

Guide for the Preparation for Worship on 31 August 2025

AM Worship

Call to Worship: Psalm 96:1-3

Opening Hymn: 409 Blest Be the Tie That Binds

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: 2 Corinthians 5:17-21

Hymn of Preparation: 246 Though Troubles Assail Us

Old Covenant Reading: 2 Kings 1:1-18

New Covenant Reading: Hebrews 11:32-38

Sermon Title: *Faith Through Suffering and Triumph*

Hymn of Response: 541 The Son of God Goes Forth to War

Confession of Faith: Apostles Creed (p. 851)

Doxology (Hymn 568)

Closing Hymn: 408 For All the Saints

PM Worship

277 Before the Throne of God Above

274 Jesus, My Great High Priest

433 Amazing Grace!

Old Covenant Reading: Hosea 4:1-19

New Covenant Reading: Colossians 3:1-10

No Sunday School – Extended Time of Fellowship

Suggested Preparations

Monday (8/25) Read and discuss Hebrews 11:32–38

And what more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets—who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, were made strong out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. Women received back their dead by resurrection. Some were tortured, refusing to accept release, so that they might rise again to a better life. Others suffered mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they

were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword. They went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, mistreated—of whom the world was not worthy—wandering about in deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. (ESV)

Tom Wright comments:

Since the present passage offers a long catalogue of people who faced terrifying situations, and in many cases were persecuted to within an inch of their lives if not beyond, it raises all these questions quite acutely. Why should it be like this? What's wrong? Why, if God was at work in the lives of Gideon, Barak, Samson and the rest, and those who were stoned, sawn in two, and so on – why, if God was calling them and was with them, did they have to go through all that?

It's important to begin by saying that there's never a full, or ultimately 'correct,' answer to the question 'why' in such circumstances. If you could analyze the situation in each case and explain 'why,' you would make things seem not so bad; and part of the point is that they were bad, very bad, for those involved. You cannot somehow draw the sting of torture and murder by locating them, loftily, on some scale of higher invisible purpose.

But when we have said that, we come to the point the writer is making, here in particular, in his long list of heroes and heroines of the faith. He is now drawing a conclusion from their experience similar to the one he had drawn, again and again, from the Old Testament. The fact that they suffered such things, and that they demonstrated that the world wasn't worthy of them, was a sign both that they believed that God was making a new world in which everything would be better, and that this belief was in fact true. They were out of tune with their times because they were living by faith in God's future world while society all around them was living as though the present world was all there as or ever would be; and God was giving them strength to live like that, thus proving the truth of their claim. They were, in their own lives and sufferings, living beacons of hope, pointers to the fact that the God who had made the world was intending to remake it, and that they were the advance guard of that great moment.

Read or sing Hymn 409 Blest Be the Tie That Binds

Tuesday (8/26) Read and discuss Hebrews 11:23–31

By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden for three months by his parents, because they saw that the child was beautiful, and they were not afraid of the king's edict.

By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward.

By faith he left Egypt, not being afraid of the anger of the king, for he endured as seeing him who is invisible. By faith he kept the Passover and sprinkled the blood, so that the Destroyer of the firstborn might not touch them.

By faith the people crossed the Red Sea as on dry land, but the Egyptians, when they attempted to do the same, were drowned. By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they had been encircled for seven days.

By faith Rahab the prostitute did not perish with those who were disobedient, because she had given a friendly welcome to the spies. (ESV)

Philip Edgcumbe Hughes writes:

We may assume that Moses' God-fearing parents were driven by an inner conviction that their child had a role to play within the divine purposes and that it was because they were sustained by this conviction that *they were not afraid of the king's edict*, which required every male child born to the Hebrews to be destroyed – just as Moses himself, when he had grown to manhood, by virtue of the firmness of his faith was not afraid of the anger of the king (v. 27). The great risk which Amram and Jochebed took in secretly keeping their infant son despite Pharaoh's cruel command was in itself evidence of the reality of their faith. But their faith was still more severely tested when it became impossible for them to conceal him any longer in their home and they adopted the perilous device of placing him in a specially prepared basket among the reeds by the bank of the river, while his sister kept watch from a safe distance – for here, too, it is apparent that they continued to believe that in some way God would preserve their child. Little did they expect that he would be found by no less a personage than Pharaoh's daughter and be brought up by her in the royal palace as her own son, with his own mother as his nurse, thanks to the alertness of his sister. Yet, due no doubt to the instruction he received from his mother [and father], he grew up conscious both of his own nationality and of his divine vocation, for, as Stephen tells us in Acts 7:25, on the occasion when he first attempted to identify himself with the Hebrews and their cause, "he supposed that **his brethren** understood that God was giving them deliverance by his hand, but they did not understand" (emphasis added by Pastor Booth).

In 3:2ff. ... our author draws a comparison between Moses and Christ in terms of the faithfulness of each. That Moses prefigured Christ is made plain in the messianic promise given him by God, that He would raise up a prophet like him from his brethren and put His words in His mouth (Dt. 15:15-18). This relates to Moses not only as the one through whom God's law was communicated to the people but also as a notable type of Christ in His role of deliverer, who led the chosen people from the bondage of Egypt to the borders of the Promised Land. So, in fulfilment of this type, Christ is

the pioneer of our salvation ho, not ashamed to call us brethren, delivers Go's people from lifelong bondage and brings them to the promised rest. But even the events of Moses' infancy foreshadow the experience of Him who is greater than Moses, for the life of the infant Jesus was threatened by the edict of a despotic monarch ordering the slaughter of all male children under the age of two years, and by their faith and obedience Joseph and Mary were enabled to preserve the child by taking refuge in the very country where Moses was preserved.

Read or sing Hymn 246 Though Troubles Assail Us

Wednesday (8/27) Read and discuss 2 Kings 1

After the death of Ahab, Moab rebelled against Israel.

Now Ahaziah fell through the lattice in his upper chamber in Samaria, and lay sick; so he sent messengers, telling them, "Go, inquire of Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron, whether I shall recover from this sickness." But the angel of the LORD said to Elijah the Tishbite, "Arise, go up to meet the messengers of the king of Samaria, and say to them, 'Is it because there is no God in Israel that you are going to inquire of Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron? Now therefore thus says the LORD, You shall not come down from the bed to which you have gone up, but you shall surely die.'" So Elijah went.

The messengers returned to the king, and he said to them, "Why have you returned?" And they said to him, "There came a man to meet us, and said to us, 'Go back to the king who sent you, and say to him, Thus says the LORD, Is it because there is no God in Israel that you are sending to inquire of Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron? Therefore you shall not come down from the bed to which you have gone up, but you shall surely die.'" He said to them, "What kind of man was he who came to meet you and told you these things?" They answered him, "He wore a garment of hair, with a belt of leather about his waist." And he said, "It is Elijah the Tishbite."

Then the king sent to him a captain of fifty men with his fifty. He went up to Elijah, who was sitting on the top of a hill, and said to him, "O man of God, the king says, 'Come down.'" But Elijah answered the captain of fifty, "If I am a man of God, let fire come down from heaven and consume you and your fifty." Then fire came down from heaven and consumed him and his fifty.

Again the king sent to him another captain of fifty men with his fifty. And he answered and said to him, "O man of God, this is the king's order, 'Come down quickly!'" But Elijah answered them, "If I am a man of God, let fire come down from heaven and consume you and your fifty." Then the fire of God came down from heaven and consumed him and his fifty.

Again the king sent the captain of a third fifty with his fifty. And the third captain of fifty went up and came and fell on his knees before Elijah and entreated him, "O man of God, please let my life, and the life of these fifty servants of yours, be precious in your sight.

Behold, fire came down from heaven and consumed the two former captains of fifty men with their fifties, but now let my life be precious in your sight.” Then the angel of the LORD said to Elijah, “Go down with him; do not be afraid of him.” So he arose and went down with him to the king and said to him, “Thus says the LORD, ‘Because you have sent messengers to inquire of Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron—is it because there is no God in Israel to inquire of his word?—therefore you shall not come down from the bed to which you have gone up, but you shall surely die.’”

So he died according to the word of the LORD that Elijah had spoken. Jehoram became king in his place in the second year of Jehoram the son of Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, because Ahaziah had no son. Now the rest of the acts of Ahaziah that he did, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel? (ESV)

Dale Ralph Davis writes:

What do we meet in this section of the story? Above all, *an intolerant God*. The suave, self-appointed connoisseurs of religious taste in our time will be aghast if ever they happen on to this story. How can Yahweh in His wild, untamed holiness sentence a man to death simply for exercising his religious preferences in a critical hour of his life? Yahweh here is not the democratic sort of God people crave, according to the polls. Our times would prefer the mythology of the Ancient Near East, where gods and goddesses were permissive and casual and never insisted upon exclusive loyalty. None of these deities thought it a mortal sin should one of his/her devotees want to be ecumenical in his devotion. But in the Bible we meet Yahweh and keep bashing ourselves against His first commandment. Nor is it any better in the New Testament. Jesus goes around insisting folks must smash idols if they would follow as disciples. He is as obnoxious as Yahweh. Who does He think He is?

We also meet a trenchant idolatry here. We must not think Ahaziah’s resort to Baal-zebub was simply a sudden act of desperation in a moment of weakness. Flip back your Bible page to 1 Kings 22:52-53, where the writer summarizes the policy of Ahaziah’s reign. ‘He served Baal and bowed down to him’ (v. 53). In verse 2 (of the present text) Ahaziah only displays the *consistency* of his ‘faith’. His appeal to Baal was not a knee-jerk reaction in a sudden emergency. Baal has always been Ahaziah’s deity of choice; he has no place for Yahweh. His idolatry was due to preference, not to ignorance or weakness. ...

Yet Ahaziah’s was also a foolish idolatry. For a believer in Yahweh there is such a sadness about it all. Here is the king, perhaps near life’s end – at least his request (v. 2) suggests Ahaziah knew it could be his ‘last illness’. And in this desperate moment we hear, ‘Go, inquire of Baal-zebub.’ The moment so crucial; the recourse so asinine. The spectre of death does not necessarily produce good sense.

Read or sing Hymn 541 The Son of God Goes Forth to War

Thursday (8/28) Read and discuss Colossians 3:1-10

If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. On account of these the wrath of God is coming. In these you too once walked, when you were living in them. But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. (ESV)

Tom Wright comments:

Paul is continuing to warn the Colossians about the dangers of being drawn into Judaism, as the Galatians had been. But in this passage he's doing something else as well: he is showing them the way to genuine, full-blooded holiness. It isn't what might seem the shortest, most obvious way; but it's the way that will bring them where they need to be.

One of the principal appeals of Judaism in the pagan world of the first century was its high moral code. It made heavy demands, and often when people are sick and tired of the murky and immoral world of paganism they are glad to embrace a way of life which offers clear, bring, clean lines. Serious minded people in a place like Colossae, people who had begun to realize that their pagan gods weren't doing them any good, might well feel that the regulations of the Torah itself, and of the numerous explanatory additions that first century teachers expounded, were going to be a great help to them in finding a new way of life that would leave the messy world of paganism behind once and for all. 'Don't handle this, don't taste that, don't touch this'; the very detail of the regulations and the severe self-discipline needed to keep them, would make them feel they really must be making advances in their moral and spiritual lives.

Well, says Paul, it may feel like that, but it's an illusion. Go that way, and the street will soon come to a dead end. These are simply regulations that function at a worldly level. You will merely be giving up a worldly self-indulgence of a sensual kind for a worldly self-indulgence of a spiritual kind. A religion that focuses purely on the details of things you're allowed, or not allowed, to touch or eat – he obviously had the Jewish food regulations in mind – is dealing with perishables; and if you want to do business with God you have to get beyond that. In short, when Judaism sets

itself against its own Messiah, it may well have the appearance of wisdom in the kind of religion it comes up with, but it won't actually attain the goal. It won't succeed in making you genuinely holy, through and through.

For that, you need to go what seems like a much harder and longer route, but it's the one that will get you there in the end. You need to die and be raised. You need, that is, to come out altogether from the 'worldly' sphere presided over by the 'elements of the world,' the shadowy powers that operate within the present creation, doomed as it is to decay and perish. You need to belong instead to God's new world, the new creation that is being brought in to replace the old. The truly human life you seek – the life of a genuine, glad holiness that runs right through the personality – is to be found in that new world.

And the good news is that, if you belong to the Messiah, you already do belong to that new world. One of the main things Paul longs for new Christians to realize is *what is already true of them 'in Christ.'* Because the Messiah and His people are so closely bound up with one another, he lays it down as a basic principle: what is true of Him is true of them. It may not feel like it. [Yet,] learning to believe what doesn't at the moment feel true is an essential part of being a Christian.

Friday (8/22) Read and discuss Hosea 4

Hear the word of the LORD, O children of Israel,
for the LORD has a controversy with the inhabitants of the land.
There is no faithfulness or steadfast love,
and no knowledge of God in the land;
there is swearing, lying, murder, stealing, and committing adultery;
they break all bounds, and bloodshed follows bloodshed.
Therefore the land mourns,
and all who dwell in it languish,
and also the beasts of the field
and the birds of the heavens,
and even the fish of the sea are taken away.

Yet let no one contend,
and let none accuse,
for with you is my contention, O priest.
You shall stumble by day;
the prophet also shall stumble with you by night;
and I will destroy your mother.
My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge;
because you have rejected knowledge,
I reject you from being a priest to me.
And since you have forgotten the law of your God,
I also will forget your children.

The more they increased,
the more they sinned against me;
I will change their glory into shame.
They feed on the sin of my people;
they are greedy for their iniquity.
And it shall be like people, like priest;
I will punish them for their ways
and repay them for their deeds.
They shall eat, but not be satisfied;
they shall play the whore, but not multiply,
because they have forsaken the LORD
to cherish [11] whoredom, wine, and new wine,
which take away the understanding.
My people inquire of a piece of wood,
and their walking staff gives them oracles.
For a spirit of whoredom has led them astray,
and they have left their God to play the whore.
They sacrifice on the tops of the mountains
and burn offerings on the hills,
under oak, poplar, and terebinth,
because their shade is good.
Therefore your daughters play the whore,
and your brides commit adultery.
I will not punish your daughters when they play the whore,
nor your brides when they commit adultery;
for the men themselves go aside with prostitutes
and sacrifice with cult prostitutes,
and a people without understanding shall come to ruin.

Though you play the whore, O Israel,
let not Judah become guilty.
Enter not into Gilgal,
nor go up to Beth-aven,
and swear not, "As the LORD lives."
Like a stubborn heifer,
Israel is stubborn;
can the LORD now feed them
like a lamb in a broad pasture?

Ephraim is joined to idols;
leave him alone.
When their drink is gone, they give themselves to whoring;
their rulers dearly love shame.
A wind has wrapped them in its wings,
and they shall be ashamed because of their sacrifices. (ESV)

Commenting on verses 7-10, Derek Kidner writes:

While it may look at first sight as if the LORD is speaking of the nation growing in sin as it grows in size, the *they* of verse 8 means certainly the priests; therefore these men are surely the subject of verse 7 as well: *The more priests there were, the more they sinned against Me*. And we can recognize the picture. A protected and exclusive group will easily grow arrogant, and then cynical and shameless. Added to this was the tempting fact that the sin offerings, which were prime lambs or kids, were priestly perquisites: 'The priest who offers it shall eat it' (Lev. 6:26).

So the charge of verse 8, *They feed on the sins of My people*, may be quite literal. To a degenerate set of priests, the more sin the better: there would be all the more flesh to eat. The fact that a sin offering was a thing 'most holy ... given to you to take away the guilt of the community by making atonement for them' would mean nothing to them. On the other hand, since in times of moral decadence consciences grow hard, and sacrifices scarce, the meaning may be metaphorical: simply that the priests love and relish the prevailing wickedness.

So comes the blunt prediction, like people, like priests – a saying which, taken on its own, might either brand the priests as, so to speak, clerical chameleons, forever matching their color to their social context (a phenomenon by no means obsolete), or else, as the Hebrew idiom would equally allow, it might imply the converse: that the people would be sinking to the level of their priests. But in fact it is a saying about judgment: a warning that there will be no exemptions. No privilege will shelter this supposed elite. There is a strikingly similar prophecy in Isaiah 24:1-3, speaking of the end time, where the same Hebrew phrase, 'like people, like priests,' heads a list which demonstrates the equal exposure of us all to the day of God.

Read or sing Hymn 408 For All the Saints

Saturday (8/23) Read and discuss Hebrews 11:32–38

And what more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets—who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, were made strong out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. Women received back their dead by resurrection. Some were tortured, refusing to accept release, so that they might rise again to a better life. Others suffered mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword. They went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, mistreated—of whom the world was not worthy—wandering about in deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. (ESV)

Philip Edgcumbe Hughes writes:

The Christian ... needs to divest himself of sin which clings so closely, an expression which seems best understood as a clarification of what is meant by the weight or encumbrance of every kind which must be laid aside. It is precisely sin, of whatever kind, that impedes or slows down the Christian in the spiritual race, and conversely, anything, however innocent in itself, which impedes or slows down the Christian in the spiritual race is for that reason sinful and must, with God's help, be discarded. Indeed, self-discipline is itself an integral part of the daily spiritual contest, for "the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh"; the two are "opposed to each other, to prevent you from doing what you would," and only through living by the Spirit" will this conflict be won (Gal. 5:16-25; cf. Rom. 7:14-25).

The unencumbered Christian is the one who is fit and ready to *run the race that is set before us* and to do so *with perseverance*. One of the chief problems with the Hebrew Christians to whom this letter is addressed is that they have set out on the race but, after a good start (10:32-34), are now slackening in the will to persevere: their effort is decreasing (2:1), sin is holding them back (3:17-4:1), they need to recover their intensity of purpose (4:11), to shake off the sluggish mood into which they have fallen, to regain their confidence (10:35, 39) and their competitive spirit (12:12). The consideration that they are performing, as it were, in the presence and with the example of the veterans of the faith who courageously bore testimony in the centuries leading up to Christ's advent should remind them that they are engaging in a contest of the utmost seriousness and that their goal belongs not to the realm of time but of eternity. But there is Someone Else, infinitely more illustrious, who has run this race before them and on whom above all others their gaze should constantly be fixed, so that by the grace that flows from Him they may be strong to persevere and prevail. It is to Him that the writer of our epistle now directs our reader's attention.

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