

Guide for the Preparation for Worship on 1 March 2026

AM Worship

Call to Worship: Psalm 105:1-3

Opening Hymn: 172 Speak, O Lord

Confession of Sin

Almighty and everlasting God, Glorious Creator of all things, and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; We have sinned against Your holy Name, by failing to glorify You in our lives as your redeemed children. Our unthankfulness extends to every thought and deed, as well as to our failure to thank you with our lips. We have not lived to the praise of the glory of Your grace. We have not esteemed the reproach of Jesus Christ our Savior to be greater than the riches of this world. We have failed to estimate the infinite cost of the salvation won for us at the cross through the shed blood of Jesus. We have not been faithful to You as You have been faithful to us in all things. Father, forgive us for our ingratitude through the reconciling sacrifice of Jesus Christ our all-sufficient Mediator, we pray. Amen.

Assurance of Pardon: Colossians 1:11-14

Psalm of Preparation: 105C O Praise the LORD, His Deeds Make Known

Old Covenant Reading: Exodus 4:19-26

New Covenant Reading: Romans 9:14-29

Sermon Title: *Sovereign Love*

Hymn of Response: 242 Father, Long before Creation

Confession of Faith: Apostles Creed (p. 851)

Doxology (Hymn 568)

Closing Hymn: 263 O Savior, Precious Savior

PM Worship

211 We All Believe in One True God

116A I Love the LORD, for He Has Heard My Voice (1-4)

116A I Love the LORD, for He Has Heard My Voice (5-8)

Old Covenant Reading: Psalm 116

New Covenant Reading: 2 Corinthians 4:7-15

Sermon Title: *Death, Life, and the Power of God*

Adult Sunday School – Abraham Kuyper and Neo-Calvinism

Suggested Preparations

Monday (2/23) Read and discuss Exodus 4:19–26

And the LORD said to Moses in Midian, “Go back to Egypt, for all the men who were seeking your life are dead.” So Moses took his wife and his sons and had them ride on a donkey, and went back to the land of Egypt. And Moses took the staff of God in his hand.

And the LORD said to Moses, “When you go back to Egypt, see that you do before Pharaoh all the miracles that I have put in your power. But I will harden his heart, so that he will not let the people go. Then you shall say to Pharaoh, ‘Thus says the LORD, Israel is my firstborn son, and I say to you, “Let my son go that he may serve me.” If you refuse to let him go, behold, I will kill your firstborn son.’”

At a lodging place on the way the LORD met him and sought to put him to death. Then Zipporah took a flint and cut off her son’s foreskin and touched Moses’ feet with it and said, “Surely you are a bridegroom of blood to me!” So he let him alone. It was then that she said, “A bridegroom of blood,” because of the circumcision. (ESV)

Christopher Wright comments:

God affirms a family relationship with Israel by portraying himself as father and Israel emphatically as “my son, my firstborn.” This affirmation of the nature of God’s relationship to Israel comes before the making of the covenant at Mount Sinai. That is, the family metaphor for the relationship precedes the political one. Israel is the son of Yahweh the Father prior to their commitment as vassal to Yahweh the Great King. It is also the relationship to which Israel will appeal, even when that covenant lies broken and shattered by judgment and exile. It is a relationship that speaks of love and protection on the one hand, with obedience to fatherly authority on the other. In both respects it remains a powerful metaphor throughout Old Testament times, for God’s relationship both with the people of Israel as a whole and also with their king in particular. That scriptural tradition of what it means to be the son of God richly informs the consciousness of Jesus in His relationship with His Father and the presentation of Jesus as Son of God in the New Testament.

Read or sing Hymn 172 Speak, O Lord

Tuesday (2/24) Read and discuss Exodus 4:10–18

But Moses said to the LORD, “Oh, my Lord, I am not eloquent, either in the past or since you have spoken to your servant, but I am slow of speech and of tongue.” Then the LORD said to him, “Who has made man’s mouth? Who makes him mute, or deaf, or seeing, or blind? Is it not I, the LORD? Now therefore go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall speak.” But he said, “Oh, my Lord, please send someone else.” Then the anger of the LORD was kindled against Moses and he said, “Is there not Aaron, your brother, the Levite? I know that he can speak well. Behold, he is coming out to meet you, and when he sees you, he will be glad in his heart. You shall speak to him and put the words in his mouth, and I will be with your mouth and with his mouth and will teach you both what to do. He shall speak for you to the people, and he shall be your mouth, and you shall be as God to him. And take in your hand this staff, with which you shall do the signs.”

Moses went back to Jethro his father-in-law and said to him, “Please let me go back to my brothers in Egypt to see whether they are still alive.” And Jethro said to Moses, “Go in peace.” (ESV)

Kenneth Cherney writes:

The prophet’s reluctance to accept his commission from God is a regular, expected feature of a call/commissioning narrative. Probably only Jonah, however, surpasses Moses in the lengths to which he will go to duck his assignment. The message of the account in Exodus 3-4 is clear: Moses is not a self-appointed deliverer. He will speak with divine authority and govern by divine appointment; but if it had been up to him, he would have much preferred not to.

Moses’ reluctance to accept God’s call goes well beyond what ministers of the Gospel today should emulate. Yet there are important, fundamental similarities between his call and theirs. A desire to serve God’s people in the public ministry is commendable, but the desire is not itself a qualification. God has both called candidates who were unwilling and declined to call candidates who were eager to serve (Mk 5:18-19).

Gifts are not a prerequisite, either, since it is God who bestows or withholds these in the first place (Ex 4:11). To paraphrase an old saying, it is no harder for God to equip the called than to call the equipped. The annals of the church are full of stories of unimpressive candidates for ministry through whom God accomplished great things, and probably just as many highly gifted persons who entered the ministry and made a complete mess of it.

The *sine qua non* of ministry among God’s people is a call from God. Even Christ made a special point of not having selected His assignments independently; He had come because He was called and sent by God (e.g. John 7:28; 12:44). It is even more necessary for the Messiah’s undershepherds to be able to say the same.

Necessary, and comforting. When faced with adversity, Moses could truthfully tell his opponents that their problem was with God, not him; who was he, after all? (Numbers 16:8-10). On dark days in his ministry, Moses could truthfully remind God that he had not asked for his assignment and that therefore God owed him his help and support (Num. 11:10-15). The ability to pray, “LORD, I did not ask for this; You laid it on me. Now, help me!” is a comfort that minister of the Gospel would willingly forfeit.

Read or sing Psalm 105C O Praise the LORD, His Deeds Make Known

Wednesday (2/25) Read and discuss Romans 9:14–29

What shall we say then? Is there injustice on God's part? By no means! For he says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion." So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy. For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I might show my power in you, and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth." So then he has mercy on whomever he wills, and he hardens whomever he wills.

You will say to me then, "Why does he still find fault? For who can resist his will?" But who are you, O man, to answer back to God? Will what is molded say to its molder, "Why have you made me like this?" Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for dishonorable use? What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, in order to make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory—even us whom he has called, not from the Jews only but also from the Gentiles? As indeed he says in Hosea,

"Those who were not my people I will call 'my people,'
and her who was not beloved I will call 'beloved.'"

"And in the very place where it was said to them, 'You are not my people,'
there they will be called 'sons of the living God.'"

And Isaiah cries out concerning Israel: "Though the number of the sons of Israel be as the sand of the sea, only a remnant of them will be saved, for the Lord will carry out his sentence upon the earth fully and without delay." And as Isaiah predicted,

"If the Lord of hosts had not left us offspring,
we would have been like Sodom
and become like Gomorrah." (ESV)

Since everything exists for the glory of God, the manifestation of God's power and holy wrath against sin does bring Him glory. As I have, from time to time, suggested to several of you: If Adam and Eve had never fallen into sin, there would never have been a manifestation of God's holy wrath nor of His astonishing mercy and grace. The reality of sin, judgment, and deliverance glorifies God in a way that an endlessly sinless universe would not have.

But there is more going on here than judgment. Paul's emphasis comes in the purpose clause: "In order to make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy."

God has a purpose to reveal the glory of His mercy against a backdrop of evil.

Paul isn't trying to take us inside the mind of God, to show us why God chooses some and not others. Paul is rightly content to let God be God. What Paul is doing is holding forth a great principle that every true believer can grasp: It is precisely when we see the profound wickedness of sin, and what each sin deserves, that we begin to grasp the riches of the glory of God and His sovereign grace, in redeeming wicked people like us, and making us His very own sons and daughters.

The LORD having mercy upon whom He will have mercy, and hardening whom He wills, reveals the glory of His mercy.

Third, Paul makes clear that those who render judgment against God's sovereign grace, are badly misunderstanding what the LORD was saying to Moses in the Old Testament. They are objecting to God hardening the sinner's heart, but they are forgetting that this takes place in history with nothing but sinners.

Remember that pottery is made in two stages. First, the soft clay is formed into the object that the craftsmen is creating. Second, only after it is formed is it placed into the furnace and hardened.

When the LORD hardens Pharaoh's heart, that corresponds to the second stage when the potter glazes and fires the clay. By hardening Pharaoh's heart, the LORD is simply fixing it in the way that it was already aligned. This is key: The LORD wasn't turning Pharaoh's good heart into a bad one.

Here is why this is so important: Those who object to the LORD judging those whom He passes over, and those whose hearts He hardens, have a fundamentally wrong understanding of human nature. They are assuming that the LORD is starting either with a neutral material, or something precious like gold – and then the LORD is arbitrarily crafting some of that gold into beautiful vessels and transforming some of that gold into dross.

But as Paul makes clear with four quotations from the Old Testament, that isn't what is going on at all. The Potter is working with corrupted clay and defiled dirt. As John Murray points out:

Paul is not dealing [here] with God's sovereign rights over men as men but over men as sinners.¹

Think about this in terms of the analogy of God as the potter or artistic craftsmen. We ought not to imagine that the LORD goes around selecting only the finest materials for His masterpiece. Instead, we ought to be thinking of an artist who is picking out the materials for his project from the town dump.

¹ John Murray, *Romans*, Vol. II, p. 32.

If we see ourselves in this light, we will cease to marvel that the LORD would pass some over and stand in awe of the fact that the LORD chose us from the trash heap to be His own treasured possession and collectively the bride for His eternally beloved Son.

That's what Paul is straining for us to see. Paul not only wants to shut the mouths of those who would blasphemously attack the justice of the Living God. Paul wants to open our mouths that they would shew forth wonderous praise! And so we sing: "Amazing grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me!"

Read or sing Hymn 242 Father, Long before Creation

Thursday (2/26) Read and discuss Psalm 116

I love the LORD, because he has heard
my voice and my pleas for mercy.
Because he inclined his ear to me,
therefore I will call on him as long as I live.
The snares of death encompassed me;
the pangs of Sheol laid hold on me;
I suffered distress and anguish.
Then I called on the name of the LORD:
"O LORD, I pray, deliver my soul!"

Gracious is the LORD, and righteous;
our God is merciful.
The LORD preserves the simple;
when I was brought low, he saved me.
Return, O my soul, to your rest;
for the LORD has dealt bountifully with you.

For you have delivered my soul from death,
my eyes from tears,
my feet from stumbling;
I will walk before the LORD
in the land of the living.

I believed, even when I spoke:
"I am greatly afflicted";
I said in my alarm,
"All mankind are liars."

What shall I render to the LORD
for all his benefits to me?

I will lift up the cup of salvation
and call on the name of the LORD,
I will pay my vows to the LORD
in the presence of all his people.

Precious in the sight of the LORD
is the death of his saints.
O LORD, I am your servant;
I am your servant, the son of your maidservant.
You have loosed my bonds.
I will offer to you the sacrifice of thanksgiving
and call on the name of the LORD.
I will pay my vows to the LORD
in the presence of all his people,
in the courts of the house of the LORD,
in your midst, O Jerusalem.
Praise the LORD! (ESV)

Tim Keller writes:

The psalmist almost died. In his fear he called everyone a liar, but he trusted God even when his emotions were out of control. Now he has restructured his life on the basis of grateful love. The first mark of a thankful life is this: “I will call on Him as long as I live” (verse 2). To call on God’s name means two things in the Bible – to trust in him and nothing else for your salvation and to orient your whole life to prayer and worship. Grateful people should also *walk* before God (verse 9). This means to live conscious of him at all time. It is to be both “wholly exposed [and accountable] but wholly befriended [and loved]. Love the LORD, for He listens.

God saved the psalmist from death because His servants’ deaths are costly (“precious) and painful to Him (verse 15). The psalmist feels He has been virtually resurrected back into the land of the living. God does, of course, allow His people to die, but they are so precious to Him that He will someday pay the ultimate price on the cross so that our physical death will be just an entrance into greater life (2 Corinthians 5:1-10). Therefore, we can drink “the cup of salvation” to Him, celebrating this salvation in worship. But that is only because He drank the cup of divine wrath on sin, for us (Luke 22:42).

Friday (2/27) Read and discuss 2 Corinthians 4:7–15

But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to

despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our bodies. For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So death is at work in us, but life in you.

Since we have the same spirit of faith according to what has been written, "I believed, and so I spoke," we also believe, and so we also speak, knowing that he who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and bring us with you into his presence. For it is all for your sake, so that as grace extends to more and more people it may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God. (ESV)

David Garland writes:

Paul's acknowledgment that he always is given over to death gets at the core of the confusion and complaints about his apostolic ministry. How does the unsurpassed glory of the ministry of the Spirit harmonize with unrelenting death? How can such wonderful treasure be properly exhibited in such a lowly clay pot? Paul cannot cover up his tribulations and does not wish to do so. Instead, he exults in them and explains why the divine glory must be contained in the earthen vessel of his frail, pummeled body. It shows that his extraordinary apostolic power can only come from God and not himself. Ashley shows that the example of Christ "crucified as a result of weakness" but living "as a result of God's power" was Paul's model for Christian ministry. Rather than discrediting his apostolic ministry, Paul's hardships point to the all-transcending power of God working in and through him. This explanation gets at the heart of the gospel. The glory of the ministry must be seen in terms of both cross and resurrection. Paul reads the cross into all his experiences and interprets the ups and downs of his ministry theologically as carrying around in his body the death of Jesus to manifest the life (the resurrection) of Jesus. All his suffering is part of God's design to spread the gospel.

Read or sing Hymn 263 O Savior, Precious Savior

Saturday (2/28) Read and discuss Exodus 4:19–26

And the LORD said to Moses in Midian, "Go back to Egypt, for all the men who were seeking your life are dead." So Moses took his wife and his sons and had them ride on a donkey, and went back to the land of Egypt. And Moses took the staff of God in his hand.

And the LORD said to Moses, "When you go back to Egypt, see that you do before Pharaoh all the miracles that I have put in your power. But I will harden his heart, so that he will not let the people go. Then you shall say to Pharaoh, 'Thus says the LORD, Israel is my

firstborn son, and I say to you, “Let my son go that he may serve me.” If you refuse to let him go, behold, I will kill your firstborn son.”

At a lodging place on the way the LORD met him and sought to put him to death. Then Zipporah took a flint and cut off her son’s foreskin and touched Moses’ feet with it and said, “Surely you are a bridegroom of blood to me!” So he let him alone. It was then that she said, “A bridegroom of blood,” because of the circumcision. (ESV)

The events in the last paragraph are a shocking mystery to us. Like a bolt out of the blue, the LORD is suddenly seeking to put someone, presumably Moses, to death. Given the numerous parallels between Jacob and Moses, it seems likely that this is part of the connection between Jacob leaving Padan Aram and his father-in-law to travel to Canaan where he had been born and raised with Moses leaving Midian and his father-in-law to travel back to Egypt where he had been born and raised. In the case of Jacob, the Patriarch had a mysterious encounter with the LORD in the night which changed him forever. We may anticipate that something like that is happening here with Moses. That said, it is helpful to remind ourselves of the things that we simply do not know for sure about this passage.

Christopher Wright comments:

1. We do not know for certain who was attacked. The text names no names (other than Yahweh and Zipporah). Some think that since she circumcised one of her sons, it was that the son who was at death’s door. But since Moses has been the active focus of all the preceding paragraphs, it seems almost certain that Moses was the “him” whom God had brought to the point of death.
2. We do not know for certain whose “feet” Zipporah touched with her son’s bleeding foreskin. ... It might have been the circumcised son, but the “bridegroom” words that she spoke were probably addressed to Moses, which probably means that [it was at Moses’s feet].
3. Does this mean, then, that Moses himself was uncircumcised, and Zipporah’s act constituted a kind of vicarious circumcision for him too? This seems unlikely. Moses had been with his parents for three months before being floated on the Nile, and, as the devout Hebrews they appear to have been, they would almost certainly have circumcised him. Rather, if the fact that Moses’s son was uncircumcised constituted the act of disobedience that had led to this encounter with God, then touching Moses with the blood of circumcision was a kind of atonement that spared his life.
4. We do not know why the son had not been circumcised. That has not stopped commentators through the ages guessing. A common explanation has been that the rite was not practiced among the Midianites, and Moses had negligently accommodated to them during his stay with Jethro. Since Zipporah knew immediately what to do, how to do it, and what needed to be said, this seems unlikely. Others have blamed Zipporah herself, assuming that it must have been her

opposition that had prevented Moses doing the deed when the child was born. Blaming a woman, of course, is an excuse men have found useful ever since Adam and Eve, and we must insist that we are simply not told the reason why Moses had not obeyed God's command. Blaming somebody else hardly helps.

On Wright's fourth point, we should add something that we can tell. The failure to circumcise his son makes clear that Moses had not yet been focusing his life on the covenant promises that the LORD had made to Abraham which were sealed by circumcising his descendants on the eighth day.

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