

Guide for the Preparation for Worship on 7 September 2025

AM Worship

Call to Worship: Psalm 96:1-3

Opening Hymn: 286 Let Us Love and Sing and Wonder

Confession of Sin

Almighty and most merciful Father; We have erred and strayed from Your ways like lost sheep. We have followed too much the devices and desires of our own hearts. We have offended against Your holy laws. We have left undone those things which we ought to have done. And we have done those things which we ought not to have done; and there is no health in us. But You, O Lord, have mercy upon us, miserable offenders. Spare those, O God, who confess their faults. Restore those who are penitent; According to Your promises declared to mankind in Christ Jesus our Lord. And grant, O most merciful Father; For His sake; That we may hereby live a godly, righteous, and sober life; To the glory of Your holy name. Amen.

Assurance of Pardon: Galatians 2:20

Hymn of Preparation: 290 Consider Well

Old Covenant Reading: Psalm 46:1-11

New Covenant Reading: Hebrews 11:39-12:3

Sermon Title: *Running Toward Jesus*

Hymn of Response: 466 My Faith Looks Up to Thee

Confession of Faith: Apostles Creed (p. 851)

Doxology (Hymn 568)

Closing Hymn: 488 May the Mind of Christ, My Savior

PM Worship

253 God, All Nature Sings Thy Glory

16A Preserve Me, O My God

214 Sing Praise to God Who Reigns Above

Old Covenant Reading: Hosea 5:1-14

New Covenant Reading: Romans 2:1-11

Sermon Title: *Who Will Help You?*

Sunday School – Making a Good Profession: Introduction & The Word of God

Suggested Preparations

Monday (9/1) Read and discuss Hebrews 11:39–12:3

And all these, though commended through their faith, did not receive what was promised, since God had provided something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect.

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right

hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted. (ESV)

Doug Moo writes:

In verses 1-2 and then again in verses 12-13, the author uses the widespread ancient activity of running a race to teach about the importance of dedicated application in living the life God has called us to. This focus dovetails with the author's central concern in his sermon, as he writes to believers who are flagging in zeal, tempted even to give up their rich spiritual position in Christ. This being the case, it is not the sprint that the author is thinking about, but the long-distance race. The author commends his audience for starting the race well (10:32-34). And, indeed, we often find that people who come to Christ display an initial burst of enthusiasm. But can they sustain it? This is what the author is worried about. The metaphor of the race he employs for these ends is not simple but complex, as the author touches on various specific comparisons of athletic competition and spiritual pilgrimage. Keeping our eyes fixed on the goal keeps runners on track: looking to the side or behind is often disastrous. So believers are to keep focused on Jesus, turning away from all the distractions that so easily creep in and put us off course. We will only run well if we divest ourselves of extraneous burdens. When I competed in track many years ago, we would often train with weights affixed to our ankles – but we did not compete in meets with those weights on!

Athletes are spurred on by the example of those who have competed successfully. Coaches often bring star athletes from the past into the locker room to provide an example of what competing well looks like. And so we also run our race surrounded by a “cloud of witnesses.” ... These believers from the past “witness” to us through their unbreakable faith, even when faced with overwhelming pressure. If they can trust in these circumstances, our author is saying, surely you can trust too!

Read or sing Hymn 286 Let Us Love and Sing and Wonder

Tuesday (9/2) 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 Edgecumbe Hughes writes:

The language is vividly descriptive of the savage indignities and sever hardships which men and women of faith have been willing to endure rather than deny the truth by which they have been liberated. It depicts, moreover, the fierce hatred of the unbelieving world in its guilty hostility to the truth as it ruthlessly hunts and assaults those whose trust is in the immutability of the divine promises. Rejecting the world they are ejected by the world. For their refusal to conform to this world's fallen standards the world attempts to eliminate them and their witness. But it is precisely these hunted heroes of the faith *of whom* (as our author declares in a resounding parenthesis) *the world was not worthy*. Their nobility and their integrity shine forth all the more brilliantly against the world's dark hatred; for in a world darkened and degraded by sin they truly are the light, and theirs is the true blessedness and the everlasting reward. As those whose gaze is fixed on a better world they endure and by their faith they overcome, knowing as they do (and as the world refuses to know) that "the world passes away," but that "he who does the will of God abides forever" (1 Jn 2:7; 5:4).

Read or sing Hymn 290 Consider Well

Wednesday (9/3) Read and discuss Psalm 46

God is our refuge and strength,
a very present help in trouble.
Therefore we will not fear though the earth give way,
though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea,
though its waters roar and foam,
though the mountains tremble at its swelling. Selah

There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God,
the holy habitation of the Most High.
God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved;
God will help her when morning dawns.
The nations rage, the kingdoms totter;
he utters his voice, the earth melts.
The LORD of hosts is with us;
the God of Jacob is our fortress. Selah

Come, behold the works of the LORD,
how he has brought desolations on the earth.
He makes wars cease to the end of the earth;
he breaks the bow and shatters the spear;
he burns the chariots with fire.
"Be still, and know that I am God.
I will be exalted among the nations,

I will be exalted in the earth!”
The LORD of hosts is with us;
the God of Jacob is our fortress. Selah (ESV)

Tim Keller writes:

Until recently no one imagined the possibility of the world itself being destroyed, but today our films are filled with ways it could happen. But if you have this God as your God, you can face even such cataclysms without any fear. It doesn't say here that God will help you if you get into a strong refuge. It says He *is* that refuge. God is a stronghold or city that cannot be bombed or destroyed. Though earthquakes and tidal waves dissolve the solid world and civilizations melt, His rule is unshaken. If God is with you, even the worst thing that happens to you – death – only makes you infinitely happier and greater.

Nothing is truly solid, trustworthy, and lasting but God. Nor can anything thwart Him. Even the rage and assaults of others against God and His people and His cause will only be ultimately used by Him for redemptive purposes. No matter how bleak the prospects seem or how overwhelming the opposition, the city of God – the heavenly community and reality – cannot be harmed but can only triumph. Why? Because that reality and community are in God Himself. There is no more proper response to really seeing God as He is – transcendent beyond all imagination – than to be still and adore.

Read or sing Hymn 466 My Faith Looks Up to Thee

Thursday (9/4) Read and discuss Romans 2:1–11

Therefore you have no excuse, O man, every one of you who judges. For in passing judgment on another you condemn yourself, because you, the judge, practice the very same things. We know that the judgment of God rightly falls on those who practice such things. Do you suppose, O man—you who judge those who practice such things and yet do them yourself—that you will escape the judgment of God? Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance? But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed.

He will render to each one according to his works: to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; but for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury. There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek, but glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek. [11] For God shows no partiality. (ESV)

Now, Paul isn't saying something so frivolous as suggesting that every person who condemns homosexual behavior, drug abuse, arson, or fraud is in fact engaging in that particular behavior him or herself.

Paul's accusation is much more penetrating than that.

He begins with where they agree: "We know that the judgment of God rightly falls on those who practice such things." But then he points out that those who imagine that they are in better standing with God because they lead socially respectable lives are every bit as guilty before God as the gluttons and drunkards that they are condemning.

Three points:

1. First, the portrait of sin and rebellion that we saw in chapter one is not a portrait of a small group of particularly evil people. It is what every single fallen human being is like if God simply leaves us to ourselves. When I was a small child, it used to bother me whenever I was with my mother, and we saw a drunk or a bum. For, inevitably, my mom would say: "There but for the grace of God go I." Everything inside me wanted to cry out "No! I would never be like that wretch." But now I have acknowledge that my mom was right about that too! Please realize, that apart from the grace of God, you would be as vile as the worst sinners on earth.
2. Second, even as a Christian, none of us has been so transformed by God's sanctifying grace that when we look at the sins Paul lists in chapter one we don't catch at least a glimpse of ourselves looking back at us in the mirror of God's word. There is **no place for the condemning spirit in the Christian life**. Apart from God's saving grace we would be as filthy as the worst of sinners – and even with God's justifying and sanctifying grace, we still sin daily in thought, word, and deed. There is simply **no room ever for us to try to lift ourselves up by putting other people down**.
3. Third, Paul is exposing a real danger in these verses that we need to take heed of lest we fall into temptation. If, in God's kindness, you have been blessed with a good education, a middle-class lifestyle, and meaningful exposure to the church – it is pretty easy to look good and be respected by all the people in your workplace or community. I grew up in a church like that. Sure, people freely denied Christ's substitutionary atonement and the bodily resurrection of Jesus – but they were very respectable. Now I have nothing against being respectable. It is a wonderful thing to live in a community where families all go to the park for Fourth of July picnics, where people speak politely to one another, honor their contracts, and do those things which really make a community work. I'm in favor of all such things. But if a person is doing that **for their own glory** rather than **for the glory of God** – then they are a stench in the nostrils of the Living God and unless they repent they are heading straight to hell.

Please remember that the root sin that Paul is writing about is the rebellion of idolatry. Truth be told, it is just as easy to exchange the truth about God for a lie in a corporate boardroom as it is sitting drunk in the gutter outside of a bar. In fact, it might be easier – because everyone is going to praise you for the former while many people might try to get you help when your life is so obviously a mess.

Friday (9/5) Read and discuss Hosea 5:1–14

Hear this, O priests!
Pay attention, O house of Israel!
Give ear, O house of the king!
For the judgment is for you;
for you have been a snare at Mizpah
and a net spread upon Tabor.
And the revolvers have gone deep into slaughter,
but I will discipline all of them.

I know Ephraim,
and Israel is not hidden from me;
for now, O Ephraim, you have played the whore;
Israel is defiled.
Their deeds do not permit them
to return to their God.
For the spirit of whoredom is within them,
and they know not the LORD.

The pride of Israel testifies to his face;
Israel and Ephraim shall stumble in his guilt;
Judah also shall stumble with them.
With their flocks and herds they shall go
to seek the LORD,
but they will not find him;
he has withdrawn from them.
They have dealt faithlessly with the LORD;
for they have borne alien children.
Now the new moon shall devour them with their fields.

Blow the horn in Gibeah,
the trumpet in Ramah.
Sound the alarm at Beth-aven;
we follow you, O Benjamin!
Ephraim shall become a desolation
in the day of punishment;
among the tribes of Israel
I make known what is sure.
The princes of Judah have become
like those who move the landmark;

upon them I will pour out
 my wrath like water.
Ephraim is oppressed, crushed in judgment,
 because he was determined to go after filth.
But I am like a moth to Ephraim,
 and like dry rot to the house of Judah.

When Ephraim saw his sickness,
 and Judah his wound,
then Ephraim went to Assyria,
 and sent to the great king.
But he is not able to cure you
 or heal your wound.
For I will be like a lion to Ephraim,
 and like a young lion to the house of Judah.
I, even I, will tear and go away;
 I will carry off, and no one shall rescue. (ESV)

Derek Kidner writes:

There is no pretense here that reconciliation can be easy, or penitence a mere gesture of apology. The whole book is, from one angle, a study of what it means to turn back to God [or better, *being turned back to God*]. So in this passage the nation is confronted with two unconsidered facts: the stranglehold of its own habits, and the hiddenness of God for worshippers who are insincere.

The first of these is swiftly demonstrated, point after point, in verses 4 and 5. To say that *Their deeds do not permit them to return* may well have a double meaning: not only that sinners are the prisoners of their habits, but that their actions, persisted in, will unsay their pious words. The second half of the verse delves deeper, beneath the habits to the fickle spirit, and beneath the fickleness itself to the fundamental lack: *they do not acknowledge the LORD*. This is the hiatus at the heart of all nominal religion. But verse 5 points out another obstacle to a reunion. Sin not only alienates: it saddles one with guilt – and guilt is written all over this nation, not by the shamefaced looks that normally betray it, but by the very brazenness that would deny it.

So they must learn that God is not the prisoner of His sacraments. Verse 6 sees them going through the due procedures of religion, sparing no expense to gain access to God; but there is nobody home. It is a spectacle that meets us in all the prophets of the time; for this was a religious age, and if there is one thing more odious to God than plain iniquity it is what Isaiah 1:13 calls ‘worthless assemblies’ – surplined sin, aggravated in this case by the fertility rites which produced a crop of *illegitimate children* in both senses of the word, literal and spiritual. All this may explain the cryptic mention

of the disastrous ‘new moon’ in verse 7, for (as Isaiah went on to say) ‘Your New Moon feasts and your appointed festivals I hate with all My being’ (Isa. 1:14). The very festivals that were relied on to placate God would be the sharpest provocation of Him.

Read or sing Hymn 488 May the Mind of Christ, My Savior

Saturday (9/6) Read and discuss Hebrews 11:39–12:3

And all these, though commended through their faith, did not receive what was promised, since God had provided something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect.

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted. (ESV)

Amy Peeler writes:

As the community runs this long, hard race with this cloud of witnesses around them, they are a certain kind of people – namely, those who put away weight and sin: *as we lay aside every weight, particularly the entangling sin*. The verbal form here is a middle participle, and many interpreters have chosen to show its dependence on the main hortatory subjunctive verb, “let us run,” by making it imperatival (“let us lay aside”). Alternatively, this participle could align with the first participle (“we have”) as another affirmation. Just as they already have the cloud of witnesses, they have already put aside various things in order to confess Christ and begin the race. Instead of a command, “Do this!” the author affirms that they already *have* done this. They have not, however, laid aside *every* weight and sin that will appear in their lives, and therefore need to continue. A reading that acknowledges both past action and future continuance agrees with the previous section of the letter where the author recalls the good they have already done and urges them toward endurance rather than the taking up of new habits. Hence, putting aside these things initially does not mean that one can rest, because the threat of entanglement ever remains. The continual threat leads to the necessity of a *continual* laying aside of the entangling realities.

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