

*October 2018 Bible Reading Plan*

*Themes following  
the October Preaching Schedule*

*From*

*Philippians 2:5-13*

*Acts 20:32 and Exodus 33:18-19; 34:6-7*

*And*

*Mark 2:1-12*

*Preach the Word of God*

*Believe & Live the Word of God*

*Read and Study the Word of God*



## *A Message from Bill Tyson*

In January 2016 the WPC Session launched a 6 month emphasis on personal Bible Reading and Study. They had recognized that our personal reading and study of the Word of God is vital to our growth in Christ. The first two Psalms introduce the entire Psalter by focusing on two complementary and interrelated disciplines – if I may call them that – namely meditation upon the Word of God and Submission to the Son of God.

The first Psalm addresses the Word of God and tells us that the person who delights in and meditates upon the law [the revealed Word of God] will be “like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does he prospers.” It is no accident that the longest Psalm – the 119<sup>th</sup> – devotes almost every one of its 176 verses to devotion to the revealed Word of God. It is not enough to possess it in one’s home. One must read and study it, meditate upon it day and night, if he is to spiritually prosper in the Christian life.

Those first 6 months of our use of the Bible Reading Plan were designed to help us know how to study the Bible, learning principles and guidelines for how one interprets the Scriptures as he reads. Subsequently we continued to prepare the Bible Reading Plan in the hope that many would continue to use it, and that it would aid many in doing what some had confessed they had never achieved – the establishment of a regular practice of reading and studying God’s Word. I hope it has achieved that goal in a number of lives.

The second Psalm emphasizes the complementary and interrelated truth that it is vital that we not only read and study God’s Word, but submit to Jesus as our Lord, the exalted Son of God, who came to redeem us from our sin.

God appointed the Preaching of the Word of God as a chief means of our growth (see 2 Timothy 4:1-5 – which I believe was used as the charge to Chad Watkins, your new pastor) and we should diligently devote ourselves to hearing those God has called to faithfully proclaim his Word. Psalm 1 makes it clear that we should also personally read and study and meditate upon the Word of God. But in addition, it is vital that we “Believe and Live the Word of God.”

I am personally delighted that you have a pastor committed to the faithful preaching and teaching of God’s Word. And I hope that our exploration of the Scriptures over these 2 years and 10 months has helped a number of you explore God’s Word more seriously and deeply than perhaps ever before. It is of utmost importance that you continue to devote yourself to God’s revelation of himself and his will for your life by hearing the Word of God preached and taught, and by personally reading it daily as much as possible. But the final aspect of that process is to “Believe and Live the Word of God,” to receive it readily, and allow it to renew one’s mind so that by the Holy Spirit one’s life may be transformed little by little.

This is the last of the Bible Reading Plans that I will prepare for you, as I conclude all aspects of my ministry at Westminster. I do so with the confidence that you have a pastor who will continue the sound preaching and teaching of the Word of God, and that you have a Session who will lead and care for you well. I am very grateful for the years the Lord blessed me to share with you.

Later in this month’s BRP I will jot a brief note about what I plan to be doing in these latter years of my life, should the Lord give me strength and perseverance to follow through my resolve (p 25).

I again want to encourage you to use the Westminster Confession of Faith and Larger and Shorter Catechisms in conjunction with your reading of Scripture to guide you into the truths of the Word of God. You have in those documents a *treasure* of Biblical teaching waiting for your exploration and study. They will serve you well if you will but use them along with the Scriptures, not to take the place of the Scriptures by any means, but to guide you in your reading and study of the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments.

“And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified” (Acts 20:32).

*Bill Tyson*

If you did not read the introductory letter above, please take the time to do so in light of this being the final Bible Reading Plan I personally will prepare for WPC. -- Bill

Read Philippians 2:5-8.

As one reads through the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, he notes that there are a number of Covenants that unfold God’s redemptive plan – with Adam (although the word Covenant is not used there, but the concept is -- see Westminster Confession of Faith – WCF – chapter 7, paragraphs 1-3 – 7.1-3), with Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, and the New Covenant.

Theologians have discerned another covenant, often called the “Covenant of Redemption,” that seems to be implied in a number of passages, a Covenant made before the creation of the world between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. J. V. Fesko defines it in this manner: “At its most fundamental level, the covenant of redemption is the pre-temporal, intra-trinitarian agreement among Father, Son, and Holy Spirit to plan and execute the redemption of the elect. The covenant entails the appointment of the Son as surety [i.e., the One who would take responsibility for others] of the covenant of grace who accomplishes the redemption of the elect through His incarnation, perfect obedience, suffering, resurrection, and ascension. The covenant of redemption is also the root of the Spirit’s role to anoint and equip the Son for His mission as surety and to apply His finished work to the elect” (*The Trinity and the Covenant of Redemption*, pp 131f). “Pre-temporal” simply means before the creation of the world, and “intra-trinitarian” means by the persons *within* the Trinity, the Father, Son, and Spirit.

We won’t explore that further, but what unfolds here in Philippians 2:5-11 seems to reflect that covenant between the Father and the Son. Let’s look at a few passages – John 6:37-40 & 44-45, 17:1-9, 24 and Heb 10:5-10.

Read John 6:37-40 & 44-45, and then 17:1-9 & 24.

1. What does the Father give to the Son? (6:37,39; 17:2,6,9,24) \_\_\_\_\_

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2. What does the Son do? \_\_\_\_\_

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3. What evidence do you see in the passages read that Jesus existed before he came into this world? \_\_\_\_\_

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Read Hebrews 10:5-10.

4. God provided the sacrificial system of the Old Testament, yet here the writer

says that Jesus declared: “You have neither desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sin offerings’ (these are offered according to the law).” God gave the law through Moses, so what does he mean that God didn’t delight in these things he had ordained? \_\_\_\_\_

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(If you have time, read WCF 7.5).

5. Finally, how do the above relate to Philippians 2:5-11? \_\_\_\_\_

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***For your Meditation and Prayer:*** Reflect on the fact that our redemption was not an afterthought, as though God created Adam and Eve, expecting they would be faithful, and after the Fall developed a plan to redeem them. Although it may be difficult for us to fully understand, it is clear that God created Adam and Eve fully intending to execute his redemptive plan for the praise of his glorious grace. According to that plan, he chose a people to be redeemed “in Christ,” predestined them for adoption as sons, redeemed them by the blood of Christ, and ultimately will give them an inheritance “in Christ.” But the cost was tremendous, involving the sacrifice of his only Son, whom he loved from all eternity. And the Son willingly undertook to offer himself an atoning sacrifice to satisfy the justice of God, so that the Father could be both just and the justifier of the ungodly who trust in Christ (see Romans 3:26 and 4:5). Reflect on that, and lift up prayers of thanksgiving and praise.

Read Philippians 2:5-8, and then John 1:1-5 & 14-18, and Luke 1:26-35 & 39-43.

1. These passages describe the same thing in multiple ways. How does John 1:1-5 & 14 relate to Philippians 2:6-7? \_\_\_\_\_

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2. What role does Luke's account play in understanding this event? \_\_\_\_\_

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3. What is the significance of Elizabeth's exclamation in Luke 1:43? \_\_\_\_\_

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4. Does Luke 1:26-35 & 39-43 suggest two persons, each with a particular nature – one of God and one of man – or does it suggest one person with two natures? Read carefully. \_\_\_\_\_

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5. Why was it important that the eternal Son of God take to himself a human nature? See and read Hebrews 2:14-18 and 4:14-16? \_\_\_\_\_

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**For your Meditation and Prayer:** Take a few minutes and read through Westminster Larger Catechism questions/answers 36-40, reflect on these and pray in light of them and in light of Hebrews 4:14-16.

**Read Philippians 2:5-8 again.**

The Gospels present cumulative evidences for the Deity and Humanity of Jesus Christ. It was immediately clear that he was a man, one who had grown up in a particular community, one who lived in the midst of others, could be touched by them, reflected common characteristics with them, etc. But there was more to him, and the gospel accounts make that evident cumulatively, little by little. Let's read several passages and note what they reveal. Jot down what the evidence suggests to you. Just quickly skim the passages if you are familiar with them:

1. John 2:1-11 \_\_\_\_\_  
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2. John 6:1-14 \_\_\_\_\_  
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3. John 6:16-21 \_\_\_\_\_  
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4. John 8:57-59 \_\_\_\_\_  
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5. John 11:17-27 & 43-44 \_\_\_\_\_  
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6. John 20 recounts Jesus' resurrection, and then this event – John 20:24-29  
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To not overburden you with far too many passages, just a couple more:

7. Mark 4:35-41 \_\_\_\_\_  
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8. Mark 8:1-44 recounts the feeding of the 5000+ as did John 6:1-14 above. But read Mark 8:45-52, which parallels John 6:16-21 above, but note verse 52. What is the significance of that comment? \_\_\_\_\_  
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**For your Meditation and Prayer:** Most of us assume what the disciples were learning little by little – that Jesus was more than a mere man; he was God in the flesh, though clearly a man as well. Try to put yourself in their shoes for a few moments, walking with and living with Jesus in a small band of followers, watching all of the above unfold, and more besides. How conclusive is the evidence that Jesus was both a man and God? Do we take for granted one of the most perplexing realities the world has ever seen? Pray for wonder!

**Read Philippians 2:5-8.**

Verse 8 mentions Jesus “becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.” That is a tremendously important point, as we’ll note tomorrow. But for now, let’s focus on what “obedience” meant for Jesus.

Hebrews 5:8 affirms that “Although he [Jesus] was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered.” Let’s explore what that means.

1. Does “learning obedience” imply previous “disobedience”? Explain: \_\_\_\_\_

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2. Read Hebrews 2:18 and 4:14-15. Taking those verses into account, what must “learning obedience” mean? \_\_\_\_\_

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3. When Jesus was growing up as a youngster, he likely interacted with other young people. How might he have had to “learn obedience” through the temptations he suffered? \_\_\_\_\_

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4. You would agree that the “fruit of the Spirit” in Galatians 5:22-23 are virtues, would you not? **Read Galatians 5:22-23.** How would Jesus “learn obedience” with respect to the development of these “relational” virtues? \_\_\_\_\_

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**For your Meditation and Prayer:** In the final week of Jesus’ life on earth prior to his resurrection, he encountered all kinds of trials – the hostility of Jewish leaders, the accolades of the crowds, questions intended to trip him up, false accusations and slander, jealousies, betrayal by a close associate, denial by a leading follower, injustices, etc. How would you have reacted to these – honestly? How do they make his choice to go to the Cross all the more amazing? What was at stake in his doing so, or not? What if we are called to suffer some of those same sorts of things as his follower, and what if he allows it to happen – how will we react? Will it change our attitude toward him? Will we be disappointed with God for not making things go better for us? Why might he let bad things happen to his people – to us? Reflect on these things, and pray over these matters.

*Read Philippians 2:5-8 once more.*

We have been looking at various matters that relate to the truths of this passage in Philippians. I want us to close by considering the passage in context in two different ways. First, the purpose of the matters described in vss 6-8 of Phil 2, and second, the practical application of Jesus' example to various aspects of life.

First, vss 6-8 deal with matters foundational to the doctrine of "Justification." *Justification* is a legal term that pertains to God's action as the Judge of all the earth, declaring a person righteous or guilty, acquitting the righteous, demanding that justice be satisfied in the case of the guilty. Jesus came to be the "Surety" for all whom the Father has given him, which means that he assumes the responsibility to fulfil what God's justice demands for all those whom the Father has given him. Therefore, he assumes the responsibility to live the life of righteousness we were supposed to live before God, and, he assumes the responsibility to satisfy God's justice for the sins we have committed.

1. In Philippians 2:6-8 Jesus is described as having done both. What did he do as our "Surety" to secure the status of "righteous" in God's sight? \_\_\_\_\_

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2. In this text, what did he do to satisfy the justice of God that we might be forgiven the multitude of our sins? \_\_\_\_\_

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Secondly, the text in context suggests a particular application from Jesus' example described in vss 5-8.

The particular application (as we noted last month) is to the exhortations in Phil 1:27-2:4, and particularly to 2:3-4. Paul brings forth the greatest truths of the Gospel in vss 5-8, exhorting us to have the same mental attitude as Jesus reflected in vss 6-8, towards one another as described in 2:3-4. He did not reflect "selfish ambition" by looking merely to his own interests, but looked also to our interests, and he did not act with "conceit," but "in humility counted others more significant than" himself. Therefore, if we have his mind in us (vs 5), we will do the same towards one another, especially in the church, and so fulfil Paul's exhortations about "standing firm in one spirit with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the Gospel" (1:27) and to complete his "joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind" (2:2).

But there are also other applications that can be made with respect to Jesus' mind or attitude reflected in vss 6-8, so let's look briefly at three:

3. How does Jesus' mindset in Phil 2:6-8 impact leadership? See Matthew 20:20-28. \_\_\_\_\_

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4. How ought Jesus' mindset in Phil 2:6-8 to impact our giving of our resources to help others, whether materially poor and in need, or spiritual impoverished without access to the Gospel (as still remains true for thousands of people groups throughout the world who have yet to hear about Jesus)? See 2 Corinthians 8:1-15. \_\_\_\_\_  
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5. Finally, how ought Jesus' mindset in Phil 2:6-8 to impact prejudices between ethnic or racial groups? See Ephesians 2:11-22. \_\_\_\_\_  
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***For your Meditation and Prayer:*** When Jesus addressed what it means to be a follower of Christ, he did it in these terms – note the reference to the “cross” – “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me” (Luke 9:23). That is a call to live the “cross” throughout one’s life – the word “daily” makes that evident. It is the internal heart-battle that must be fought over and over and over again. It calls for the application of truths like those of Philippians 2:6-8 to all of life. We will see it specifically addressed at the end of this month’s readings as we follow Pastor Chad’s preaching schedule. For now, pray for insight and wisdom and humility to apply the mind of Christ to every area of your life. I would appreciate your prayers for me in that regard, as Luke 9:23 was the verse the Lord used in my life to bring me to himself, and in a good way, it is a verse that haunts my daily life as I struggle with my own self-will – still, after almost 54 years since that date! There is a reason we are sometimes called “a glorious ruin”!

**Read Philippians 2:5-11.** This Lord’s Day pastor Chad is scheduled to preach on Philippians 2:9-11, so that will be our focus for this coming week.

One of the important principles of interpretation is captured in the statement: “When you see the word ‘therefore,’ look to see what it is ‘there for.’” Verse 9 begins with a “Therefore.” Why? What is the significance of that? On the 1<sup>st</sup> of October in this BRP, I mentioned that theologians speak of a “Covenant of Redemption,” which represents what appears to be a pre-creation agreement between the persons of the Trinity setting forth a plan of redemption by which the Son would willingly become the “Surety” for all those whom the Father would give him out of the world, living the perfectly obedient life they ought to have lived, and satisfying the justice of God by suffering the punishment due them for their sin. Phil 2:5-8 described how the Son set about that task, fulfilling the agreement made in the Covenant of Redemption. So, for a time, Jesus willingly relinquished the privileges of the glory he had shared with the Father eternally, to fulfill the obligations of the Covenant pertaining to his role. In that Covenant, however, there was apparently also the promise, that when Jesus fulfilled that role, the Father would exalt the Son in his Divine/human nature, that is, as “Jesus.”

1. So, if the above is true, what does the “Therefore” of vs 9 imply about the promise made to Jesus? \_\_\_\_\_

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2. **Read John 17:5; 12:27-33; and Psalm 2.** In light of these passages, what was the promise to Jesus? \_\_\_\_\_

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3. How might Hebrews 12:1-2 relate to the above? \_\_\_\_\_

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4. How might “*the joy set before us*” in Christ impact our lives in light of Phil 2:9-11 and Hebrews 12:1-2? \_\_\_\_\_

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**For your Meditation and Prayer:** Reflect on what motivates you: short-term pleasures or long-term promises? Read Hebrews 10:32-39 – reflect on what difference it makes whether we have a short-term perspective, or long-term? Make that a matter of prayer.

Read Philippians 2:9-11, and then read Luke 1:31-33 & 67-69, and Acts 2:22-36.

The angel Gabriel informed Mary that the child she would bear would sit on the throne of his father David, and Zechariah was “filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied, saying, “Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited his people and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David...”

- 1. So, when did or will Jesus sit on the throne of David? \_\_\_\_\_  
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- 2. What practical implications does that have for us? \_\_\_\_\_  
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**Read Acts 4:23-31.**

We read Psalm 2 yesterday. In this passage a portion of that Psalm is quoted by the church in prayer. I find it interesting that when Jesus asked his disciples: “But who do you say I am?” and Peter replied: “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God,” at that point Jesus began to “show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised,” to which Peter immediately objected. He then received a strong rebuke: “Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of men.” (Matthew 16:15-23)

- 3. Do you think those who opposed Jesus as in Psalm 2:1-2 and Acts 4:25-28 **intended** to “gather against the Lord and his anointed”? or, as the next verse of Psalm 2 – verse 3 – says: to reflect the attitude “Let us burst their (the Lord and his Anointed’s) bonds apart and cast away their cords from us” – in other words, cast aside the authority of the Lord and his Anointed? Explain: \_\_\_\_\_  
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- 4. Another way to ask the same question as # 3 is this: Was Peter intentionally casting off Christ’s Lordship when he said: “Far be it from you, Lord”? Explain: \_\_\_\_\_  
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**For your Meditation and Prayer:** Reflect on how difficult it is for us to bring our will into conformity altogether to God’s will, and how easily we fall prey to thinking he ought to do things, and order things, the way we think is right. Was that not what Peter was doing when he objected to Jesus going to the Cross? Pray for wisdom.

Read Philippians 2:9-11 again.

Turn back in your Bibles to Isaiah 40-45. This section of Isaiah contains some of the strongest arguments for God being God and the only God. Throughout, God affirms that he is the living God, as opposed to all false gods. Let's read just a few sample verses in this section of Isaiah.

Read the following passages: Isaiah 40:9, 12-14, 18, 25-26; 42:8; 43:10-13; 44:6-8, 9-20, 24-28; and 45:1-7, 18, 20-23.

1. What were some of the things God said about himself to affirm that he is unique among the gods, indeed, that he is the only God and that there is no other?

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2. But did you notice Isaiah 42:8 and especially 45:21-23? Compare Philippians 2:9-11 with Isaiah 45:23. Can you see Paul's allusion to Isaiah 45:23 when he speaks of God highly exalting Jesus and giving him the name above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow ... and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father? How can that be consistent with 42:8?

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3. Throughout Isaiah 40-45 it is Yahweh speaking, which you can tell in your Bible because "LORD" is in all caps. So, what does that tell you about Jesus?

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I've had you read a good bit, so let me just mention a few points. In the New Testament, Jesus is described ordinarily as the Creator and Savior, and here in Isaiah 40-45 Yahweh describes himself as Creator and Savior. These are evidences of the doctrine of the Trinity, or part of it. Yahweh is actually Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

**For your Meditation and Prayer:** Remember the "Covenant of Redemption," the Intra-Trinitarian Covenant in which all three persons have particular agreed-upon roles to fulfil. Jesus's role involved emptying himself of the glory he possessed as the eternal Son of God, taking to himself a human nature, humbling himself further to die upon the Cross for the redemption of all those whom the Father gave him, being raised and exalted to the right hand of the Father, and as the God/man being given the name above all names that all might confess him LORD, Yahweh, through whom the Father created all things, and the only Savior of sinners. He could say: "Turn to me and be saved all the ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other." Praise and thanksgiving are in order, don't you think?

Read Philippians 2:9-11 again.

Lest we misunderstand, we need to be clear that the last statement in yesterday’s “For your Meditation and Prayer” was not intended to say that Jesus exhausts Yahweh, as though he is all that Yahweh is. Yahweh is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, three persons, but one God. This was a mystery that, though present in the Old Testament, was unfolded and made more evident in the New. Most often in the New Testament the word “God” is reserved for the Father, but not always, and the honor and glory and power and eternal being attributed to the Father are also attributed to the Son and to the Spirit. Theologians sometimes speak of the *economical* Trinity, or of the relations within the Trinity. Today, the word “economics” is used primarily of financial matters. But the older Webster’s Dictionary of Noah Webster 1828 defined the word as “Primarily, the management, regulation and government of a family or the concerns of a household,” and only further down mentions financial management. So the *economical* Trinity describes the manner in which the persons of the Trinity function, the way the one Triune God functions. So Yahweh could affirm in Isaiah 40-45 that Yahweh alone is God, the Creator, the only Savior, and that there is no other and Yahweh will not give his glory to another. But the New Testament will make clear that the Father created the world through his Son. John 1:1-3 says: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made ... And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth” (1:14). (see also Colossians 1:15-16-20).

Philippians 2:6-11 describes Jesus first in his eternal condition as the Son, and thus having the form of God, taking to himself a human nature that he might live and die on our behalf, achieving the righteousness we desperately need to be acceptable to the Father – his going to the Cross being the crowning act of his lifetime obedience – suffering the punishment that was our due to satisfy God’s justice on our behalf, and then being raised and exalted to the right hand of the Father, and given the name above all names, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow...and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ (who appeared to others as a man) is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” The Father vindicated his Son, and made clear that he was Yahweh with the Father.

1. Imagine for a moment that you had lived in Jesus’s time, knowing nothing about him that you know now, and suddenly this man appears on the scene who looks like any other man, and claims to be God. How do you think you would have reacted? \_\_\_\_\_  
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2. Suppose the vast majority of the religious leaders you knew did not believe his claims, and made it clear to others that they thought him an impostor. How would that likely have affected your opinion of him? \_\_\_\_\_  
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3. Now, suppose this man did some extraordinary things – miracles, we’ll call them! Would you immediately jump to the conclusion that he was God? After all, others had done such in the past – Moses, Elijah and Elisha, etc. What would you conclude? \_\_\_\_\_

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4. A step further: Suddenly, the religious authorities, along with the civil authorities, arrest him, try him, and have him put to death, cruelly, and he does nothing to stop them. Now what would you think of him? God? Really?! \_\_\_\_\_

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5. But what if he were to rise from the dead? What if he were to appear to multitudes of people? What if their lives were suddenly turned around, and they were willing to lay down their lives for him? What then? \_\_\_\_\_

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6. What if one of the fiercest enemies of this religious sect that followed him, a man who was intellectually far superior to many of his companions, a man who trained under one of the great Jewish teachers, a man who appeared to show tremendous promise, suddenly converted and began to proclaim that this man whom authorities had put to death so cruelly was alive and had appeared to him, and argued from the Scriptures of the Old Testament that such had been prophesied long ago? What if this man risked his life, putting it on the line daily to proclaim that this one whom he had seen and heard was indeed God come in the flesh because he had loved us enough to lay aside his glory for a time, and suffer unimaginably to save a people from their sins? What if this man named Paul affirmed of his former enemy: “he loved me, and gave himself up for me!” What would you think then? \_\_\_\_\_

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***For your Meditation and Prayer:*** It is probably difficult for all of us to put ourselves in the position described above because having been taught about Jesus for most of our lives, the fact of his being God is so familiar to us, that we find it difficult to think about what it would have been like in those early years. So we easily lose the wonder of it, and all too easily begin to expect him to make our lives go well, even though Paul’s was much the worse in this life for following Jesus – that is, worse in terms of the treatment he received from others. As you’ll see later in Philippians, he never regretted having become a follower of Jesus (see Phil 3:3-11). Reflect on these things, and pray for a passion to know Christ.

**Read Philippians 2:5-11 today.**

What is the significance of Christ being given ‘the name above all names, that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow ... and every tongue confess, that Jesus Christ is Lord’? That is the question for today.

The WPC Vision Statement says that we exist “to develop in ourselves and others a passion for the glory of God and for the preeminence of Christ in all of life and in all the world.”

1. What does “preeminence” mean? \_\_\_\_\_  
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2. What practically does it mean for Christ to be *preeminent in all of life*?  
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3. What does that leave out? \_\_\_\_\_  
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4. How do we know we ARE genuinely acknowledging him preeminent in various areas of life? \_\_\_\_\_  
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5. What does **Luke 9:23** mean? \_\_\_\_\_  
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6. What is the significance of **Luke 6:46-49** with respect to the Preeminence of Christ in your life? \_\_\_\_\_  
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**For your Meditation and Prayer:** Reflect on the above questions and answers. Would you characterize your life as one devoted to Christ and his preeminence in all of your life? How is your relationship with the church and with other believers? Are there specific areas you need to work on? If you are married, do you seek to conform to Ephesians 5:22-33? If you are still in the workplace, do you do your work daily as unto Christ? If you are raising children, what is your chief goal for their lives? If you are suffering or going through some sort of trial, do you see that as from his hand, and as an opportunity to serve Christ there? As for “preeminent ... in all the world,” are you committed to supporting missions?

Read Philippians 1:27-2:11 today, and let's look back over this entire passage.

Jesus made it clear in a passage like Matthew 10:34-39 that he did not come to bring universal peace with everyone.

1. What does he make clear in Matthew 10:34-39 with respect to his coming?

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2. What would be the *dividing* factor in that passage? \_\_\_\_\_

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3. However, within the church, apart from significant doctrinal differences or deviations, it is a different situation than what Jesus was describing in Matt 10. What was the main practical matter that Paul was addressing in Phil 1:27-2:11? Keep in mind that he used doctrine – tremendous doctrines! – to *support* his concern, but he began with a different concern. What was it? \_\_\_\_\_

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Ephesians 4:1-16 had addressed the same matter.

4. Nor should we think that Matthew 10:34-39 was all that Jesus had to say about peace. Read Matthew 5:3-12. There are two contrasting pictures regarding peace, or lack of it, here. What are they? \_\_\_\_\_

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5. Each of the Beatitudes has a second part: Blessed are they ..., for theirs is or they shall be or some such phrase. Why, in verse 9, do you think he said “they shall be called sons of God”? \_\_\_\_\_

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**For your Meditation and Prayer:** We live in the midst of a fallen world that is horribly marred by sin. *We* are horribly marred by sin. But we are called to be lights in this fallen world (Matthew 5:14), and to set before the world an example of the power of the gospel to transform our lives. That is why our heeding passages like Phil 1:27-2:11 is so vitally important. The honor of Christ is at stake! Reflect on Paul’s use of the greatest truths of the gospel to stimulate us to pursue unity as he urges us to live *worthy* of the gospel, i.e., to reflect the value we place on the gospel in our relationships with one another within the church.

## October 13-14      Exodus 3:7-15; 33:18-19; 34:1-7

This weekend we shift gears for a while. I will be preaching Sunday instead of Chad, as a final declaration and commitment of you to the Lord in the care of pastor Chad, of Knox, and of the great group of elders you are privileged to have. So I want to focus your attention first on a passage I will include in my message, and one that I have referred to repeatedly over the years because it means a great deal to me.

**Read Exodus 3:7-15; 33:18-19; and 34:1-7.**

These passages are a revelation of the NAME of God – YAHWEH – presented as LORD in small caps in our English Bibles. The first occurred when the LORD called Moses in the wilderness while shepherding his father-in-law’s flocks. The LORD told Moses that he had seen the affliction of his people in Egypt and had come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians and bring them to a land flowing with milk and honey. Moses was, no doubt, delighted to hear that, until the LORD continued: “Come, I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt.” SHOCK! Moses responded: “Who am I that I should go...?” The LORD responds: “But **I will be with you....**” Moses responds in turn: “If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, ‘‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ what shall I say to them?’” Then follows the first great revelation of the name LORD (Yahweh, or actually YHWH, without the vowels).

The name comes from the verb “to be.” God responds: “I am who I am,” or “I will be who I will be,” or .... The name has led to many attempts at explanation, and solving that issue is beyond me. However, I like J. A. Motyer’s explanation. He compares it to the later statement in Exo 33:18-19 – “‘I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion’ ... In other words, ‘I bestow my grace exactly and only where I choose.’ The same applies here, ‘It rests solely with me when and where and with whom I make my presence felt.’” Motyer goes on to explain that Moses had yet to understand that fully, and that when he did go to Egypt, and things got worse before they got better, he complained, as though something had gone wrong. But, says Motyer, nothing had gone wrong but Moses’ expectations. “By revealing himself as ‘I am who I am’ the Lord had in effect said, ‘**Yes, I have committed myself to you to be actively present with you, but I am not at your unfettered disposal. My active presence is mine and mine alone to exercise as and when and under what conditions I choose.**’”

It reminds me personally of Mr. Beaver’s statement about Aslan, the great Lion and Christ-figure of C. S. Lewis’s *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe.* Mrs. Beaver tells the children who have entered Narnia through the Wardrobe, that when Aslan arrives he will put all to right. When the children are told that Aslan is a Lion, the great Lion, Susan responds: “Ooh! ... I’d thought he was a man. Is he – quite safe? I shall feel rather nervous about meeting a lion.” “‘That you will, dearie, and no mistake,’ said Mrs. Beaver, ‘if there’s anyone who can appear before Aslan without their knees knocking, they’re either braver than most or else just silly.’ ‘Then he isn’t safe?’ said Lucy. ‘Safe?’ said Mr. Beaver. ‘Don’t you hear what Mrs. Beaver tells you? Who said anything about safe?’ ‘Course he

isn't safe. **But he's good. He's the King, I tell you.**” Later someone will say of him: “He's not a tame Lion, you know,” or something like that.

1. What is the point of Lewis's illustration about Aslan, and of Motyer's explanation of Yahweh, which is tied to the promise made to Moses: “I will be with you”? \_\_\_\_\_  
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2. Can you think of times in your life – perhaps even now – when your expectations of what it means for God to be *for you* and *with you*, have led to disappointment with God, or disillusionment with him? Reflect and write down what happened and how you felt and why. \_\_\_\_\_  
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3. What is the lesson we are to learn about “faith” in and through these sorts of experiences? \_\_\_\_\_  
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4. Suppose you had been Moses, and later, standing at the edge of the Red Sea, with your back against it, the Egyptian army closing in before you, wondering why in the world God had led you out of Egypt and into such a precarious situation likely to end in destruction or re-enslavement at best, and God told you to raise your staff over the Sea, what would you have been thinking, and how would you have responded, do you think? \_\_\_\_\_  
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**For your Meditation and Prayer:** Think about the importance of our reading the Scriptures, all of the Scriptures, and observing how God dealt with his people throughout the years – not merely how he dealt with some, but with all. If we only read the stories that went really well, we likely will be surprised if things don't go well in our lives. Hebrews 11 recounts a number of very positive examples of people who did great things by faith, until one comes to verse 35b-38, which recounts others who experienced some terrible things, but remained faithful. Jesus did too. So pray for wisdom and eyes to see what God has revealed, lest we be disappointed with God. I've done that before, and it doesn't go well.

In Exodus 20 the LORD gave the Ten Commandments verbally to the people of Israel with a rather awesome display of his power and presence at Mt. Sinai, following which the Lord had Moses warn the people, in light of what they had seen and heard, to not make gods of silver or gold. He then delivered a number of laws, mostly applying the 10 Commandments to various areas of life. Afterwards God told Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu and seventy of the elders of Israel to come up and worship, inviting Moses alone to come near to the LORD (Exo 24). Moses told the people all that the LORD revealed, and they affirmed “All the words that the LORD has spoken we will do. And Moses wrote down all the words of the LORD” (24:3f). The LORD then established a covenant with the people, after which God called Moses to come up on the mountain to receive the 10 Commandments on stone, written by the LORD himself, and instructions about building the Tabernacle that represented the LORD’S presence in the midst of his people. Moses remained for 40 days.

Exodus 32 recounts that the people became impatient at Moses’ absence, and demanded that Aaron make gods who would go before them, which Aaron did under pressure from the people, all in amazing violation of the Lord’s explicit commands. The LORD told Moses to go down from the mountain because the people had corrupted themselves, threatening to unleash his wrath upon the people and consume them and make a great nation from Moses. Moses interceded on their behalf, and the Lord “relented from the disaster that he had spoken of bringing on his people” (32:14). Moses then went down the mountain, and his anger burned hot. He cast the tablets of the 10 Commandments down at the foot of mountain, breaking them in pieces, and then proceeded to destroy the calf Aaron had made.

Moses rebuked the people, and pled with the LORD to go up with the people to the land the LORD would give them. Let’s pick up at that point with our reading for the day:

**Read Exodus 33:12-34:9.**

Moses earnestly pleads with the Lord that he go up with them to take Canaan, and so caught up in his interchange with the Lord that he makes a hugely bold plea: “Please, show me your glory” (33:18).

1. What is the Lord’s immediate response? “I will make all my \_\_\_\_\_ pass before you and will proclaim before you \_\_\_\_\_ ‘The \_\_\_\_\_.’ And I will \_\_\_\_\_ to whom I will \_\_\_\_\_, and will show \_\_\_\_\_ on whom I will show \_\_\_\_\_.”

2. Apparently the next day the LORD called Moses to come up to Mount Sinai, and there proclaimed the name of the LORD to him, saying: “The LORD, the LORD, a God \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_, and abounding in \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, keeping \_\_\_\_\_ for thousands, \_\_\_\_\_ iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by \_\_\_\_\_, visiting the iniquity . . .”

I am a sinner, deeply in need of mercy and grace and forgiveness, needing the LORD to be slow to anger and abounding (!) abounding (!) in steadfast love and faithfulness – *no, that was not a typo* – I need the LORD to ABOUND in steadfast love, not just somehow squeeze it out!

Do you get the point of this passage from Exo 33:18 to 34:6-7? The LORD himself tells us: It is my GLORY to be merciful and gracious!!! I need to hear that as a sinner deeply conscious of my sinfulness, and I need to hear it from the LORD himself!

3. What about you? Are you a sinner? Do you have a keen sense that you fall hugely short of loving the Lord with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength? Can you find encouragement in the LORD declaring to you that it is his GLORY to be merciful and gracious to you if you draw near to him in repentance and faith in Christ?

***For your Meditation and Prayer:*** Tomorrow we will look at Psalm 103. Close your time today by reading through that Psalm. It is only a Psalm for those who believe in Christ:

Psalm 103:1 *Of David.* Bless the LORD, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name! <sup>2</sup> Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits, <sup>3</sup> who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases, <sup>4</sup> who redeems your life from the pit, who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy, <sup>5</sup> who satisfies you with good so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's. <sup>6</sup> The LORD works righteousness and justice for all who are oppressed. <sup>7</sup> He made known his ways to Moses, his acts to the people of Israel. <sup>8</sup> The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. <sup>9</sup> He will not always chide, nor will he keep his anger forever. <sup>10</sup> He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities. <sup>11</sup> For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him; <sup>12</sup> as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us. <sup>13</sup> As a father shows compassion to his children, so the LORD shows compassion to those who fear him. <sup>14</sup> For he knows our frame; he remembers that we are dust. <sup>15</sup> As for man, his days are like grass; he flourishes like a flower of the field; <sup>16</sup> for the wind passes over it, and it is gone, and its place knows it no more. <sup>17</sup> But the steadfast love of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear him, and his righteousness to children's children, <sup>18</sup> to those who keep his covenant and remember to do his commandments. <sup>19</sup> The LORD has established his throne in the heavens, and his kingdom rules over all. <sup>20</sup> Bless the LORD, O you his angels, you mighty ones who do his word, obeying the voice of his word! <sup>21</sup> Bless the LORD, all his hosts, his ministers, who do his will! <sup>22</sup> Bless the LORD, all his works, in all places of his dominion. Bless the LORD, O my soul!

**Praise the Lord for who he is, and thank him for his mercy and grace and steadfast love for you.**

Read Exodus 33:12-13, 18-19 and 34:6-7, and then Psalm 103.

1. Why do you think I picked Psalm 103 to read in conjunction with Exo 33:12-13, 18-19, and 34:6-7? \_\_\_\_\_

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2. Do you remember Psalm 1, and how the man who meditates day and night upon the Law of the Lord prospers spiritually and bears fruit in every season of life? Do you think the psalmist had meditated on Exodus 33 & 34? Do you find evidence in the Psalm that he had done more than merely read it? Explain: \_\_\_\_\_

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3. What do you find encouraging to you as a sinner in this Psalm – particular things that stand out to you? \_\_\_\_\_

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4. Who is this psalm for, because it is clearly not for everybody? Explain: \_\_\_\_\_

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5. If you are familiar with Jesus’ interactions with his disciples from reading the Gospels or hearing them preached, can you see the character of Jesus here? Explain: \_\_\_\_\_

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**For Your Meditation and Prayer:** This is a great psalm to spend some time with. The beginning and ending of the Psalm tell us where these truths should lead us – to worship!!! “Bless the **LORD**, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name!” -- the name “Yahweh”!

**Read Exodus 34:6-7 and then Psalm 51.**

Psalm 51 has the superscript that it was from the occasion of Nathan the prophet coming to David and exposing his sin with Bathsheba, and his conspiracy to have her husband killed in battle – essentially, murder. This prayer is THE greatest model of confession and repentance in the Psalter, indeed, perhaps in the whole of Scripture. It has been used by Christians for centuries to confess their own sin before God.

The name Yahweh does not appear in this Psalm, which I find intriguing, but am not sure why. Nevertheless, it is clear that David has Exodus 34:6-7 in view.

1. Compare Ps 51:1-2 with Exo 34:6-7. What similarities do you see that might point to a connection between the two in David’s mind and heart? \_\_\_\_\_

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2. There are Psalms where David appeals to his righteousness and integrity (e.g., see Psalm 7:3-5,8-10) as he requests help of some sort from the Lord. Where do you find that here, or do you? What do you find? \_\_\_\_\_

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3. What gives evidence of genuine desire, not only for forgiveness or cleansing, but for change? \_\_\_\_\_

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4. God appointed the sacrificial system for sinners, so why does David say what he does in vs 16-17? \_\_\_\_\_

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5. In what does David trust as he approaches God on this occasion? \_\_\_\_\_

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**Turn and Read Luke 18:9-14.**

6. Do you see any similarity between that passage and David in Psalm 51? Explain: \_\_\_\_\_

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**For your Meditation and Prayer:** This is a great psalm to turn to and pray through when one’s sins weigh upon one’s heart. God brought something good even out of David’s sin!

Read Exodus 34:6-7, and then turn to the book of Joel towards the end of the Old Testament.

Joel speaks of the Day of the LORD being near. He describes an invasion of wave after wave of locusts that devastate the land.

Read Joel 1:14-15 and 2:1-3 & 11.

1. What will the Day of the Lord be like for Judah from these descriptions? \_\_\_\_\_  
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Keep in mind that judgments of the past prefigure a greater judgment and Day of the Lord to come.

2. Read Joel 2:12-17. What does Joel hold out to the people to give hope that the Lord might stay the judgment that is otherwise sure to come? \_\_\_\_\_  
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3. Why does Joel say “rend your hearts and not your garments”? What is his point? \_\_\_\_\_  
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Joel urges them to earnestly pray (2:15-17), and the LORD responds.

Read Joel 2:25-27.

The promise made to the people in 2:25a is a tremendously encouraging promise to those who have spent a portion of their lives in sin and rebellion and later come to repentance. Remember, he had spoken of swarms of locusts devastating the land.

4. What hope is here for someone who feels they have messed up so badly that there is no hope left? \_\_\_\_\_  
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Read Joel 2:26-32, and then Acts 2:14-21 and Romans 10:9-15 which quote from Joel 2:26-32.

In Acts 2, Peter goes on after what I had you read to describe how Peter exposed the sins of the people in the killing of Jesus, and when they are brought under deep conviction, holds out to them salvation in keeping with the promise in Joel 2:32. Paul quotes Joel 2:32 as he invites people to confess Christ as Lord and believe God had raised him from the dead, because by believing one is justified, and by confession he is saved, whether Jew or Greek, because “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

5. In Joel 2:32 it is said that everyone who calls on the name of the LORD (Yahweh) shall be saved. Both Peter and Paul direct people to call on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ (see the contexts of Acts 2 and Romans 10). What does that imply about Jesus? \_\_\_\_\_

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6. Paul lays out a practical conclusion after quoting Joel 2:32 in Romans 10:13. What is it? (see the context) \_\_\_\_\_

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7. What implications does Paul's conclusion have for you and your attitude and support of missions? \_\_\_\_\_

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8. Some contend that if people have never heard the gospel, they will be saved. Is that consistent with what Paul teaches in Romans 10:11-15? Explain: \_\_\_\_\_

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***For Your Meditation and Prayer:*** Joel is a little book, probably neglected by the majority of professing Christians. Yet it is quoted by Peter to explain the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, and to urge the people to respond to Christ, and quoted by Paul in Romans 10 to explain the only way of salvation, namely, through Christ. If you remember our study of Philippians 2:9-11 back on October 9 & 10 and its quotation or allusion to Isaiah 45, you will perhaps remember that Paul is affirming in Philippians 2:9-11 that God the Father has made clear that Jesus is Yahweh too, and that the exhortation in Isaiah 45:22 to “Turn to me (Yahweh) and be saved all the ends of the earth! For I am God and there is no other,” is now applied to Christ, just as what was said of calling upon Yahweh in Joel is applied to Christ in Acts 2 and Romans 10. There is salvation in no other. Jesus's statement in John 14:6 still stands: “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father but by me,” he said. Yet they cannot call upon one in whom they have not believed, and they cannot believe in one of whom they have not heard. Therefore we must labor to get the gospel to the ends of the earth. People do not perish because they have not believed in Jesus, they perish because they are sinners, and because they have violated their own consciences in doing things they believe are wrong. But none is saved apart from faith in Christ, so they **MUST** hear the gospel, for faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of God. Pray over these matters, and your part in them.

Read Exodus 34:6-7, and then read Psalms 23 & 25.

Both Psalms are addressed to the LORD, Yahweh, so they immediately bring to the fore the characteristics of Yahweh as he revealed himself in Exo 34:6-7. Psalm 23 is perhaps the best known Psalm of the Psalter. "The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want," that is, lack for anything needed. It is no secret that Jesus called himself the Good Shepherd who lays down his life for the sheep.

Psalm 23 is not a psalm reflecting trouble as so many of David's psalms do. It is written reflectively by David as a shepherd, relating God's care and provision for him. Note verse 6, a tremendous verse of assurance and confidence that things will end well in the house of the LORD.

1. Look at verse 6, and turn back to Exodus 33:19 and 34:6-7. Why is David able to affirm that goodness and lovingkindness will follow him all the days of his life? Where did such confidence come from? \_\_\_\_\_

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Now look at Psalm 25. David begins addressing the LORD, and immediately expresses that he puts his trust in the LORD. But in this case, David is threatened by enemies; he is "lonely and afflicted" (vs 16), and the "troubles of [his] heart are enlarged;" and he is in distress. His enemies hate him violently. And David seems to be aware that his sins have played a part in the scenario. So look at what he does.

2. Note his request in verse 25 - "Make me to know your ways, O Lord; teach me your paths. Lead me in your truth and teach me..." Compare that to Exo 33:13 and 34:6 ("faithfulness" in Exo 34:6 is the same word as "truth"). What does this request reveal about David's heart? \_\_\_\_\_

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Note Psalm 25:6-11. Look at the words he gathers: vs 6 - mercy, steadfast love; vs 7 - steadfast love and goodness; vs 8 - Good (... is the LORD); vs 10 - steadfast love and faithfulness; vs 11 - For your name's sake, O LORD, pardon my guilt, for it is great ("pardon" is found in Exo 34:9 based on 34:6-7's revelation); vs 16 - "be gracious to me;" vs 18 - and forgive all my sins."

3. So, where did he get all those words and bank his life on them? Why can he say "For your name's sake, O LORD, pardon my guilt"? What does this say to you about praying when you are in need? How can you draw near to the LORD with confidence? Where will you turn for encouragement? \_\_\_\_\_

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**For your Meditation and Prayer:** Look back over Psalm 25 for a few minutes in light of the above. It is a great psalm to teach us how to pray on the basis of the LORD'S own revelation of his name, which reveals his character.

**Read Exodus 34:6-7 one more time, and then turn to the prophets Jonah and Nahum, again toward the end of the Old Testament.**

I imagine you know the story of Jonah well. Jonah was told by the LORD (note: Yahweh) to go to Nineveh and preach against it. Nineveh was a threat to Israel, and Jonah didn't want them to survive, so he fled. But the reason why he fled comes out clearly in chapter 4.

**Read Exodus 34:6-7 and Jonah 4.**

1. Chapter 3 of Jonah closes with the people of Nineveh repenting and being spared the destruction Jonah had preached would come unless they repented. Jonah 4 is Jonah's unhappy reaction. But it answers the real reason why he fled. Why did he do so? \_\_\_\_\_  
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It is possible that we could not support missions to particular countries or peoples because we regard them as enemies. Perhaps closer to home for some of us: Is there some person we want to get what they deserve, and therefore do not want that person to come to repentance and receive forgiveness in Christ?

It appears to me that we face a heart-tension at this point. Justice is not a bad thing – not at all. But if we are keenly aware of our sin (and I guarantee we only know a little of it), we do not want God to treat us as we deserve, and are glad for the invasion of grace into our lives. It would seem hypocritical or altogether self-serving to want God to be gracious to us and not to another. The picture we have of Jonah at the end of Jonah 4 is not an attractive one! And yet it is not wrong for God to judge and condemn the unrepentant.

2. So how should we pray for those who may be our political or national enemies, or for those whom we personally see as evil and believe should have to face the consequences of their continued sinful ways? \_\_\_\_\_  
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**Read Exodus 34:6-7 again, and then Nahum 1:1-8.**

Nahum ministered a good deal later than Jonah. Nineveh had returned to her brutal sinful ways. Nahum will speak of the judgment and fall of Nineveh, and this time the Ninevites will not repent and be spared.

3. What do you notice to be different here from all the other passages where Exodus 34:6-7 is quoted or alluded to? \_\_\_\_\_  
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By the time Nahum prophesied, the Northern Kingdom of Israel had fallen to the Assyrians in 722 B.C., which is what Jonah had not wanted to happen. Nahum speaks of the LORD – note it is Yahweh – being a jealous and avenging God, avenging and wrathful... (1:2)

It has been interesting to me that a number of more liberal scholars, who don't acknowledge the Scriptures as the very Word of God, can't seem to tolerate the idea that God can be marvelously gracious and forgiving, but also a God of wrath. They sometimes speak of the contradiction that exists in the Scriptures, rather than accepting the whole of what the Scriptures teach us about God. Some people speak of "the God of the Old Testament" as a God of wrath, and "the God of the New Testament" as a God of love and grace. That is simply not true to the Scriptures!!!

**Read 2 Thessalonians 1:3-10.** Is that not a similar picture as we find here in Nahum. God is jealous for the honor of his name (Exo 34:14) and for his people (Zechariah 1:14 & 8:2), and he will exercise vengeance on their enemies.

4. Who is it who is pictured executing avenging wrath in 2 Thes 1:3-10 and in Revelation 19:11-16? \_\_\_\_\_

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**For your Meditation and Prayer:** God is described as "a consuming fire" in Deuteronomy 4:24 (where it also says he is "a jealous God"), Deut 9:3, and in Hebrews 12:29. Deuteronomy 4:24 and Hebrews 12:29 are in contexts warning those who profess to be God's people that if they violate the covenant (Deut 4) or reject him who now warns from heaven (Heb 12:25-29) God will be to them "a consuming fire." Deuteronomy 9:3 and 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9 speak of God and Jesus being a consuming fire or coming in flaming fire to exercise vengeance on the enemies of God's people. God does not change. The revelation of Exodus 34:6-7 was the LORD'S (Yahweh's) declaration of his own character, and though making it clear that it was his GLORY to be "merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin," nevertheless, for those who do not genuinely repent and trust in Christ, it remains true that he "will by no means clear the guilty." The latter remains a warning and encouragement to turn in repentance to the LORD, casting ourselves wholly upon his grace and mercy and steadfast love, and seeking forgiveness of our sins in Christ.

**A NOTE ABOUT WHAT I PLAN TO BE DOING:** I indicated in the letter at the very beginning that I would say something about what I plan to be doing in my latter years if God enables. That will unfold over time in perhaps fuller measure as opportunities develop, or don't, to minister in various ways.

However, one thing that I have already begun, and plan to try to complete, pertains to Exodus 33:18-19 and 34:6-7. It is my conviction that those verses represent THE MOST CENTRAL REVELATION the LORD gave in the Old Testament regarding his character. Those verses are quoted or alluded to over and over and over again throughout the Old Testament, and their truths unfold in their fulness in the New Testament with the coming of Christ. I would like to try to write a book, or possible two, based on these texts and how they are used throughout the Scriptures, one for pastors and other serious students of the Scripture, and one more briefly for Christians at large, to exhibit the GLORY of our God, and to stimulate our love for him and confidence in his love for us. To that end I would appreciate your prayers.

I was told David Senters was scheduled to preach yesterday on Mark 2:1-12. So let's focus on some related matters.

**Read Mark 2:1-12.**

Mark's Gospel begins with John the Baptizer preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. After Jesus' baptism and John's arrest, we see Jesus call his first disciples, Simon and Andrew.

1. What did he call them to do? (1:16-20) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Mark records that he went into the synagogue in Capernaum, and was teaching, and they were amazed at his teaching with authority. But a man with an unclean spirit cried out. Notice that the demons were to first to recognize who Jesus really was. When he cast out the demon, they were amazed, saying: "A new teaching with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him. (1:27). In 1:38 Jesus indicates they are to go on to other places so he may preach there also, "for, that is why I came out," he said. He continues in ministry, including healing a leper, and returns to Capernaum. A crowd gathers in the home where he is preaching the word to them (2:2).

2. What stands out in these passages regarding Jesus' primary ministry? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. If you had been in the group carrying the paralytic, and had come to the door and it was packed out with no more space, what would you have done?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. What can we learn from the 4 friends? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

R.T. France, a rather good commentator, comments: "The houses, like most in ancient Palestine, were single-story structures with flat roofs accessible by and outside staircase. The roof was used for working and sometimes for sleeping, and so it was not flimsy in construction; wooden beams or branches were thatched with rush and daubed with mud. Mark's description of how the men ... 'unroofed the roof' ... therefore suggests a major demolition job, and the addition of [a Greek term literally meaning] 'digging it out', adds to the graphic effect." (*The Gospel of Mark of The New International Greek Testament Commentary*, p 123). These men went to no little effort!

5. What was it that Jesus saw that sparked his response? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**For your Meditation and Prayer:** If these 4 men went to such extremes to bring their friend to Jesus, does it not raise the question to us as to our diligence to bring our friends to Jesus? Make that a matter of prayer, and perhaps of a plan.

Read Mark 2:1-12 again.

1. When Jesus saw the faith of the four friends (and perhaps the paralytic too, although we don't know that), how did he respond? \_\_\_\_\_

2. Do you think that is what they expected? Explain: \_\_\_\_\_

Addressing the "felt need" of a friend may sometimes become the occasion of ministering to a "deeper and more vital need" he or she may have. That may be more important for ministries in the church than some of us realize.

3. What was the response of the scribes to Jesus' declaration: "Son, your sins are forgiven"? \_\_\_\_\_

4. Jesus replied to their thoughts in vss 8-9. So, which is easier? Explain: \_\_\_\_\_

R.T. France comments: "To regard the forgiveness of sins as 'easier' than healing a medical complaint may seem oddly out of keeping with biblical perspective, but the argument does not focus on the inherent value of the acts themselves, but on their force as proof to a sceptical [British spelling] audience. A visible healing is 'hard evidence', whereas a merely verbal claim to forgive sins invites scepticism. To tell a paralyzed man to get up and walk exposes the speaker to ridicule if it is not successful; but how can a claim to have forgiven sins be falsified?" (p 127). France alludes to the fact that, in fact, biblically, forgiveness is harder. It required nothing less than the death of Jesus on the Cross! Forgiveness could not be justly given apart from the satisfaction of God's justice. That is the point of Romans 3:21-26. Nevertheless, Jesus is speaking from the perspective of "their force as proof to a sceptical audience."

5. Mark, however, has chosen certain events to demonstrate the authority of Jesus in his teaching and power to perform miracles, so what does his forgiving sin demonstrate? \_\_\_\_\_

**For your Meditation and Prayer:** Even so early in Jesus ministry, a hostility has begun to evidence itself among religious leaders. Jesus alone has authority to forgive sins, and as time goes on in his ministry, Jesus' exclusive claims will arouse stronger and stronger hostility. The same is true today. To proclaim that there is but one way of salvation from sin, that only by faith in Christ can we be forgiven is increasingly offensive to our culture, likely in part because the authority of Jesus is much broader, requiring obedience of those who would follow him.

**Read Mark 2:13-17.**

Immediately following Mark’s account of the 4 men bringing the paralytic to Jesus we find the account of the call of Levi, or Matthew (cf. Matthew 9:9-13).

There is an authority evidenced in Jesus’ call of his disciples. Mark 1:16ff recounted the calling of Simon and Andrew while casting a net into the sea, and Jesus said: “Follow me, and I will make you become fishers of men.” Mark recounts Levi’s call merely with the words “Follow me.” Each left what they were doing and followed. Note what Levi does after following Jesus.

1. What is Levi’s initial action after leaving his post to follow Jesus according to Mark 2:15ff, Matthew 9:10ff, **and especially Luke 5:29ff**? \_\_\_\_\_

2. If you are the type person who has difficulty talking to others about Jesus, or difficulty presenting the gospel verbally, what might Levi’s action suggest that you might do? \_\_\_\_\_

Look at Matthew’s account of his own call. Matthew included one item of what Jesus said that neither Mark nor Luke recorded: “Go and learn what this means, ‘I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.’” (from Hosea 6:6). The Hebrew word in Hosea 6:6 is often translated “steadfast love” in the ESV. The Greek translation of the Old Testament used the word for “mercy.” In any case, it makes clear that Jesus’ association with tax collectors and others was motivated by love or mercy, like a physician is expected to show toward the sick, or the very spirit that Yahweh declared to show forth his glory to sinners who repent (Exodus 34:6-7 as a response to Exo 33:18-19).

3. So, who is reflecting the heart of God, Jesus in his association with and calling of sinners to repentance, or the Pharisees and scribes who want to remain aloof and not ceremonially defile themselves with contact with these sorts of people, leaving them to the in their sins? \_\_\_\_\_

**For your Meditation and Prayer:** Not everybody is equally able to verbally communicate the gospel. But those who think they cannot do so, may be able to plan other ways to draw non-Christian friends into contact with other fellow believers who are much better able to interact with people who are not followers of Christ. Some may invite others to something like *Christianity Explored*, a video series by Rico Tice, a very good low-key presentation of Christ through the Gospel of Mark. Others might plan social gatherings where Christian brothers and sisters can meet non-Christian friends, sometimes in just a fun get-together, but intentionally exposing them to believers who can build relationships with them. Some might host an exploratory Bible Study for unbelievers, or *Christianity Explored*, with someone else leading it. Pray about ways to reach out to friends and acquaintances that may not know Christ.

Let's look at a couple of Psalms as we move towards the Lord's Day when Chad will preach on Philippians again. If one marks the Psalms which contain the words found in Exodus 34:6-7, one is amazed at how many use those particular words, sometimes clearly quoting from Exodus, at other times alluding to it.

**Read Psalm 86, another great Psalm.**

1. What is it that the psalmist is facing that spurs him to cry out earnestly to the LORD? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. Why do we need Psalms like this one? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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3. List some of the words that the psalmist uses that warrant his drawing near to God in prayer. \_\_\_\_\_

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4. Particularly note vss 5 and 15-16. In all of these verses the psalmist is looking back all the way to Exodus 33:18-19 & 34:6-7. Why do you think he does that?

\_\_\_\_\_

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\_\_\_\_\_

5. Verse 9 is a tremendously encouraging verse . . . It still awaits fulfilment. Why is it encouraging? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

6. I need the Lord to fulfil verse 11 in me, especially "unite my heart to fear your holy name." Is not one of our struggles having a divided heart???

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**For your Meditation and Prayer:** Here is one of those psalms that reflects the wrestling of a man with things external and internal, enemies on the outside and struggles inside his own heart. It has much to pray about.

This is a Psalm of pure praise of the LORD. It reflects the psalmist’s meditation, as mentioned in vs 5, and it too quotes from Exodus 34:6.

**Read Psalm 145.**

1. Verses 1-3 would make a good resolution for us all, would they not? What “name” do you think he has in view when he says “bless your name” and “praise your name”?

2. If vss 4-7 are to be a reality, what does that imply about our churches and even more our homes? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. Do we (do you) take time as we ought to practice vs 5? What do we lose if we don’t? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Turn back for a moment and re-read Exodus 33:19. Do you see the word “goodness” there? How will he make his “goodness” pass before Moses? Note what he says next. Exodus 34:6-7 is the fulfilment of 33:19, and look what you find here in Psalm 145:7-8! Are you getting a sense of how pervasive that revelation by the LORD is throughout the Old Testament, and its truths permeate the New Testament and come to their fullest expression in Christ?

4. The “Kingdom of God” was a major theme in Jesus’ teaching. In his day the Kingdom didn’t appear very impressive. Matthew 13 records the parables of the Kingdom. Some portrayed its growth and permeation of the world. Think of what it has become today. Write out Hebrews 12:28-29, and then read over these verses 5 times: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

5. Read Psalm 145:17-20 again, and then Psalm 1. They are quite different, and yet they are very similar. In what way are they similar? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**For your Meditation and Prayer:** Reflect back over the Psalm, and spend some time doing what verse 21 says in light of what you read as you look back over this Psalm.

This Lord’s Day, pastor Chad returns to the pulpit to pick up his series on one of the great books of the New Testament at Philippians 2:12-13. So, let’s back up and get the context of those verses.

**Read Philippians 2:5-13.**

1. Vs 12 begins with a word that can mean “for this reason,” “therefore,” “so.” What is Paul looking back to, or drawing out an implication of, or application from? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

As I’m sure pastor Chad will deal with this particular text well, let’s focus on the broader concept of obedience. This reading and the next will focus on three mistakes often made in regard to obedience.

2. Is obedience necessary to be saved? Explain: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Now that you have answered that – if you didn’t, stop and do it before going on – don’t cheat!

Now that you have answered that, let’s explore that question further. Let me ask it in different ways.

3. Does our obedience contribute positively to our salvation in any measure? Is it our part? Has God left it to us to do one thing, to believe? Explain: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. Does salvation by grace alone by faith alone through Christ alone make obedience optional, something we ought to do out of gratitude, but unnecessary with regard to salvation? Explain: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

5. If we are justified by faith alone, so that our standing with God is secure because God sees us clothed in the righteousness of Christ rather than in our own dirty rags, and if we can therefore neither be less or more righteous in God’s sight because Christ’s righteousness is perfect, does that mean that our relationship with God is neither positively or negatively affected by our obedience? Explain: \_\_\_\_\_  
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Now, if you will bear with me, let me try to address what I was attempting to do in questions 2-5, and to explain what I believe is the proper way to view obedience. This is how I would answer the questions:

# 2 above: Yes, obedience is necessary to be saved, but not in the sense of my making myself acceptable to God. I'll explain further shortly.

# 3 above: No, God has not left it to us to do one thing to positively contribute to our own salvation as our part. I'll explain further shortly.

# 4 above: No, obedience is not optional, it is necessary. I'll explain further shortly.

# 5 above: No, it does not mean that our relationship with God as our Father is neither positively or negatively affected by our obedience. It IS affected by our obedience.

Here goes: Our salvation is wholly a work of God, and it is a comprehensive work. By that I mean that God does not merely deliver us from the guilt and punishment of sin, but also from the power and presence of sin in our lives, transforming us into the likeness and image of his Son, who was perfectly obedient. It is not a momentary work, but a process that will only find its absolute completion when Christ returns.

God sovereignly begins that work by powerfully calling us into fellowship with himself and his Son through the regenerating work of his Spirit, by which he brings us from spiritual death to life, transforming our inner disposition from enmity and rejection of his authority over us to a disposition of love and willing submission and obedience to Christ as Lord. That initial transformation is not total, but still significantly different, though different in different people. For example, we love the Lord, but not with all our heart, mind, strength and soul until we die. We begin to obey, but will grow in our obedience and conformity to Christ throughout our lives. But death to life is a radical change, and it is not something we contribute the least bit to. This change in disposition leads to responding to the gospel of Christ with the obedience of faith, but it is an obedience wrought in us as the free gift of God, not one we are left to do on our own as our own contribution to make by our will. It is the result of regeneration and the internal change of disposition towards the Lord and the things of the Lord.

The nature of that obedience of faith is to abandon all trust in one's self, and to look altogether away unto Christ for the forgiveness of our sins and to receive his righteousness as a free gift. Faith abandons all boasting save that which is in Christ.

But our relationship with God as Father and with Christ IS affected by our obedience to his will as taught in his word. Our standing before God as Judge is not changed, but our relationship with God IS affected. He disciplines those he loves, and sometimes severely, but for their good.

***For your Meditation and Prayer:*** There is a great deal that could be said about this, but for space's sake, let me encourage you to read John 14:15, 21, & 23, and meditate on those verses in relation to this last matter.

**Read Philippians 2:12-13.**

I hope I didn't hopelessly confuse you yesterday. The issues we were touching upon are issues that need a number of qualifications, which is hard to do in a short space of time, at least for some of us it is hard! But let's continue to focus on the matter of obedience and its place in the Christian life.

**Read Romans 3:28-4:8.** Here Paul definitely emphasizes that we are saved through faith in Christ alone without doing works of the law. His point in 4:4-5 is that we don't earn right standing with God. It is a gift given us because of the work of Christ that he had described in 3:21-26, and will describe again in a different way in 5:12-21. But those relate to HOW one is justified in God's sight.

**Now read Romans 2:1-16.** There is a lot in this passage, but I want you to look at verses 4-11 and verse 13.

1. Do these sound contradictory to Romans 3:28-4:8 to you? Explain: \_\_\_\_\_

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\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Romans 2:13 sounds so contradictory to Romans 3:28-4:8 that many have said 2:13 is purely hypothetical, that Paul is saying what would be if someone could actually do it, but of course no one can, so they must seek a different way to be justified. The problem with that is that 2:6-11 sounds virtually the same, and representing them as hypothetical is really out of the question. So what is the answer? Did Paul contradict himself in the same book? That is hardly likely!

The answer is "context." What is the "context" of these passages? Look back to 2:4-5. The context is the issue of "repentance." Repentance is a gift of God. Do you remember our discussion yesterday about regeneration and the internal change of the disposition of our hearts from enmity to submission and obedience? That internal change of disposition produces repentance.

The Westminster Shorter Catechism (WSC # 87) says: "Repentance unto life is a saving grace, whereby a sinner, out of a true sense of his sin, and apprehension (or grasp and understanding of) the mercy of God in Christ, does, with grief and hatred of his sin, turn from it unto God, with full purpose of, and endeavor after, new obedience."

Note that repentance is a saving grace, that is, it is a gift of God as Paul indicates in 2 Timothy 2:24-26 and the church declared in response to Peter's account of the conversion of Cornelius and his household in Acts 11:18.

Such repentance is not merely a momentary experience; it reflects a life-changing transformation of the heart by the Holy Spirit, and it produces people who "by patience and well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality," leading to "eternal life ... glory and honor and peace," as over against those who continue to be "self-seeking, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness," leading to wrath and fury ... tribulation and distress" (Romans 2:7-10).

2. Now, is that describing HOW one is saved, or WHO will be saved? Is one saved "BY patience and well-doing..." or, is that describing WHO has experienced that life-changing transformation by the Holy Spirit that led to

repentance and saving faith? Explain your answer: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

And let me caution that if you are becoming impatient with the difficulty of understanding these matters, and want to avoid them altogether, you need to understand that these are eternal life and death issues. Romans 2:13 is NOT hypothetical, but it is important to understand what it IS. It is *not* a description of HOW one is saved, which would contradict everything Paul teaches in the rest of Romans and Galatians and Ephesians. It is a description of WHO will be saved, and it makes clear that if a person has experienced what Paul calls the inward “circumcision” of the heart by the Spirit – which is what I have thus far called “regeneration” – then he will not only be a hearer of the law, but he will be a doer of the law – not perfectly, granted, but that will be the course of his life as in 2:7. But if he is only a “hearer” of the law, and not a doer, he will perish. Read Matthew 7:21-27 where Jesus makes the same basic point.

***For your Meditation and Prayer:*** Let me encourage you to read back over what we have tried to cover, and pray for understanding if you are struggling with it. But especially pray that the Lord will give you and others of the congregation clear understanding of your/their own state, lest some be self-deceived and perish in the end.

Tomorrow we’ll look at a couple of other passages that may help make this clearer, and, I think, will confirm what has been said.

Read Philippians 2:12-13 again.

Today we'll read several passages that I believe confirm what we dealt with yesterday, first in Romans itself, and then in Titus, James, and Galatians.

Read through fairly quickly, but carefully enough to get the gist of Romans 6:1-23 and 8:12-17.

1. Did those passages agree with what I tried to communicate yesterday? Explain: \_\_\_\_\_

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\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. Read Titus 2:11-15. Does that support yesterday's conclusions? IF so, how?

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\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
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Read James 2:14-26. James 2:24 appears to contradict Romans 3:28 until one notes the context. Paul is speaking of whether one is saved by faith, or by faith and some measure of works. He assumes that "faith" is the genuine thing. James, on the other hand, is asking about the nature of "faith." That is the point of James 2:14. If someone professes faith, but it makes no difference in their life and obedience to the law, is it the type of faith that saves?

3. And his answer is \_\_\_\_\_. Explain: \_\_\_\_\_

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\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Now turn to Galatians, a book strongly emphasizing salvation by faith alone and not by any measure of works.

4. Read Galatians 5:19-26. Note especially verse 21. Is that not making the same point we have emphasized yesterday and in the other passages today? What does it mean? \_\_\_\_\_

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\_\_\_\_\_

**For your Meditation and Prayer:** Go back to Titus 2:11-15 and reflect on that passage. It speaks of the more comprehensive picture of God's gracious purpose to save a people for himself. And if you have an extra moment, turn to Ephesians 2:7, which I think is one of the most amazing statements about God's grace I can imagine! It is hard for me to conceive that such is his intent for a sinner like me!!!

501 years ago today Martin Luther nailed his 95 Theses to the Wittenberg Church Door, inviting debate over issues that relate to what we have been dealing with the past several days. At that point he was not as clear in his understanding of the gospel of grace as he would be later, but he had nevertheless come to understand some of the obvious abuses within the Roman Catholic Church of his day, and they related to issues we have discussed in some measure.

**Read Philippians 2:12-13**, and since this is the last day of the last Bible Reading Plan I am to prepare, turn ahead to a passage pastor Chad will come to later, probably in December, and let us explore slightly in conjunction with the passage that has been our focus for the last several days.

**Read Philippians 3:3-16.**

Note what Paul does in this passage. He begins with an affirmation in vs 3 that is vitally important. He affirms that the true people of God – which is what he means by “we are the circumcision” (speaking of the circumcision of the heart, not in the flesh) who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh,” that is, in any human pedigree or accomplishment. Then Paul recounts what he might have put confidence in, if anyone else thinks he could do so. He gives his pedigree and his accomplishments – and they are impressive – and then makes the point in vss 7-8 that anything he might have boasted of, he had counted as loss and as “rubbish,” or, as one highly respected Greek Lexicon put it, as “crap.”

1. Why did he come to regard those things as rubbish? For what purpose? \_\_\_\_\_

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\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. Verse 9 expresses what he wanted in a different manner. Compare Romans 10:1-4 with verse 9. What insight do you get? \_\_\_\_\_

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\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

The issues Paul faced were very similar *in principle* to the issues faced in Luther’s day, and the Roman Catholic Church pronounced Luther and the views he held – which were essentially the views Paul held – as anathema, a curse that to my knowledge they have never recanted of. So, don’t be fooled by the claim that these are not serious differences, just of semantics. The Reformers were too sharp and discerning to mistake semantics for genuine differences, indeed, critical differences.

3. Finally, did Paul’s dependence on the righteousness of Christ alone impede his zeal for living for Christ? (Phil 3:12-16)? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
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**For your Meditation and Prayer:** Pray that we will all clearly understand these matters.



