

Guide for the Preparation for Worship on 10 August 2025

Call to Worship: Psalm 98:1-3

Opening Hymn: 164 God Himself Is with Us

Confession of Sin

O great and everlasting God, Who dwells in unapproachable light, Who searches and knows the thoughts and intentions of the heart; We confess that we have not loved You with all our heart, nor with all our soul, nor with all our mind, nor with all our strength; Nor our neighbors as ourselves. We have loved what we ought not to have loved; We have coveted what is not ours; We have not been content with Your provisions for us. We have complained in our hearts about our family, about our friends, about our health, about our occupations, about Your church, and about our trials. We have sought our security in those things which perish, rather than in You, the Everlasting God. Chasten, cleanse, and forgive us, through Jesus Christ, who is able for all time to save us who approach You through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for us. Amen.

Assurance of Pardon: Isaiah 55:7-9

Hymn of Preparation: 247 We Praise You, O God, Our Redeemer, Creator

Old Covenant Reading: Genesis 22:1-18

New Covenant Reading: Hebrews 11:8-22

Sermon Title: *Faith and the Covenant Family*

Hymn of Response: 382 How Great the Bright Angelic Host

Confession of Faith: Ten Commandments

Doxology (Hymn 568)

Closing Hymn: 410 Christian Hearts in Love United

PM Worship

16A Preserve Me, O My God

457 Jesus, Thy Blood and Righteousness

456 Jesus! What a Friend for Sinners!

Old Covenant Reading: Hosea 2:2-13

New Covenant Reading: Romans 3:19-26

Sermon Title: Case in Point

No Sunday School – Extended Time of Fellowship

Suggested Preparations

Monday (8/4) Read and discuss Hebrews 11:8–22

By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he went to live in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise. For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God. By faith Sarah herself received power to conceive, even when she was past the age, since she considered him faithful who had promised. Therefore

from one man, and him as good as dead, were born descendants as many as the stars of heaven and as many as the innumerable grains of sand by the seashore.

These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. For people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return. But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city.

By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was in the act of offering up his only son, of whom it was said, “Through Isaac shall your offspring be named.” He considered that God was able even to raise him from the dead, from which, figuratively speaking, he did receive him back. By faith Isaac invoked future blessings on Jacob and Esau. By faith Jacob, when dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, bowing in worship over the head of his staff. By faith Joseph, at the end of his life, made mention of the exodus of the Israelites and gave directions concerning his bones. (ESV)

Tom Schreiner writes:

The author highlights here that faith trusts in God for the future. Abraham left Ur even when he didn't know where God was calling him to live. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob died without seeing the promises realized in their fulness, but they didn't mock the promises of God or dismiss them as fantasies. They trusted that God had a heavenly homeland for them, a heavenly city. So too, when the LORD summoned Abraham to sacrifice Isaac, he didn't shrink back in unbelief. He continued to believe that God would fulfill His promises through Isaac and came to the conviction that God would raise him from the dead if need be. So too, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph on their deathbeds didn't see God's promises fulfilled; but they spoke about the future in confidence and faith, convinced God would do what He said. Faith trusts God for the future and believes, no matter how improbably it seems, that God will fulfill what He promised.

Read or sing Hymn 164 God Himself Is with Us

Tuesday (8/5) Read and discuss Hebrews 11:1–7

Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. For by it the people of old received their commendation. By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible.

By faith Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, through which he was commended as righteous, God commending him by accepting his gifts. And through his faith, though he died, he still speaks. By faith Enoch was taken up so that he should not see

death, and he was not found, because God had taken him. Now before he was taken he was commended as having pleased God. And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him. By faith Noah, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, in reverent fear constructed an ark for the saving of his household. By this he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith. (ESV)

Doug Moo writes:

We believers live inescapably in a world that bombards us with its own images, sounds, ideas, values, etc. In a basic sense, a key to leading a faithful Christian life is to keep our gaze focused on the unseen spiritual realm – to constantly remind ourselves that our true identity is found there, not in this world, that the realities of that realm are the ultimate, enduring realities, and that the values of that realm must therefore shape our own lives. To put it another way, we believers are called daily to exercise our imaginations – to live with a vision of a world filled with spiritual beings, both evil and good. It is for their effect in stimulating my imagination in this way that I so appreciate the “space trilogy” of C.S. Lewis. These books do not explicitly teach theology or Christian living. But they have the inestimable value of portraying the unseen spiritual world that has so enormous and decisive an impact on the nature and direction of our mundane, sensory world. It is the vision of that unseen spiritual world that the author presents as a basic effect of genuine biblical faith.

Read or sing Hymn 247 We Praise You, O God, Our Redeemer, Creator

Wednesday (8/6) Read and discuss Genesis 22:1–19

After these things God tested Abraham and said to him, “Abraham!” And he said, “Here I am.” He said, “Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you.” So Abraham rose early in the morning, saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and his son Isaac. And he cut the wood for the burnt offering and arose and went to the place of which God had told him. On the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw the place from afar. Then Abraham said to his young men, “Stay here with the donkey; I and the boy will go over there and worship and come again to you.” And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son. And he took in his hand the fire and the knife. So they went both of them together. And Isaac said to his father Abraham, “My father!” And he said, “Here I am, my son.” He said, “Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?” Abraham said, “God will provide for himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son.” So they went both of them together.

When they came to the place of which God had told him, Abraham built the altar there and laid the wood in order and bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. Then Abraham reached out his hand and took the knife to slaughter his son. But the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, “Abraham, Abraham!” And he said,

“Here I am.” He said, “Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him, for now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me.” And Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him was a ram, caught in a thicket by his horns. And Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son. So Abraham called the name of that place, “The LORD will provide”; as it is said to this day, “On the mount of the LORD it shall be provided.”

And the angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time from heaven and said, “By myself I have sworn, declares the LORD, because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of his enemies, and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice.” (ESV)

Tremper Longman writes:

The story of God’s testing of Abraham naturally raises the question ... “Does God Test Us?” Indirectly, it raises the question, “Can we test God?” It only seems fair after all that if He can test us than He ought to let us test Him. “If you are there God, then ...” And we can fill in the blank, “heal me,” “help me with my bills,” “reveal Yourself to me,” “make it rain,” “let me get pregnant.” The potential list is endless.

About this issue, Scripture is perfectly clear: “Do not put the LORD your God to the test” (Deut 6:16; see also Exod 17:2). The psalmist cites Israel’s testing God as a sign of their rebellion against God (Pss 78:18, 41, 56; 106:14). Jesus understood this when Satan tried to get Him to test God, and He utterly refused.

It is in the light of these consistent and clear prohibitions of testing God that we are to read the narratives about those who are coming out to test Jesus. In other words, those who come out to test Him are pictured in a negative light as not trusting Him.

Thus, it is clear in Scripture that we are not to test God, but rather to trust Him. But, someone might object, isn’t it OK to “put a fleece out before the LORD”? This reference to Gideon’s testing God’s command that he lead an army against the Midianites. The angel of the LORD came to Gideon and commissioned him to save Israel from Midian. The angel, who is the LORD Himself, assures Gideon that He will be with him in the battle. The LORD assures Gideon of His presence by creating the fire of the sacrifice. Because of this, he is certain that he was in the presence of God (Judg. 6:22). On this basis, he demolished the altar of Baal. But he remains uncertain about leading an army against the Midianites and he put out a dry fleece and asks God to make the fleece wet and the ground dry. God did it, but Gideon tests God further, and he then asks God to reverse it making the fleece dry and the ground wet.

Though God did this for Gideon, it does not give blanket approval to the practice of testing God, which is, as we have seen, prohibited in the rest of Scripture. And when we think about it, Gideon's persistent testing of God is clearly an indication of his fundamental distrust of God even after God made His presence absolutely clear to him. Indeed, a close reader of the story of Gideon sees that he is hardly a model to be emulated. God uses him, but like with so many of the judges, he is a deeply flawed individual, even creating the occasion for an act of idolatry at the end of his life.

God tests us, but we are not to test God. After all, we are weak, fallible creatures who do waver in our faith. On the other hand, God is totally faithful. To test Him is to cast doubt on that unassailable face.

Before we leave the subject of testing, however, we need to clarify a possible misapprehension. While it is wrong to test God, there is nothing wrong with testing whether something is from God or not. John tells us to "not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God" (1 John 4:1). There is a lot of false religion and even false Christian voices out there.

Read or sing Hymn 382 How Great the Bright Angelic Host

Thursday (8/7) Read and discuss Romans 3:19–26

Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.

But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. (ESV)

Look at the second half of verse 25 and verse 26 with me. Paul has just told us about God putting forth Christ as a propitiation. Now he concludes:

This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be both just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

What made God look unrighteous? People in the modern West frequently imagine that this is the challenge: “Why do bad things happen to good people?” But as Paul has devastatingly demonstrated from Romans 1:19 through chapter 3 verse 20, that isn’t a problem at all for the simple reason that, left to ourselves, we are all idolaters who are in open rebellion against God. Everyone who receives God’s wrath clearly deserves it.

The real challenge is the mirror image of the modern question: “Why do good things happen to bad people?” In particular, throughout the Old Testament the LORD had publicly declared the forgiveness of those who trusted in Him and identified them as being His people forever. How could the LORD be the friend of Abraham who passed off Sarah as his sister, not once but twice, allowing her to be taken into the harems of both Pharaoh and Abimelech? To make matters worse, how could the LORD authoritatively declare through His prophet Nathan that He had put away David’s sins of adultery and murder – and that He even promised to make of David an everlasting dynasty? What sort of Judge does something like that?

And, of course, we can make the question a great deal more personal: How can God pour out His wrath on Sodom, Gomorrah, and Egypt; and yet forgive a miserable sinner like me? What would we think of a human judge who sentenced one murderer to death but who not only declared a second murderer to be not guilty, but who went on to make that second murderer a member of his own family - and one who regularly ate at his table?

Now that we understand the gospel we see the answer clearly: God the Just punishes each and every sin. The only question is whether your sins were punished when they were laid upon Jesus Christ or whether, because you refuse to turn and follow Jesus, you will carry those sins into an eternity of never-ending punishment.

But please remember, if you place your trust in Jesus Christ, then God does more than take away your sins. He reckons to you the perfect righteousness of the man Christ Jesus so that, in Christ, He is pleased with you, He declares you to be perfectly righteous, and He welcomes you into His family as a beloved daughter or son.

What does Almighty God think about when He thinks about you? That all depends on what you have done with Jesus.

Friday (8/8) Read and discuss Hosea 2:2–13

“Plead with your mother, plead—
for she is not my wife,
and I am not her husband—
that she put away her whoring from her face,
and her adultery from between her breasts;
lest I strip her naked
and make her as in the day she was born,
and make her like a wilderness,
and make her like a parched land,
and kill her with thirst.

Upon her children also I will have no mercy,
because they are children of whoredom.
For their mother has played the whore;
she who conceived them has acted shamefully.
For she said, 'I will go after my lovers,
who give me my bread and my water,
my wool and my flax, my oil and my drink.'
Therefore I will hedge up her way with thorns,
and I will build a wall against her,
so that she cannot find her paths.
She shall pursue her lovers
but not overtake them,
and she shall seek them
but shall not find them.
Then she shall say,
'I will go and return to my first husband,
for it was better for me then than now.'
And she did not know
that it was I who gave her
the grain, the wine, and the oil,
and who lavished on her silver and gold,
which they used for Baal.
Therefore I will take back
my grain in its time,
and my wine in its season,
and I will take away my wool and my flax,
which were to cover her nakedness.
Now I will uncover her lewdness
in the sight of her lovers,
and no one shall rescue her out of my hand.
And I will put an end to all her mirth,
her feasts, her new moons, her Sabbaths,
and all her appointed feasts.
And I will lay waste her vines and her fig trees,
of which she said,
'These are my wages,
which my lovers have given me.'
I will make them a forest,
and the beasts of the field shall devour them.
And I will punish her for the feast days of the Baals
when she burned offerings to them
and adorned herself with her ring and jewelry,
and went after her lovers
and forgot me, declares the LORD. (ESV)

Gary Smith writes:

[One] theme in Hosea 2 is the loving and just discipline of God. Because God cares about His relationship with people and wants that covenant relationship to continue, He confronts action that threatens to ruin that relationship. He must first make people aware that those who follow the commonly accepted beliefs and behaviors of this world are sinners in His eyes. This transforming perspective on unfaithfulness to God may come about through the convicting power of the Holy Spirit, through the exhortation of another believer, or through removing what people depend on (See Hos. 2:9). Sometimes people get caught, and their shameful sin is exposed.

In the midst of this discipline God may try to hedge in a person's way to keep him or her from further sin (see 2:6). Certainly He will not accept the frail attempts to worship Him by sinful people. All of these efforts will attempt to show that the unfaithful person's present theological worldview and behavior are wrong. By disrupting the people's present connection between their deceptive faith and their blessings, God will show that there is an error in their thinking. By demonstrating that their present behavior brings judgment rather than God's blessing, He instructs the attentive listener about His ways.

Read or sing Hymn 410 Christian Hearts in Love United

Saturday (8/9) Read and discuss Hebrews 11:8–22

By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he went to live in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise. For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God. By faith Sarah herself received power to conceive, even when she was past the age, since she considered him faithful who had promised. Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born descendants as many as the stars of heaven and as many as the innumerable grains of sand by the seashore.

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of his life, made mention of the exodus of the Israelites and gave directions concerning his bones. (ESV)

Doug Moo writes:

A city that Abraham and others could call “home” had already been prepared by God, and it was this city that Abraham was “looking forward to.” Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph all “saw” “the things promised” “from a distance” and looked “for a country of their own.” Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau “in regard to their future.” Joseph’s gaze at the end of his life was directed to the promised return of the land of promise.

The importance of the forward look in faith is standard New Testament teaching. We look back to God’s inauguration of the new realm through Christ’s death and resurrection and the pouring out of God’s Spirit. We look back also to our own entry into that realm through God’s gracious choice and our faith. However, we have been saved, Paul reminds us, “in hope” (Rom 8:24). We have an “inheritance” that is being “kept in heaven” for us and that we will fully enjoy at “the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time” (1 Pet 1:4-5). The Messiah has come to inaugurate God’s kingdom, but He will come again to consummate it. The forward look of faith, our hope, is vital for many reasons, two of which we mention here. First, as our text in Hebrews particularly emphasizes, looking ahead to “the city with foundations” puts into perspective the very pale imitation that is the “city” of this world. Like the Babylon of Revelation, this city, while superficially alluring, is, in fact, “a dwelling for demons.” To be sure, God in His common grace, gives us gifts to enjoy in this world – family, the beauty and variety of the natural world, friendship. But the temptation is always to view these genuine, yet transient, pleasures as the ultimate pleasure. Keeping a vision of the eternal city, the new Jerusalem, before us will help keep the pleasures of this world in proper perspective.

Second, the forward look of faith enables us to endure the difficulties of this world. This becomes a key focus of the author in chapter 12. He concludes that chapter by reminding us that “we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken” and that we should therefore “be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe.” In this world, Jesus reminds us, we have “trouble,” but, He assures us, He has “overcome the world.” This “overcoming,” while secured in principle, is not yet the reality we actually experience. God’s people are persecuted, we suffer the ravages of time, we fall ill, we watch loved ones die, and we ourselves die. All these evils will one day be overcome. Until that day, we live “in faith,” keeping our focus on the promises that our faithful God will infallibly fulfill on the day when evil is judged and the righteous receive their reward.

Prayer: Please lift up tomorrow’s morning and evening worship services.