

Guide for the Preparation for Worship on 21 September 2025

AM Worship

Call to Worship: Psalm 98:1-3

Opening Hymn: 216 Praise to the Lord, the Almighty

Confession of Sin

Almighty God, Who are rich in mercy to all those who call upon You; Hear us as we humbly come to You confessing our sins; And imploring Your mercy and forgiveness. We have broken Your holy laws by our deeds and by our words; And by the sinful affections of our hearts. We confess before You our disobedience and ingratitude, our pride and willfulness; And all our failures and shortcomings toward You and toward fellow men. Have mercy upon us, Most merciful Father; And of Your great goodness grant that we may hereafter serve and please You in newness of life; Through the merit and mediation of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Assurance of Pardon: John 14:1-3

Hymn of Preparation: 231 What'er My God Ordains Is Right

Old Covenant Reading: Isaiah 64:1-12

New Covenant Reading: Hebrews 12:4-11

Sermon Title: *Fatherly Discipline*

Hymn of Response: 493 Savior, Teach Me, Day by Day

Confession of Faith: Ten Commandments

Doxology (Hymn 568)

Closing Hymn: 238 Lord, with Glowing Heart I'd Praise Thee

PM Worship

159 Abide with Me

28 To You, O LORD, I Cry (1-4)

28 To You, O LORD, I Cry (5-8)

Old Covenant Reading: Hosea 6:7-7:16

New Covenant Reading: Romans 5:12-21

Sermon Title: *Exposing Sin*

No Sunday School – Fellowship Lunch

Suggested Preparations

Monday (9/15) Read and discuss Hebrews 12:4–11

In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons?

“My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord,
nor be weary when reproof by him.
For the Lord disciplines the one he loves,
and chastises every son whom he receives.”

It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. (ESV)

Doug Moo writes:

The earthly family provides the writers of Scripture with perhaps the most fruitful metaphor for the new-covenant people of God. Early Christians commonly addressed each other in terms drawn from family life, as is clear from the common New Testament address of fellow Christians as “brothers and sisters.” The author to the Hebrews, following the lead of other early Christians, extends that “siblingship” to include Jesus Christ himself. A central argument of the author in 2:10-18 is that Jesus has fully identified with humans and is therefore part of the same family. He has been “made like them” in every way is not to address humans as “brothers and sisters.” The author draws out the spiritual implications of this identification: Jesus can be a merciful high priest, able to identify with every human weakness and challenge.

However, perhaps the most evocative application of the family metaphor to spiritual matters in all the New Testament comes in Hebrews 12:5-11. Here the author presents our awesome God as the loving father who disciplines His sons and daughters – always perfectly and wisely and always with our best interests in view. It is hard to imagine any greater encouragement than knowing that, in whatever I face, I am being directed and supported by the loving God who sovereignly controls every aspect of this world.

Read or sing Hymn 216 Praise to the Lord, the Almighty

Tuesday (9/16) Read and discuss Luke 7:36–50

One of the Pharisees asked him to eat with him, and he went into the Pharisee’s house and reclined at table. And behold, a woman of the city, who was a sinner, when she learned that he was reclining at table in the Pharisee’s house, brought an alabaster flask of ointment, and standing behind him at his feet, weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head and kissed his feet and anointed them with the ointment. Now when the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, “If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what sort of woman this is who is touching him, for she is a sinner.” And Jesus answering said to him, “Simon, I have something to say to you.” And he answered, “Say it, Teacher.”

“A certain moneylender had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. When they could not pay, he cancelled the debt of both. Now which of them will love him more?” Simon answered, “The one, I suppose, for whom he cancelled the larger debt.” And he said to him, “You have judged rightly.” Then turning toward the woman he said to Simon, “Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave me no water for my feet, but she has wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not ceased to kiss my feet. You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment. Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven—for she loved much. But he who is forgiven little, loves little.” And he said to her, “Your sins are forgiven.” Then those who were at table with him began to say among themselves, “Who is this, who even forgives sins?” And he said to the woman, “Your faith has saved you; go in peace.” (ESV)

In verse 41, Jesus speaks of a man who owes a vast sum of money ... whose debt his master cancelled. David Garland writes:

If the large debtor in the parable applies to the woman, then her elaborate expression of love to Jesus means that He is the one who forgives sins. The statements in 5:21, 24, and 7:49 “are clear authorial affirmations that Jesus has the power to forgive sins (Kilgallen).” Faith in Him marks the moment of forgiveness that cleansed the woman’s heart. As the story unfolds, it will become clearer that this forgiveness does not come cheap. The one who is forgiven much should love much because it cost so much to the one who forgives so much.

The woman responds with gratitude to Jesus. Her gratitude differs from that of the Pharisee in Jesus’ parable who is thankful to God because he is so much better than others: the robbers, rogues, adulterers, and tax collectors (18:11). This woman’s thankful spirit recognizes how God’s grace has saved her in spite of herself. This kind of gratitude should fill the lives of Christ followers. It reminds us that we are not self-sufficient but totally dependent on God. It directs our feelings outward in showing love toward others rather than inward, where it congeals into viscous lumps of self-pity. It stifles that ugly competitive spirit that looks down on others who do not measure up to our standards. They are judged to be less accomplished in life than we are, less dedicated, less worthy, and just plain less than us. When we measure ourselves against others, we always come out head and shoulders above them and become smug. A thankful spirit recognizes that all we are and can become is a result of God’s grace.

Read or sing Hymn 231 What’er My God Ordains Is Right

Wednesday (9/17) Read and discuss Isaiah 64

Oh that you would rend the heavens and come down,
that the mountains might quake at your presence—
as when fire kindles brushwood

and the fire causes water to boil—
to make your name known to your adversaries,
and that the nations might tremble at your presence!
When you did awesome things that we did not look for,
you came down, the mountains quaked at your presence.
From of old no one has heard
or perceived by the ear,
no eye has seen a God besides you,
who acts for those who wait for him.
You meet him who joyfully works righteousness,
those who remember you in your ways.
Behold, you were angry, and we sinned;
in our sins we have been a long time, and shall we be saved?
We have all become like one who is unclean,
and all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment.
We all fade like a leaf,
and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.
There is no one who calls upon your name,
who rouses himself to take hold of you;
for you have hidden your face from us,
and have made us melt in the hand of our iniquities.

But now, O LORD, you are our Father;
we are the clay, and you are our potter;
we are all the work of your hand.
Be not so terribly angry, O LORD,
and remember not iniquity forever.
Behold, please look, we are all your people.
Your holy cities have become a wilderness;
Zion has become a wilderness,
Jerusalem a desolation.
Our holy and beautiful house,
where our fathers praised you,
has been burned by fire,
and all our pleasant places have become ruins.
Will you restrain yourself at these things, O LORD?
Will you keep silent, and afflict us so terribly? (ESV)

R. Reed Lessing writes:

David once prayed, “Take not Your Holy Spirit from me.” Can you hear the problem in David’s words? He is well aware that his sin could drive away the Spirit. And this is the human dilemma. We don’t need the Holy Spirit just for a season; we need Him always and forevermore. Yet this vital gift we need is one we ourselves cannot grasp. We must be born again of water and the Spirit, and the Spirit is like the wind, which blows where it wills. We can chase the wind, but we cannot capture it, and we certainly cannot

contain it. Or the Spirit may be likened to a bird, the most beautiful bird in the whole world. We need that bird more than anything else, but if we reach out our hand to seize it and domesticate it, the bird flies away, leaving us empty-handed, with a deep void inside.

One day, the Holy Spirit, flying like a dove, spotted a Man standing in the water, a Man who committed no sin and in whose mouth no deceit was found. Indeed, this Man had been conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit. The dove descended upon Jesus and *remained* on Him. The way John puts it echoes Gen 6:3 by way of contrast. We can see this more clearly from the Septuagint, “My Spirit will not *remain* among these men forever, for they are flesh.” Unlike the dove in Gen 8:9, this Dove alighted on a permanent resting place – Jesus.

The activity of the Spirit in and among the people of God, in both the OT and NT, is possible only because the Spirit has returned to the human race through the incarnation of God in a man, Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Jesus was “full of the Holy Spirit” (Lk 4:1) and carried out His ministry “in the power of the Spirit” (Lk 4:14). After His sacrificial death, Jesus Christ was “designated the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by [His] resurrection from the dead” (Rom 1:4). The risen Christ breathes on his disciples and says, “Receive the Holy Spirit.” He tells them to remain in Jerusalem until they are clothed with power from on high. Then after His ascension into heaven He sends the Spirit upon His infant church, fulfilling Joel’s words: “I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh.” ... The Holy Spirit is poured into our lives and dwells in our hearts. Indeed, we are “sealed with the promised Holy Spirit” as the down payment of our eternal inheritance. The curse of sin is undone, and the Holy Spirit is back. “The LORD and giver of life” (Nicene Creed) bestows eternal life. Thanks be to God!

Read or sing Hymn 493 Savior, Teach Me, Day by Day

Thursday (9/18) Read and discuss Romans 5:12–21

Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned—for sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law. Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come.

But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if many died through one man’s trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many. And the free gift is not like the result of that one man’s sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brought justification. For if, because of one man’s trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ.

Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous. Now the law came in to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, so that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. (ESV)

The problem is stated so simply in verses 18 and 19 that we could almost miss its cosmic significance:

“One trespass led to condemnation for **all** men” and ...

“by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners.”

The rebellion of our first representative head in eating the forbidden fruit was clear, simple, and utterly devastating in its consequences. As Gordon Keddie put it:

“So simple an act. So hard to reverse. The Son of God would have to taste death before those words ‘take and eat’ would become words of blessing again.”¹

And yet, here is the main thing that the Holy Spirit wants us to understand from today's passage: The Son of God did choose to taste death ... and so now He offers Himself to His people with these words: “Take. Eat. This is My body, given for you. Do this in remembrance of Me.”

Sin is a dreadful enemy – but sin is no match for our Jesus.

... where sin increased, grace abounded **all the more**, so that, as sin reigned in death, **grace also might reign through righteousness** leading to eternal life **through Jesus Christ our Lord**.

Therefore, we long, in hope, for that day ...

... When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written:

“Death is swallowed up in victory.”
“O death, where is your victory?
O death, where is your sting?”

The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

¹ Paraphrased from memory.

How is sin to be defeated in our own lives on this side of Christ's Second Coming? For many Jews the answer would have been obvious – God gave us the Mosaic Law so that **through the Law we could overcome sin**. To them, and to many in our own day, what Paul says next is absolutely shocking.

Verses 20 and 21:

Now the law came in **to increase the trespass**, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, so that, as sin reigned in death, **grace also might reign through righteousness** leading to eternal life **through Jesus Christ our Lord**.

Rather than the Law being the primary means for defeating sin, Paul says that one of the reasons why the Law was given was so that trespasses would increase. That not only sounds crazy, it sounds like it might be blasphemous. Wasn't the Law God's great gift to us?

Well yes, it is! As Paul will go on to say in chapter 7: "the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good." There is nothing wrong with the Law. The reason why the Law can't defeat sin in my life isn't because there is something deficient in the Law. It is because there is something dreadfully deficient in me. To think that Law can defeat sin would be to imagine that WE can defeat sin through our own efforts at law-keeping.

The Law can restrain behavior and thereby contribute to a type of civic righteousness. This is particularly true when the Law is enforced, either through civil magistrates or simply through people being ashamed of being known as breakers of the law. But the Law is powerless to restrain sin because it has no ability to change the fallen human heart.

Paul is going to develop this theme more in Romans chapter 7. Today, we only need to see three things:

1. First, Paul is very precise in his language. He does not say that the Law increased sin. He said that the Law increased trespasses. Apart from specific laws it is pretty easy to pretend that we are basically good people – people who would obey God's commands if we only had them. Then we read the Ten Commandments, and if we try to keep them perfectly we quickly discover that not coveting is a lot harder in practice than it is in theory. Or we read Christ's application of the Law in the Sermon on the Mount, and we realize how frequently we have had bad thoughts about other drivers – particularly other Massachusetts drivers – and then we remember these words from our Lord:

But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, 'You fool!' will be liable to the hell of fire.

By giving us specific commandments and teaching, the Lord is not making us more wicked. But the actual transgressions of His Law brings our wickedness out into

the open. The Law shines a giant spotlight on our corrupt nature, by multiplying are actual transgressions of the Law, so that we will be convicted of sin and flee to Jesus Christ.

2. Second, Paul's bigger point is that where sin did abound **grace did all the more abound**. Think of Jesus as an invading Army who came to wage war against sin's dominion. Jesus doesn't simply come out on top. Jesus sweeps sin from the field of battle – "so that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." And ...
3. Third, when Paul speaks about grace – he is not talking about an abstract theological topic. For Paul, everything good that we receive from the hand of Almighty God comes to us in and through Jesus Christ.

Friday (9/19) Read and discuss Hosea 6:7–7:16.

But like Adam they transgressed the covenant;
there they dealt faithlessly with me.
Gilead is a city of evildoers,
tracked with blood.
As robbers lie in wait for a man,
so the priests band together;
they murder on the way to Shechem;
they commit villainy.
In the house of Israel I have seen a horrible thing;
Ephraim's whoredom is there; Israel is defiled.

For you also, O Judah, a harvest is appointed.

When I restore the fortunes of my people,
when I would heal Israel,
the iniquity of Ephraim is revealed,
and the evil deeds of Samaria,
for they deal falsely;
the thief breaks in,
and the bandits raid outside.
But they do not consider
that I remember all their evil.
Now their deeds surround them;
they are before my face.
By their evil they make the king glad,
and the princes by their treachery.
They are all adulterers;
they are like a heated oven
whose baker ceases to stir the fire,
from the kneading of the dough
until it is leavened.

On the day of our king, the princes
became sick with the heat of wine;
he stretched out his hand with mockers.
For with hearts like an oven they approach their intrigue;
all night their anger smolders;
in the morning it blazes like a flaming fire.
All of them are hot as an oven,
and they devour their rulers.
All their kings have fallen,
and none of them calls upon me.

Ephraim mixes himself with the peoples;
Ephraim is a cake not turned.
Strangers devour his strength,
and he knows it not;
gray hairs are sprinkled upon him,
and he knows it not.
The pride of Israel testifies to his face;
yet they do not return to the LORD their God,
nor seek him, for all this.

Ephraim is like a dove,
silly and without sense,
calling to Egypt, going to Assyria.
As they go, I will spread over them my net;
I will bring them down like birds of the heavens;
I will discipline them according to the report made to their congregation.
Woe to them, for they have strayed from me!
Destruction to them, for they have rebelled against me!
I would redeem them,
but they speak lies against me.

They do not cry to me from the heart,
but they wail upon their beds;
for grain and wine they gash themselves;
they rebel against me.
Although I trained and strengthened their arms,
yet they devise evil against me.
They return, but not upward;
they are like a treacherous bow;
their princes shall fall by the sword
because of the insolence of their tongue.
This shall be their derision in the land of Egypt. (ESV)

Commenting on chapter 7, verses 8-16, Derek Kidner writes:

The first line of this couplet, Ephraim mixes the with the nations, brings out the loss of conviction which left the people neither one thing nor the other: neither a light to the Gentiles nor an excusable product of paganism. The church in every age knows this temptation and tends to meet it either by retreat into itself or by melting into its surroundings. The Gospels demonstrate a better way in their account of the good physician and the friend of sinners: wholly himself yet wholly accessible, and as compassionate as he was uncompromising.

The second figure, of the man who thinks himself still in his prime, may recall to us (in muted terms) the plight of Samson, his strength devoured by the aliens whom he loved and hated, while ‘he did not know that the LORD had left him’ (Judges 16:20). For Israel there has been as yet no rude awakening like his. To this people, if not to others, the decline is doubly imperceptible, unnoticed through its gradualness and invisible to their pride. Yet the arrogance itself is a telltale sign of it – almost like the hardening lines in a face – and a fatal obstacle to their even considering repentance.

Read or sing Hymn 238 Lord, with Glowing Heart I’d Praise Thee

Saturday (9/20) Read and discuss Hebrews 12:4–11

In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons?

“My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord,
nor be weary when reproved by him.
For the Lord disciplines the one he loves,
and chastises every son whom he receives.”

It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. (ESV)

Tom Schreiner writes:

The decision facing the readers is momentous. Esau failed to get the blessing because he kicked it away, and when he desired to obtain it, the opportunity to receive it had passed. The readers should not let the comforts of the world beguile them so that they choose them instead of Jesus Christ. They should not turn away from the Lord so that they are defiled and unworthy to enter the heavenly city. They must strengthen themselves to

pursue the Lord and holiness so that they will see God and rejoice in Him forever.

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