comments before we pray?*

I can pray...

- Thank You, God, for giving me a place among Your people.
- Show me how I can serve my church and help others to think and speak highly of Jesus.
- I pray that You would use me to help bring someone else out of darkness and into Your light through my teaching them the gospel.
- Fill me with gratitude at the thought of my new and amazing status as one who has received mercy.



## 7 | A Permanent Union

---

For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers,<sup>39</sup> nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 8:38-39

### Reflection Questions

1. Where can we find the love of God, according to Paul in verse 39?
2. Why is it that God's love is in Christ? What not say God's love is in the Holy Spirit? (See Romans 5:6-8 for help).
3. Consider again Romans 8:1, "Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." What is the connection between no condemnation in Christ and having the love of God, which is in Christ?

*For family devotion: any other questions or insights about this passage?*

Paul began Romans 8 with an amazing truth—*no condemnation*. And he ends Romans 8 with an even more amazing truth—*no separation*.

We might expect someone who was once accepted to eventually be rejected, for someone once loved to eventually be unloved, for someone once justified to eventually return to being condemned. But God will never change. Our good standing is based on *His* unchanging righteousness, not *ours*. Our precious position as Christ's bride is based on *His* unmerited love, not *our* loveliness. Our status as innocent in the court of heaven and in the eyes of God is based on the Son being condemned in our place, not in our own worth. We

overwhelmingly conquer because of His resurrection—and the Christ will never die.

Therefore, nothing will separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord—though all may try. He has bound and pledged Himself to us in an unbreakable union. He has loved us with an everlasting love. The heights and depths cannot move us. All creation may try to shake us, but all will fail.

He is the one who holds us firmly in His hands. No one is able to snatch us away. Our great and only hope as Christians is that in life and in death, in body and in soul, we are not our own, but we belong, in both body and soul, and in life and in death, to our faithful savior, Jesus Christ. We know that all our sins have been forgiven by His precious blood. He has rescued us from all the power of the devil. He also keeps us in such a way that without the will of our Heavenly Father not a hair of our heads can fall. Indeed, all things must work together for our good.

Our assurance of salvation is not grounded in how *strong* is our faith, but in the *object* of our faith. As Paul began Romans 8 with the great truth of justification by God’s grace alone and through faith alone, it naturally leads to the confident truth that nothing will undo what God has begun.

If our salvation was not based on us, then we cannot undo it—nor can anything else. It was all God’s power, God’s choice, God’s initiative, and God’s perfect justice being satisfied according to God’s perfect plan. The golden chain of salvation can never be broken. It reaches into eternity past and goes forward into eternity future in an unbroken line. If *He* began the work, then no one and nothing can stop the work.

There is an absolute certainty in Paul’s description of the stages of salvation. We know that all things will work for good—“Because those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brothers; and those whom He predestined, He also called; and those whom He called, He also justified; and those whom He justified, He also glorified” (8:29-30). The final stage of the application of

salvation, our entrance into glory, is spoken of in the past tense. It is not “He *will* glorify,” but “He *has* glorified.” That is how certain we can be if we are in Christ.

This is the kind of assurance that erupted out of the Protestant Reformation in Europe. The Reformers recovered the purity of the gospel, and they saw that by faith alone, by God’s grace alone, in the perfect work of Christ alone, they could be saved. The German reformer Martin Luther saw in Romans 1:17 that “the righteous will live by faith” is not a command for already righteous people to live lives of faith, but that they could become righteous in the sight of God by faith.

No more did they have to trust in their own repentance, their own confession of sins, their own church or priests. They could trust in Christ alone who has paid for all their sins. This recovery of the doctrine of justification by faith alone is well described in a German teaching curriculum produced in 1563:

**Question 60. How are you righteous before God?**

*Answer:* Only by true faith in Jesus Christ.

Even though my conscience accuses me  
of having grievously sinned against all God’s commandments,  
of never having kept any of them,  
and of still being inclined toward all evil,  
nevertheless,  
without any merit of my own,  
out of sheer grace,  
God grants and credits to me  
the perfect satisfaction, righteousness, and holiness of Christ,  
as if I had never sinned nor been a sinner,  
and as if I had been as perfectly obedient  
as Christ was obedient for me.  
All I need to do  
is accept this gift with a believing heart.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> More on this in *Going Deeper: Christ our Hope in Life and Death*

We know it is not *us* who are holding on, but Christ. He is our resting place. He is our immovable anchor. Though all hell may try to shake us, nothing will separate us from the love of God—a love that is *in* Christ Jesus. Therefore for all those who are *in* Christ, they are those who are *in* the love of God.

*For family devotion: any other questions or comments before we pray?*

I can pray...

- Thank You, Father, for placing me in the hands of Jesus for safe-keeping, so that no one can snatch me away.
- Thank You, God, for taking the initiative to save me. I would never have chosen You if You did not first choose me.
- In all my trials, please help me to remember the truths that cannot change—things that are eternal, like Your love.
- Fill me with the confidence that can only come through believing fully that Jesus died for me. And because I know He died for me, I know I will never be separated from Your love.







## Going Deeper: Christ our Hope in Life and Death

---

One of the reasons I am thankful for church history is because it frees us from the burden of having to reinvent the wheel every generation. I am thankful for faithful saints who have labored their entire lives studying, meditating, and writing on the themes of Scripture. We, in the western world, are the inheritors of treasures of doctrine and works of theology. We should make good use of these resources. As Chaucer wrote, “For out of old fields, as men say, comes all this new corn from year to year.”

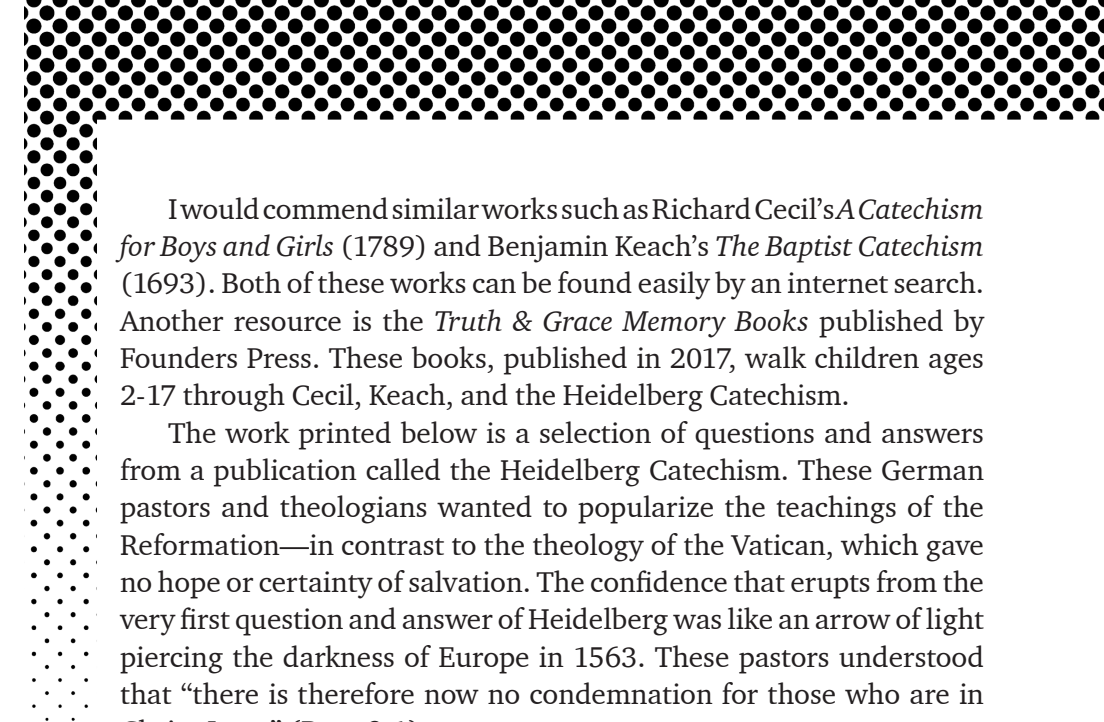
One particular “field” from which we can glean much good is the work of a group of German pastors who lived during the Reformation. They wrote a curriculum that taught basic tenets of the Christian faith. This type of curriculum, called a *catechism*, has a long history in Christian tradition for instruction and moral formation, going back to the early church. But don’t let that word, *catechism*, scare you. (Pronounced “KA-tuh-ki-zm). The word “catechize” is from the Greek word, *katekeo*, which simply means “to teach.”

If you have kids, then you have already catechized your own children without knowing it. This is simply a method of teaching that begins with a question and expects one correct answer. When you ask your small child “What sound does a cat make?”, there is an expected response: “Meow.”

So also Christians throughout church history have sought to pass down the faith once-for-all delivered to the saints in memorable and accessible ways, usually through producing similar curricula for young students.

“Who made you?” God made me.

“Why did God make you?” For His glory.



I would commend similar works such as Richard Cecil’s *A Catechism for Boys and Girls* (1789) and Benjamin Keach’s *The Baptist Catechism* (1693). Both of these works can be found easily by an internet search. Another resource is the *Truth & Grace Memory Books* published by Founders Press. These books, published in 2017, walk children ages 2-17 through Cecil, Keach, and the Heidelberg Catechism.

The work printed below is a selection of questions and answers from a publication called the Heidelberg Catechism. These German pastors and theologians wanted to popularize the teachings of the Reformation—in contrast to the theology of the Vatican, which gave no hope or certainty of salvation. The confidence that erupts from the very first question and answer of Heidelberg was like an arrow of light piercing the darkness of Europe in 1563. These pastors understood that “there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (Rom 8:1).

The benefits we receive from Christ are only because we are one with Him, grafted into Christ, and by grace receive all His blessings. No penance, no priest, no purgatory, and no righteousness of my own can ever make me right with God—only Christ’s merits by being united to Him by faith.

### **How Do We Use This?**

After you finish this devotional and the Holy Week readings, I encourage you and your family to take time and slowly walk through the questions and answers provided below from the Heidelberg. I would even encourage you to memorize the first question and answer.

Depending on the age of your children and their comprehension, it may be more appropriate to walk through Keach’s or Cecil’s curriculum first. I’m happy to provide a printed copy of each upon request! [david@fbclindale.com](mailto:david@fbclindale.com)

Consider spending a few mornings or nights in family devotion on each question, as appropriate. Some days you may want to combine several questions. Read some of the Scripture references and ask questions together about how each verse or passage teaches us the truths summarized in the Answer to each Question. Close each time



with prayer for the truths God revealed in His Word.

I pray that through your time together you would deepen in joy and appreciation for Christ—for all of who He is and what He has done for you, so that we may say with confidence: “In Christ I am right with God and heir to life everlasting.” [Q.58]

## The Heidelberg Catechism

### **1. What is your only comfort in life and in death?**

That I am not my own,<sup>1</sup>

but belong—

body and soul,

in life and in death—<sup>2</sup>

to my faithful Savior, Jesus Christ.<sup>3</sup>

He has fully paid for all my sins with his precious blood,<sup>4</sup>

and has set me free from all the power of the devil.<sup>5</sup>

He also keeps me in such a way<sup>6</sup>

that without the will of my Father in heaven

not a hair can fall from my head;<sup>7</sup>

indeed, all things must work together for my salvation.<sup>8</sup>

And therefore, by his Holy Spirit,

He also assures me of eternal life<sup>9</sup>

and makes me wholeheartedly willing and ready

from now on to live for him.<sup>10</sup>

1 1 Cor. 6:19-20

2 Rom. 14:7-9

3 1 Cor. 3:23; Titus 2:14

4 1 Pet. 1:18-19; 1 John 1:7-9; 2:2

5 John 8:34-36; Heb. 2:14-15; 1 John 3:1-11

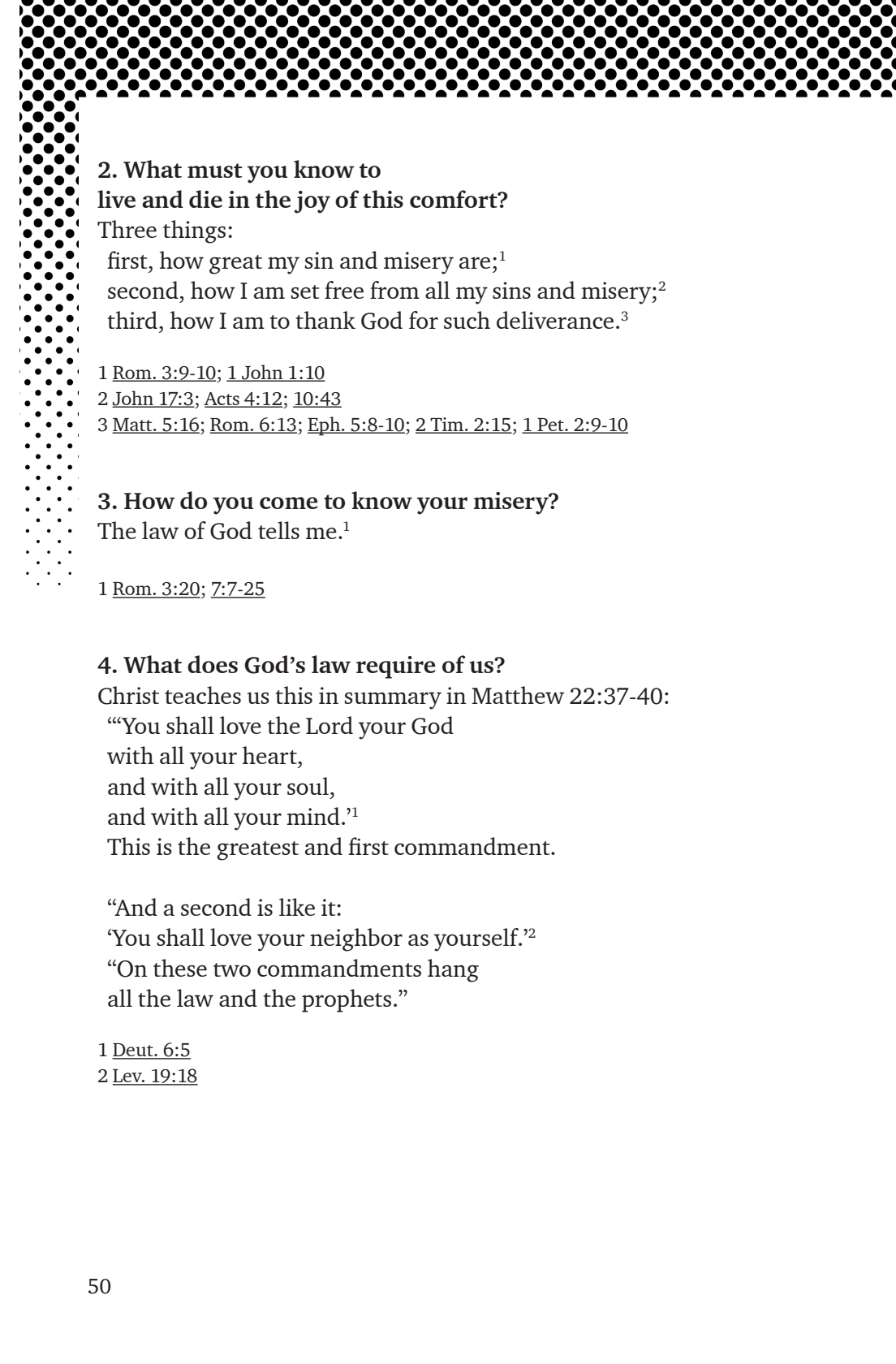
6 John 6:39-40; 10:27-30; 2 Thess. 3:3; 1 Pet. 1:5

7 Matt. 10:29-31; Luke 21:16-18

8 Rom. 8:28

9 Rom. 8:15-16; 2 Cor. 1:21-22; 5:5; Eph. 1:13-14

10 Rom. 8:1-17



## 2. What must you know to live and die in the joy of this comfort?

Three things:

- first, how great my sin and misery are;<sup>1</sup>
- second, how I am set free from all my sins and misery;<sup>2</sup>
- third, how I am to thank God for such deliverance.<sup>3</sup>

1 [Rom. 3:9-10](#); [1 John 1:10](#)

2 [John 17:3](#); [Acts 4:12](#); [10:43](#)

3 [Matt. 5:16](#); [Rom. 6:13](#); [Eph. 5:8-10](#); [2 Tim. 2:15](#); [1 Pet. 2:9-10](#)

## 3. How do you come to know your misery?

The law of God tells me.<sup>1</sup>

1 [Rom. 3:20](#); [7:7-25](#)

## 4. What does God's law require of us?

Christ teaches us this in summary in Matthew 22:37-40:

“You shall love the Lord your God  
with all your heart,  
and with all your soul,  
and with all your mind.”<sup>1</sup>

This is the greatest and first commandment.

“And a second is like it:

“You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”<sup>2</sup>

“On these two commandments hang  
all the law and the prophets.”

1 [Deut. 6:5](#)

2 [Lev. 19:18](#)

## 5. Can you live up to all this perfectly?

No.<sup>1</sup>

I have a natural tendency  
to hate God and my neighbor.<sup>2</sup>

1 [Rom. 3:9-20, 23](#); [1 John 1:8, 10](#)

2 [Gen. 6:5](#); [Jer. 17:9](#); [Rom. 7:23-24](#); [8:7](#); [Eph. 2:1-3](#); [Titus 3:3](#)

## 6. Did God create people so wicked and perverse?

No.

God created them good<sup>1</sup> and in his own image,<sup>2</sup>  
that is, in true righteousness and holiness,<sup>3</sup>  
so that they might  
truly know God their creator,<sup>4</sup>  
love him with all their heart,  
and live with God in eternal happiness,  
to praise and glorify him.<sup>5</sup>

1 [Gen. 1:31](#)

2 [Gen. 1:26-27](#)

3 [Eph. 4:24](#)

4 [Col. 3:10](#)

5 [Ps. 8](#)

## 7. Then where does this corrupt human nature come from?

The fall and disobedience of our first parents,  
Adam and Eve, in Paradise.<sup>1</sup>

This fall has so poisoned our nature<sup>2</sup>  
that we are all conceived and born  
in a sinful condition.<sup>3</sup>

1 [Gen. 3](#)

2 [Rom. 5:12, 18-19](#)

3 [Ps. 51:5](#)

**8. But are we so corrupt  
that we are totally unable to do any good  
and inclined toward all evil?**

Yes,<sup>1</sup> unless we are born again  
by the Spirit of God.<sup>2</sup>

1 [Gen. 6:5](#); [8:21](#); [Job 14:4](#); [Isa. 53:6](#)

2 [John 3:3-5](#)

**9. But doesn't God do us an injustice  
by requiring in his law  
what we are unable to do?**

No, God created human beings with the ability to keep the law.<sup>1</sup>

They, however, provoked by the devil,<sup>2</sup>  
in willful disobedience,<sup>3</sup>

robbed themselves and all their descendants of these gifts.<sup>4</sup>

1 [Gen. 1:31](#); [Eph. 4:24](#)

2 [Gen. 3:13](#); [John 8:44](#)

3 [Gen. 3:6](#)

4 [Rom. 5:12, 18, 19](#)

**10. Does God permit  
such disobedience and rebellion  
to go unpunished?**

Certainly not.

God is terribly angry  
with the sin we are born with  
as well as the sins we personally commit.

As a just judge,

God will punish them both now and in eternity,<sup>1</sup>  
having declared:

“Cursed is everyone who does not observe and obey  
all the things written in the book of the law.”<sup>2</sup>

1 Ex. 34:7; Ps. 5:4-6; Nah. 1:2; Rom. 1:18; Eph. 5:6; Heb. 9:27  
2 Gal. 3:10; Deut. 27:26

### **11. But isn't God also merciful?**

God is certainly merciful,<sup>1</sup>  
but also just.<sup>2</sup>

God's justice demands  
that sin, committed against his supreme majesty,  
be punished with the supreme penalty—  
eternal punishment of body and soul.<sup>3</sup>

1 Ex. 34:6-7; Ps. 103:8-9  
2 Ex. 34:7; Deut. 7:9-11; Ps. 5:4-6; Heb. 10:30-31  
3 Matt. 25:35-46

### **12. According to God's righteous judgment we deserve punishment both now and in eternity: how then can we escape this punishment and return to God's favor?**

God requires that his justice be satisfied.<sup>1</sup>  
Therefore the claims of this justice  
must be paid in full,  
either by ourselves or by another.<sup>2</sup>

1 Ex. 23:7; Rom. 2:1-11  
2 Isa. 53:11; Rom. 8:3-4

### **13. Can we make this payment ourselves?**

Certainly not.  
Actually, we increase our debt every day.<sup>1</sup>

1 Matt. 6:12; Rom. 2:4-5

**14. Can another type of creature—any at all—pay this debt for us?**

No.

To begin with, God will not punish any other creature for what a human is guilty of.<sup>1</sup>

Furthermore, no mere creature can bear the weight of God's eternal wrath against sin and deliver others from it.<sup>2</sup>

1 [Ezek. 18:4, 20](#); [Heb. 2:14-18](#)

2 [Ps. 49:7-9](#); [130:3](#)

**15. What kind of mediator and deliverer should we look for then?**

One who is a true<sup>1</sup> and righteous<sup>2</sup> human, yet more powerful than all creatures, that is, one who is also true God.<sup>3</sup>

1 [Rom. 1:3](#); [1 Cor. 15:21](#); [Heb. 2:17](#)

2 [Isa. 53:9](#); [2 Cor. 5:21](#); [Heb. 7:26](#)

3 [Isa. 7:14](#); [9:6](#); [Jer. 23:6](#); [John 1:1](#)

**16. Why must the mediator be a true and righteous human?**

God's justice demands that human nature, which has sinned, must pay for sin;<sup>1</sup> but a sinful human could never pay for others.<sup>2</sup>

1 [Rom. 5:12, 15](#); [1 Cor. 15:21](#); [Heb. 2:14-16](#)

2 [Heb. 7:26-27](#); [1 Pet. 3:18](#)

### **17. Why must the mediator also be true God?**

So that the mediator,  
by the power of his divinity,  
might bear the weight of God's wrath in his humanity  
and earn for us  
and restore to us  
righteousness and life.<sup>1</sup>

1 [Isa. 53](#); [John 3:16](#); [2 Cor. 5:21](#)

### **18. Then who is this mediator— true God and at the same time a true and righteous human?**

Our Lord Jesus Christ,<sup>1</sup>  
who was given to us  
to completely deliver us  
and make us right with God.<sup>2</sup>

1 [Matt. 1:21-23](#); [Luke 2:11](#); [1 Tim. 2:5](#)

2 [1 Cor. 1:30](#)

### **19. How do you come to know this?**

The holy gospel tells me.  
God began to reveal the gospel already in Paradise;<sup>1</sup>  
later God proclaimed it  
by the holy patriarchs<sup>2</sup> and prophets<sup>3</sup>  
and foreshadowed it  
by the sacrifices and other ceremonies of the law;<sup>4</sup>  
and finally God fulfilled it through his own beloved Son.<sup>5</sup>

1 [Gen. 3:15](#)

2 [Gen. 22:18](#); [49:10](#)

3 [Isa. 53](#); [Jer. 23:5-6](#); [Mic. 7:18-20](#); [Acts 10:43](#); [Heb. 1:1-2](#)

4 [Lev. 1-7](#); [John 5:46](#); [Heb. 10:1-10](#)

5 [Rom. 10:4](#); [Gal. 4:4-5](#); [Col. 2:17](#)

**20. Are all people then saved through Christ just as they were lost through Adam?**

No.

Only those are saved  
who through true faith  
are grafted into Christ  
and accept all his benefits.<sup>1</sup>

1 Matt. 7:14; John 3:16, 18, 36; Rom. 11:16-21

**21. What is true faith?**

True faith is  
not only a sure knowledge by which I hold as true  
all that God has revealed to us in Scripture;<sup>1</sup>  
it is also a wholehearted trust,<sup>2</sup>  
which the Holy Spirit creates in me<sup>3</sup> by the gospel,<sup>4</sup>  
that God has freely granted,  
not only to others but to me also,<sup>5</sup>  
forgiveness of sins,  
eternal righteousness,  
and salvation.<sup>6</sup>  
These are gifts of sheer grace,  
granted solely by Christ's merit.<sup>7</sup>

1 John 17:3, 17; Heb. 11:1-3; James 2:19

2 Rom. 4:18-21; 5:1; 10:10; Heb. 4:14-16

3 Matt. 16:15-17; John 3:5; Acts 16:14

4 Rom. 1:16; 10:17; 1 Cor. 1:21

5 Gal. 2:20

6 Rom. 1:17; Heb. 10:10

7 Rom. 3:21-26; Gal. 2:16; Eph. 2:8-10

...



**59. What good does it do you, however,  
to believe all this?**

In Christ I am righteous before God  
and heir to life everlasting.<sup>1</sup>

1 John 3:36; Rom. 1:17 (Hab. 2:4); Rom. 5:1-2

**60. How are you righteous before God?**

Only by true faith in Jesus Christ.<sup>1</sup>  
Even though my conscience accuses me  
of having grievously sinned against all God's commandments,  
of never having kept any of them,<sup>2</sup>  
and of still being inclined toward all evil,<sup>3</sup>  
nevertheless,  
without any merit of my own,<sup>4</sup>  
out of sheer grace,<sup>5</sup>  
God grants and credits to me  
the perfect satisfaction, righteousness, and holiness of Christ,<sup>6</sup>  
as if I had never sinned nor been a sinner,  
and as if I had been as perfectly obedient  
as Christ was obedient for me.<sup>7</sup>  
All I need to do  
is accept this gift with a believing heart.<sup>8</sup>

1 Rom. 3:21-28; Gal. 2:16; Eph. 2:8-9; Phil 3:8-11

2 Rom. 3:9-10

3 Rom. 7:23

4 Tit. 3:4-5

5 Rom. 3:24; Eph. 2:8

6 Rom. 4:3-5 (Gen. 15:6); 2 Cor. 5:17-19; 1 John 2:1-2

7 Rom. 4:24-25; 2 Cor. 5:21

8 John 3:18; Acts 16:30-31

**61. Why do you say that  
through faith alone  
you are righteous?**

Not because I please God  
by the worthiness of my faith.

It is because only Christ's satisfaction, righteousness, and holiness  
make me righteous before God,<sup>1</sup>  
and because I can accept this righteousness and make it mine  
in no other way  
than through faith.<sup>2</sup>

1 [1 Cor. 1:30-31](#)

2 [Rom. 10:10](#); [1 John 5:10-12](#)

**62. Why can't our good works  
be our righteousness before God,  
or at least a part of our righteousness?**

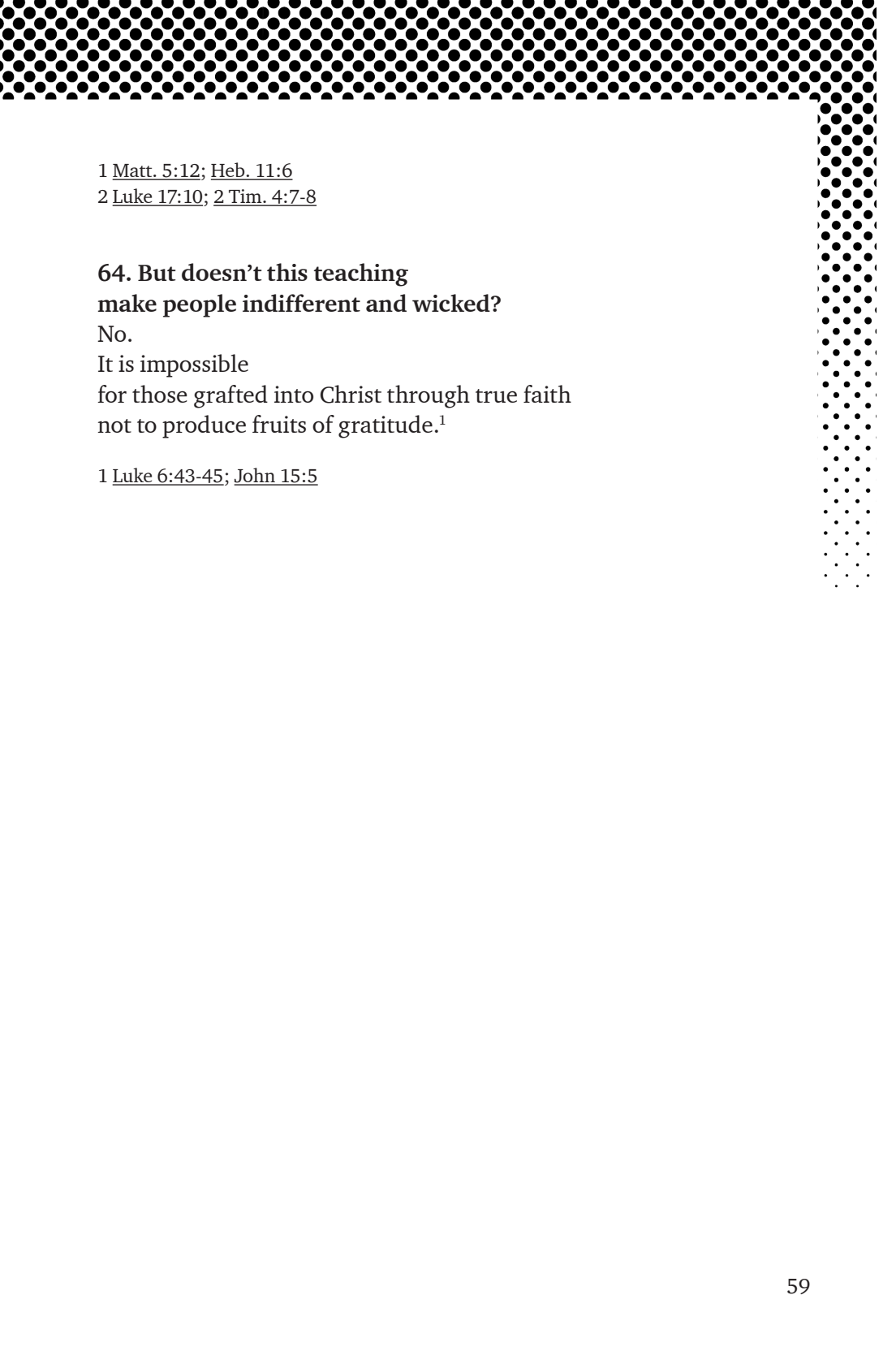
Because the righteousness  
which can pass God's judgment  
must be entirely perfect  
and must in every way measure up to the divine law.<sup>1</sup>  
But even our best works in this life  
are imperfect  
and stained with sin.<sup>2</sup>

1 [Rom. 3:20](#); [Gal. 3:10](#) ([Deut. 27:26](#))

2 [Isa. 64:6](#)

**63. How can our good works  
be said to merit nothing  
when God promises to reward them  
in this life and the next?<sup>1</sup>**

This reward is not earned;  
it is a gift of grace.<sup>2</sup>



1 Matt. 5:12; Heb. 11:6

2 Luke 17:10; 2 Tim. 4:7-8

**64. But doesn't this teaching  
make people indifferent and wicked?**

No.

It is impossible

for those grafted into Christ through true faith  
not to produce fruits of gratitude.<sup>1</sup>

1 Luke 6:43-45; John 15:5



—  
**HOLY  
WEEK  
READINGS**  
—

**MATTHEW**





# 1 | Palm Sunday - 21:1-22

---

And when they had approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, <sup>2</sup>saying to them, “Go into the village opposite you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied there and a colt with her; untie them and bring them to Me. <sup>3</sup>And if anyone says anything to you, you shall say, ‘The Lord has need of them,’ and immediately he will send them.” <sup>4</sup>And this took place in order that what was spoken through the prophet would be fulfilled, saying, <sup>5</sup>“Say to the daughter of Zion, ‘Behold your King is coming to you, Lowly, and mounted on a donkey, And on a colt, the foal of a pack animal.’” <sup>6</sup>And the disciples went and did just as Jesus had instructed them, <sup>7</sup>and brought the donkey and the colt, and laid their garments on them; and He sat on the garments. <sup>8</sup>And most of the crowd spread their garments in the road, and others were cutting branches from the trees and spreading them in the road. <sup>9</sup>And the crowds going ahead of Him, and those who followed, were crying out, saying, “Hosanna to the Son of David; Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest!” <sup>10</sup>And when He had entered Jerusalem, all the city was stirred, saying, “Who is this?” <sup>11</sup>And the crowds were saying, “This is the prophet Jesus, from Nazareth in Galilee.”

<sup>12</sup>And Jesus entered the temple and drove out all those who were buying and selling in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who were selling doves. <sup>13</sup>And He said to them, “It is written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer’; but you are making it a robbers’ den.”

<sup>14</sup>And the blind and the lame came to Him in the temple, and He healed them. <sup>15</sup>But when the chief priests and the scribes saw the marvelous things which He had done, and the children who were shouting in the temple, saying, “Hosanna to the Son of David,” they became indignant <sup>16</sup>and said to Him, “Do You hear what these children are saying?” And Jesus said to them, “Yes; have you never read, ‘Out

of the mouth of infants and nursing babies You have prepared praise for Yourself?”<sup>17</sup> And He left them and went out of the city to Bethany, and spent the night there.

<sup>18</sup> Now in the morning, when He was returning to the city, He became hungry. <sup>19</sup> And seeing a lone fig tree by the road, He came to it and found nothing on it except leaves only; and He said to it, “No longer shall there ever be any fruit from you.” And at once the fig tree withered. <sup>20</sup> And seeing this, the disciples marveled, saying, “How did the fig tree wither all at once?” <sup>21</sup> And Jesus answered and said to them, “Truly I say to you, if you have faith and do not doubt, you will not only do what was done to the fig tree, but even if you say to this mountain, ‘Be taken up and cast into the sea,’ it will happen. <sup>22</sup> And all things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive.”

### Reflection Questions

1. What is the difference between the chief priests and the children?
2. What is similar between the fig tree and the temple?
3. How does this passage prepare us for the transition between the old covenant and the new covenant?

*For family devotion: any other questions or insights about this passage?*

Matthew has been clear that Jesus is the king from the very beginning of his Gospel. He calls this “The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, *the son of David*” (Matt 1:1). The Magi came from the east to worship *the king of the Jews* (2:2). Now we have the grand moment of the King’s entrance into His royal city. It seems the hearts of the people belong to Him. But by the end of the week, He will be given a crown of thorns instead.

This turn—from shouts of praise to cries of “*crucify!*” should not surprise us. The structure of the Gospel of Matthew follows the same pattern. The King is recognized by His disciples: “You are the Christ,



the Son of the living God” (16:16). But He surprises them by also announcing He goes to die. “From that time Jesus began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day” (16:21).

Who is this Man? He comes as a king and yet walks toward the royal city like a sacrificial lamb. As He entered Jerusalem, all the city was stirred and asked the same—“Who is this?” (21:10). Do we recognize Him for who He is and what He came to accomplish?

Jesus put the same question to His disciples: “But who do you say that I am?” (16:13). And we must answer the same question. Who do we say that He is? Are our eyes open like the children, the blind, and the lame—or are they closed like the chief priests and scribes who did not recognize Him? Even infants will declare His praise (Psalm 8:2).

His praise will come from the despised and lowly—not the great and learned. His kingdom is for the weak and humble—not the proud and haughty: “Blessed are the *poor in spirit*, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (5:3), “Truly I say to you, unless you are converted and *become like children*, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven” (18:3), “Let the children alone, and do not hinder them from coming to Me; for the kingdom of heaven *belongs to such as these*” (19:14).

Have we become like children yet? This is the only way into God’s kingdom. But what will be done to those who reject Him, those who still proudly hold onto their own greatness? They will wither like trees and be cast down into the sea.

We need to read this passage as part of the progress of salvation history. The rule of the elders is coming to an end. The corrupt Temple Mount will be cast down and thrown into the ocean. Jesus was angry that God’s temple was being used in such a way that would prevent it from being a house of prayer for all nations (Isa 56:7). And so He declared it a den of robbers, fit only for destruction, like how the Lord removed the ark of His presence from Shiloh (Jer 7:11).

The fig tree Jesus cursed is a parable of Israel, by and large. They had an appearance of health from a distance. There was much activity in the temple. But upon closer inspection, there was no fruit. They

were barren. So also, let us not assume because we are busy that we are at peace with God. We must go to Christ alone. No sacrifice can make us right with God but His.

And so we see in this passage that those previously prohibited from entering the temple under the Law, the blind and the lame, are coming to Jesus (Lev 21:17-19). As the true temple of God, Jesus Christ receives all who come to Him. He can make us clean.

In Christ, God has provided His people with a new temple, one that would be destroyed and rebuilt in three days (26:61). It is a temple for all peoples, a place where sins have been paid for with a perfect sacrifice by a perfect High Priest.

Who is this Man? We learn from Palm Sunday that to Him belongs the temple of the Lord, the throne of David, the praise of Yahweh, and the people of God. Let us become children and go to Him. He deserves all that we may lay at His feet.

Come, ye sinners, poor and wretched,  
Weak and wounded, sick and sore;  
Jesus ready waits to save you,  
Full of pity, love and pow'r:  
He is able, He is able,  
He is willing, doubt no more.

Come, ye weary, heavy laden,  
Lost and ruined by the fall;  
If you tarry till you're better,  
You will never come at all:  
Not the righteous, not the righteous,  
Sinners Jesus came to call.

Joseph Hart, 1759

*For family devotion: any other questions or comments before we pray?*

I can pray...

- Lord, help me to be like a child and come to You with nothing in my hands.
- Thank You, Lord, that You call all people to Yourself, even me, an unrighteous sinner.
- Thank You, Father, that in Christ we can have peace with You and have all our sins washed away.



## 2 | Monday - 21:23-46

---

And when He entered the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came to Him while He was teaching, and said, “By what authority are You doing these things, and who gave You this authority?” <sup>24</sup> And Jesus answered and said to them, “I will also ask you one thing, which if you tell Me, I will also tell you by what authority I do these things. <sup>25</sup> The baptism of John was from what source, from heaven or from men?” And they began reasoning among themselves, saying, “If we say, ‘From heaven,’ He will say to us, ‘Then why did you not believe him?’ <sup>26</sup> But if we say, ‘From men,’ we fear the crowd; for they all regard John as a prophet.” <sup>27</sup> And they answered Jesus and said, “We do not know.” He also said to them, “Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things.

<sup>28</sup> “But what do you think? A man had two sons, and he came to the first and said, ‘Son, go work today in the vineyard.’ <sup>29</sup> And he answered and said, ‘I will not’; but afterward he regretted it and went. <sup>30</sup> And the man came to the second and said the same thing; and he answered and said, ‘I will, sir’; but he did not go. <sup>31</sup> Which of the two did the will of his father?” They said, “The first.” Jesus said to them, “Truly I say to you that the tax collectors and prostitutes will get into the kingdom of God before you. <sup>32</sup> For John came to you in the way of righteousness and you did not believe him; but the tax collectors and prostitutes did believe him; and you, seeing this, did not even regret afterward so as to believe him.

<sup>33</sup> “Listen to another parable. There was a landowner who planted a vineyard and put a wall around it and dug a wine press in it, and built a tower, and rented it out to vine-growers and went on a journey. <sup>34</sup> Now when the harvest time approached, he sent his slaves to the vine-growers to receive his fruit. <sup>35</sup> And the vine-growers took his slaves and beat one, and killed another, and stoned a third. <sup>36</sup> Again he sent another group of slaves larger than the first; and they did the same thing to them. <sup>37</sup> But afterward he sent his son to them, saying,

‘They will respect my son.’<sup>38</sup> But when the vine-growers saw the son, they said among themselves, ‘This is the heir; come, let us kill him and seize his inheritance.’<sup>39</sup> And they took him, and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him.<sup>40</sup> Therefore when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those vine-growers?”<sup>41</sup> They said to Him, “He will bring those wretches to a wretched end, and will rent out the vineyard to other vine-growers who will pay him the proceeds at the proper seasons.”

<sup>42</sup> Jesus said to them, “Did you never read in the Scriptures, ‘The stone which the builders rejected, This became the chief corner stone; This came about from the Lord, And it is marvelous in our eyes’?<sup>43</sup> Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a nation, producing the fruit of it.<sup>44</sup> And he who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; but on whomever it falls, it will scatter him like dust.”

<sup>45</sup> And when the chief priests and the Pharisees heard His parables, they understood that He was speaking about them.<sup>46</sup> And although they were seeking to seize Him, they feared the crowds, because they were regarding Him to be a prophet.

### Reflection Questions

1. What was it that the son who said “No” but afterward did what his dad asked is better than the son who said “Yes” but never did what his dad wanted?
2. What would it look like to say “Yes” to God with our words, but “No” to God with our lives?
3. In 21:26, the chief priests and elders feared the crowd because they said John was a prophet. In 21:46, they feared the crowds because the crowds said Jesus was a prophet. How would fearing the Lord have changed their actions?

*For family devotion: any other questions or insights about this passage?*

Several years earlier, the Pharisees and Sadducees had heard there was a prophet of God, the first in several hundred years, who had arisen and was staying near the Jordan. They went to inspect this man and his message. When they arrived, they saw a wild man wearing camel skins and standing in the water. He pointed at them and called them rotten trees and seed of the serpent. He told them to repent—that the axe was laid at the root of their tree, and soon they would be tossed onto the burn pile.

Was this a message from God or not? Surely not, they thought. But surprisingly, the common people were drawn to him. In the minds of the religious leaders, this man was dangerous—he was saying the Jews shouldn't rely on Abraham being their father!

And now Jesus came speaking a similar message. He disrupted *their* temple. He overturned *their* money tables. He was stealing away *their* people with His teaching. *Who did this man think He was?*

The irony of this passage is that the Lord Himself—the very One whose glory was in the Holy of Holies—the One whose presence was in the cloud that terrified the people at Mt. Sinai—the One who was in the cloud of splendor that fell with fire on the sacrifices before Solomon at the dedication of the temple—that very same God was standing outside His own temple being accosted by bullies who claimed ownership of the temple grounds.

What they didn't realize was that the Cornerstone had come to tell them, the self-important “builders,” that they would not be a part of God's building. The irony of Jesus quoting Psalm 118 was that in the original context it was the unbelieving *nations* who had rejected Israel, the cornerstone. But now the true Cornerstone, God's Son, was being rejected *by Israel*—and the gentile nations would be among those who would receive Him.

We see in this passage the hypocrisy, shame, and rebellion of the religious leaders as they reject the Son. Those who knew the truth were the most deceived. Those whose righteousness was the most austere and pious were in last place, being surpassed by tax collectors and sinners.

We are in the same situation unless we lay down our weapons

against God and receive the Son. We must admit we are fruitless, rebellious subjects of the King. He has given us much—our lives, our homes, our families, our gifts and opportunities—and we have squandered much. We have not given the Lord the glory He deserves.

We must realize first that we deserve no grace or inheritance. We have no right to claim citizenship in His kingdom. We must admit we have done great wrong to our God. We must cry aloud for His mercy. We must delay no more and do what the Father has asked—to go and produce fruit in keeping with repentance—to place our faith in the Cornerstone. Only then can we enter His kingdom. Only then will God take us, as cast-off stones on the ground, and transform us into the children of Abraham (Matt 3:9).

Religious heritage will not get us into God's kingdom. We cannot ride on the coattails of our parents into heaven. We must go ourselves to Jesus. We must personally ask for His mercy. We must place our faith in Him—and then we will be gathered like wheat into His storehouse (Matt 4:12). Christ is the great winnowing fork, dividing all of humanity into two piles. The alternative—if we will not have Christ—is to remain outside, still in our rebellion, and to be burned with the chaff.

Lay down your weapons before the Sovereign, admit the sins you have been defending and excusing, and humble yourself. Go to Christ, and you will be received and welcomed. Place your faith in the Cornerstone, and you will never be put to shame (1 Peter 2:6).

Behold the Corner-Stone,  
Which God in Zion lays,  
To build our heav'nly hopes upon,  
And his eternal praise!  
The Jewish scribe and priest  
Reject it with disdain;  
Yet on this Rock shall Zion rest,  
And envy rage in vain.

Isaac Watts, 1795



*For family devotion: any other questions or comments before we pray?*

I can pray...

- Thank You that I can place my trust in Jesus the Cornerstone and never be ashamed.
- Help my life to be “Yes” to You, God, so that my words and my actions are the same and honor You.
- May I not be like the priests and scribes and fear what other people think—but only fear You, Lord, and confess You before men.



### 3 | Tuesday - 23:1-36

---

Then Jesus spoke to the crowds and to His disciples, <sup>2</sup> saying: “The scribes and the Pharisees have seated themselves in the chair of Moses; <sup>3</sup> therefore all that they tell you, do and keep, but do not do according to their deeds; for they say things and do not do them. <sup>4</sup> And they tie up heavy burdens and lay them on men’s shoulders, but they themselves are unwilling to move them with so much as a finger. <sup>5</sup> But they do all their deeds to be noticed by men; for they broaden their phylacteries and lengthen the tassels of their garments. <sup>6</sup> And they love the place of honor at banquets and the best seats in the synagogues, <sup>7</sup> and respectful greetings in the marketplaces, and being called Rabbi by men. <sup>8</sup> But do not be called Rabbi; for One is your Teacher, and you are all brothers. <sup>9</sup> And do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven. <sup>10</sup> Do not be called instructors; for One is your Instructor, that is, Christ. <sup>11</sup> But the greatest among you shall be your servant. <sup>12</sup> And whoever exalts himself shall be humbled; and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted.

<sup>13</sup> “But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you shut off the kingdom of heaven from people; for you do not enter in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in. <sup>14</sup> [Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you devour widows’ houses, and for a pretense you make long prayers; therefore you will receive greater condemnation.] <sup>15</sup> “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you travel around on sea and land to make one proselyte; and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves.

<sup>16</sup> “Woe to you, blind guides, who say, ‘Whoever swears by the sanctuary, that is nothing; but whoever swears by the gold of the sanctuary is obligated.’ <sup>17</sup> You fools and blind men! For which is more important, the gold or the sanctuary that sanctified the gold? <sup>18</sup> And, ‘Whoever swears by the altar, that is nothing, but whoever swears by

the offering on it, he is obligated.’<sup>19</sup> You blind men, which is more important, the offering, or the altar that sanctifies the offering?<sup>20</sup> Therefore, whoever swears by the altar, swears both by the altar and by everything on it.<sup>21</sup> And whoever swears by the sanctuary, swears both by the sanctuary and by Him who dwells within it.<sup>22</sup> And whoever swears by heaven, swears both by the throne of God and by Him who sits upon it.

<sup>23</sup> “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier provisions of the Law: justice and mercy and faithfulness; but these are the things you should have done without neglecting the others.<sup>24</sup> You blind guides, who strain out a gnat but swallow a camel!

<sup>25</sup> “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside they are full of robbery and self-indulgence.<sup>26</sup> You blind Pharisee, first clean the inside of the cup and of the dish, so that the outside of it may become clean also.<sup>27</sup> “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which on the outside appear beautiful, but inside they are full of dead men’s bones and all uncleanness.<sup>28</sup> In this way, you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inwardly you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.

<sup>29</sup> “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you build the tombs of the prophets and adorn the monuments of the righteous,<sup>30</sup> and say, ‘If we had been living in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partners with them in shedding the blood of the prophets.’<sup>31</sup> So you bear witness against yourselves, that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets.<sup>32</sup> Fill up, then, the measure of the guilt of your fathers.<sup>33</sup> You serpents, you brood of vipers, how will you escape the sentence of hell?

<sup>34</sup> “On account of this, behold, I am sending you prophets and wise men and scribes; some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will flog in your synagogues, and persecute from city to city,<sup>35</sup> so that upon you may fall the guilt of all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the sanctuary

and the altar. <sup>36</sup>Truly I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation.

### Reflection Questions

1. What were some of the evil motives that controlled the actions of the scribes and Pharisees?
2. What would be some ways that Christians could do “good things” from the same evil motives?
3. Since purity begins in the heart, what should our fight against sin look like?

*For family devotion: any other questions or insights about this passage?*

This passage is set up as an inverse to the Sermon on the Mount and the Beatitudes. Instead of “blessed are you,” we have the repeated phrase “woe to you.” The scribes and Pharisees have become carnival mirror distortions of what true worshippers of the Lord should be and do. This is a cautionary tale to us, as believers—that we should be warned about having a religion that hides our sins and hypocrisy with a show of piety.

Jesus wanted His followers to practice their righteousness so as not to be noticed by men but by their Father who sees in secret (Matt 6:5). The scribes and Pharisees, in contrast, “do all their good deeds to be noticed by men” (23:5). Jesus wanted His followers to be men and women of their word, letting their Yes be Yes (5:37). The scribes and Pharisees, in contrast, played games with their promises, entering into obligations yet finding ways to escape their responsibilities (23:16).

Jesus wanted His followers to have a right focus on the heart of the Law: love and justice—even leaving behind an offering on the altar to be first reconciled to a brother (5:24). The scribes and Pharisees, in contrast, paid attention to the tiniest detail of the Law, even

tithing out of their spice rack, but failing to see the bigger picture of loving their neighbor as themselves, failing to show love and justice and faithfulness (23:23).

We should be warned not to follow in their footsteps. “Do not do according to their deeds” (Matt 23:3). But what will keep us from their path? How will we avoid their same condemnation? We must return to the center and beginning of the Law: to hear and understand that the Lord our God, the Lord is One. We have One who is our Teacher. One who is our Father. One who is our Instructor, that is, Christ (23:8-10). There is one Lord. We should love this God with all our heart, and soul, and strength (Duet 6:4-5).

This is the beginning of the Law and of wisdom—that the One God has drawn near to us and spoken. This should cause us to tremble and be filled with wonder. This causes us to fear and to reverently listen to the God who speaks.

What other god has ever drawn near to his people as the Lord has drawn near to us? Who but the Lord has promised to be our God and we His people? His grace should humble us. His grace should bind us diligently to His Word. How treacherous it would be to use His grace to exalt ourselves and push others down!

We must recognize that our God draws near to the humble and broken-hearted (Psalm 34:18). We must be emptied. We must realize we are those who are bankrupt in spirit and have nothing to offer God. We must become those who mourn over our sins. We must hunger and thirst after righteousness—a righteousness we do not possess. Then we will be made into those who will inherit the kingdom of heaven. We will be those who are comforted. We will be those who are satisfied (Matt 5:3-6). “Whoever humbles himself shall be exalted (23:12).

Lord, we confess our num'rous faults,  
How great our guilt has been,  
How vain and foolish all our thoughts,  
How deeply stained with sin.

But oh, my soul, forever praise,  
Forever love, his name  
Who turns your feet from dang'rous ways  
Of folly, sin, and shame.

'Tis not by works of righteousness  
Which our own hands have done,  
But we are saved by God's free grace  
Abounding through his Son.

Isaac Watts, 1737

*For family devotion: any other questions or comments before we pray?*

I can pray...

- Help me meditate on the truths of the gospel so that my pride would have less and less power over me.
- Lord, give me a pure heart and cleanse me from within.
- Father, help me to reach true greatness by becoming a servant, like Your Son, Jesus.





## 4 | Wednesday - 26:1-19

---

Now it happened that when Jesus had finished all these words, He said to His disciples, <sup>2</sup>“You know that after two days the Passover is coming, and the Son of Man is to be delivered over for crucifixion.” <sup>3</sup>Then the chief priests and the elders of the people were gathered together in the court of the high priest, named Caiaphas; <sup>4</sup>and they plotted together to seize Jesus by stealth and kill Him. <sup>5</sup>But they were saying, “Not during the festival, lest a riot occur among the people.”

<sup>6</sup>Now when Jesus was in Bethany, at the home of Simon the leper, <sup>7</sup>a woman came to Him with an alabaster jar of very costly perfume, and she poured it on His head as He reclined at the table. <sup>8</sup>But when the disciples saw this, they were indignant, saying, “Why this waste? <sup>9</sup>For this perfume might have been sold for a high price and the money given to the poor.” <sup>10</sup>But Jesus, aware of this, said to them, “Why do you bother the woman? For she has done a good work to Me. <sup>11</sup>For you always have the poor with you; but you do not always have Me. <sup>12</sup>For when she poured this perfume on My body, she did it to prepare Me for burial. <sup>13</sup>Truly I say to you, wherever this gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be spoken of in memory of her.”

<sup>14</sup>Then one of the twelve, named Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests <sup>15</sup>and said, “What are you willing to give me to deliver Him to you?” And they weighed out thirty pieces of silver to him. <sup>16</sup>And from then on he began looking for a good opportunity to betray Jesus.

<sup>17</sup>Now on the first day of Unleavened Bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying, “Where do You want us to prepare for You to eat the Passover?” <sup>18</sup>And He said, “Go into the city to a certain man, and say to him, ‘The Teacher says, “My time is near; I am keeping the Passover at your house with My disciples.”’” <sup>19</sup>And the disciples did as Jesus had directed them; and they prepared the Passover.

## Reflection Questions

1. In what ways do we see Jesus' control over all things in this passage?
2. What do the amounts of money—"very costly perfume" and "thirty pieces of silver"—tell us about the hearts behind the actions of the woman and Judas, respectively?
3. In what ways was the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross and this woman's sacrifice similar?

*For family devotion: any other questions or insights about this passage?*

Nearly every day of Holy Week is filled with events. Palm Sunday is the entrance of the King into His city. Monday and Tuesday are filled with confrontations, debates, prophecies, and teaching. Thursday is the final meal and evening betrayal in the garden. Friday is the trial and execution. Saturday is a day of mourning. Sunday is resurrection.

But what about Wednesday? This day was a day of waiting patiently. On Wednesday, plans were being made ahead of time.

We read about how Jesus' body was prepared ahead of time. The Passover meal was prepared ahead of time. The Jewish leaders plotted Jesus' death ahead of time. Judas betrayed his Master ahead of time. But Matthew teaches us that all along it was the Lord who arranged all these events ahead of time. He knew He would be betrayed and delivered over in two days. He even knew the house where they would stay for the meal. Nothing surprised our Lord. It was all according to plan.

Matthew, the Gospel writer, structured this passage to be like a mirror image. The top and bottom look the same. This passage begins and ends with the time drawing near for the sacrifice. Jesus knew His fate, saying that soon He will be crucified. The Passover will happen soon (verses 1-2). The passage ends with Jesus saying His time is near. The Passover will happen soon (17-19).

Moving inward, we see the plot against Him. Matthew inter-

weaves statements planning the details of the Passover and statements planning Jesus' death to show us how Jesus is God's true Passover lamb. The chief priests and elders plot His death (3-5). Judas conspires together with them to put Him to death (14-16). Just as all of Jerusalem was busy with their plans for the Passover, so also the Jewish leaders were busy planning to destroy Jesus at an opportune time—all the time not knowing they were instruments in God's plan to give His own Lamb as a sacrifice for sins.

We can see in this passage how perfect are the plans of God. His plans cannot be derailed or taken off course. Even the evil actions of men, seeking to destroy God's works, will in the end serve God's good purposes.

The center of the passage, where the top and bottom draw our eyes, is a "flashback" that Matthew inserts into the narrative. Although it is Wednesday (two days before the Friday Passover), Matthew included an event that happened in Bethany, on Palm Sunday evening (see 21:7). Matthew brings this story forward into the narrative because he knew the events that occurred on the previous Sunday evening were an interpretive key to understanding the plot against the Son of God on Wednesday.

How exactly are the plans of God, the Passover meal, and the plots of men all connected? The answer is that it is all leading to the costly sacrifice and planned burial of the Son of God. Matthew tells us the story of a nameless woman who prepared Jesus' body for burial. In contrast to Judas and the religious leaders preparing evil deeds out of hatred for Jesus, we see a faithful woman preparing a costly sacrifice of devotion out of love for Jesus.

That Sunday evening in Bethany a woman made an extravagant sacrifice that shocked the disciples. It seemed in their eyes to be a waste. But Jesus said it was not wasted. What she did was fitting. It was the right thing to do in light of His coming death.

Just as all of Jerusalem made preparation for the Passover meal and the upcoming sacrifice, so also Jesus' body was being prepared. Soon He would die. What this woman gave was a beautiful sacrifice of great cost. She anointed Jesus—whose body would soon be given

in an even more beautiful and costly sacrifice.

The atmosphere of the home of Simon was thick with symbolism that night. In the home of a former leper the spotless Lamb of God waited patiently for His own death—and by that death would make all men clean. This nameless woman (who now has worldwide renown) gave a costly sacrifice for Jesus, anticipating how He would give an even more extravagant sacrifice—at great cost to Himself. The disciples objected to the cost of the perfume (*think of the poor!*). They did not consider the priceless blood of Jesus that would be poured out soon for the unrighteous and poor.

If our Lord so freely and lovingly gave His life—a life of infinite value for us—then it is right and good for us to give much for Him. Like this woman, how can we hold back any costly sacrifice He would ask in view of the great gift of His life for us?

My God, thy service well demands  
The remnant of my days;  
Why was this fleeting breath renew'd,  
But to renew thy praise?

Thine arms of everlasting love  
Did this weak frame sustain;  
When life was hov'ring o'er the grave,  
And nature sunk with pain.

Thou, when the pains of death were felt,  
Didst chase the fears of hell;  
And teach my pale and quiv'ring lips  
Thy matchless grace to tell.

Philip Doddridge, 1810

*For family devotion: any other questions or comments before we pray?*

I can pray...

- Thank You, Jesus, for Your costly sacrifice for a poor sinner like me.
- Help my life to be an extravagant sacrifice for You, Jesus.
- Lord, help me to trust that if Jesus' death and the evil done against Him was a part of the victory of God, who turns all things to good, then I too can go through trials and find resurrection hope on the other side—all according to Your sovereign plan.



## 5 | Thursday - 26:20-75

---

Now when evening came, Jesus was reclining at the table with the twelve disciples. <sup>21</sup> And as they were eating, He said, “Truly I say to you that one of you will betray Me.” <sup>22</sup> And being deeply grieved, they each one began to say to Him, “Surely not I, Lord?” <sup>23</sup> And He answered and said, “He who dipped his hand with Me in the bowl is the one who will betray Me. <sup>24</sup> The Son of Man is going, just as it is written of Him; but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been good for that man if he had not been born.” <sup>25</sup> And Judas, who was betraying Him, answered and said, “Surely not I, Rabbi?” Jesus said to him, “You yourself said it.”

<sup>26</sup> Now while they were eating, Jesus took some bread, and after a blessing, He broke it. And giving it to the disciples, He said, “Take, eat; this is My body.” <sup>27</sup> And when He had taken a cup and given thanks, He gave it to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you; <sup>28</sup> for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins. <sup>29</sup> But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father’s kingdom.”

<sup>30</sup> And after singing a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

<sup>31</sup> Then Jesus said to them, “You will all fall away because of Me this night, for it is written, ‘I will strike down the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered.’ <sup>32</sup> But after I have been raised, I will go ahead of you to Galilee.” <sup>33</sup> But Peter answered and said to Him, “Even though all may fall away because of You, I will never fall away.” <sup>34</sup> Jesus said to him, “Truly I say to you that this very night, before a rooster crows, you will deny Me three times.” <sup>35</sup> Peter said to Him, “Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny You.” All the disciples said the same thing too.

<sup>36</sup> Then Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemane, and said to His disciples, “Sit here while I go over there and pray.” <sup>37</sup> And He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to

be grieved and distressed. <sup>38</sup> Then He said to them, “My soul is deeply grieved, to the point of death; remain here and keep watch with Me.”

<sup>39</sup> And He went a little beyond them, and fell on His face and prayed, saying, “My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will.” <sup>40</sup> And He came to the disciples and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, “So, you men could not keep watch with Me for one hour? <sup>41</sup> Keep watching and praying that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.”

<sup>42</sup> He went away again a second time and prayed, saying, “My Father, if this cannot pass away unless I drink it, Your will be done.”

<sup>43</sup> And again He came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy. <sup>44</sup> And He left them again, and went away and prayed a third time, saying the same thing once more. <sup>45</sup> Then He came to the disciples and said to them, “Are you still sleeping and resting? Behold, the hour is at hand and the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners. <sup>46</sup> Get up, let us go; behold, the one who betrays Me is at hand!”

<sup>47</sup> And while He was still speaking, behold, Judas, one of the twelve, came up, and with him was a large crowd with swords and clubs, who came from the chief priests and elders of the people.

<sup>48</sup> Now he who was betraying Him gave them a sign, saying, “Whomever I kiss, He is the one; seize Him.” <sup>49</sup> And immediately Judas went to Jesus and said, “Greetings, Rabbi!” and kissed Him. <sup>50</sup> And Jesus said to him, “Friend, do what you have come for.” Then they came and laid hands on Jesus and seized Him.

<sup>51</sup> And behold, one of those who were with Jesus stretched out his hand and drew out his sword and struck the slave of the high priest and cut off his ear. <sup>52</sup> Then Jesus said to him, “Put your sword back into its place; for all those who take up the sword shall perish by the sword. <sup>53</sup> Or do you think that I cannot appeal to My Father, and He will at once put at My disposal more than twelve legions of angels? <sup>54</sup> Therefore, how will the Scriptures be fulfilled, which say that it must happen this way?”

<sup>55</sup> At that time Jesus said to the crowds, “Have you come out with



swords and clubs to arrest Me as you would against a robber? Every day I used to sit in the temple teaching and you did not seize Me.<sup>56</sup> But all this has taken place in order that the Scriptures of the prophets would be fulfilled.” Then all the disciples left Him and fled.

<sup>57</sup> Now those who had seized Jesus led Him away to Caiaphas, the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were gathered together.<sup>58</sup> But Peter was following Him at a distance as far as the courtyard of the high priest, and entered in, and sat down with the officers to see the outcome.

<sup>59</sup> Now the chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin kept trying to obtain false testimony against Jesus, so that they might put Him to death.<sup>60</sup> And they did not find any, even though many false witnesses came forward. But later on two came forward,<sup>61</sup> and said, “This man stated, ‘I am able to destroy the sanctuary of God and to rebuild it in three days.’”<sup>62</sup> And the high priest stood up and said to Him, “Do You not answer? What are these men testifying against You?”<sup>63</sup> But Jesus kept silent. And the high priest said to Him, “I put You under oath by the living God, that You tell us whether You are the Christ, the Son of God.”<sup>64</sup> Jesus said to him, “You yourself said it; nevertheless I tell you, hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven.”

<sup>65</sup> Then the high priest tore his garments and said, “He has blasphemed! What further need do we have of witnesses? Behold, you have now heard the blasphemy; <sup>66</sup> what do you think?” They answered and said, “He deserves death!”

<sup>67</sup> Then they spat in His face and beat Him with their fists; and others slapped Him,<sup>68</sup> and said, “Prophecy to us, O Christ; who is the one who hit You?”

<sup>69</sup> Now Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard, and a servant-girl came to him and said, “You too were with Jesus the Galilean.”<sup>70</sup> But he denied it before them all, saying, “I do not know what you are talking about.”<sup>71</sup> And when he had gone out to the gateway, another servant-girl saw him and said to those who were there, “This man was with Jesus of Nazareth.”<sup>72</sup> And again he denied it with an oath, “I do not know the man.”<sup>73</sup> A little later the bystanders came up and said to

Peter, “Surely you too are one of them; for even the way you talk gives you away.”<sup>74</sup> Then he began to curse and swear, “I do not know the man!” And immediately a rooster crowed.<sup>75</sup> And Peter remembered the word which Jesus had said, “Before a rooster crows, you will deny Me three times.” And he went out and cried bitterly.

### Reflection Questions

1. What things in this passage show how Jesus did not avoid the cross?
2. What does Jesus going to the Father through prayer in Gethsemane teach us about praying in the midst of our trials?
3. What things should we pray for during trials?

*For family devotion: any other questions or insights about this passage?*

What is striking about this passage is the many times prophecy and fulfillment are mentioned. Jesus’ betrayal was predicted (26:24). That His disciples would be scattered was predicted (26:31). Peter’s denial was predicted (26:34). The exact *time* of Jesus’ betrayal was predicted (26:45-46). The exact *manner* of Jesus’ betrayal was predicted (26:54). The ascension and return of Christ were predicted (26:64). At the end of our passage we see how Peter denied his Lord in the exact way it was predicted (26:75). And yet, in light of these things, Jesus’ foreknowledge was mocked by His enemies (26:67-68).

How should these promises and fulfillments fill us with hope as Christians? They show us how God’s word and promises are true. If all of what Jesus said came to pass *exactly* as He said it, then we can have certainty about the other things He said would come to pass—that these things are *also* true.

This confidence led the early Christians to say, “For truly in this city there were gathered together against Your holy Servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose predestined to occur” (Acts 4:27-28).

What type of confidence should God's faithful and true words give to us as believers? They give us confidence in His covenant promises. When Jesus broke the bread and poured the wine, He said that His death would be for the forgiveness of sins. Can we believe this? Yes! He said it was true—therefore it must be true!

We know we can be forgiven our sins through repentance and faith in Jesus' death *because He told us*. We have no reason to doubt our Savior. Everything else He said came to pass in exactly the way He predicted. Therefore the things that are unseen—things we must grasp by faith—are also true and have come to pass.

We can also look forward and believe His words when He said He would drink the cup anew in His Father's kingdom. We can believe and know with certainty that He is now sitting at the right hand of power. There is a bright and certain day coming when we too will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven.

No failure in his promises,  
But steadfast, firm and sure;  
The word of our unchanging God  
For ever shall endure.  
Tho' heav'n and earth shall pass away,  
And all we love may die,  
God's promises to us remain,—  
On these we may rely.

Believing them, the Spirit's pow'r  
Renews and purifies,  
Thro' Christ's all-cleansing, precious blood,  
Our perfect sacrifice.  
O, glorious legacy of heav'n,  
So rich, so vast and free!  
These precious promises divine,  
Securing all to me.

Mary D. James, 1885

*For family devotion: any other questions or comments before we pray?*

I can pray...

- Thank You, Jesus, for giving me strong confidence to believe in the things I cannot see.
- Give me greater measures of peace and joy through knowing that Your blood was shed for me.
- Lord, help me have the same God-centered trust in Your steadfast character and everlasting covenant as I see in Jesus' prayer—that I, too, may say in the middle of my difficulties, “not as I will, but as You will.”

## 6 | Friday - 27:1-56

---

Now when morning came, all the chief priests and the elders of the people took counsel together against Jesus to put Him to death; <sup>2</sup> and they bound Him, and led Him away and delivered Him to Pilate the governor.

<sup>3</sup> Then when Judas, who had betrayed Him, saw that He had been condemned, he felt remorse and returned the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, <sup>4</sup> saying, “I have sinned by betraying innocent blood.” But they said, “What is that to us? See to that yourself!” <sup>5</sup> And he threw the pieces of silver into the sanctuary and departed; and he went away and hanged himself. <sup>6</sup> And the chief priests took the pieces of silver and said, “It is not lawful to put them into the temple treasury, since it is the price of blood.” <sup>7</sup> And taking counsel together, they bought with the money the Potter’s Field as a burial place for strangers. <sup>8</sup> For this reason that field has been called the Field of Blood to this day. <sup>9</sup> Then that which was spoken through Jeremiah the prophet was fulfilled, saying, “And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of the one whose price had been set by the sons of Israel; <sup>10</sup> and they gave them for the Potter’s Field, as the Lord directed me.”

<sup>11</sup> Now Jesus stood before the governor, and the governor questioned Him, saying, “Are You the King of the Jews?” And Jesus said to him, “You yourself say it.” <sup>12</sup> And while He was being accused by the chief priests and elders, He did not answer. <sup>13</sup> Then Pilate said to Him, “Do You not hear how many things they testify against You?” <sup>14</sup> And He did not answer him with regard to even a single charge, so the governor marveled greatly.

<sup>15</sup> Now at the feast the governor was accustomed to release for the crowd any one prisoner whom they wanted. <sup>16</sup> And at that time they were holding a notorious prisoner, called Barabbas. <sup>17</sup> So when the people gathered together, Pilate said to them, “Whom do you want me to release for you? Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ?” <sup>18</sup> For

he knew that because of envy they had delivered Him over.

<sup>19</sup> Now while he was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent him a message, saying, "Have nothing to do with that righteous Man; for last night I suffered greatly in a dream because of Him." <sup>20</sup> But the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowds to ask for Barabbas and to put Jesus to death. <sup>21</sup> But the governor answered and said to them, "Which of the two do you want me to release for you?" And they said, "Barabbas." <sup>22</sup> Pilate said to them, "Then, what shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?" They all said, "Let Him be crucified!" <sup>23</sup> And he said, "Why, what evil did He do?" But they were crying out all the more, saying, "Let Him be crucified!"

<sup>24</sup> Now when Pilate saw that he was accomplishing nothing, but rather that a riot was starting, he took water and washed his hands in front of the crowd, saying, "I am innocent of this man's blood; see to that yourselves." <sup>25</sup> And all the people answered and said, "His blood be on us and on our children!" <sup>26</sup> Then he released Barabbas for them; but after having Jesus scourged, he delivered Him over to be crucified.

<sup>27</sup> Then when the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the Praetorium, they gathered the whole Roman cohort around Him. <sup>28</sup> And they stripped Him and put a scarlet robe on Him. <sup>29</sup> And after twisting together a crown of thorns, they put it on His head, and a reed in His right hand; and they knelt down before Him and mocked Him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" <sup>30</sup> And they spat on Him, and took the reed and began to beat Him on the head. <sup>31</sup> When they had mocked Him, they took the scarlet robe off Him and put His own garments back on Him, and led Him away to crucify Him.

<sup>32</sup> And as they were coming out, they found a man of Cyrene named Simon, whom they pressed into service to bear His cross.

<sup>33</sup> And when they came to a place called Golgotha, which means Place of a Skull, <sup>34</sup> they gave Him wine to drink mixed with gall; and after tasting it, He did not want to drink.

<sup>35</sup> And when they had crucified Him, they divided up His garments among themselves by casting lots. <sup>36</sup> And sitting down, they began to keep watch over Him there. <sup>37</sup> And above His head they put up the charge against Him which read, "THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE

JEWS.”

<sup>38</sup> At that time two robbers were crucified with Him, one on the right and one on the left. <sup>39</sup> And those passing by were blaspheming Him, shaking their heads <sup>40</sup> and saying, “You who are going to destroy the sanctuary and rebuild it in three days, save Yourself! If You are the Son of God, come down from the cross.” <sup>41</sup> In the same way the chief priests also, along with the scribes and elders, were mocking Him and saying, <sup>42</sup> “He saved others; He cannot save Himself. He is the King of Israel; let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe in Him. <sup>43</sup> He trusts in God; let God rescue Him now, if He delights in Him; for He said, ‘I am the Son of God.’” <sup>44</sup> And the robbers who had been crucified with Him were also insulting Him with the same words.

<sup>45</sup> Now from the sixth hour darkness fell upon all the land until the ninth hour. <sup>46</sup> And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, “Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?” that is, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” <sup>47</sup> And some of those who were standing there, when they heard it, began saying, “This man is calling for Elijah.” <sup>48</sup> And immediately one of them ran, and taking a sponge, he filled it with sour wine and put it on a reed, and gave Him a drink. <sup>49</sup> But the rest of them were saying, “Let us see whether Elijah will come to save Him.” <sup>50</sup> And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit. <sup>51</sup> And behold, the veil of the sanctuary was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth shook and the rocks were split. <sup>52</sup> And the tombs were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; <sup>53</sup> and coming out of the tombs after His resurrection they entered the holy city and appeared to many. <sup>54</sup> Now the centurion, and those who were with him keeping guard over Jesus, when they saw the earthquake and the things that were happening, became very frightened and said, “Truly this was God’s Son!”

<sup>55</sup> And many women were there looking on from a distance, who had followed Jesus from Galilee while ministering to Him. <sup>56</sup> Among them was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of the sons of Zebedee.

## Reflection Questions

1. Who are some of the voices that declared Jesus to be innocent?
2. And yet being innocent, He suffered. What shows us that His suffering was more than physical suffering? (See 27:40, 46).
3. Jesus promised He would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days. How was the work of the cross an act of the new temple—the place where man and God could have peace?

*For family devotion: any other questions or insights about this passage?*

Judas said Jesus was innocent (verse 4). Jesus' silence declared that He was innocent (14). Pilate's plan to pit Jesus against Barabbas showed how Pilate knew Jesus was innocent (18). Pilate's wife knew He was innocent (19). Pilate himself said that Jesus was innocent (23).

And yet being innocent, the soldiers mocked Him (31). The sign they posted above His head mocked Him (37). Those that passed by mocked Him (39). The chief priests, scribes, and elders mocked Him (41). Even the thieves hanging on their own crosses mocked Him (44).

But Jesus' innocence and divinity would be proclaimed by the earth, even if no man would. The truth was known by the changing of the skies (45). The truth was known by the tearing of the veil (51). The truth was known by the shaking of the earth (51). The truth was known by the opening of the tombs and the raising of the dead (52-53). Until at last the centurion and the guards were brought to declare the obvious truth: this Man was the Son of God (54).

Jesus was innocent and righteous. Yet they crucified and mocked Him. But the truth will be known.

When we read through this passage, we are struck with horror to see how terribly Jesus was treated. How silently He stood accused! How lovingly He wore the crown of thorns! How cruelly they mocked His trust in the Father and the Father's delight in His Son!

We cry out with Pilate, "Why? What evil did He do?" But we must



realize it was for the evil that *we have done* that He suffered so. We are like Barabbas and are notorious sinners. We were set free while the innocent Man died in our place. *Bar-abba*, whose name meant *son of the father*, was exchanged for the true Son of the Father. Jesus' life was given for those deserving death. The innocent One was exchanged for the guilty.

Will we recognize the truth that few men saw that day? The heavens and the earth, made by their Maker's hand, knew who was crucified. Creation itself saw and testified to the truth that day. While men, created in God's image, laughed as their Maker died, the creation shook and was clothed in black.

Do we see the truth? Do we recognize our Lord? "An ox knows its owner, and a donkey its master's manger, but Israel does not know; my people do not perceive" (Isa 1:3). Will we accept Him as our king? Will we believe He died even "for me?"

What wondrous thing is this  
That Jesus Christ should die!  
That He should bear this shame  
That I might live on high!

Oh! Jesus, blessed Lord,  
Why hast Thou loved me so  
That thou shouldst bear my guilt  
And carry all my woe?

For me those wounds He bore,  
For me He knew this pain,  
The thorny crown He wore,  
That with Him I might reign.

Alexander B. McLeod, 1902

*For family devotion: any other questions or comments before we pray?*

I can pray...

- Thank You, Jesus, for bearing the wrath of God in Your human soul for me, so that I do not have to drink the cup of wrath I deserve.
- Thank You that I can see myself among that number of old saints who were raised from their tombs when Jesus died. His death meant my life.
- Strengthen my heart and establish my joy in Jesus' love for me. In this, I see the love of God (Rom 5:6-8).

## 7 | Saturday - 27:57-61

---

Now when it was evening, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who himself had also become a disciple of Jesus. <sup>58</sup> This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate ordered it to be given to him. <sup>59</sup> And Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, <sup>60</sup> and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock; and he rolled a large stone against the entrance of the tomb and went away. <sup>61</sup> And Mary Magdalene was there, and the other Mary, sitting opposite the grave.

<sup>62</sup> Now on the next day, the day after the Preparation, the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered together with Pilate, <sup>63</sup> and said, “Sir, we remember that when He was still alive that deceiver said, ‘After three days I am to rise again.’ <sup>64</sup> Therefore, order for the grave to be made secure until the third day, lest His disciples come and steal Him away and say to the people, ‘He has risen from the dead,’ and the last deception will be worse than the first.” <sup>65</sup> Pilate said to them, “You have a guard; go, make it as secure as you know how.” <sup>66</sup> And they went and made the grave secure, and along with the guard they set a seal on the stone.

### Reflection Questions

1. What difference do we see between the actions of Joseph and the actions of the chief priests and Pharisees?
2. What purpose could the Gospel writer, Matthew, have in placing their actions side-by-side? What lessons do we see?
3. What assurances do we have from this passage that when the empty tomb is discovered on Sunday that it wasn't a case of mistaken identity?

*For family devotion: any other questions or insights about this passage?*

This passage contrasts two different responses to God and His word. The man Joseph was converted by Jesus' teaching. He responded with kindness, affection, loyalty, and generosity to his Master, because his heart was made soft by the teachings of Christ.

In contrast, the chief priests and Pharisees were made bitter by Jesus' teaching. Their hearts were made hard like clay under the sun—by the very same teachings of Christ that made Joseph's heart soft. They responded with anger, jealousy, mockery, and unbelief in their God.

Like Joseph, we must give our best to the Christ who was laid in our own tomb. The gospel teaches us that in our place He was laid, so that in His place we may be raised. In light of this, what lives should we live in devotion to our Teacher, whose words have power over life and death? We must not fear the authority of those who appear great. We must serve our Master and do service He requires in loving obedience.

When Joseph took our Lord down from the cross and treated His body so tenderly, it showed what a faithful and loving response as a disciple should be in that moment. We should seek to do the things that would be loving and faithful for our God in the moments He has given us, giving our proper response as disciples, as the moment requires.

There is an irony that the priests remembered Jesus' words better than His disciples. They remembered how He said He would rise again after three days. Even though they heard His words, they did not believe them. The chief priests and Pharisees wanted to stamp out Jesus' influence and teaching. They wished to stamp out even the memory of Jesus. How much they must have hated His teaching! They set a guard and affixed a seal on the tomb, marking in wax their sign of authority with rings bearing their names and positions of power—that none may break this seal upon pain of punishment by their hands.

Foolish men who sought to bar the power and plans of God! With a wax seal they sought to stop the Word, by whom the heavens and earth were created, from emerging from the tomb. There is a lesson

here that we should heed. We must not resist the word of God. We harden our hearts to our own peril. His word has all the might of the Rider upon the white horse. What fools we are to oppose God.

But this same Jesus can change us with His teachings as He changed the heart of Joseph. His word can turn us from enemies of God to His followers. His word has the power to transmute our hearts from stone to flesh. By His teaching He can raise the dead. Never underestimate the power of God's word. Never give up hope that a bitter opponent can be made a follower of Christ. If our Lord can overcome the grave, then He can overcome an unbelieving heart. Let us not be like Jesus' fearful disciples, forgetful of His promises.

In the tomb they laid him, 'neath the silent skies,  
All forgot the promise that he should arise  
In the silence leave him whom they love the best,  
'Sleep, sleep, calmly take thy rest.'

Bright shall dawn the morrow, grief shall be no more,  
Joy shall fill the mourners, from the open door.  
Ye shall surely meet him who shall be earth's King;  
Then, then, ye with joy shall sing.

C. Austin Miles, 1908

*For family devotion: any other questions or comments before we pray?*

I can pray...

- Thank You, Jesus, for turning me from being an opponent to a heartfelt follower of You. Father, You have shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ. (2 Cor 4:6).
- Give me the courage to do what is right and loving as Your disciple, even though the world may condemn me.
- Help me not to forget Your promises, but let them rule over my fearful heart when trials arise.



## 8 | Easter Sunday - 28:1-20

---

Now after the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to look at the grave. <sup>2</sup> And behold, there was a great earthquake, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled away the stone and sat upon it. <sup>3</sup> And his appearance was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow. <sup>4</sup> And the guards quaked from fear of him and became like dead men. <sup>5</sup> And the angel answered and said to the women, “Do not be afraid; for I know that you are looking for Jesus who has been crucified. <sup>6</sup> He is not here, for He has risen, just as He said. Come, see the place where He was lying. <sup>7</sup> And go quickly and tell His disciples that He has risen from the dead; and behold, He is going ahead of you into Galilee, there you will see Him; behold, I have told you.”

<sup>8</sup> And they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy and ran to report it to His disciples. <sup>9</sup> And behold, Jesus met them and said, “Greetings!” And they came up and took hold of His feet and worshiped Him. <sup>10</sup> Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid; go and report to My brothers to leave for Galilee, and there they will see Me.”

<sup>11</sup> Now while they were on their way, behold, some of the guard came into the city and reported to the chief priests all that had happened. <sup>12</sup> And when they had assembled with the elders and took counsel together, they gave a large sum of money to the soldiers, <sup>13</sup> and said, “You are to say, ‘His disciples came by night and stole Him away while we were asleep.’ <sup>14</sup> And if this is heard before the governor, we will win him over and keep you out of trouble.” <sup>15</sup> And they took the money and did as they had been instructed; and this story was widely spread among the Jews, and is to this day.

<sup>16</sup> But the eleven disciples proceeded to Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had designated. <sup>17</sup> And when they saw Him, they worshiped Him; but some doubted. <sup>18</sup> And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on

earth. <sup>19</sup> Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup> teaching them to keep all that I commanded you; and behold, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

### Reflection Questions

1. How did the chief priests respond to the news of an angel?
2. How did their plan for the soldiers compare to Jesus’ plan for His disciples? (Compare 28:13-14 and 28:19-20).
3. What lessons can we as Christians learn about the types of challenges we’ll face in light of the chief priests’ reaction?

*For family devotion: any other questions or insights about this passage?*

The One who was dead became alive. And those guards who were alive become like dead men. The Jews sent the soldiers out with a false message of Jesus’ death and the disciples’ deception, spreading a false report far and wide. But Jesus sent His own disciples out with a true message to give to all the nations of the earth.

Just as the Jews failed to seal away our Lord in the tomb, so also their false message failed the test of time as well. The whole world is hearing even now the message that Christ is alive. The message is spreading to every corner of the earth.

As we go as disciples to all nations, we should expect to encounter some to be like the Pharisees. We still face those who try and contradict the story. We see in this passage the hardness of their hearts. They were presented with evidence of a miracle and an angel from God, but still they opposed the Lord.

Even some of Jesus’ own disciples were hesitant to join in the worship of their Master (28:17). *Can this story all be true? Is He really who He says He is?* They were like Peter on the waves, walking out on the water with little faith. As Jesus asked of Peter, “You of little faith, why



did you doubt?” (14:31). Even the disciples needed to grow as disciples. There is a lesson here for us, that we must fully believe and not be half-hearted in our discipleship. Jesus is alive! Let us follow Him and observe all that He commanded us. Our discipleship should not be a secret. We should tell others the good news.

But why did Jesus ask His disciples to travel all the way from Jerusalem to a mountain in Galilee, about a four days walk? Why is Matthew the only Gospel writer who mentioned the site of Galilee as the location of Jesus’ final words before His departure to heaven? (See also 26:32, 28:7, 10).

Matthew’s Gospel began with a genealogy that included gentiles in Jesus’ lineage (1:5-6). The first people to seek out and worship Jesus were gentiles from a far nation (2:2, 11). Galilee in Matthew’s Gospel is specially named “Galilee of the Gentiles” (4:15). Jesus began His public ministry in Galilee, and even then large crowds from gentile cities began to follow Him (4:25).

It was here in Galilee that Jesus first called the disciples to Himself. In Jerusalem, the flock was scattered (26:31), but in Galilee, they are regathered by the Shepherd. And now He would recommission them on a mountain for the next stage of His ministry—a ministry not just to Israel, but to all the nations of the earth.

It was on a mountain in Galilee that He was transfigured into a shining picture of glory before three of His disciples (17:9). But they kept this knowledge a secret. Now from another mountain in Galilee, the story of Jesus’ glory, which was once known by few, will be told to all.

Also remember that it was on a high mountain that the devil showed Jesus all the kingdoms of the world (Matt 4:8)—all the peoples who were promised by the Father to the Son in the Psalms: “Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Your inheritance, and the ends of the earth as Your possession,” “Let all the peoples praise You. Let the nations be glad and sing for joy,” “Let all kings bow down to him, all nations serve him” (Psalm 2:8, 67:4-5, 72:11).

Jesus resisted the devil because He knew He would be given the nations in the Father’s own time. And now His disciples are sent to all

the kingdoms of the world so that all peoples of the earth would be His possession by faith in His death and resurrection.

He sends them out with all authority, to all nations, to observe all He commanded—and His presence will be with us for all days. What a glorious commission! What a wonderful thing to grow as His disciples in the church! What a privilege to share the good news of Jesus' death and resurrection for our sins!

Christ became a man on earth,  
Gave His life for man's rebirth.  
Christ arose and to heaven went,  
All may follow who repent.

Christ still lives in the world today,  
Giving strength to all souls who pray.  
Tell the good news that Christ has come;  
Tell the good news, tell the good news to everyone.

Gene Bartlett, 1968

*For family devotion: any other questions or comments before we pray?*

I can pray...

- Thank You, Jesus, that You call all nations and peoples to Yourself. Thank You that I am included in that number and that the gospel reached me.
- Help me to be courageous as a disciple and to confess You publicly before men.
- Increase in me a desire to tell others about Jesus—not by being motivated by guilt or from the neediness of mankind, but motivated by the glory of the gospel.

