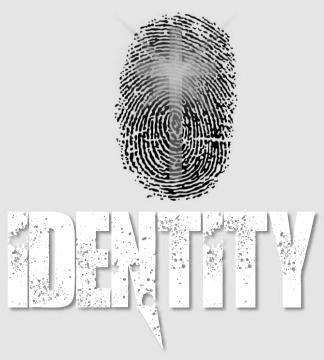
POWER SERIES



WHO WE ARE IN CHRIST

A 40 DAY DEVOTIONAL FROM SELECTED LETTERS OF APOSTLE PAUL



IDENTITY: WHO WE ARE IN CHRIST

A 40-Day Devotional from Selected Letters of Apostle Paul



IDENTITY: WHO WE ARE IN CHRIST

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P.O. Box 52088, Falomo, Ikoyi, Lagos.

https://www.icocnigeria.org

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POWER SERIES TEAM 14.0

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Titi George

EDITORS

Rolayo Ogbonnaya Titi George Wale Aderibigbe

SUB-EDITOR

Emmanuel Emeh

COVER DESIGN, TYPESETTING AND LAYOUT

Emmanuel Emeh

ILLUSTRATIONS & PUZZLES

Emmanuel Emeh

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

Abimbola Odusote Funmi Aina

Adediwura Aderibigbe Israel Bolaji

Adeola Adesanya Jason Obeh

Blessed Idowu John Obaje

Bolu Olaniyan Korede Olayemi

Chidinma Akpojotor Ndubuisi Eke

Chris Ogbonnaya Njideka Eke

Daniel Oyewolu Olaoluwa Oni

Dayo Andre Omobola Abolarinwa

Emeka Anolefo Rolayo Ogbonnaya

Emmanuel Ekpo Seun Oyegunle

Emmanuel Emeh Temitope Oduyomi

Eyo O. Eyo Titi George

Femi Okodugha Tola Faneye

Frank Okodugha

HAPPY AND PROSPEROUS NEW YEAR TO THE SAINTS OF GOD!

We are grateful to the Almighty that we can embark on Power Series 14.0

We dive deep this year as we study Paul's letters to the Colossians, Galatians, Ephesians, Thessalonians, and Philippians. Our theme is IDENTITY, and in each book, you will gain incredible insights into who we are and who we are called to be, individually and collectively, as followers of Jesus.

Studying God's word together is a refreshing and uplifting experience. The scripture is filled with treasures, old and new. As writers, we noticed that for all that God enabled us to pen down, there was still so much more that could be written! So, go ahead and write your devotionals in addition! Let's all share what we are learning in our small groups. Imagine the growth and joy we will experience as we inspire, encourage, and hold one another accountable to put what we learn into practice!

This year, in addition to our print and electronic copies, God has enabled us to take the power series into the social media space with videos and audio devotionals on Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, Spotify, and WhatsApp. Our prayer is that God will reach and impact many more souls within and outside the church through these means.

My heartfelt gratitude goes to all who worked hard night and day, often at significant personal cost, to produce this year's publication. I sincerely thank our 29 contributing writers for their dedication and commitment.

The beauty and wisdom of God shine forth from the rich variety of perspectives they provide. I am grateful to our Teachers' team for always being on hand to assist with doctrinal accuracy and to provide helpful resources where necessary. The Editorial team gladly took on more work than usual to see this project through. I wish to especially thank those who served on the newly constituted social media team and our National and Lagos church leadership for their support and advice on securing print copies for those who need them. My deep appreciation goes to our production team for working under pressure during the Christmas holidays to ensure that this work is ready for the new year.

God bless you all, and may He reward you accordingly! Finally, I thank every brother, sister, family member, or friend who devotes themselves to reading these devotional lessons. May you glean from them so much more than you can ask or imagine. Amen!



PREFACE

Welcome to the 14th edition of "Power Series," an annual devotional book from the ICOC Nigeria. This year's theme is IDENTITY - Who We Are in Christ. This theme is both timely and transformative as we explore the depths of our identity in Christ through a 40-day devotional journey inspired by the letters of the Apostle Paul. This edition includes 40+3 devotionals for a total of 43 days, divided into six sections: Book 1 (Days 1-8), Book 2 (Days 9-16), Book 3 (Days 17-26), Book 4 (Days 27-33), Book 5 (Days 34-37), and Book 6 (Days 38-43). In a world that constantly challenges our values, beliefs, and selfworth, we, as Christians, must anchor our identity in Christ's unchanging truth. The Apostle Paul, through his letters, offers profound insights and teachings that guide us in living out our true identity with confidence and purpose.

Book 1 (Days 1-8): We Are Full and Complete in Him In this section, we establish the groundwork for understanding our identity in Christ. The devotionals will explore fundamental truths about who we are as God's beloved children, redeemed and chosen for His glory. We will reflect on Paul's letters to the Colossians and Ephesians, learning about Christ's supremacy and our completeness in Him.

Book 2 (Days 9-16): We Are People of Faith and People of Freedom This section focuses on how we can practically live out our identity in our daily lives. Drawing from the epistles to the Galatians and Philippians, we will explore the fruits of the Spirit, the freedom we have in Christ, and the call to live a life worthy of our calling.

Book 3 (Days 17-26): We Are Members of One Body Our identity in Christ profoundly affects our relationships with others. In Book 3, we will delve into Paul's teachings on how to reflect Christ in our interactions with family, friends, and the broader community. Key passages from Ephesians and Colossians will guide us in building Christ-centered relationships and fostering unity within the body of Christ.

Book 4 (Days 27-33): We Are Children Of The Day As we journey through life, we face numerous challenges that can shake our understanding of who we are in Christ. Book 4 addresses these challenges head-on, offering encouragement and strategies to

we are in Christ. Book 4 addresses these challenges head-on, offering encouragement and strategies to stand firm in our faith. We will find strength and resilience to overcome adversity through Paul's letters to the Corinthians and Thessalonians.

Book 5 (Days 34-37): We Are Delivered From Evil Hope is a defining characteristic of our identity in Christ. This book focuses on our hope in Jesus, both for this life and the next. Through selected passages from Romans and Philippians, we are reminded of the eternal glory that awaits us and our assurance of salvation.

Book 6 (Days 38-43): We Rejoice Always In this final section, we explore how our identity in Christ propels us into mission. Paul's letters to Timothy and Titus provide a roadmap for living out our faith with purpose and impacting the world around us. We are called to be ambassadors of Christ, sharing the good news and making disciples of all nations.

As you embark on this 40-day journey, may you be deeply enriched and transformed by the truth of who you are in Christ. Let each devotional inspire you to fully embrace your identity and live out the calling God has placed on your life. Remember, our identity in Christ is not just a theological concept but a lived reality that shapes every aspect of our being. May the Holy Spirit guide you, and may the words of the Apostle Paul resonate in your heart, empowering you to live as God's image-bearer here on earth.

In Christ,

Evangelist/Teacher Sub-Editor We are thrilled to announce a new addition to the Power Series 2025: "IDENTITY - Who We Are in Christ." For the first time ever, our beloved annual devotional is now available on electronic, print, audio, and video versions! This innovation aims to further expand your reading experience, making it easier than ever to engage with God's word wherever you are.

Introducing The MULTIVERSE Of The POWER SERIES

In addition to our traditional hardcover, this year's publication comes in various formats including a flipbook, PDF, and now, weekly video themes on Facebook, Instagram, YouTube & TikTok, plus Shareable audios and videos on WhatsApp. Whether you are commuting, exercising, or simply prefer listening to reading, these versions provides a flexible and convenient way to immerse yourself in the transformative teachings of the Bible.

The audio version features engaging narrations by a dedicated team of volunteers who have poured their hearts into bringing these devotionals to life. Their voices carry the warmth and passion of the messages, enhancing the devotional experience in a unique and impactful way.

We celebrate the incredible men and women who volunteered for this project. Their commitment and hard work have made it possible for us to reach a broader audience and provide multiple ways to experience the Power Series. Their contributions ensure that everyone, regardless of their preferred method of engagement, can connect deeply with the theme of "IDENTITY - Who We Are in Christ."

Join us in exploring the Power Series 2025 on Spotify and experience the devotionals like never before. Listen to the inspiring words of the Apostle Paul and allow them to resonate in your heart as you navigate your daily life. This audio version is not just an addition; it is a new dimension to our shared journey in Christ.

Together, let's embrace this new format and continue to grow in our understanding and living out of our identity in Christ. Happy listening!



MEET THE CREATIVE/SOCIAL **MEDIA TEAM**

Concept Creation

Titi George Collins Ibeh Rotimi Awaye



Video Management

Collins Ibeh



Audio Management Rotimi Awaye

Al Assistance



Rotimi Awaye

Voice - Overs Rotimi Awaye (0) Bajo Adebule Angela Ege Andrew Chinedu Sunday Awolowo Abimbola Abolarinwa



Social Media Management

Blessed Idowu Gift Idowu Philip George

Project Management

Bright Onyekaba Seun Oyegunle



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You can also join the WhatsApp Channel for the Power Series, you get daily updates about the Power Series. Feel free to share this link with ALL your friends and anyone you know might need it.

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POWER SERIES 2025

THEME: IDENTITY - WHO WE ARE IN CHRIST (Inspired by Selected Letters of Apostle Paul)

BOOKS, TOPICS AND BIBLE PASSAGE:

BOOK 1:

WE ARE FULL AND COMPLETE IN HIM	Colossians 1-4
1. We Pray for You	Colossians 1:1-14
2. The Supremacy of Christ	Colossians 1:15-23
3. Christ in You: The hope of glory	Colossians 1:24 – 2:5
4. We Are Complete in Christ	Colossians 2:6-12
5. Forgiven and Free	Colossians 2:13-23
6. We Are Set on Things Above	Colossians 3:1-17
7. Christ-Centered Relationships	Col. 3:18-25, 4:1-6
8. We are Dear Brothers & Sisters in Christ	Col ossians4:7-18

BOOK 2:

WE ARE PEOPLE OF FAITH AND PEOPLE OF FREEDOM

	Galatians 1-6
9. The one Gospel	Galatians 1:1-10
10. We are called by God's grace	Galatians 1:11-21
11. We are entrusted with a task	Galatians 2:6-10
12. We are called to walk in line with the Truth	Gal 2:11-16
13. We are Justified by Faith	Gal 2:20-21; 3:7-14
14. We are Sons, not Slaves	Galatians 4:1-7.
15. We are a new creation in Christ	Gal 5:1-6; 6:12-16
16. We are free to live by the Spirit	Gal 5:13-26; 6:1-10

BOOK 3:

WE ARE MEMBERS OF THE ONE BODY Ep	hesians 1-6
17. We are Blessed with Spiritual Blessings	Eph 1:1-14
18. That you may Know Him Better	Eph 1:15-23
19. We Are Saved By Grace	Eph 2:1-10
20. We Are No Longer Foreigners	Eph 2:11-22
21. God's Plan for the Church	Eph 3: 1-13
22. We are One Body with Many Gifts	Eph 4: 1-16
23. We are Created to be Like God	Eph 4:17-32
24. We are Children of Light	Eph 5:1-20
25. We are called to Love, Submit, Nurture, & Obe	y Eph 5:21–6:19
26. We Are Hard-Fighting Soldiers	Eph 6:10-24

BOOK 4:

WE ARE CHILDREN OF THE DAY	1Thessalonians
27. We are Called to Deep Conviction	1Thess 1:1-10
28. We Are Called to Share the Gospel & Our	Lives 1Thes 2:1-12
29. Our Joy and Crown in God's presence	1Thes 2:17-20, 3:6-13
30. We are called to sexual integrity.	1Thess 4:3-8
31. We are Called to Live a Life that Wins Resp	ect 1Thess 4:9-12
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35. Do Not Let Anyone Deceive You

36. We Are Called to Stand Firm

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2Thess 1:1-12

2Thess 2:1-12

2Thess 2: 13-16; 3:1-5

2Thess 3:6-18

BOOK 6:

WE REJOICE ALWAYS

38. To live is Christ

39. We are called to unity and humility

40. Gains and Losses

41. We are Called to Peace

42. We are Called to Contentment

43. We Can Do All This

Philippians 1 - 4

Phil 1:1-21

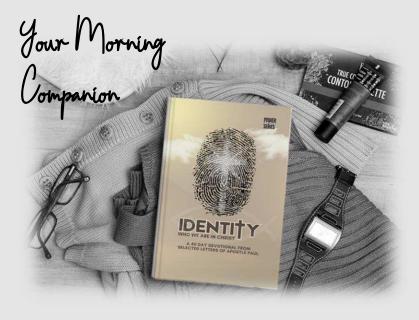
Phil 2:1-18, 4:2-3

Phil 3:7-14

Phil 4: 4-8

Phil 4:9-12

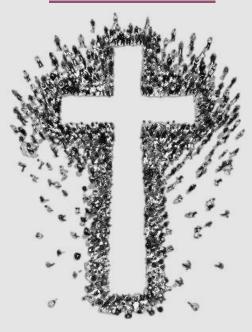
Phil 4:13



WE ARE FULL AND COMPLETE IN HIM

Foundations Of Our Identity In Christ

Colossians 1-4



BOOK 1 OVERVIEW

Ephesians 1:4-5

"For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will."

1 Peter 2:9

"But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light."

Jeremiah 1:5

"Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations."

"To be yourself in a world that is constantly trying to make you something else is the greatest accomplishment."

- Ralph Waldo Emerson

"The two most important days in your life are the day you are born and the day you find out why."

- Mark Twain

WE ARE FULL AND COMPLETE IN HIM

Day 1 – We Pray for You

Day 2 - The Supremacy of Christ

Day 3 - Christ in You: The hope of glory

Day 4 - We Are Complete in Christ

Day 5 – Forgiven and Free

Day 6 – We Are Set on Things Above

Day 7 – Christ-Centered Relationships

Day 8 – We are Dear Brothers & Sisters in Christ

WE PRAY FOR YOU

Colossians 1:1-14

For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you.

hanks be to God for a new year and for the blessing of being able to begin it with one another, learning and growing from God's word.

We begin our devotionals with Paul's letter to the disciples in Colossae. He wrote to them during his imprisonment in Rome. This was about 60 years after the death and resurrection of Jesus. Paul did not convert the Colossian disciples. It was Epaphras, one of Paul's close companions, who preached the gospel to them and undoubtedly began the church there. Imagine the joy that must have filled Paul's heart as he heard from Epaphras about men and women that he had never even met, becoming followers of Jesus Christ and bearing fruit in amazing ways. Indeed, God's word cannot be chained! Unable to see the believers face to face, Paul and his companions committed themselves to the most important ministry of all - the ministry of prayer. Prayer travels farther than we can and accomplishes more than we can.

What stands out in Paul's prayer is its' **consistency** and its **content**. Notice his words:

We always thank God for you (vs. 3) ...since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you (vs. 9a)

We continually ask God to fill you... (vs 9b)

How do you feel when a brother or sister tells you, "I have been praying for you"? It is profoundly encouraging and uplifting. Why? Because we all know that it takes commitment and selflessness not just to pray for someone else but to keep doing so.

Also, what did Paul pray for the disciples?

That God would fill the Christians with the knowledge of His will, that they would live a life worthy of Him, that they would bear fruit in good works and be strengthened, and that they would develop great endurance and patience and joyfully give thanks to God. What outstanding spiritual requests on behalf of others. I must say, these requests are very different from what most of us usually pray for, isn't it?

This prayer for the Colossians is a prayer for all the saints of every age and generation whom the apostle would not meet personally. That includes us. We have been prayed for!

Think about this: You and I stand today because of the earnest prayers of others on our behalf at different times in our lives.

Conclusion

As we begin a new year learning and re-learning about who we are in Christ, let's commit to prayer for one another and for God's people everywhere.

Call to Action

- Write out your prayer list for the year 2025. Include personal requests as well as requests for specific people that you know.
- Using the prayers of Paul, think of one person or group that you are not very familiar with but you will commit yourself to pray for over the next 40 days. E.g. a young convert in your church or a ministry you don't personally belong to.

Further reading 1 Sam 12:23 Lk 22:31-32

We Pray for You

"Prayer is the breath of faith, the whisper of hope, and the heartbeat of love."

"Through prayer, we touch the heart of God and invite His power into our lives."

"In every moment of prayer, we are never alone; God listens and answers with grace."

Scripture reading: Colossians 1:15-23

He is before all things and in Him all things hold together. He is the head of the body, the church; He is the beginning and the first born from among the dead, so that in everything He might have the supremacy (1:17)

After Paul's prayers for the Colossians at the beginning of his letter, he is compelled to write to them about the supremacy of Jesus Christ. In the same way, the goal of this writing is to inspire us on the greatness, superiority and supremacy of Yeshua (Jesus the Christ) who came bearing his father's (YHWH) name (Matthew 1:20-21), and who made His dwelling among us (John 1:14) on earth for 33.5 years. May this understanding strengthen our faith and build patience and perseverance muscles as we see the DAY approaching.

The Hebrew word for supremacy שֶּלְיוֹנוּת (elyonut) means supreme, topmost, uppermost, superiority, ascendancy, dominance, preeminence, primacy (Morfix English Hebrew Dictionary). For me, I think of it as "over all."

The supremacy of Christ telescopes and captures His unique and unprecedented greatness. He reigns above all in power, wisdom, dominion, majesty and glory. As the conduit through whom the Creator of all created the universe, Jesus stands as our Savior, appropriately and fittingly referred to as "our God and Savior, Jesus Christ" (2 Pet. 1:1). His greatness is unfathomable (Ps. 145:3).

He is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth (Rev. 1:5). He is the Alpha and Omega, the One who is, who was, and who is to come, the Almighty.

As you read this, let the immensity of His power and the awe and wonder of His dominion wash over you. Reflect on the splendor of His person and the absolute authority of His rule, unparalleled and unmatched.

"Fire and hail, snow and vapor; stormy winds fulfilling His word; mountains and all hills; fruitful trees and all cedars," are all summoned to "praise the name of the Lord: for His name alone is excellent; His glory is above the earth and heaven." Nothing can be more contrasting than fire and water, yet they are the most potent forces in nature. Despite their opposition, they submit to the hidden power of Him whose will is their command.

He is Lord, over all, and God Almighty. Nothing is too hard for Him. He sees what is hidden in darkness; He knows our collective and individual sufferings, the secrets of rulers, and all human plotting. He understands the impact of the economic recession on you and me. He is more than able to provide.

Conclusion

Reflect on the One who has called you into His kingdom and toward heaven—His power is infinite, His rule is supreme. Powers that be can do you no harm. He is able to protect, assist, relieve, and succor you. Fear not. He is supreme. His eye is upon the righteous, and his ear is open to their cry.

Paul writes, "It is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent" (1 Cor. 1:19). Even in ruling the hearts of men, Christ's power is conspicuous (Psa. 33:15).

Let us be fully aware and convinced of the boundless power available to us in Christ. May these words inspire and empower you!

Call to action

Think of anything that makes you afraid or doubtful or tempts you to seek help from native doctors, spiritualists, etc. Lay down these fears before the greatness and supremacy of Christ you read about today.

Further reading Titus 2:13 Job 36:26. Rev 1:8

The Supremacy of Christ

"Christ is the light that outshines all darkness, the King who reigns above all."

"In Christ, we see the fullness of God's glory, the essence of divine supremacy."

"He is above all, in all, and through all; Christ is the cornerstone of our faith." Scripture reading: Colossians 1:24 - 2:5

To them, God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory (1:27)

As we learned yesterday, one crucial reason why Paul wrote to the Colossian disciples was to help them understand the supremacy of Christ, whom they had come to believe, and the completeness of their position in Him. God wants every one of us, His children, to grasp this understanding.

In verses 26 and 27 of chapter 1, the Bible tells us that God has now chosen to reveal to His people a mystery. A mystery is something difficult or even, at times, impossible to understand or explain. As such, this mystery was hidden in Old Testament times but was revealed and became manifest from Pentecost day for anyone who believes, repents, makes Jesus Lord, and is baptized. (Acts 2:36-38) Scripture refers to "the glorious riches" of this mystery, which is "Christ in you, the hope of glory."

What does this mean? For me, this means that at baptism our bodies became a dwelling that Christ lives in. Christ is in you, and Christ is in me by his Spirit. (Eph 2:22) What a glorious fact!

Secondly, it means I can share in Christ's glory on the last day. This is the goal of our faith. When all is said and done, I can look forward to an eternity with the Lord as long as I remain faithful to Him while here on earth, reflecting, propagating, and exhibiting Christ's character, nature, and teaching.

2 vs 2 reads ...that they may have the full riches of complete understanding so that they may know the mystery of God, namely Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

Again, scripture mentions a 'mystery' and 'hidden treasures.' One may ask, does that mean God is in the business of hiding His precious gifts? And why? The truth is that God reveals what He wants His people to know and follow diligently at any particular point in time. (Deut 29:29). God wants us to appreciate and treat His Word and His relationship with us as precious. This is the greatest treasure, and it is found in Christ.

Finally, scripture tells us that we have all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge in Christ. This is awesome news! There are many inferior and counterfeit ideas, insight, and so-called knowledge today. The world is in total confusion and turmoil. In all areas of life, how to be a godly spouse, a successful and fulfilled professional, a great parent who depicts Christ, a hardworking and truthful student, an obedient child who honours the parents, an honest and dutiful citizen, and so on; Christ is our wisdom and knowledge source for life.

Conclusion

Our glory is the singular fact that we, as Christians, have Christ dwelling in us. This should fill us with hope and confidence. There is no lasting glory for any person outside of Christ. Our relationship with Christ is a treasure; like every treasure, seeking it is deliberate and passionate. When obstacles occur, it will take planning, effort, determination, and perseverance. How devoted are we to seeking this treasure? We cannot be cherry-picking. We must seek our true identity, position, security, and assurance in Jesus Christ.

Call to action

Make 2025 a year of treasure-seeking through daily prayer and bible study.

Meditate intently on Christ's wisdom and knowledge for your daily living

Seek God to direct your thoughts and mind; wrestle with His Word.

Further reading Matt 13:44. Rom 16:25-26

We Are Complete in Christ

"In Christ, we lack nothing; He is our fullness and our sufficiency."

"We are made whole in Christ, complete in His perfect love and grace."

"Our identity is perfected in Christ, where we find our true completeness." Scripture reading: Colossians 2:6-12

For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form and in Christ, you have been brought to fullness (2vs9-10)

Yesterday, we understood the mystery of Christ dwelling in us. Today, we learn another great revelation from Paul's admonition to the Colossians—that we are complete and brought to fullness in Christ.

As a data scientist, completeness refers to the extent to which a dataset is free from missing information; all required data points needed for accurate analysis and decision-making are present. Anything complete invariably means it is full, a whole, and not a part; thus, nothing more is needed to make it functional.

Hence, understanding my identity in Christ is vital for me as a disciple, especially in today's world, where societal expectations can heavily influence self-worth. Colossians 2:6-12 reminds us that we are complete in Him, a truth that can transform our lives amid challenges.

The Fullness of God in Us

Paul states, "...in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form" and "you have been brought to fullness in Christ" (v9). As disciples of Jesus and Nigerians, our identity is not defined by economic status or social standing. Whether you are a student struggling to excel in academics, a job applicant trying to find employment or a professional facing job insecurity, your worth is rooted in the divine nature of Christ. This understanding will empower you to rise above societal pressures.

The Temptation of Incompleteness

Today, many feel pressured to conform to the world's standards of success—wealth, education, and social status. Young graduates may feel inadequate if they cannot secure a job immediately after school.

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A single person may feel societal pressure to get married by a specific time. A married brother who is not able to adequately provide for his family faces the constant torture of self-doubt and low self-worth. All these experiences can create feelings of incompleteness that overshadow our true identity.

Embracing Our Identity

To combat feelings of inadequacy, we must actively reaffirm our identity in Christ through practical steps:

Reflect on verses affirming your identity. There are a few at the end of this devotional.

Spend time in prayer asking God to reveal areas where you feel inadequate. Acknowledge your fears and let God reassure you of your worth.

Engage with disciples at Bible Talk/Family Group to see who can uplift you. In our Church, sharing experiences, mentoring, disciplining, and confession of sins foster understanding and encouragement.

Serve others by volunteering at our benevolence outreaches or caring hearts initiatives, which can help shift our focus from personal struggles to recognizing the fullness of what we have in Christ.

Take responsibility for your situation, spirituality, finances, career, health, and overall well-being. Gal 6:5 urges each of us to carry our own load. You may be fortunate to get help from others, but if you don't, begrudge no one.

Conclusion

Remember that our completeness comes from our relationship with Jesus Christ, not external achievements or societal expectations. Embrace this identity daily; it will anchor you against doubt and insecurity.

Call to action

Pick one of the practical points above that resonates with you and that you will focus on in the next week. Share in your small group or with your discipleship partner about areas where you may be experiencing self-doubt or inadequacy. Pray together about this.

Further reading Eph 1:5; 5:1, Psalm 23:1, Isaiah 43:1-4; 54, 1John 1:3

Forgiven and Free

"In Christ, we are forgiven, washed clean by His grace, and set free from sin."

"Forgiveness opens the door to freedom; in Christ, we walk unchained."

"Through Christ's sacrifice, we are freed from guilt and liberated by grace."

FORGIVEN AND FREE

Scripture reading: Colossians 2:13-23

He forgave us all our sins, having canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; He has taken it away, nailing it to the cross. (2:13-14)

n today's reading, Paul reminds the Christians in Colossae of who they were before coming to faith in Christ and their present redeemed standing in Him. He encourages them and us today that our sins have been forgiven and that we are totally and absolutely free from their burden. As such, we should be careful not to get enslaved by rules and regulations that are incompatible with Christ, as these are ephemeral and of little value.

One human action that is analogous to the forgiveness of our sins is what is called the "presidential pardon." A presidential pardon may be granted to a citizen convicted of a crime by a court of law. This pardon is under the laws of different nations. recognized including Britain and the United States. When a presidential pardon is extended to a convict, his prior conviction will never again preclude him from aspiring to any elective position in the land. He has been forgiven of his crime, and he is as free as air. However. there is still one significant difference between the forgiveness granted to us due to the work of Christ on the cross and the presidential pardon. In the latter's case, the beneficiary must meet some qualifying conditions. Also, the pardon can be revoked at any time under certain circumstances. A presidential pardon does not erase the records of the conviction.

But the forgiveness of God bestowed upon us as a result of the work of Christ has no limitations. It is not subject to any revocation because God Himself promises that once He forgives us our sins He will remember them no more.

Isaiah 43:25:

I, yes I alone will blot out your sins for my own sake and will never think of them again.

Jeremiah 31:34

... I will forgive their wickedness, and I will never again remember their sins.

The key points of interest in the two passages are that God is referring to all our sins, unlike the presidential pardon granted by man, which is for limited crimes alone. Secondly, God emphasizes that when He forgives, He will never again remember our sins. Our forgiveness and freedom from the burden of sin are absolute. Praise be to God!

In verses 16-23, Paul admonishes us that in view of this complete forgiveness, we need to evaluate all rules, regulations, religious opinions, subjective judgments, or cultural demands put forth by man both within and outside the church and ensure that we do not allow such things to infringe on or call into question our salvation and freedom in Christ.

Conclusion

Jesus Christ has canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness (2vs 14). Indeed, we have something far greater than a presidential pardon. We are forgiven and free of accusation through Christ's blood. Let us walk in this identity, holding on to the reality we have received, which is Christ Himself. (2vs 17) His sacrifice is enough. We do not need more than we already have in in order to experience Christian life to the full.

Call to Action

Thank God today for allowing you to be forgiven of your sins. Don't miss the beauty of God's grace.

Are there rules or regulations you are holding to that seem questionable or burdensome? Re-evaluate them. Seek advice from spiritually mature people where necessary.

Further reading John 8:3-11.

We Are Set on Things Above

"Set your hearts on heavenly things, where Christ reigns in glory."

"Our focus is upward, our hearts aligned with the eternal."

"In Christ, we set our minds on things above, living for the glory of God." Scripture reading: Colossians 3:1-17

Since then you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God (3:1)

In today's reading, we see Paul calling the Christians in Colossae to a different life. This is the same lesson for us today. The transformative power of setting our minds on things above can genuinely reshape our earthly lives. Paul's writings remind us of the fleeting nature of this world and encourage us to focus on the eternal. Living in the kingdom of God is a profound experience. We are called to be in the world but not of it, constantly seeking the guidance of the Holy Spirit to align our lives with God's will.

When we were baptized into Christ, we "died" with Him. In line with the crucified life, scripture tells us to "put to death" those things that belong to our former earthly nature. Up and out of the water, we also resurrected with Him, which means that we now participate in the heavenly realm where the resurrected Christ is presently and eternally. I am often tempted to be fixated or distracted by things here on earth, since that is all I can see. I vacillate between an earthly and heavenly mindset - "I want what I want, the way I want it, and I want it now." Can you relate? I am learning to cultivate a reflective will that asks, "What is truly good before God, for others, for myself and my family?" Scripture does not say we should not have any concern for earthly creation. Instead, we should let a heavenly mindset influence our daily decisions, relationships, and overall outlook on life here on earth. That heavenly mindset will also keep our hearts safe from the mentality of fear or threat of unfriendly powers, whether human or non-human.

Conclusion

We have been raised with Christ. Therefore, we live our present lives from a heavenly perspective. This can be challenging yet enriching because the kingdom life is a wonderful life. It's a powerful reminder that our true identity goes beyond the physical and is rooted in our union with Christ.

What areas do you need to refocus your heart and mind the most? What do you need to "put to death" this year? What do you need to "put on"?

Galatians 2:20 is a powerful verse about dying to self and living a new life in Christ. We have been liberated from our impulsive will. We can let go of self-centered concerns and focus on higher things. Living a life set on things above can bring a sense of peace and purpose. It helps us transcend this life's worries and pains and align ourselves with the greater good. Though this present world is passing away, those who do God's will, will not.

Call to action

- 1.Acknowledge the kingdom of God, enter it, and make every effort to grow daily.
- 2.Invite God into all your little things Prov 3:5-6. Practice gratitude in small moments.
- 3.Invest yourself more in kingdom living. Risk yourself in learning and practicing Jesus's teachings. Your life will be exciting and interesting! Remember the early days!
- 4. What practices or teachings have you found most helpful in maintaining a kingdom-focused mindset? Share with someone.
- 5.Pray with people. Pray for them as well. James 1:2-4s
- 6. Rest and relax. Put your confidence in Him. Trust God with it. Philippians 4:6-7

Further reading Gal 2:20 1 Cor 7:31



"Relationships rooted in Christ flourish in love, grace, and unity."

"In Christ, our connections are strengthened, reflecting His love."

"Centered in Christ, our relationships mirror His grace and compassion."

Col 3:18-25, 4:1-6

...It is the Lord Christ you are serving...(3:24b)

"When Christ is at the center of a relationship, His love fills each person, giving them strength to love beyond themselves." — Unknown.

Relationships Defined by Christ

At the beginning of Chapter 3, Paul reminds the Colossian disciples of the vanity of their old life, steeped in selfishness and ungodly living. He reminds them that Christ defines their new life. The characteristics of this old life will hinder us from achieving relationships/lives defined by Christ. The call is to be self-aware. Do you realize that self-awareness can help you achieve your Christ-empowered status? Verse 3 reveals that our lives are hidden in Christ. This translates to a new life with a new identity in Christ. It means we are secure under his protection and ultimate fulfillment in heaven. This should motivate us to live Christ-centered lives. Thus, we will shape our relationships with one another and our neighbors by fostering and encouraging love, service, forgiveness, unity, and spiritual growth.

One of the early church's defining strengths was its commitment to building relationships. They devoted themselves to meaningful connections. Acts 2 paints a vivid picture of a community united, free of class or caste divisions, where members shared their belongings and gathered in each other's homes to break bread. Imagine this unity and consider the standards we should strive for in relationships, both within the church and beyond.

Relationships Where Charity Begins From Home

Home should be where we are honest and at ease, modeling Christian values without pressure. In Colossians 3:18–19, Paul outlines the foundations of family relationships between husbands and wives.

He emphasizes the wife's role in submitting willingly to her husband, empowering him to love her as Christ loves the church (Ephesians 5:25). While ancient societies were patriarchal, Women had little or no rights; Christianity calls husbands to be compassionate and caring, not harsh toward their wives and children. In Colossians 3:21, parents are also cautioned not to provoke their children, for instance, by being too demanding, over-controlling, unforgiving, or just plain angry (shouting). From my experience, my children respond better to my correction when it is done with calmness, love, and respect.

Colossians 3:22–23 advises that enslaved people or workers should not overlook the blessing of a Christ-centered home but work wholeheartedly, as if for Jesus. In the early church, some wealthy disciples had slaves who also became believers. This mutual faith was meant to foster a loving home environment that enslaved people were encouraged to appreciate by giving their best effort. In Colossians 4:1, Christian masters, in turn, are called to act with fairness. When a disciple avoids hiring fellow believers, it suggests a breakdown in this principle of mutual respect and should be addressed.

Conclusion

Our identity in Christ should produce Christ-centered relationships that our neighbors envy. We are called to embody Christ's love, humility, and grace in our relationships. Let us make our lives and families attractive to others. Matt. 5:16.

Call to Action

Let us be self-aware:

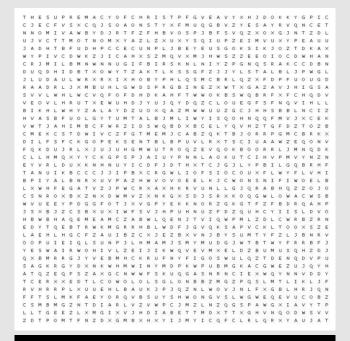
If you are married, how Christ-centered is your marriage?

Parents, how patient are you with your children? Children, rate your obedience on a scale of 1 – 10. Be open as a family and discuss how you have decided to improve.

As an employer, employee, or business owner, decide on one area where you will make your work relationships more Christ-centered.

Further reading

Colossians 3:14 Philippians 2:3-4 Ephesians 4:32



Find the hidden message, "THE SUPREMACY OF CHRIST" in this maze



"We are a family in Christ, bound by His love and united in faith."

"In Christ, we find our true kinship, brothers and sisters in His grace."

"Our bond in Christ makes us dear to one another, cherished in His love."

Col 4:7-18

Give my greetings to the brothers and sisters at Laodicea and to Nympha and the church in her house (vs. 15)

love reading parts of the New Testament books that mention peoples' names. As I read about specific brothers and sisters in Christ, I feel I can relate to their human strengths and weaknesses, imitate their faith, and learn from their mistakes. Today, we shall get to know some of them.

Tychicus (vs7) was the bearer of Paul's letter to the Colossians. Paul described him as a "dear brother, a faithful minister, and a fellow servant." He was also one of the brothers who accompanied Paul in Acts 20. Paul entrusted Tychicus with delivering his letter to the Ephesian disciples as well. He seems to have been a truly reliable and trustworthy disciple. Do you know someone like him? In what ways would you personally want to imitate the character of this brother?

Onesimus (vs. 9) was a slave who escaped his master Philemon. As God would have it, he later met Paul and became a follower of Jesus. The former rebellious slave was eager to go anywhere and do anything God wanted. In Philemon 11, Paul describes him, saying, "Formerly, he was useless to you, [Philemon], but now he has become useful both to you and me." Have you given up on the conversion or turnaround of a particular friend or family member? Onesimus' life reminds us that the gospel can change anyone.

Aristarchus (vs. 10) was one of Paul's faithful companions. He survived the riot in Ephesus in Acts 19, where the crowd molested him because they identified him as an associate of Paul. He also suffered a dangerous shipwreck in Acts 27 alongside the apostle and other brothers.

In Col 4, we see him as a prisoner, similar to Paul. Aristarchus strikes us as one of those "ancient" disciples whose zeal for God never waned. He must have had many scars and stories to tell, but he did not live in past glory. Do we?

Mark (10) was the cousin of Barnabas, Paul's first traveling companion. From Acts 15, we learn that he initially followed Paul and Barnabas on their journey. Still, he deserted them for some reason and abandoned the mission work. Later, he resurfaced. Even Paul struggled to put him back on the team. However, it seems Mark worked on his repentance. In today's passage, we see that Paul was able to commend him to the Colossian disciples. In 2 Tim 4:11, Paul could say that Mark, the former "weak" brother, was a help to him in his ministry. Mark's life reminds us that we can get up and finish strong no matter how often we fail and fall as Christians.

We know nothing more about **Justus** (vs. 11) than that he was one of the few Jews who labored with Paul for the kingdom work. Little did he know that his name would eventually be mentioned in the Bible. Like Justus, let us keep doing what God has called us to do without worrying if we will be noticed by men. No one is unnoticed by God.

Epaphras (vs. 12) was the faithful brother who first preached Christ to the Colossians, and He converted many of them. But he didn't stop there. He continued as a prayer warrior on their behalf. Paul describes him as always "wrestling," praying for them to grow spiritually and fully mature. Epaphras is an example of how we must fight to save souls and keep every soul saved.

Luke (vs. 14) was a doctor, writer, and close companion of the apostle. He wrote the Book of Luke and the Book of Acts. How did he combine medical practice with prolific writing, missionary journeys, and ministry? Luke exemplifies how we can serve God as professionals and multi-talented disciples.

Every gift we have is to be used for the glory of God and the advancement of His kingdom. What gifts has God given you?

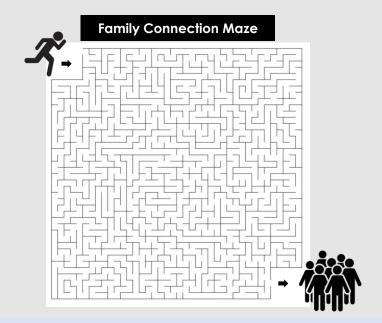
At first, Demas (vs 14) was also a faithful fellow worker with Paul. Sadly, he backslid and deserted the brotherhood. The Scripture says he "loved this world" (2 Tim 4:9) . Demas's life reminds us of the danger of romance with the world. Is there something attracting or enticing you to leave God and the fellowship?

Finally, we meet **Nympha** (vs. 15), a sister who opened her home for the church to meet. She is an example of hospitality and making whatever we have available for kingdom use. Are there ways you can offer more of your resources to God this year? Go for it!

Call to Action

What convicted you most about each of these brothers and sisters? Pick one person you want to imitate.

Further reading - Rom 16:1-16



The One Gospel

"The Gospel is our foundation, unchanging and true, the power of God for salvation."

"One Gospel, one truth, one Savior; the message of Christ unites us all."

"In the Gospel, we find the unshakeable truth of God's redeeming love."

WE ARE PEOPLE OF FAITH AND PEOPLE OF FREEDOM

Living Out Our Identity



Galatians 1 - 6

Colossians 3:1-3

"Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God."

Romans 12:2

"Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will."

Philippians 4:8

"Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things."

"Your life is controlled by what you focus on."
- Tony Robbins

"Change your thoughts and you change your world."
- Norman Vincent Peale

WE ARE PEOPLE OF FAITH AND PEOPLE OF FREEDOM

Day 9 – The one Gospel

Day 10 - We are called by God's grace

Day 11 – We are entrusted with a task

Day 12 – We are called to walk in line with the Truth

Day 13 - We are Justified by Faith

Day 14 - We are Sons, not Slaves

Day 15 – We are a new creation in Christ

Day 16 - We are free to live by the Spirit

Scripture reading: Galatians 1:1-10

But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let them be under God's curse! (1:8)

Unlike most of Paul's other letters, his letter to the Galatians starts with tough talk. Paul did not mince words and gave a strong apostolic warning to those trying to alter the gospel message.

What is the gospel, and why is it so crucial that its message is preserved and unadulterated in a world that clamors for change in favor of what is easy, popular, and convenient?

If someone walked up to you and said, "I hear you are a Christian. What is the gospel you believe?" What would your response be?

The gospel is good news. The good news is that Jesus has come as a savior for everyone on earth who will believe, regardless of race, status, gender, or position. Rom 3:22-24

The good news is that Jesus' shed blood can wash and clean our filthiest sins and make us new creations -1Cor 1:23-24.

It is the good news that Jesus' death has destroyed Satan's work, Col 2:15

The good news is that Jesus' resurrection assures us of hope beyond this life. John 11:25-26

The good news is that every area of our broken lives can be mended in Christ. Mk 1:40-41

The gospel has saving power for every age and generation. Its application may differ for different people in various contexts (for example, scripture says that the free man who embraces the gospel becomes Christ's slave, while the enslaved person becomes a free man in Christ.

1Cor 7:22-23). Still, the core of the gospel is unchanging. That core is Jesus Christ and Him crucified. (1 Cor 1:23-24)

Paul strongly opposed those who were trying to "add" something to the gospel by insisting that faith in Jesus must be accompanied by circumcision, a requirement in the Torah (the Jewish law). We, too, must be careful not to subtly add on requirements to salvation that are not commanded in scripture. The gospel calls for men to believe, repent, and be baptized for the forgiveness of sins (Mk 16:16, Acts 2:38). Still, we must not make impossible demands of people in the name of proving repentance by deeds. (Acts 26:20)

Again, to be circumcised as a Gentile back then would secure the approval of the broader Jewish community and spare a convert from potential persecution, so it was an attractive option. (Gal 6:12) Today, too, promises of health, wealth, and problem-free life, having one's pressing needs met, and even being part of a warm and loving fellowship are great attractions, but these are not substitutes for the gospel of faith in Jesus and the crucified life found in Him alone.

Conclusion

Jesus Christ and His death, burial, and resurrection are the centre and cornerstone of the gospel. This is the one gospel we believe in and must hold firm to. It has saving power for all time and is the foundation of our Christian identity. Jesus must also be at the centre of our soul-winning. No other promises, packages, or personalities can deliver salvation to man. We must be careful not to empty the cross of its power by adding to or removing it from the message.

Call to action

Practice Christ-centered evangelism today. Share how it went with a friend. Begin making this a lifestyle.

Further reading Acts 4:12



"God's grace calls us, transforms us, and sets us on a path of purpose."

"Grace is the voice that calls us out of darkness into His marvelous light."

"By grace, we are called, chosen, and empowered to live for Him."

Scripture reading: Galatians 1:11-21

But when God, who set me apart from my mother's womb and called me by his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son in me so that I might preach him among the Gentiles, my immediate response was not to consult any human being (1:15-16)

magine toiling and working hard to raise a child, teaching, training, securing an education, and looking forward to him doing well. Then, all of a sudden, this child starts to associate with people who feed him with strange ideas, telling him that you, the parent, are an imposter and everything you have taught him is a bunch of lies! And worst of all, your child starts to believe them!

This was Apostle Paul's deep pain and concern as he wrote to the church in Galatia. He wanted to do all he could to protect the faith of his spiritual children. As we saw in yesterday's reading, he had to begin this letter with a strong rebuke to those trying to pervert the gospel he had preached to them. In today's reading, Paul also made it clear that he was no "fake" apostle as some were trying to paint him, but that he had been called by God, not man, to take God's message to the Gentiles. In doing so, Paul recounted his conversion story.

For you have heard of my previous way of life in Judaism, how intensely I persecuted the church of God ... but God ...set me apart from my mother's womb and called me by His grace...

Brothers and sisters, we all were called by God, not man, into His kingdom. We must remember how special our calling is. We find this reminder throughout the New Testament letters. Think about how you were met. Remember who you were and where your life was heading before God sent his people to you at the right time.

Recall the obstacles that could have stopped you from entering His kingdom and how God cleared them all. Some were invited to know Christ just as you were, but they did not honor the invitation. Others were taught the truth of God's word just as you were taught, but they never embraced it. Today, you and I are still standing by grace and grace alone.

Paul's conviction about his calling helped him cope with his disappointments, challenges, and opposition. (Gal 4:9-20) There will be times when the going gets tough, and we are tempted to doubt whether God is still for us or whether we should rethink our discipleship. Remember that God called you, and He makes no mistakes!

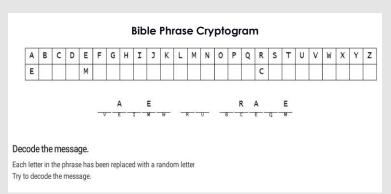
Conclusion

God himself called us to be a part of His kingdom. What a privilege! Let us esteem this call, knowing that the One who called us is faithful.

Call to action

Spend time today to thank God for calling you to be his disciple. Pray for and reach out to people who might have ignored or refused this call.

Further reading 1 Corinthians 1:9 2 Pet 1:10-11



We are Entrusted with a Task

"God entrusts us with His mission, to be His hands and feet in the world."

"Our task is sacred, entrusted by God to spread His love and truth."

"In God's kingdom, we are entrusted with purpose, to serve and glorify Him."

WE ARE ENTRUSTED WITH A TASK

Scripture reading: Galatians 2:6-10

...they recognized that I had been entrusted with the task of preaching the gospel to the Gentiles just as Peter had been to the Jews (2vs7)

Every student and worker is familiar with the assignments to be completed. Today, we learn from Paul's example that God does not call us without a purpose. He has something He wants each of us to do.

Paul was one of the persecutors of the church till he met the resurrected Jesus on the road to Damascus. After that encounter, his life's purpose changed. The former destroyer of the church became its chief builder. In 1vs 15, Paul described how God had "set him apart from his mother's womb" so that he might "...preach Christ among the Gentiles." God had planned to use Paul as His instrument to the Gentiles before he was conceived. God orchestrated his upbringing, his religious training, his exposure, and his entire past to equip him for God's purpose. Paul began this task (Acts 18:6, 22:21) and carried it out with all diliaence amid countless hardships and trials until he breathed his last. Thus, he was able to say toward the end of his life, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race."(2 Tim 4:6-7) He completed his task.

When you read the New Testament, especially the Book of Acts, you cannot miss the sense of urgency in the early disciples that compelled them to take the task of evangelism seriously. They clearly understood Jesus' commission in Matthew 28. They would not relent until the whole world had heard Jesus' message.

As I pondered today's scripture, one question came to mind: "Is there any disciple of Jesus whom God has not entrusted with a task?" I don't think so.

God set you and me apart from our mother's womb so we could know Him and carry out His will. His will is for all to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth (1 Tim 2:3-4), and He intends to use you and me to accomplish this. Are you aware of the task that the Lord has given you personally?

One way to know who God is sending you to is to look inside and around you. When you look inside you, you will see your gifts and capabilities. You will see the totality of your life experiences, both good and bad. God wants you to evangelize among those you can impact with your talents and experience. And when you look around you, you will see your environment. Who are your friends, family, neighbors, schoolmates, or colleagues? Who do you buy things from? Who patronizes your business? God wants you to evangelize among those He has put in your life and across your path.

Conclusion

Every disciple of Jesus has been entrusted with a portion of the Great Commission. What portion is yours? Have you started that assignment? How far have you gone? Are you attending to it daily? What will help or hinder you from completing it? Let us renew our commitment to the task of evangelism. Spiritual laziness is not our identity. When it is all said and done, may the Master tell us, "Well done!"

Call to action

Discuss evangelism plans in your small group this week. Include an accountability and feedback mechanism. Pray as a group about these plans, and pray by name for each person you are reaching out to.

Further reading Jeremiah 1:4-5 Acts 20:24

We are Called to Walk in Line with the Truth

"Truth guides our steps, and in it, we walk faithfully and boldly."

"Walking in truth, we reflect the light of Christ to the world."

"Our calling is to align our lives with God's truth, living in His way."

WE ARE CALLED TO WALK IN LINE WITH THE TRUTH

Scripture reading: **Galatians 2:11-16**When Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his

When Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face because he stood condemned (2:11)

Today's reading depicts a unique scenario that captures both the struggles and the truth about our identity in Christ. We see Paul standing firm against hypocrisy by Cephas (Peter). Cephas was a key pillar of the church, yet he momentarily faltered in his commitment to the truth of the gospel. He had initially shared meals with Gentile believers, demonstrating unity in Christ, but suddenly withdrew from them out of fear of criticism or the desire to be accepted by the Judaizers – Jewish believers who were insisting that Gentile Christians had to follow Jewish customs. Paul was swift with his rebuke to get Peter back on track.

The incident offers an opportunity to reflect on our own lives as we learn from Peter's mistake. Is our faith a function of the people around us at any given time or from deep convictions within us? To walk in line with the truth is to be authentic and not double-faced. It means having a character of integrity at all times. In my profession, my faith is constantly challenged. For a long time, getting my due was almost impossible because I would not compromise on standards. Today, however, I am glad that I have become a reference point when it comes to conscientiousness. Are we living authentically, reflecting Christ wherever we are and whoever we are with, or are we allowing others to dictate our conduct and outlook?

In verse 14, Paul addresses Peter's hypocrisy. Paul's boldness in confronting Peter teaches us that standing for the truth might not always be easy, especially when it involves those we respect. Yet, the truth of the gospel is worth defending.

Imagine for a moment that you are on a path that leads straight to the heart of God. As you walk this path, you may encounter distractions and temptations that try to lure you off course. Perhaps it's the desire to fit in with friends or the pressure to conform to societal expectations. Such moments will come and challenge who we are in Christ. However, that is the opportunity to remind ourselves of the truth we hold dear.

Walking in truth means embracing who we are. As we learn throughout the book of Galatians, we are justified by faith in Jesus, and we are called to have a relationship with our Saviour, obey His commands, and share that grace with others because we love him and seek to please him.

Conclusion

Are we reflecting the truth of Christ in words and actions? Walking in line with the truth requires intentionality. It means choosing to act in love and integrity even when it is difficult. When we walk in truth, we become conduits of God's love and grace, drawing others to Him.

Remember that your identity in Jesus empowers you to live boldly. You are called to embody his love and truth in a world that desperately needs it by standing out and not getting unduly influenced.

Call to action

Reflect on your walk with Christ. Are there areas where you feel tempted to compromise your faith? Where do you need to stand firm in truth? Share these with an accountability partner.

Pray for boldness and conviction to stand firm on your job, at school, among friends and family, etc.

Further reading Prov 27:5-6 Eph 4:15 Prov 28:1

We are Justified by Faith

"Faith justifies us, not by our works, but by Christ's righteousness."

"Through faith, we are declared righteous, clothed in Christ's purity."

"Justified by faith, we stand blameless before God, redeemed by His grace." Scripture Readings: **Galatians 2:20-21, Galatians 3:7-14**The life I now live...I live by faith in the Son of God.
So those who rely on faith are blessed along with
Abraham, the man of faith.

One major theme of Paul's letter to the Galatians was the need to help the new Gentile converts understand that they were now saved, redeemed, and justified by faith in Jesus Christ alone and not by keeping to the Mosaic law. What does it mean to be justified by faith? How does this apply to us today?

Faith lives for Christ.

At my baptism years ago, today's scripture, *Gal* 2:20-21 was read, and these verses impacted me profoundly. I had come to understand from the bible studies I was taught that I would be "crucified with Christ," dying to my old self to live for the One who saved me. At that moment, I chose to follow Jesus, acknowledging that my new life was for Him.

It was never my acts of righteousness that saved me, but rather God's grace received through my faith in Jesus. Our salvation is God's way of reconciling us to Himself, not something we could ever achieve on our own. This grace inspired me to take that step of faith all those years ago. Since then, I've seen even more deeply that living for Christ takes faith.

Faith Avoids Self-Righteousness

Despite knowing these truths, it's easy to forget that our works don't save us. Over time, a sense of self-righteousness can creep in. We may think our deeds make us better or "more spiritual" than others. We look down on brothers and sisters who may not meet the standards we think are "fit" for God's people. Instead of focusing on our common faith, we grow critical of minor differences—our opinions about dress, jewellery, hairstyles, food and drink consumption or even the "right" kind of prayer.

I confess that I was once like this, often judging others (to my shame) until God called me to repentance. Now, I am learning to guard my heart and to dispel critical thoughts quickly with scripture, remembering that God has begun a work in each of us, and only He will complete it. (*Philippians 1:6*). We are called to accept and encourage one another in the faith, not to tear each other down over personal preferences.

Faith is what unites us.

We can call Abraham our father through faith, even though we are not his physical descendants. *Galatians 3:7-14* teaches us that even though we are not Jews, we have been brought into God's family because of Jesus, not because of lineage or law. Hallelujah!

Our faith, not our culture, background, or age, is the common factor that unites us as a church. Just as on the day of Pentecost, when the one message preached by Peter was understood in every dialect, the one message of Christ is understood by every believing heart, irrespective of education, language, status, or anything else. We are a community brought together by faith to encourage and build each other up in love. How are you exercising your faith?

Conclusion

To be justified by faith means that we now have the right standing with God, not because we have earned it through our good works but because we trust Jesus and submit and surrender to Him. This new year, let's remember our foundation in Christ and hold fast to our faith, showing grace to one another and teaching each other to obey God's word. Let us correct gently and avoid self-righteousness. As we grow in love, we will become a community reflecting His grace.

Call to action

If you are a disciple of Jesus, take time today to thank God for saving you by faith. Ask for grace to live a surrendered life for Christ from your heart, not just as compliance with a set of laws.

If you are not yet a follower of Jesus, He invites you to be saved by faith in Him. Speak with the person who shared this devotional with you.

Further reading John 3:16 Rom 14:1-12



"In Christ, we are adopted as sons and daughters, not bound by slavery."

"We are children of God, liberated from the chains of sin."

"Our identity is as beloved sons, not slaves; heirs to God's promises."

Scripture Reading: Galatians 4:1-7.

Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out "Abba, Father." So you are no longer a slave but God's child; and since you are his child, God has made you also an heir (4:6-7)

The Cambridge Dictionary defines a slave as "a person who is legally owned by someone else and must work for that person." A slave has no rights and no say. His life is controlled by his master. Once upon a time, this was our condition. As today's passage puts it, we were in slavery under the basic principles of this world. Romans 6:20-21 says we were once slaves to sin, driven by it to places we didn't want to go, doing things we now regret and are ashamed of in every way. Sin had control, chaining us to choices that brought shame. We were powerless to set ourselves free. Do you remember that time in your life? I do.

Then, at God's set time, God sent Jesus to bring us out of slavery, but not just that, to adopt us as children. And an even greater privilege follows; we are not just children; we are heirs—co-heirs with Christ! Everything that belongs to God our Father, is ours to inherit. When we stop to think about this, it's awe-inspiring!

Yet, even as we know what God has offered us as His children, we often still wrestle with sin's pull. Each time we give in, we submit ourselves again to the old chains of slavery that hold us back from fully enjoying our walk as God's beloved children.

Take a moment to imagine what heaven will be like. Streets of gold, sparkling mansions, no more crying, sickness, fear or death. Imagine being able to walk with God our Father—our Abba, Daddy, Papa or whatever fond name you want to call Him. No barriers, just the joy

of His presence and the freedom to ask any question with all our doubts erased forever.

This glorious inheritance awaits us because we are His sons and daughters, adopted into His family, chosen and handpicked by God Himself. Can you feel it? Can you feel the awe and wonder of being that special to Him? I do and it feels so good to be so loved.

Conclusion

Jesus has brought us from slavery into freedom. We are now sons and daughters of God and co-heirs with Christ Himself. What we endure for now; health struggles, financial stress, job loss, hunger, or hardship is temporary, and it can't compare to the future glory that awaits us. Don't let the immediate challenges or fleeting pleasures of today rob you of your eternal inheritance. There's so much waiting for you. Our Father offers us unimaginable privileges as His children, but we are not meant to live in compromise. We are called to a higher purpose. Step fully into your identity as His son or daughter, living in the light of what He has prepared for you.

Called to action

Have a time of self-reflection. Write down any sins that still seem to enslave you from time to time. Lies? Cheating? Impurity? Compromise or any others? Pray with a discipleship partner about these and ask to be held accountable.

What aspect of your heavenly inheritance are you most looking forward to? Share with others at your next small group meeting.

Further reading Rom 8:17-18 Rev 21-22 Heb 12:14



"In Christ, we are adopted as sons and daughters, not bound by slavery."

"We are children of God, liberated from the chains of sin."

"Our identity is as beloved sons, not slaves; heirs to God's promises."

Scripture reading: Galatians 5:1-6, Galatians 6:12-16

Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; what counts is the new creation. Peace and mercy to all who follow this rule, and to the Israel of God. (Galatians 6:16)

remember a time when I was being pressurized to conform to certain practices in order to be accepted within my community. It was a heavy burden as I struggled to find peace and love. One morning, during my regular walk, I noticed a renovated house. This once dilapidated building now looked completely transformed with new features. The new-look building opened my eyes to the fact that I had once lived a life burdened with guilt and shame. However, Christ offered me a brand new identity that liberated me from my past. I am indeed a new creation. I do not need to conform in order to be accepted.

Throughout the book of Galatians, we see Paul emphasizing the liberating power of Christ's sacrifice. The law of sin and death no longer binds us. We can now live life according to the Spirit's guidance, rather than the flesh's desires.

As followers of Christ, our journey does not stop at being saved from sin. It is a life-long journey of transformation that reshapes our hearts. This new life sets us free from the chains of our past mistakes. We are now empowered to live fully and authentically. In today's reading, Paul was reminding the Galatians that rituals and external practices are not the true measure of being a new creation. It is the same for us. External activities like church attendance, paying of tithes etc are good but they can become a source of misplaced pride and self-evaluation if we are not careful. (6:13-14)

What genuinely matters is the inner transformation that we allow Christ to bring into our lives. Like Paul, our motivation for all this should be the cross of Christ, where Jesus selflessly sacrificed himself for our salvation.

Gal 5 reminds us that the Holy Spirit is able to nurture beautiful qualities within us: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, freedom, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Let us allow Him to make us who God wants us to be.

Conclusion

In Christ, we now have a unique identity and purpose. We are a whole new creation. Let us strive to fully embrace our identity and allow his Spirit to shape us from the inside out. As we do, we will inspire others and manifest the transformative power of God to those around us and beyond.

Call to action

Ask yourself the following questions:

- Am I living as a new creation in Christ?
- Are my choices and interactions reflecting a new identity in Christ?
- Am I allowing the Spirit to transform me and produce fruit in me?

Write down your answers and pray about each one.

Further Reading: 2 Cor 5:17 Colossians 3:1-4

We are Free to Live by the Spirit

"The Spirit sets us free, empowering us to live in God's will."

"In the Spirit, we find freedom, life, and peace beyond measure."

"Living by the Spirit, we are free to fulfill God's divine purpose."

Scripture reading: **Galatians 5:13-26**, **Galatians 6:1-10**So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh...the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Against such things, there is no law. (5:16,22-23)

Freedom in Christ isn't just an escape from sin, but an invitation to serve others in love empowered by the Spirit to live differently.

magine a bird long confined to a cage suddenly granted freedom as the door swings open. Yet, paradoxically, it hesitates to take flight, held back by the familiar comforts of its former prison and the daunting uncertainty of the world beyond.

Like the bird, we were trapped by our sinful nature and habits, but Christ sets us free! We are no longer bound by the law or enslaved by sin's control. The Spirit empowers us to live differently.

In Galatians 5:13-26 and 6:1-10, Paul reminds us of this freedom and how to live by the Spirit.

"You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love." (Galatians 5:13)

What does "freedom in Christ" mean to you? Some misunderstand freedom to suggest that Christians can do as they please or that we have no need for the control of righteousness. (Rom 6:20) Others may see it as merely an escape from sin. But is it something more? Paul's words in the verse above speak to our hearts, admonishing us that our freedom in Christ is not a license for self-indulgence. Instead, it is an invitation to serve others in love.

Galatians 5:16 calls us to walk by the Spirit. Walking by the Spirit requires surrender and dependence on God. The flesh and the Spirit are at odds, but we don't have to be controlled by our sinful desires. The more we walk by the Spirit, the less we will gratify the flesh.

Gal 5:19-21 paints a vivid picture of the destructive nature of the flesh; sexual immorality, impurity, and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions, and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. But the scripture doesn't stop there. Verses 22-23 describe the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

What a striking contrast! While the acts of sinful nature alienate us from God and His kingdom, the Spirit produces beautiful, life-giving fruit.

In chapter 6, Paul continues to emphasize living by the Spirit. When we live by Him, we can help one another, restore others gently and not judgmentally, carry each other's burdens, sow to please the Spirit, remain steadfast and not weary in doing good, and fulfill the law of Christ.

Conclusion

We are free to serve, free to love, and free to live differently. How can you demonstrate the fruit of the Spirit in your relationships going forward? Remember that living by the Spirit requires constant dependence on God. As we learn to walk daily by the Spirit, we will increasingly reflect on God's character and experience true freedom.

Call to Action

Today, intentionally serve someone in love and ask the Holy Spirit to guide your actions.

Further reading 2 Cor 3:17 Titus 3:5-6



"In Christ, we are blessed with every spiritual blessing from heavenly realms."

"God's blessings enrich our lives, filling us with His abundant grace."

"Our identity is marked by divine blessings, poured out by God's love."

WE ARE MEMBERS OF THE ONE BODY

Identity In Relationships



Ephesians 1 - 6

Galatians 2:20

"I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."

2 Corinthians 5:17

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!"

John 15:5

"I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing."

"We are not human beings having a spiritual experience. We are spiritual beings having a human experience."

- Pierre Teilhard de Chardin

"The greatest tragedy in life is not death, but a life without a purpose."

- Myles Munroe

WE ARE MEMBERS OF THE ONE BODY

Day 17 – We are Blessed with Spiritual Blessings

Day 18 – That you may Know Him Better

Day 19 - We Are Saved By Grace

Day 20 - Keeping a Pure Heart.

Day 21 – God's Plan for the Church

Day 22 – We are One Body with Many Gifts

Day 23 – We are Created to be Like God

Day 24 – We are Children of Light

Day 25 – We are called to Love, Submit, Nurture, & Obey

Scripture reading: Ephesians 1:1-14

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. For He chose us in Him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in His sight. In love, He predestined us for adoption to son-ship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with His pleasure and will - to the praise of His glorious grace, which He has freely given us in the One He loves. Eph. 1:3-6.

Today, we begin with Apostle Paul's letter to the Ephesians, which he penned from a Roman prison to encourage a young Church set in the heart of a pagan society. Ephesus was a thriving commercial center, but for the Church to thrive, the Ephesian disciples needed to know how to live and how to stand apart as different while at the same time having a Christ-like influence on their society.

Today's scripture was meant to remind them and to remind us of what an honor it is for every Christian to be identified with Christ Jesus! It is a fantastic privilege to be saved by grace.

The spiritual blessings of our inheritance through Christ are yet to be fully seen or heard. Man cannot comprehend the things that God has prepared for every one of us, even though they are readily accessible to us who are in Christ Jesus 1 Cor. 2:9

Pause for a moment and think back to your younger years. Did you, at any period, ever imagine that you had been chosen before the creation of the world to be holy? Were you aware that you were predestined for adoption to a son-ship through Jesus Christ? How much did you grasp this even when you embraced the gospel of truth?

I am overwhelmed by the riches of God's tremendous spiritual blessings. If I had known or realized it earlier, maybe I wouldn't have delayed my conversion to Christ for so long! Flashing back, I remembered one Sunday after service at Kings Cinema when a sister was told to come and meet a visitor. I happened to be that visitor. As soon as she saw me, she said, 'You again!' That comment spurred me and helped me to finally make Jesus the Lord of my life in February 1994 after several years of visiting the church and enjoying the fellowship. Ephesians 1:11-14

In Him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of Him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of His will... And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in Him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession - to the praise of His glory.

A seal authenticates a document or instrument; it guarantees originality and assures genuineness. Unquestionably, we are blessed from birth with spiritual blessings that are unknown to us. This unrealized identity was even more profound at baptism when we received the Holy Spirit, guaranteeing our inheritance to eternity!

Conclusion

We often think of blessings in material terms. See all we have in Christ that no money can buy and no worldly position can secure. How excited are you about realizing your spiritual identity by claiming your spiritual blessings?

Call to Action

What would God's overwhelming spiritual blessings inspire you to do today and through the rest of the year? Write these down in your journal.

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Further reading: John 1:12-13, 1 Peter 2:9-10.

Scripture reading: Ephesians 1:15-23

I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation so that you may know Him better (Eph 1:17)

Paul's prayer of thanksgiving for the saints is that they receive the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ. He emphasizes that we are not alone as Christians but an integral part of a larger spiritual body—the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:12-27).

Paul prayed that the Ephesians would experience three important things: the hope of God's calling, the rich inheritance He provides to those who obey, and God's immense power in the resurrection and ascension of Christ. In the same way, he emphasizes Jesus' power in three areas: what Jesus reigns over, what is under Jesus' authority, and Jesus' presence everywhere.

Paul's prayer is for all Christians to fully understand the depth of God's power and the hope to which we are called—the same hope that led Jesus to endure the cross. This hope isn't about earthly riches; it's a treasure found in Christ alone. Through the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, we come to know Christ, and knowing Him strengthens our faith and helps us grow in character, as described in 2 Peter 1:5-8. By adding virtues like self-control, steadfastness, godliness, and love, we prevent our faith from becoming ineffective and align more closely with Christ.

God has placed Christ above all powers and authorities, making Him the head of the church, His body. In life, we may face trials that challenge our faith - illness, relationship struggles, or mental battles—but we can take heart knowing that Jesus understands adversity yet remains victorious. Jesus reigns supreme over all.

This truth is why we worship Him; no one is greater than our God. Paul hopes the church can fully grasp just how mighty Christ is.

God has put everything under Jesus' authority. He is the one truly in control—not us. This is comforting because it means we are guided by His wisdom and not our limited understanding. Under His care, we are protected and provided for, just as a child feels safe with a parent. Our peace grows as we trust He is leading us with our best interests at heart. Are we letting Him lead, or do we struggle to let go?

Remember that Jesus said, "If anyone wants to follow me, they must deny themselves and take up their cross daily." Our obedience to this command is another measure of our surrender to him. How are we doing with this? This mission is not just about personal growth; it's about expanding His family by inviting others into His love. By sharing our faith and extending a simple invitation, we can help open doors for others to experience this same hope, this inheritance, and this life-transforming power.

God chose us to join His mission. Let's ask ourselves, "Am I following His lead or trying to control my life?" His authority offers us strength, peace, and protection, and He invites us to help build His Kingdom.

Conclusion

Christ fills everything with His presence. As part of His body, we are called to bring His love and truth wherever we go. Since He lives in us, we have the privilege and responsibility to reflect His character to a world that deeply needs Him. Let the desire to know God better become a mark of our identity.

Call to Action

Thank Jesus for calling, guiding, and offering safety in His authority. Ask Him to help you share His love and bring others into His family.

Further reading

Colossians 1:1 2 Corinthians 2:14



"To know Christ is our greatest pursuit, the foundation of our faith."

"Deeper knowledge of Christ transforms our hearts and minds."

"In knowing Him better, we find the fullness of life and truth."

Scripture Reading: Ephesians 2:1-10

But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved.

n today's passage, Apostle Paul takes us down memory lane as he paints a powerful picture of our lives before Christ and the transformation that came through Him. "As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins" (v.1). This is the reality of our broken state without God. We were spiritually dead and separated from Him because of our sins. But God doesn't leave us in that place of hopelessness. Paul points to the grace and love of God that saves us.

God's Grace Is Greater Than Our Past

Reflecting on my life, I recall how I was once lost in my sins and trapped in a cycle that seemed impossible to break. Several times, I felt distant from God, ashamed of my mistakes and unsure if I could ever find my way back. But the beautiful truth of Ephesians 2 is that God's grace is more significant than our past! He doesn't leave us in our sins. Instead, "because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved."

A Second Chance Through Christ

God's grace gave me a second chance, not because I deserved it, but because of His love. It wasn't about earning His favor or trying to redeem myself through my efforts. The transformation came when I understood that salvation is purely a gift from God - not by works, so that no one can boast (v. 9). This second chance isn't something I achieved; it is something God gave me freely through Christ. Jesus took the weight of my sins upon Himself and offered me freedom and a new life instead- the life of a minister in His vineyard.

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Living Out Our New Identity

As someone saved by grace, I am called to live differently. Verse 10 says, For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared us to do. My past sins or failures no longer define my identity. I am God's masterpiece, created for a purpose—to walk in the good works that He has prepared for me.

Conclusion

Today, remember that God's grace is always enough no matter how far we've fallen. He offers us a new identity and a chance to walk in the fullness of His love and purpose. We are not just saved; we are redeemed and called to live as reflections of His grace. Let's embrace this wonderful gift!

Call to action

Thank God for His grace that saved you from your sins and gave you a second chance. Ask for help to live out your new identity in Christ and walk in the good works He prepared for you. Ask that your life be a testimony of His transforming power and love. Amen.

Share with someone today about the grace of God in your life.

Further reading 1Cor 15:1





"Grace is our salvation, unearned and freely given by God's love."

"Through grace, we are saved, not by works but by His mercy."

"God's grace is the cornerstone of our salvation, eternal and unfailing."

Scripture reading: Ephesians 2:11-22

Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of His household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets with Christ Jesus Himself as the chief cornerstone. (Eph 2:19-20)

never knew what it felt like to be regarded as a foreigner until I relocated to England a few years ago. There were several benefits and privileges I was not entitled to. I had to pay for a permit to live as a resident in addition to a compulsory health surcharge. I was not eligible to apply for certain jobs until I had lived in the country for a number of years. So, the idea of being a foreigner strikes a chord with me.

Paul took great pains to write this letter to the church in Ephesus which was predominantly composed of Gentiles. In comparison to the Jewish believers, these Gentile disciples may have felt less important in the fellowship and this would have created doubts in their minds about their salvation. His goal in today's passage was to encourage and edify them. He reminded them of how far away they were from Christ once upon a time; foreigners and strangers to His covenant, but how they had now been brought near to become members of His very household. Paul stressed that Christ has accomplished this by his blood and ushered in a new era (John 4:23-24).

This message of unity and oneness in Christ is consistent with what Paul emphasizes in his other letters that both Jews and Gentiles are now one people before God. Christ has destroyed the obstacle that stood between the two groups.

All, therefore, are now citizens of heaven.(vs 14-18) In the same way, Christ has removed our hostilities. There are some sins we don't give due attention to such as hatred, discord, selfish ambition, dissensions and factions (Gal 5:19-21) but they are as grievous as those sins we treat with harsh measures. They have the potential of mounting barriers and hostilities among believers. These sins can tear us apart and lead to the ultimate death of the church. They are silent killers of our collective strength and unity. We must not allow such sins to fester amongst us.

Rom 5:20 says the law and its regulations were products of sin. Sin was in the world long before the law was given. But, in Christ Jesus, the law has been removed and sin has been nailed to the cross once and for all thereby giving access to everyone who earnestly seeks God to find him. Let us not put a stumbling block on anyone's path. We can help as many as possible to gain access to God.

Conclusion

We may be foreigners here in the physical sense, but spiritually, we have a sure identity. We are fellow citizens with God's people and members of His household. God had to break down the barriers of sin and remove the law standing as an obstacle to make us one people. God's intent of making us one (inspite of our differences) is to build us up as a shining light to others. Are you now rebuilding those walls of hostility? Our actions matter! We are all being built to become a holy temple in the Lord. Therefore, you must not do things that hinder the building of this dwelling in which God lives by His Spirit.

Call to action

Are you harbouring any hostility toward anyone? Pray and go reconcile with that person. Seek the help of others if necessary. Be determined to and break any dividing wall.

Further reading Galatians 3:7-9, Romans 10:12

We Are No Longer Foreigners

"In Christ, we are no longer strangers but citizens of God's kingdom."

"We belong to God's family, no longer foreigners but beloved children."

"Our identity is secure in Christ, making us part of His eternal home." Ephesians 3: 1-13

His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known...

Today, we will be looking at God's plan for the Church, what He wants to accomplish through his Church and how we as His chosen people are to key into his vision for the Church.

Yesterday, we learned that through Christ, God brought down the wall separating Jew and Gentile. Today's reading describes this as a mystery; something mind boggling and unheard of: that everyone can now have peace with God and with each other through Jesus. He is our peace. God's desire is for everyone to find redemption, rest and peace in His family through the good news of salvation in Christ Jesus. This is the promise that the gospel brought to all of us as members of God's Church.

When most of us think about "the gospel," we tend to view it on a much smaller level. We may say, "the good news is about how you can have a relationship with God" or "it's about how your sins can be forgiven," or "how you can go to heaven when you die." These are true but that is not all that the gospel is about!

Paul is trying to widen our perspective about the good news and help us to see God's eternal plan. When you look at the world as a whole, what God wants is to create one people, one family and one holy nation that will live in peace with Him and with each other.

In Christ, all who are saved by His grace are joint heirs of God's blessing and members of His Church! To further emphasize this and leave no doubt, Paul strings together three compound words to describe this: "together with; together as heirs; together as members of the same body; and together as partners who share in His promises! (vs 6)

We all are equally sinners, equally needy and yet unworthy of His grace, equally helpless and equally weak. Yet, together, we have all come to the same Savior, received the same salvation, are empowered by the same Spirit, living out the same purpose, facing the same trials and sharing the same destiny! How has the knowledge of this grace motivated you to fully and confidently participate in building others up and in sharing your faith?

As His church, we are to be vibrant and active, protecting the health of the entire body, and growing proportionally in maturity. The closer we are to God, the closer we will be to each other as well. In this way, the world will see the wisdom and power of God. This is God's plan for the Church. How are you playing your part in making the body of Christ unified and strong? How can you deepen your Bible study and your daily connection with God?

Conclusion

The Church is God's plan to bring a world of lost sinners into a lasting relationship with Him and to build a family of redeemed souls who will be unified in reflecting His glory to the world. Are you keying into God's plan in the way you live? What will change this week?

Action Plan

Make a list of 3 things you desire to change as a result of your appreciation of God's grace in your life. Share with your trusted friend/partner.

Make a list of 3 friends you can reach out to this week to share your salvation story with.

Further reading 1 Cor 12:12-13

God's Plan for the Church

"God's plan for the Church is to be a beacon of hope and light in the world."

"The Church, God's masterpiece, reflects His love and unity."

"In His divine plan, the Church stands as a testament to God's glory."

Ephesians 4: 1-16

There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called. ...But to each of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it

As we think and reflect on our identity as the people of God, the big question from today's scripture is "What is your part in our Christian unity? How do we remain united in spite of our different gifts, roles and levels of maturity or conviction?"

Paul begins this passage by reminding the Ephesians of the calling they have received; the calling to be the new people of God bound together in unity under Christ. This new entity has two major characteristics. First, it is one people, composed of both Jew and Gentile with no distinctions. Secondly, it is a holy people, set apart to belong to God and to show by their life and character, a purity and righteousness that is worthy of Him. This is our calling as well.

The unity of the Church has been established long before we became a part of it. Our task is to continue to maintain that unity as we build each other up. How are you promoting unity in your family group, Church and Region? Are there people or groups you are not comfortable with? Who is in your circle of friends? Are they only people from your tribe, language or status? Our unity is enriched and built up by the different gifts in the Church. If you look at the great diversity of people, personality types and gifts in any congregation you might well think, how can we ever reach unity? How do we live it out in the down-to-earth, concrete realities of life?

Although there is only one Body and one God, one Spirit and one Lord, the Church itself is made up of individuals; each one different from all the rest.

Someone once likened the Church to a jigsaw puzzle. All the pieces are different and each has parts that stick out or link into another piece. In the same way, we need each other to complete the grand picture of unity that God is painting. Every piece is important to the whole!

In vs 11, Paul lists the gifts in the church; apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. This is not an exhaustive list nor is it to say that other gifts aren't important. To bring about the unity and maturity that God desires for His church, all gifts need to be valued because none are complete in and of themselves. Which one do you desire? What other areas of service do you see yourself rendering to your Church community?

Conclusion

We are one body of Christ, called to unity as we learn to accept and support each other and use our gifts to serve one another and to alorify God.

Action Plan

Make a list of people you are not very close with and intentionally reach out to them.

Further reading 1 Cor 12:21-27



"We are one body in Christ, each member uniquely gifted for His service."

"In unity, our diverse gifts glorify God and edify His Church."

"Together, we are a mosaic of God's grace, one body, many gifts."

Scripture reading: Eph 4:17-32

You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness (Eph 4:22-24)

Our standard for holiness and righteousness is God Himself! What a tall order! How should this play out in our daily lives and especially in our interaction with others? The Church in Ephesus was mostly populated by Gentiles who had embraced the word of God. believed, and repented from their old ways of life. However, they were slipping back to unspiritual ways because of the influence of the non-believing Gentiles around them. Paul's assertion that the non-believing Gentiles were unproductive in their thinking was most likely because they had hardened their hearts and were un-teachable. They lived recklessly and without consideration for godliness and righteousness. It was against this backdrop that Paul wrote to remind the Church to put to death their old ways of life and continue to embrace the new self.

The spiritual reality that we are "created to be like God" is a powerful and humbling truth that comes with profound responsibility. Paul calls us to be true to our identity in Christ and to a life that reflects God's character. He soberly reminds us of how sin blinds and corrupts. Apart from God, we were trapped in self-centeredness and rebellion. However, when we put our faith in Christ, we experienced a radical change. In verse 22, Paul instructs; "put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires." This is not just a suggestion but a command: we must intentionally and actively turn away from our past lives of sin and embrace the new identity we have in Christ.

Paul mentioned specific behaviors and attitudes that should reflect our new life in Christ, such as putting off falsehood and speaking the truth to one another. This involves making sure our 'Yes' is 'Yes', our 'No' is 'No', and we are not being deceitful (Matt 5:37). We are also expected to be self-controlled and manage our anger without sinning. Anger should not fester, and conflicts should be resolved as quickly as possible. A lifestyle of honest labor and shunning of dishonest gain are reflections of God's character which we must uphold. In addition, our words should characterize the grace we received by encouraging and edifying those around us. Our new life should mirror compassion and forgiveness following Christs' example.

Defining my identity among my friends was an initial struggle after my conversion. I knew that I needed to go the extra mile to convince them that I was a changed person. I also knew that it would take my character, not just what I said, to convince them. Each time I was tempted to compromise I paused to reflect, "How would I explain it to God if I gave in?" What past ways of life are you still struggling with or clinging on to? What ships do you still have to burn?

Conclusion:

As disciples, let us leave behind our old, sinful nature and reflect not just a change of behavior but a transformation of our thoughts, actions and entire being.

Through Christ, we are being renewed day by day, becoming more like Him in righteousness and holiness. Live as those created to be like God, walking the way our Lord Jesus walked, bringing glory to His name in all that we do.

Call to Action:

Identify areas of your life where you still struggle to be like God. Look for a mature brother or sister to help you walk through them. Be intentional about embracing the walk.

Further reading: Gen 1:27, 2 Cor. 3:18, 1 John 2:3-6

We are Created to be Like God

"God fashioned us in His image, to reflect His character and love."

"In Christ, we are transformed to be more like God, in holiness and truth."

"Our purpose is to mirror God's likeness, living in His righteousness."

Scripture reading: **Ephesians 5:1-20**

For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light. (Eph 5:8)

It is often said that who you are when no one is watching is who you are. In today's reading, we continue to learn Paul's specific instructions on how we are to conduct ourselves as children of God, especially when there is no visible accountability around us, when we are alone, or when we are in the midst of non-believers.

As we learned yesterday, the scripture tells us to follow God's example. (vs 1) We must remember that Christ is our standard, not the world around us. We are called to live a life of love. A life of love is a beautiful life. This is the fragrant attraction that can draw others to God.

In verse 3, we learn that among us, as God's people, there should not be even hints or suggestions of sexual immorality, impurity, or greed. Neither should there be obscenity, loose talk, or coarse joking. Christians of all ages have had to contend with these vices. Still, you will agree with me that the 21st-century lifestyle of today makes it even more challenging to live above board. What we hear and view online can be filled with impurity that gradually seeps into our hearts. Society has less bothered with obscene dressing, entertainment, television programs, etc. Many today object to the idea of "immorality" in sexual relations. They argue, "What is immoral about two consenting adults sleeping with each other?" or "If you want to marry someone, of course, you should test the waters first!" In these economically challenging times, greed has driven many to compromise honesty, integrity, and diligence on the job and in business dealings. Sadly, we who call ourselves followers of Jesus are sometimes as quilty as those around us in these areas. This should not be.

Some time ago, I listened to a podcast interview of an African princess from the Zulu tribe. She described how, as far back as she could remember, her parents had made her understand that she was meant to be a light for her people. They were supposed to look up to her and have direction. According to her, this identity has become a part of her and is her reference point for her choices, the things she does, and how she does them.

In much the same way, God has also called us to be peculiar people. The world might have its way of doing things, but we live by a different standard as Christians. God wants to hold us up as examples in our workplace, among our neighbors, in our families, relationships, and businesses. Have you ever been surprised by someone's comment or a word they said about you when you didn't even think they were observing you? I have many times. I would then think, "My goodness, so people are watching me!" Such comments are sober reminders that we must be careful how we live (vs. 15). Even if a man does not see, God sees and will reward accordingly.

Conclusion

Though we were once in darkness, now we have a different identity. Let us live up to our calling as children of light who can show others how to live.

Call to action

Practice Thanksgiving, songs, music, and your favorite psalms today (vs. 19 -20). These actions help bring God's light into our hearts.

Share any struggles you may face that pull you back into darkness.

Further reading 1 Pet 2:9-11

We are Children of Light

"As children of light, we shine with the radiance of Christ's glory."

"In a world of darkness, we are called to be beacons of God's light."

"Our identity as children of light guides us to walk in God's truth."

WE ARE CALLED TO LOVE, SUBMIT, NURTURE, AND OBEY SCRIPTURE

DAY 25

Ephesians 5:21-6:19

Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ (Eph 5:21)

In Ephesians 5:21–6:19, Paul paints a picture of living out our faith: loving, submitting, nurturing, and obeying one another. In his day, people lived in strict hierarchies where men held authority, and women, children, and servants were undervalued; I can say that it is not so different today. But Paul's call here is radical. Instead of authority or dominance, he's inviting us to a new way of doing relationships—one rooted in love and mutual respect, following Christ's example. Out of these words, "submit" might be the most difficult for us to accept. Maybe it feels like "losing ourselves" or being seen as less than. But when Paul talks about submission, he's pointing us toward a higher purpose—one where we submit to each other out of reverence for Christ (v. 21).

In my life, I play many roles: wife, mom, daughter, employee, leader, and follower. Some roles come naturally, while others are challenging. It's easy to feel inclined to obey an employer. Still, maybe we struggle to submit or nurture relationships that don't impact our livelihood directly. Paul reminds us that God has woven purpose into every marriage, family, and work role. No matter our position, we're all called to honor one another. Husbands and wives, for instance, are to love and submit to each other like Christ does the Church. Parents are called to lovingly nurture their children in families, while children are asked to obey respectfully. And in the workplace, we're reminded to act with integrity and respect, no matter our title.

Now, submission here doesn't mean losing our independence or voice; it's about willingly serving each other from a place of love. Jesus shows us this in the ultimate act of submission when He chose to follow God's will, even to the cross (Philippians 2:5-11).

Love forms the basis of everything—our willingness to honor our spouses, nurture our children, and show respect to those we work alongside.

Think about the roles you have. Because of cultural expectations, do you sometimes believe only certain people should submit? If you're a child, how do you respond to your parents? If you're a parent, do you create an encouraging environment for your children, or do they feel overwhelmed? This passage calls us to think about how each of our relationships reflects the character of Christ.

This is hard to live out, no doubt. In our society, independence and autonomy are prized, and it can feel "backward" to submit or nurture. However, we must remember that our identity differs from the world around us. For me, nurturing doesn't come easily, partly because of my experiences. But the beauty of God's calling is that He meets us where we are and helps us grow in ways that reveal His love.

Conclusion

For younger generations, in a culture that values independence, remember that God's design for us includes connection and support. For older generations who might be used to authority and control, true strength lies in loving, nurturing, and respecting each other. When we live this way, we show the world the beauty of a Christ-centered life. When we embrace this calling, we become living examples of His light in a world hungry for love and grace.

Call to Action

This week, let's examine one relationship where we could show a little more of Christ's love, whether through submission, nurture, or respect.

Further reading

Colossians 3:12-14 Romans 12:10

"True strength lies in submission which permits one to dedicate his life, through devotion, to something beyond himself." — Henry Miller.

We are Called to Love, Submit, Nurture, & Obey

"Our calling is to love unconditionally, submit humbly, nurture kindly, and obey faithfully."

"In Christ, we learn to love, submit, nurture, and obey as He did."

"Love, submission, nurturing, and obedience are marks of our Christian identity."

Scripture reading: Ephesians 6:10-24

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power (Eph 6:10)

Today, we are reading the concluding part of Paul's letter to the Ephesian disciples. After much encouragement and instruction, he deemed it necessary to leave them with this admonition, "Put on the full armour of God ...For our struggle is not against flesh and blood..." vs. 11-12

My story began three decades ago, precisely on August 11, 1994, when, as a 20-year-old, I publicly confessed Jesus as Lord. This marked the beginning of my walk with God. Since that day, I have understood that following Christ is not a passive journey but an active engagement in spiritual warfare. In this passage, Paul reminds us of our identity as God's people; we are soldiers in the Lord's army, fully equipped to stand firm against the forces of darkness.

Charles Albert Tindley (1851 – 1933) penned down the lyrics of song 112 from the Songs of the Kingdom (Trials Dark on Ev'ry Hand). Whenever I sing that song, especially the third stanza, I am reminded of Paul's call to "be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might." That stanza reads:

"Temptations, hidden snares
Often take us unawares
And our hearts are made to bleed
For each thoughtless word or deed
And we wonder why the test
When we try to do our best
We will understand it better, by and by."

For me, this stanza captures the essence of Paul's admonition, which speaks about a strength rooted in who we are - children of God empowered to engage in

IDENTITY: WHO WE ARE IN CHRIST

battle, not against flesh and blood, but against spiritual forces. The "armour of God" represents the tools God has given us to live victoriously. Each part of the armour truth, righteousness, the gospel of peace, faith, salvation, the Word of God, and prayer, symbolizes our secure position in Christ. Each part of the armour must remain firmly in place if we are to fight and win the battle of our faith.

Over the last thirty years, I've realized that my struggles are not isolated. I have had to fight anger and the temptation to cheat on my spouse (emotional affairs), and I have engaged in battles that cannot be fought with physical weapons. I've come to recognize the spiritual dimensions of my conflicts, whether in my relationships, marriage, family, culture, or personal trials. Your struggles are not isolated, either. Paul's admonition applies just as much today as we face a world increasingly opposed to our Christian values.

Conclusion

The call to be hard-fighting soldiers of Christ is a lifelong call. Since that day in August 1994, I have realized that my walk with the Lord is marked by having to make daily choices to fight the good fight of faith. Ephesians 6:10-24 serves as a potent reminder that while the battle is ongoing, victory is assured through Christ. So, stand firm, brothers and sisters, because we are hard-fighting soldiers on the battlefield!

Call to action

Daily Vigilance: Begin your day by putting on the full armour of God.

Just as soldiers prepare for the battlefield, we must intentionally "put on" our armour through prayer, scripture reading, and dependence on the Holy Spirit.

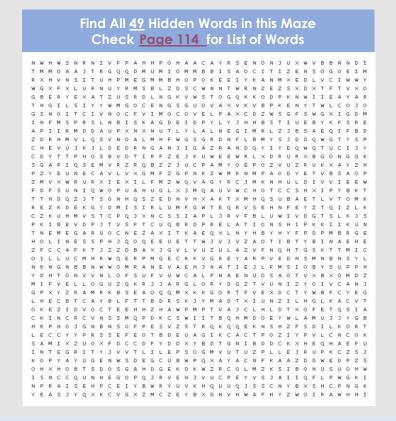
Stand Firm in Faith: Use faith as a shield to extinguish the fiery darts of doubt and discouragement. Remember that your true battle is spiritual when challenges arise, whether at work, in relationships, or within yourself.

Engage in Prayer: Make prayer your first response, not your last resort. Paul urges us to "pray in the Spirit on all occasions." A life of prayer keeps us connected to God's power.

Seek strength in Community: We need each other as disciples through fellowship or accountability (discipling) to strengthen our resolve and sharpen our spiritual weapons.

Further Study

Romans 8:37-39 | 2 Corinthians 10:3-5 | 1 Peter 5:8-9



We Are Hard-Fighting Soldiers

"As soldiers of Christ, we fight the good fight with faith and perseverance."

"Equipped with God's armor, we stand firm in the spiritual battle."

"Our strength comes from the Lord, making us valiant soldiers in His army." WE ARE
CHILDREN OF
THE DAY

Overcoming Challenges
To Our Identity



1Thessalonians 1 - 5

воок **4**

BOOK 4 OVERVIEW

Romans 8:14-17

"For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, 'Abba, Father.' The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory."

1 John 3:1

"See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him."

Psalm 139:14

"I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well."

"It is not what you are that holds you back, it is what you think you are not."

- Denis Waitley

"To the world you may be one person; but to one person you may be the world."

- Dr. Seuss

WE ARE CHILDREN OF THE DAY

Day 27 – We are Called to Deep Conviction

Day 28 – We Are Called to Share the Gospel & Our Lives

Day 29 – Our Joy and Crown in God's presence

Day 30 – We are called to sexual integrity.

Day 31 – We are Called to Live a Life that Wins Respect

Day 32 – When Christians Sleep

Day 33 – We are Called to be Awake and Sober

Scripture reading: 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10

For we know, brothers and sisters loved by God, that He has chosen you, because our gospel came to you not simply with words but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and deep conviction (1 Thess 1:4)

Today, we shall begin reading Paul's first letter to the church in Thessalonica. The Thessalonians exercised faith in Christ when they believed the gospel in the face of stiff opposition from their countrymen (Acts 17). They turned to God from idols and became an example of changed character and behavior to other believers throughout Macedonia.

Christians who experience tribulations often find greater joy in the Lord than those who live in the more comfortable spiritual atmosphere that most of us enjoy today. The disciples in Thessalonica stood strong in their commitment to Jesus despite their ongoing suffering. Indeed, our joy should not be determined by our circumstances but by our relationship with Christ.

I had to learn the importance of having deep convictions as a newly baptized disciple. When I studied the Bible - even after studying about sin and repentance - I still didn't understand why I had to break up the ungodly relationship I was in. It took more profound teaching before I got this conviction and grew to know that I had to do away with my ungodly affair. The sisters in my life not only taught me convincing lessons from God's word, but they lived consistently with the message they taught. This inspired me a great deal. Most young converts look up to mature Christians as patterns of behavior to follow, imitate and guide them. They cannot see Jesus (in a physical sense). But, they develop conviction from what they see in the lives of spiritual brothers and sisters.

How is your faith growing and influencing others around you? Is your conviction level rubbing off positively on those who look to you? Faith, love, and hope are virtues to attain in Christ Jesus. As we grow, it produces behavior worthy of praise and imitation.

For Christ's love compels us because we are convinced that one died for all...(2 Corinthians 5:14-15

Where does deep conviction come from? It comes from being fully persuaded by the cross. Jesus's dying for my good should motivate me to live, serve, and act not to please myself but Him who died for me. As I enjoy God's grace daily, it will compel me to remain at peace despite situations around me. My conviction to persevere in being sacrificial and dedicated to God's cause should stem from deep gratitude for what Jesus himself has done for me.

Conclusion

As Christians called by God's will and love, we must develop deep convictions to live a transformed life. Shallow faith will not cut it! Our convictions must result in gratitude to God, which will cause us to serve selflessly and joyfully. Let us be known as those who are compelled by God's love and Jesus' sacrifice, and let us be filled with hope as we await the rewards that will come when Jesus returns! Amen!

Call to Action

- -Deepen your convictions daily through your understanding of God's Word.
- Let that deep understanding influence your daily decisions.
- Encourage someone by taking time to share what you are learning.

Further reading

1 Corinthians 2:1-5

We are Called to Love, Submit, Nurture, & Obey

"Our calling is to love unconditionally, submit humbly, nurture kindly, and obey faithfully."

"In Christ, we learn to love, submit, nurture, and obey as He did."

"Love, submission, nurturing, and obedience are marks of our Christian identity."

WE ARE CALLED TO SHARE THE GOSPEL AND OUR LIVES

Scripture reading: 1 Thessalonians 2:1-12

Because we loved you so much, we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well (1 Thess. 2:8)

he title of this devotional brings to mind a video about William Booth's vision which emphasizes to me what my actual calling as a disciple of Jesus is. Booth saw a stormy ocean with people struggling, shrieking, and drowning. A mighty rock emerged with a platform where some climbed to safety, helped by others. However, many rescued individuals forgot about those still drowning in the water.

In the vision, Jesus descended into the raging sea, struggling to rescue the lost. He called on those He had rescued to join Him, but they were so caught up with their lives, pleasures and religious activities that they didn't respond to his call. Strangely, those who he called to come and help him were always praying to him to come help them instead. They wanted him to strengthen them or to make them feel more secure in him but all this time he was calling THEM to come and help HIM rescue perishing souls!

As disciples of Jesus we are called to share the gospel for the purpose of rescuing these perishing souls just as we were rescued when someone reached out to us and shared the gospel with us.

Paul had previously been jailed in Philippi where he went before Thessalonica. (Acts 16) He was insulted and beaten but that didn't stop him from sharing the gospel there. He had pure motives and focused on pleasing God rather than men (v.4). He could have felt entitled to have his needs catered for, but instead, he worked for a living so as not to be a burden to the Thessalonians.

Even as Paul and Silas shared the gospel with them, they shared their lives also. They spent time with them, shared meals and became like family; urging, comforting, encouraging and loving. The apostles also shared their struggles and were vulnerable and honest while living holy lives and setting a good example (v.7-8).

How can we obey our calling to share the gospel and our lives? We need to pray for courage and ask God to fill us with the Spirit's power to share his word. We must seek opportunities to share the Gospel, and strive to live open, authentic lives that make God proud. We should aim to build real relationships with those we are sharing the gospel with, and like Paul and his fellow disciples, genuinely love and care for them. We ourselves must be open and vulnerable and see them as family and friends not just as "studies" which could imply that they are merely a project or a task. At the same time, we must not water down the gospel to make it more acceptable.

Conclusion

What proportion of your prayers have been focused on asking God to help you rescue others, rather than just seeking personal blessings?

Inspired by Paul's selfless example, let us faithfully obey our calling to share the Gospel and our lives, to rescue the lost and make disciples for Jesus Christ, to God's glory.

Call to Action

Set aside 10-15 minutes of your quiet time daily to pray specifically for opportunities to share the Gospel, for courage to initiate conversations, and for the salvation of friends, family, and colleagues. Write down names, prayer requests, and answers.

Initiate at least one conversation this week that can lead to a friend or acquaintance studying the Bible

Further Reading

Acts 20 v 17- 35 2Corinthians 5 v 14 -21 Matthew 28 v 18 – 20

Reference: William Booth's Vision: "The Lazy Church" video, YouTube, Salvation Army International, April 12, 2012,

We are Called to Deep Conviction

"Deep conviction in Christ fuels our unwavering faith and steadfast hope."

"With deep conviction, we boldly proclaim the truth of the Gospel."

"Our faith is anchored in deep conviction, rooted in God's promises."

Scripture reading: 1 Thessalonians 2:17-20, 3:6-13
For what is our hope, our joy, or the crown in which we will glory in the presence of our Lord Jesus?... Is it not you? (1 Thess. 2:19)

From yesterday's devotional, we learned about our calling to share the gospel and our lives to rescue souls that are perishing. What a challenge! Today, we read about the joy of helping others to know God and grow in the faith.

When you read Paul's letter to the Thessalonians, you can't but notice his intimate bond with them. Indeed, it was like the relationship of a loving parent and his children. Many people willingly give up personal comfort to see their children do well. The proud parent who stands beside their graduating son or gives a daughter in marriage feels an indescribable joy: the crowning of years of effort and sacrifice in raising that child.

It is the same; spiritually speaking, Paul and his companions referred to the converts in Thessalonica as their "hope, joy and crown in the presence of Christ Jesus." (2:19) Later, in 3:8, amid their challenges and persecutions, they received Timothy's encouraging report about how the Thessalonians were doing. They confessed, "For now we really live, since you [the Thessalonians] are standing firm in the Lord."

All of us, as Christians, should aspire to spiritual parenthood. It is a joy to help someone come to faith and remain a committed presence in their life, loving them, giving to them, sharing with them, nurturing them, and watching them grow in the Lord. Last year, we attended the West African Leadership Conference in Port Harcourt. In one of the classes, the speaker asked us to look around the room for anyone who had impacted us, taught us, or discipled us over the years.

Then he asked us to walk up to that person and say a big "Thank you!" The atmosphere was electric after that! The hall was filled with exclamations of gratitude, hugs, and even tears. People recalled pleasant memories. Faith and conviction were rekindled as we were reminded of what a powerful influence we are in each others' lives. It was a taste of what the fellowship will be like in heaven. I am thankful to the sister who reached out to me and invited me to a bible discussion and to the disciples who taught me God's word and were patient in helping me mature in my faith over the years. I am also thankful for those that God has used me to help. When my faith weakens and I remember those who look to me for inspiration, I pick myself up and reeneraize!

Conclusion

I believe you and I can experience greater joy this year, not necessarily from having more money or more possessions, but from helping more people find Jesus and become His followers. What a joy that will be! May we be identified as those who have Jesus's heart for the souls of others.

Call to action

- Do a personal evaluation today. Ask yourself, "Since I became a disciple of Jesus, who have I helped to become one?"
- Ask God to give you the joy of having a spiritual child this year. Discuss this vision with your discipleship partner(s)
- List all those who reached out to or discipled you in the past. Call them to say a big "Thank you!"

Further reading Isaiah 40:10-11

We Are Called to Share the Gospel & Our Lives

"Sharing the Gospel is sharing our lives, reflecting Christ's love in action."

"We are ambassadors of Christ, called to spread His message and our testimony."

"In sharing the Gospel, we give a part of ourselves, embodying God's love."

Scripture reading: 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8

It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; that each of you should learn to control your own body in a way that is holy and honorable... (1 Thess 4:3-4)

magine you are a father who has returned to a bustling crowd, eagerly searching for the faces of your beloved children. But as you scan the crowd, you feel a pang of disbelief—your children look, sound, and act just like everyone else around them. You had raised them to stand apart and reflect your family's values, yet here they are, blending seamlessly into a sea of strangers.

As you watch them, disappointment fills your heart. No one could tell by looking at them that they come from a family of honor and reverence. They have taken on the behaviors and desires of the crowd, making it nearly impossible for you to recognize them as your own.

Just as a father longs for his children to proudly carry his identity, God desires that His children live in a way that reflects His identity—that of holiness and honor. When Christians blend into the world, adopting its passions and values, they risk losing the identity they were given. This grieves their Father, leaving the world unaware of His presence.

God has not called us to a life of impurity but to one of holiness. When we ignore this call and choose to blend into the world, we are not merely discarding a set of rules — we are rejecting God Himself, the very One who gave us His Holy Spirit to set us apart. To turn away from this calling is to turn away from the One who lovingly marked us as His own.

As a single disciple and a physically mature individual living in a world that constantly celebrates indulgence without restraint, I understand how desires can grow strong and how the pull of the world around us can feel intense. Yet, it's precisely in these moments that our commitment to holiness becomes a powerful testimony. Sexual integrity is for every Christian, whether you are married or single, a teenager, a student, or a senior includes adultery, **Immorality** fornication. prostitution, pedophilia, pornography, masturbation, homosexuality, and the like. Choosing to walk in sexual integrity isn't merely about avoiding certain actions; it's about aligning our hearts and minds with God's alorious life purpose.

One way to stay sexually upright is by keeping to the laid-down principles of the scriptures. **Psalm 119 vs 9-10** tells us that people can only stay pure and upright when living according to God's word. All forms of sexual immorality dishonor our bodies and violate God's clear command. The more we build our daily lives according to the pattern of God's word, the stronger we will be when faced with daily temptations.

Another very practical way to stay sexually pure is by affirming your identity and clearly defining the values you stand for - because it truly makes a difference. I once liked someone who didn't share my faith. Yet, this person helped me stay pure in a moment of vulnerability by reminding me of my commitment to sexual integrity and the principles I had earlier expressed that I hold dear. This experience showed me the power of living openly in alignment with my convictions. When others know where we stand, it protects us in moments of vulnerability. It keeps us accountable for living in a way that reflects our identity in Christ.

Conclusion

God wants us to be deliberate about honoring him with everything we are and have. He calls our body His temple and never wants us to defile it. 1 Corinthians 6:18 says, "Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body". This scripture reminds us that sexual immorality is a form of self-harm. It can mess up your mind and is powerful enough to rob you of your self-worth.

We are called to control our bodies in a way that honors God, clearly distinguishing us from a culture that does not revere Him. The path of integrity requires discipline, and that is what it means to be a disciple. Ultimately, it brings fulfillment from walking in harmony with God's design for us.

Call to action

In conjunction with other disciples in your peer group, create a Bible study on God's design for your sexuality. Be creative about it. Ask for input where necessary. Hold one another accountable.

Further reading Gen 3:24-25, Gen 39:1-10, Prove

Click to See Maze in Page 99

IDENTITY **PRAYER** CHRIST **FORGIVEN CHRISTIAN** RELATIONSHIP SAVED LOVE **FREEDOM** LIGHT UNITED TRANSFORMED JUSTIFIED **GLORY** SPIRITUAL BLESSED **GRATITUDE**

HEAVEN UNIQUE GIFTED **RIGHTEOUSNESS HOLINESS FAITHFULNESS** HUMBLE ARMOUR CONVICTIONS **AMBASSADORS CROWN HONOUR** INTEGRITY PURITY GOD **JESUS ENCOURAGEMENT** PEACE
SANCTIFICATION
KINGDOM
CITIZENS
INTERCONNECTED
CHILDREN
MISSION
GOSPEL
FELLOWSHIP
ACCOUNTABILITY
DEVOTION
PRAISE
HONESTY
BIBLE
BOLDNESS



"In God's presence, we find our ultimate joy and crown of glory."

"Our joy and crown are found in knowing and serving the Lord."

"God's presence fills us with joy and honors us with His eternal crown."

Scripture reading: 1 Thessalonians 4:9-12

...make it your ambition to lead a quiet life: You should mind your own business and work with your hands...so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders...(1 Thess 4:11)

As you read through the book of 1 Thessalonians, you will notice that Paul's confidence in the Macedonian church is striking. He was full of praise for them.

In our reading for today, he commends them first for their love for God's people, which stemmed from lessons taught by God. How is our love for one another? We need to ponder this deeply.

A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this, everyone will know that you are my disciples if you love one another.

The criterion in John 13:34-35 is relatively high. Are we only agreeable when we are in harmony? Do we correct each other in love, or are we quick to judge and condemn? To my shame, there have been times when I questioned the sincerity of someone's Thanksgiving, thinking it might be a show-off. God forgive me, for I have repented. Love means celebrating each other's successes and mourning together in times of failure.

In verse 11, the Bible encourages us to lead a quiet life, minding our business and working with our hands. Those who seek the latest news about others or who judge others harshly should heed this passage. Let us be careful not to use fellowship as a cover-up for gossip. As much as we are supposed to love one another, show kindness, and support one another, this is not an encouragement for anyone to be lazy. Work, even if what you earn is meager. Then, it will be clear that you

are making an effort and not expecting handouts or making your hard-working brothers and sisters struggle. The dignity of labor and the ethics of diligent work are core to our Christian values.

Lastly, we must consider whether our daily lives win respect for ourselves and Christ. What do people say behind our backs? Have we earned a reputation as gossips, liars, lazy or untrustworthy individuals? Or do people see us as epitomes of Christ?

We must remember that actions often speak louder than words. How we conduct ourselves in our homes, workplaces, and social circles can attract people to Christ or pull them away.

Furthermore, prayer is key. Prayer strengthens our connection with God, guides our actions, and aligns our hearts with His will. Through prayer, we can seek wisdom, patience, and the strength to love others as Christ loves us.

Conclusion

Let us be mindful of our identity and our lives impact on others. By living out our faith authentically and lovingly, we win the respect of others. This not only honors God but also draws people to Him. May our actions, words, and thoughts align with our values, and may our lives be a beacon of hope, love, and righteousness, illuminating the path to Christ for all who see us.

Call to Action

Take the time to reach out to someone who may feel isolated or offer support to someone in need. By so doing, we create a nurturing environment that reflects the kingdom of God.

Have a time to introspect. What areas need improvement from today's devotional?

Further reading 1 Pet 3:8 1 Pet 2:11



"Sexual integrity honors God and reflects His holiness in our lives."

"We are called to purity, upholding God's standard in our bodies."

"Integrity in our sexuality is a testament to our faith in God's design."

Scripture reading: 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

Brothers and sisters, we do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death so that you do not grieve like the rest of men who have no hope. (1 Thess 4:13)

One of the reasons I appreciate the exercise of reading a whole Bible book is that it makes me study portions of the scripture that I would otherwise be very happy to skip. Such is our scripture reading for today. Most of us do not like to read about death unless we are at a funeral. Why do we have these admonitions in the Bible? I believe one reason is that God wants us to be deeply encouraged.

It is very hard to lose someone you love, to not be able to see them each day, hear their voice, hold their hand. We may question God and ask, "Why? Why?" No matter how long ago that loss was, there is a part of the pain that never goes away. God understands. God comforts. According to the scripture, God wants us to know that this life is not all there is for us. We have hope.

Death, like birth, is a fact of life. In Paul's letter, he felt compelled to educate the Christians on what death means for us believers. The Bible describes death as "sleeping" for those in Christ. Anyone who sleeps will surely wake up at some point. And so it is with us. Jesus, too, slept in death (vs. 14) and rose in power on the third day. God promises that when Jesus returns, every believer who has slept in the Lord will rise also. But that's not all. We will soar on the clouds with Christ to our everlasting home. That is when the real heavenly party will begin!

I have often wished we could see beyond this physical life and glimpse what goes on in eternity. Jesus said to Martha in John 11:25, "I am the resurrection and the life.

The one who believes in me will live even though they die, and whoever lives by believing in me will never die"

I imagine that anyone who dies in Christ simply passes through a "door," a gateway to the garden of paradise where they may enjoy rest from the labor of this world until Jesus comes to take us all home. Apostle Paul asks us to encourage one another with these words. If anyone is not in Christ, eternity with the Lord is not guaranteed. Scripture says, "how shall we escape if we ignore so great a salvation?" (Heb 2:3) and also, "...now is the time of God's favor, now is the day of salvation. (2 Cor 6:2) Are you doubtful about where you will spend eternity? Are you putting off a decision to become a follower of Jesus? Are you a Christian, but you find yourself being pulled back into sin and away from God's reassuring presence? Take action today. Eternity will be worth it.

Conclusion

God wants us to be encouraged that He is always with us, whether in life or death. Our identity in Christ will remain even when we pass from this life.

Call to action

Take time today to talk to God deeply about your life after this life.

Do you know anyone who is grieving? Reach out to them with words of encouragement.

Further reading Ps 116:15 Ps 23:4

We are Called to Live a Life that Wins Respect

"Living with integrity and respect glorifies God and inspires others."

"Our conduct should reflect Christ, winning the respect of those around us."

"A life of respect is a witness to the transformative power of God's grace."

Scripture Reading: 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

Now, brothers and sisters, about times and dates, we do not need to write to you for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night (1 Thess 5:1)

The opening sentence of today's passage is quite instructive. Paul's tone shows the certainty of what is to come. Imagine living in a neighborhood on high alert for a robbery threat. Everyone stays awake, guarding their homes. In the same way, we are being called to be awake and sober, guarding our hearts and preparing for what's coming!

Sleepiness and a lack of sobriety share common denominators: laziness, lack of seriousness, and unawareness. To be awake is to be active, informed, on guard, and prepared. To be sober is to be self-controlled, disciplined, and focused. It's about balancing life, avoiding excesses, and prioritizing what truly matters. Self-control enables us to manage our thoughts, emotions, and actions, leading to a more fulfilling and purposeful life.

A person needs 6-7 hours of sleep daily to function well. While asleep, your body increases growth hormones, does repair work, improves immunity, grows the brain, and boosts concentration. While all these are essential to being mentally fit, a hard-fighting soldier on the battlefield sleeps with utmost caution. He sleeps on the ground, in a fighting position, watchtower, or under an armored vehicle, and is technically awake to act when the need arises instantly. God's children are a battalion, and we cannot all go to sleep simultaneously. When some are asleep, others keep watch. You may be weak spiritually today, but you need somebody to spur you on tomorrow. (Heb. 10:24-25)

To be spiritually alert, we must be discerning and understand our times.

The signs are scary: people hardly stand for what is right, toxic employees get more rewards, and wanton killings are everywhere. These are pointers that we must diligently pray, seeking God's guidance and strength. We must intentionally spend time in God's Word, allowing it to shape our minds and hearts by leveraging the power of the community of believers who offer support and encouragement. Let's intentionally build strong relationships with fellow believers, pray for one another, and hold each other accountable.

By embracing the call to be awake and sober, we can experience God's blessings. We become more sensitive to the Holy Spirit's guidance, more effective in serving others, and more resilient in facing life's challenges.

A man whose house is on fire would not sleep until he puts the fire out. Paul the Apostle is referencing the importance of knowing who we are, why we are here, and where we are headed, being mindful of our final destination, and impressing it in our subconscious. Many may deny it because they are not the target audience, but the sheep hear the shepherd's voice. (John 10:1-5)

Conclusion

We must be awake to the reason we attend church services, have a daily quiet time, attend Bible talks, and have discipling times: to encourage one another, draw from each other's strengths, and have fellowship with the Almighty God in one accord. We all need somebody to nudge us when we are dozy. Let us tap into the power of our community to stay awake and aware. Let us maintain our identity of watchfulness and sobriety as God's people.

Call to action

Do you belong to a team of soldiers that take turns to keep watch, calling each other higher and holding one another accountable? Create or join one today! More than ever, you need somebody to watch your back on this glorious journey!

Further reading Luke 12:35-40

When Christians Sleep

"In Christ, even in sleep, we rest in His peace and await His return."

"For Christians, sleep is a reminder of our hope in the resurrection."

"Sleep is a gift from God, a time to rejuvenate and trust in His care."

WE ARE DELIVERED FROM EVIL

The Hope Of Our Identity



2 Thessalonians 1 - 6

Ephesians 2:10

"For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."

Matthew 5:14-16

"You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven."

2 Timothy 1:7

"For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline."

"Do not wait to strike till the iron is hot; but make it hot by striking."

- William Butler Yeats

"The meaning of life is to find your gift.
The purpose of life is to give it away."
- Pablo Picasso

WE ARE DELIVERED FROM EVIL

Day 34 – We Shall Be Counted Worthy

Day 35 - Do Not Let Anyone Deceive You

Day 36 – We Are Called to Stand Firm.

Day 37 - Keep Away from the Idle One

Scripture reading: 2 Thessalonians 1:1-12

All this is evidence that God's judgment is right, and as a result, you will be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are suffering (2 Thess 1:5)

As Paul the Apostle wrote to the persecuted Thessalonians, his words also greatly encourage us today. In Acts 17:5-9 we are reminded of the intense persecution he endured when he planted the church in the thriving port city of Thessalonica.

He writes to affirm the endurance and faith of the believers he left behind there by stating that " (they) would be counted worthy of the kingdom of God for which (they) were suffering." This assurance reminds us to persevere because any form of suffering we undergo for Christ's sake will be worth it in the end. What, then, do we consider to be 'suffering for the kingdom' in today's context?

Some of us have been rejected by our family because of our faith. Others have chosen to live modestly rather than live off unjust gain. Many of us have refused to be unequally yoked in intimate relationships with unbelievers, preferring instead to remain celibate and to live in undivided devotion to the Lord. Still, others practice sacrificial generosity to the point of significant personal discomfort. God is not unaware of these pains (2 Thess. 1:6) and will not forget any sacrifice or suffering that you endure for His sake.

A Promise and a Prayer

On the other hand, we must not conclude that our efforts or sacrifices have made us worthy of the kingdom. We must be sober and humble to remain dependent on God's mercy and grace (2 Cor.12:9-10), for only in Him can we be counted worthy. In and of ourselves, we can never do enough to merit this.

This is why Paul says that he constantly prays "that our God **may** count (us) worthy of his calling..." (vs. 11) . Amen!

We can sometimes be tempted to feel as though we "deserve" to be rewarded or blessed because of the hardships that we have suffered for the kingdom. On the other hand, we could outwardly live faithfully but inwardly complain about our "sorry" lot in life. I have been guilty of both. I remember when I went through a life-threatening illness and wondered why God would allow me- a "faithful disciple" to go through such a trial. As time passed, it gradually dawned on me that God does not owe me anything. I had to learn to count my blessings with a more profound gratitude, even in my sickness. God is good, and he has given me enough. I eventually learned to pray for God to refine my heart to hopefulness and gratitude in my suffering. As Paul prayed, we must continue to pray that our God will count us worthy of his kingdom because it is undoubtedly a privilege, not a right.

Conclusion:

We must persevere joyfully when we suffer because of our faith in Christ. God is just. He sees our situation, suffering, and sacrifice. He will remember, reward, and comfort us. Above all, God, in his mercy, can make us worthy of His kingdom to His praise and glory. Amen.

Call to Action

- Reflect on how you have had to "suffer" for the sake of Christ. In what ways
- does your attitude need to improve in your situation? Share with a friend.
- Say a prayer of thanksgiving to God for making you worthy of His kingdom.

Further reading:

1 Corinthians 15:58 Galatians 6:9

We are Called to Encouragement and Edification

"Encouragement and edification are vital in building up the body of Christ."

"We are called to lift each other up, encouraging and edifying in love."

"Through encouragement, we strengthen our faith and unity in Christ."

2 Thessalonians 2:1-12

Don't let anyone deceive you in any way... The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with how Satan works. He will use all sorts of displays of power through signs and wonders that serve the lie and all the ways that wickedness deceives those who are perishing... (2

Thess 2:3,9)

n this chapter, Paul surfaces the real danger Christians face in every generation – the slippery slope of being deceived. It is as factual an issue for us today as it was for them in the first century. While these verses contain some frightening images, we will do well to focus on the practical warnings that apply to our Christian lives today. Here, Paul was addressing the Thessalonian's fear that Jesus had already returned but had not "gathered" them to Himself, and they had somehow missed their heavenly reward (2 Thess.2:1-2). Paul assured the church that Jesus' second coming has not yet occurred and that there will be a season of lawlessness before Jesus returns.

Scholars do not name any specific individual or being as this "Man of Lawlessness," "Man of Sin," or "Antichrist," depending on which Bible version you read. Because scripture does not clarify who he is, we must also be careful not to label any (one) individual as this person in the way some false preachers have done. Again, we do not know when this time will be. We do know, however, that even today, Satan exists and can perpetuate evil through his agents and in different ways. The scripture assures us, however, that he is held back (as on a leash, so to speak) until the final overthrow of evil. Ultimately, the Lord Jesus will easily overthrow every evil at the proper time (2Thess 2:5-8). Jesus' breath and splendor alone will destroy the lawless one.

We live in a broken world, and evil exists in both physical and spiritual realms. As Christians today, our preoccupation is to remain steadfast and not to be deceived by false signs and displays of power. We must beware of anything that threatens our faith or derails us from sound Biblical teaching. Sins and temptations that deceive abound all around us. We can be enticed and dragged away depending on our life's situations or experiences if we are not careful.

How can we recognize such deceit? False teachings in the religious world today usually gloss over sin, distort sexuality, and extol materialism and greed while fueling apathy. In other religious settings, love and forgiveness are replaced by suspicion, division, dissension, and even hatred. You and I are not immune.

Some of us have had terrible experiences, such as physical abuse or rape. The pain is real and confirms that evil is rampant in the world. Varying degrees of sexual temptations bombard us left and right. Desires for pleasure and desires for the comfort of material acquisitions as an end in themselves often lead our hearts to the wrong places. Lack of peace, envy, and strife towards our neighbor usually characterizes these. Some of us have gone as far as alienating people we "suspect" do not have our interest at heart...like "your village people"!! Such thinking gives Satan a foothold in our hearts and blocks out the love of Christ. Do not believe lies.

Conclusion:

Evil exists and comes at us in different ways. If you have endured harm, take heart, God sees you. God forgives if you have sinned as a victim or perpetrator of any sin or evil. Do not live in guilt. If you are witnessing or experiencing any form of evil, look to God. Do not live in fear. God is more significant than evil, and He has already overcome it.

Call to Action:

Reflect on any way (s) that evil/sin has deceived you and derailed your faith.

Further reading:

2 Corinthians 10:3-5 Colossians 2:8 Revelation 20:10

We Are Called to Peace and Sanctification

"Peace and sanctification are marks of our walk with Christ."

"We pursue peace with all, and sanctification through God's refining grace."

"Our calling is to live in peace and seek sanctification, becoming more like Christ."

2 Thessalonians 2: 13-16, 3:1-5

"May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and by his grace gave us eternal encouragement and good hope, encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good deed and word" (2Thess. 2:16-17).

Y esterday, we took a sober and painful look into the realm of evil that pervades around us. Today, we will be reminded that evil must not have the final word because nothing should shake our Christian confidence or cause us to leave the path of righteousness. Fear, anger, strained relationships, grief, loss, and harm can all overwhelm and shake our faith. We will explore these a little.

Fear, grief, loss, and harm are usually caused by things that have happened or are happening to us, often beyond our control. Sickness can be terrifying when it is happening to us or a loved one. Grief and loss of a relationship or loss of innocence are traumatic and take time to process. Trauma can make us very afraid. Fear is normal and is best talked about so that we can get the support of godly, trusted friends. Otherwise, fear will make us susceptible to being deceived and led astray. Standing firm in faith through these scary seasons is possible through Christ. Turn your thoughts to Him and lean into God's promises in the Bible.

Anger and strained relationships are tricky because we can easily be deceived into feeling justified when our negative emotions are vented on (an) individual(s). Difficult as it is, remember the warning that "man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires." (James 1:20). In many cases, resolution is possible. "...if it depends on you, live at peace with everyone." (Romans 12:17-18). If resolution is not possible, seek constructive, godly advice on how to handle things

going forward. Above all, let go of the anger – no matter what. Let love and perseverance be your watchwords through it all. Paul asked the Thessalonians to pray that the message of the Lord would spread rapidly and be honored despite the challenges (2Thess. 3:1). Think about it. How you carry yourself or respond to trials and difficulties can go a long way to win over an unbelieving observer, especially when you commit to remaining obedient to Christ even when it is so hard. Paul admonishes us not to be overcome by evil. Instead, we are commanded to overcome evil with good (Romans 12:21).

Wherever you are today- even if you are in poor health, grieving, heartbroken, or broke – remember Jesus. God has chosen you and sanctified you by His Spirit. Stand firm and hold on to his teachings (2Thess.2:13-15). May the Lord deliver you from all evil! Remember that God is faithful.

Conclusion:

God is greater than any evil that comes against us or threatens us. We do not need to be afraid or overcome. God desires that we hold onto faithfulness, obedience, and godliness in all situations.

Call to Action:

Which of the challenges described above resonates with you? Share this with a friend or your discipling partner and get advice on letting go of fear or anger and acting righteously instead.

Further reading

Psalm 34:14 Hebrews 13:6



"Our identity is defined by Christ, who we are in Him, not by the world."

"In Christ, we find our true self, our identity secure in His love."

"Christ defines us, shaping our identity in His image and purpose."

Scripture reading: 2 Thessalonians 3:6-18

For when we were with you, we gave you this rule: "The one who is unwilling to work shall not eat." (2 Thess. 3:10)

As we have learned in the last few days, the Thessalonian church had their fair share of challenges; persecution, a misunderstanding of Christ's coming, and that of 'idle disciples.'

The problem of idleness virtually became a recurring decimal. Paul addressed it in his first letter (1 Thess. 5:14) but had to revisit the issue when it persisted.

This idle team had so much time on their hands that they were meddling in the affairs of others (vs. 11) and causing more problems rather than focusing on providing for themselves and their families (vs. 12). Instead of doing their fair share to support themselves and help the poor in the Christian community, they were hanging around other believers and persistently expecting handouts.

We are taught to love our neighbors as ourselves and to share all things in common. What do we do when a disciple consistently takes advantage of the church's generosity without contributing anything? Paul had to shake up the church with a clear command, "In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we command you..." (3:6).

Let us note that Paul isn't talking about people who can't earn a living due to sickness, mental instability, age, or infirmity. He isn't talking about widows or orphans. He is talking about people who can work but are lazy and entitled.

Paul's command to the disciples to "keep away" from such people might seem harsh, but looking deeply, one can see that the purpose here is not purely punitive. We are not to treat lazy believers as enemies because we are still family. Instead, the bible makes it clear that

idleness will hurt the church; the gossipy, busybody behavior **of lazy Christians can** discourage others from being generous to those indeed in need. That was why Paul also had to encourage active disciples who are giving not to be "tired of doing what is right." (2 Thess 3:13)

Paul wanted to reinforce Titus 3:14's statement, "Our people must learn to devote themselves to doing what is good, so that they may provide for daily necessities and not live unproductive lives."

The Christian community is a giving fellowship. Perpetual takers will not fit in. The first step to solving a problem is defining it, so we must identify idle disciples.

The next step is to **warn such** believers, which means to counsel and instruct them. The leaders should take charge of admonishing and correcting things in this situation (1 Thessalonians 5:12). Instruction to these believers could even be to pick up a job they might feel is below their status. At the same time, they wait for a better opportunity ahead.

Paul also teaches the concept of taking responsibility for oneself and one's family. He reiterates this concept to Timothy: "If anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for his immediate family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever." (1 Timothy 5:8)

Conclusion

We all must find something productive to do if we are to build God's church. Hard work is part of the life of a disciple of Jesus. Indeed, hard, sincere work is the norm laid out by God from the beginning. Genesis 3:19a says, "By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food..."

Call to Action

Arise and serve the Lord with diligence today.

Further reading: Prov 6:6, Prov 13:4, Prov 18:9

Identity in God's Kingdom

"Our identity is rooted in God's kingdom, as citizens of His eternal realm."

"In God's kingdom, we find our true home, our identity as His children."

"Living as kingdom citizens, we embody God's values and reflect His glory."

WE REJOICE ALWAYS

Identity And Mission



Philippians 1 - 4

Colossians 3:1-3

"Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God."

Philippians 3:13-14

"Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus."

Hebrews 12:1-2

"Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith."

"Keep your face always toward the sunshine—and shadows will fall behind you."

- Walt Whitman

"Success is not final, failure is not fatal: It is the courage to continue that counts."

- Winston Churchill

WE REJOICE ALWAYS

Day 38 – To live is Christ

Day 39 – We are called to unity and humility.

Day 40 – Gains and Losses

Day 41 – We are Called to Peace

Day 42 - We are Called to Contentment

Day 43 – We Can Do All This

Day 44 - EPILOGUE

PHILIPPIANS 1: 1 - 21

I eagerly expect and hope that I ...will have sufficient courage so that now, as always, Christ will be exalted ... For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.

The Apostle Paul wrote to the Christians in Philippi primarily to thank them for their love and help during his time of need. Even though he was writing from prison, his letter was joyful. The word "joy" or "rejoice" was used about fourteen times in this book alone.

In verses 3-6, Paul remembers the Philippian Christians with joy and thanksgiving whenever he prays. They were willing to be used by God, and by helping Paul, they were helping the cause of Christ. Paul considered them partners in the gospel.

I also remember many disciples who helped the cause of the gospel in their way. Some willingly extended Bible Discussions to their homes, and others have helped the sick in our midst. Such memories come with joy and thanksgiving. In particular, I recall a couple living far away from the church meeting venue, along with several other families in their neighborhood. This couple offered to open their sitting room every Sunday without fail for worship service. These services included friends and neighbors who were warmly invited. During this period, their last son, about 20 years old, started seeing the word of God differently and decided to study the Bible. Already on the Cross study, he should have been baptized to God's glory by the time you are reading this devotional. I remember this story with joy!

How do others remember you? What comes to their mind? Do your acts of kindness lift others? In verses 20-21, we learn about Paul's perspective on life. People who knew Paul knew what his life was all about. His identity was clear. His greatest value was exalting Christ through his life.

For those who do not believe in God, it is natural to strive for the values of this world alone: popularity, money, power, pleasure, and prestige. For Paul, however, to remain alive meant to pursue eternal values and to tell others about Christ, who alone can help man see beyond this life. It meant speaking boldly about Christ and imitating him. It meant impacting and encouraging others to become more like Christ, devoting his life to what counts—eternity!

Do you choose to live for Christ? Consider how this choice will impact you and others. It will take your eyes off earthly values and weed out superficial beliefs. It will strengthen your faith and help you to endure. Finally, it is the greatest inspiration for non-Christians to come to faith.

Conclusion:

Paul testifies to the meaning of his present life by saying, "For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain." For him, it was a privilege. For us, it means to live to please Christ.

Call to action

What is one earthly value you want to let go of this year? Share with a brother or sister who can help and encourage you.

Further reading: Phil 1:27



Identity in the Body of Christ

"As members of the body of Christ, our identity is interconnected and purposeful."

"We are one body, each part essential, reflecting the unity in diversity."

"Our identity in the body of Christ calls us to serve and support one another."

Scripture reading Philippians 2:1-18, 4:2-3

Therefore, if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ...then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. Philippians 2:1-2

Y esterday, we learned about Paul's perspective on life. In today's reading, he writes to the Philippian disciples from this perspective. When we see our lives as all about Christ and not about us, we can have Christ's attitude in our relationships.

Unity and humility are two great qualities that can build the Church up. In vs. 2-3a, Paul stressed unity, asking the Philippians to love one another and to be one in spirit and purpose. His appeal was passionate. As an apostle, he knew how selfish ambition and vain conceit could tear the church down. When we work together, caring for the problems of others as if they were ours, we demonstrate Christ's example of putting others first, and we experience true unity.

In verses 6-8, we see how Jesus Christ was humble and willing to give up his right of claim to equality with God to be obedient and to become a servant. He not only set aside his deity to become human but also voluntarily laid aside his divine rights and privileges out of love for his Father and submission to His will. I ask myself how easy it could have been to know that you are a king, yet you submit yourself to live like the least of servants. If Christ was this humble, then what excuse do we have? What challenges our humility? In 4 vs 2, we see Paul pleading with Euodia and Syntyche to agree. These women were undoubtedly strong disciples; they had worked side by side with the apostle himself. Yet, a lack of humility was about to disqualify them. Some of us are leaders within the church or our communities.

Some of us are older than others regarding biological or spiritual age. Some of us have strong influence or opinions. We must go the extra mile to be humble. Let us have the attitude of Jesus.

In verses 12-15, we are called to "work out our salvation." Considering the earlier exhortation to unity, this is not just an individual admonition but a call for the entire Church. We must work together to rid the body of divisions and discord. Complaining and arguing do not bring about unity and humility. Our common faith in Christ should unite us as we trust in him. Then, we will "shine like stars" in a dark and depraved world. When we live out this identity as people of unity and humility, our transformed lives will be an effective witness to the power of God's word.

Conclusion:

Like Christ, we should have a servant attitude, serving out of love for God and others, not out of guilt or fear. Are you still shining brightly or becoming clouded by complaining and arguing? We must all fight for unity. Only an attitude of humility will achieve this. What attitude do you choose?

Call to action

Write down specific ways to dedicate yourself more to God's service this year.

Also, write down ways you can shine bright in unity and humility going forward

Further reading Romans 12:3 1 Pet 3:8-12

Identity as God's Beloved

"We are God's beloved, cherished and loved beyond measure."

"Our identity as beloved children shapes our relationship with God and others."

"In God's love, we find our worth and our true identity as His beloved."

Scripture reading: Philippians 3:7-14

But whatever was to my profit, I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. Moreover, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things.

Y esterday, we learned from Paul as he called us to imitate the heart of Jesus Christ in humility. In today's devotional, Paul passionately shares his personal convictions that call us to focus on eternal gains.

Do you know an investor ready to trade gold for granite? Or a gadget lover who wants to replace his iPhone 14 with a Blackberry Priv? Life is all about the best bargain. No one wants to be short-changed. With our time or possessions, what we choose to go after, or what we choose to give up, we all desire gain, not loss. What do we value most? Paul was a devout leader with impressive credentials. Ethnically, he was a Jew of the tribe of Benjamin, circumcised according to Jewish regulations, and a faultless observer of the Jewish religion. He lived as a Pharisee and was extremely zealous in protecting Israel from false beliefs and sinful practices. upbringing, nationality, His background, heritage, and moral standards were excellent. Yet, we see how he considered everything he had accomplished as a "loss" compared to the greatness of knowing Christ. Why? To him, the gain of knowing Christ alone far outweighed whatever he had attained or could ever attain in life.

We must not let past achievements hinder our growth in Christ. A good reputation, impressive credentials, quality education, a promising career path, and so on are all worthy pursuits. But we must be careful that they do not displace our relationship with God, for they cannot be compared to the greatest pursuit of all – to know Christ.

Our faith in Christ is not based on any of our achievements or spiritual achievements. It is based on the grace of God. Even the most impressive accomplishments fall short of God's holy standards. To know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his suffering means we must continue to work out our salvation with fear and trembling (Phil. 2:12)

Conclusion

As Christians, we are privileged to have gained the most critical thing in life – our salvation in Christ. Knowing Him more and more must be our daily focus. Do you hear God saying He wants to hold the ultimate place in your life? May we be identified as those who passionately pursue eternal gains.

Call to action

What spiritual discipline can you engage in to better know Christ this year? Have a daily focus on Jesus and the cross. Write down the things God has shown you and commit to praying over that list as you act on it.

Further Scriptures 1 Cor 1:18 Lk 9:23-25

GAINS AND LOSSES PUZZLE

Find the words in the puzzle. All words from first two paragraphs of Day 40.
Words can go in any direction.
Words can share letters as they cross over each other.

Ι	S	Т	R	Ι	В	Ε	Υ	D	Υ	В	D	D	Q	Н
Ε	S	0	0	Н	\subset	А	Ε	D	L	Т	Ε	Ε	\subset	Ε
М	Ε	L	L	R	Υ	V	R	А	А	Р	S	S	Т	R
I	Ν	\subset	Н	Ε	0	L	\subset	G	Т	Ε	I	I	Ε	I
Т	Т	L	R	U	А	K	I	D	А	D	R	\subset	G	Т
Z	А	0	Т	Ε	В	R	Ε	М	L	I	Ε	М	D	А
В	Ε	٧	0	Ε	D	R	S	0	А	U	Ν	U	А	G
Ε	R	Ε	R	Υ	А	Ε	G	I	J	F	F	\subset	G	Ε
Ν	G	R	Υ	Р	\subset	0	Ν	S	I	D	Ε	R	Ε	D
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ATTAINED BARGAIN BENJAMIN BLACKBERRY CHOOSE CHRIST CIRCUMCISED COMPARED CONSIDERED **CREDENTIALS** DESIRE DEVOUT ETHNICALLY FAMILY GADGET GOLD GRANITE GREATNESS HERITAGE

IMPRESSIVE

INVESTOR

ISRAFI **JEWISH** LIFE LOVER MORAL NATIONALITY OUTWEIGHED **PHARISEE POSSESSIONS** READY RELIGION REPLACE SINFUL **STANDARDS** TIME TRADE TRIBE VALUE WHATEVER **ZEALOUS**

Identity as New Creations

"In Christ, we are made new, transformed by His grace and power."

"Our old self is gone; we are new creations, reflecting God's glory."

"As new creations, our identity is renewed daily in Christ's love."

Scripture reading: Philippians 4: 4-8

And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. (Phil 4:7)

"Rejoice"! Paul's opening words in these relatively familiar verses present a big challenge. I urge us to reflect on this single word for a few moments. If you are like me, your thoughts turn too quickly to why you cannot rejoice. Folks, Paul was in prison when he penned this letter! I do not think many of us can imagine the gloomy darkness and dankness of a first-century prison. Yet Paul could look past his physical situation to channel his emotions appropriately to God's plans, purposes, and perspective.

"Now I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that what has happened to me has served to advance the gospel. As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ" (Phil. 1:12-13)

Paul's words in these earlier verses exemplify how our outward circumstances do not need to dictate our inner attitude. We see how Paul reflected on the honor of suffering with Christ for the gospel's sake (Phil. 1:20-21). In addition, Paul took full advantage of the opportunity his imprisonment afforded him to share the gospel within the palace community.

We must learn not only to displace anxiety with prayerfulness but also to maintain an attitude of thankfulness that should accompany our prayers (Phil.4:6). In doing so, God himself will "guard" our hearts through his peace, which "transcends understanding." Paul's prescriptions in Phil. 4:8 helps us further by providing a masterful antidote to anxiety and negativity. These are a great help when re-directing our thoughts to embrace God's perspectives through our challenges positively.

By now, your concerns, worries, and challenges are very much in your heart as you read this. Please take heart. While so many things are beyond our control, let us be victorious in experiencing "the peace of God" through our travails.

- 'Whatever is true' turns our hearts away from Satan's lies and from those "worst-case scenarios" that often play in our heads. God's words and promises in the Bible are actual. Hold on to them.
- 'Whatever is noble' challenges our sinful thoughts such as anger, envy, and the like. Fill your mind instead with thoughts that reflect Jesus' humility and love.
- 'Whatever is right' takes us even more profoundly to let go of ungodly thoughts and take up the right decisions and actions done in love.
- 'Whatever is pure' again challenges us to evaluate our thoughts. Identify and confess impure attitudes of greed, selfish ambition, lust, ill-will towards your neighbor, etc.
- 'Whatever is lovely' calls us back again to the positive. Fill your mind with gratitude. Remember the good that God has done.
- 'Whatever is admirable,' remember gratitude for those around you too. It is not all bad. Think about what you can admire and be thankful for.

Conclusion:

Surrender your trials and worries to God through prayer. Ask Him to fill you with peace. Remember, 'If anything is excellent or praiseworthy, think about such things.'

Perhaps even this experience can serve to advance the gospel in some way! May others identify us as people with peace from God that is more significant than human understanding.

Call to Action:

- Identify the areas where you need a mind change.
- Identify ways that you can encourage others even through your challenges.

Further reading:

Matthew 5:8 Isaiah 26:3

Identity in Mission

"Our identity is tied to our mission, to spread God's love and truth."

"In mission, we live out our identity, fulfilling God's purpose for us."

"Our calling is to be on mission, sharing the Gospel and living for Christ."

WE ARE CALLED TO CONTENTMENT

Scripture reading: Philippians 4:9-12

I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation (Phil 4:12)

n yesterday's devotional, we learned from Apostle Paul's instruction to keep our minds focused on whatever is in line with God's design—whatever is true, noble, pure, lovely, or admirable—and to think about anything that is excellent or praiseworthy. Today, the scripture urges us to find peace and contentment in our present situation, even amid the chaos and downturn of these times.

Peace and contentment in this era? This, my friend, you can call "hard teaching." But is it? Paul acknowledged in verse 12, "I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or want".

These challenging times are standard to man. Let's walk in God's words and be encouraged by Paul's experience and testimony. We will find that it's possible to find contentment in our world today. For us as followers of Christ, our identity as disciples calls us to imitate Christ's attitude. In His earthly journey, Jesus also had material needs. Yet He neither wavered nor lost His focus on the word of God concerning Him. He depended on God to find strength in His weak moments. He persevered because of the greater glory awaiting Him. Let your identity in Christ inspire you to imbibe this same attitude.

Let me share how Paul's admonition in Philippians 4: 9-12 has given me a fresh perspective and helped me grow: This season started as very discouraging and frustrating for me. Contentment was elusive until my attitude changed! I shared my feelings with a sister who drew my attention to God's word and practical steps I could take. such as turning my passion into a money-making venture. So, in addition to my regular job, I added cooking for busy women in my circle and getting paid for it. I added another income stream to support my family's needs. In addition to this, my maturity and prudency grew. I now ensure that I prioritize my family's needs over wants. I have found my strength in the word of God and the wonders of his work. This challenging time has given me a new perspective and made me a serial entrepreneur, a better homemaker, and a better manager of available resources - no matter how little. It has also instilled in me the zeal to teach others the technique to stay afloat in tough times.

Conclusion

Contentment can be achieved when we are self-controlled and accept what God has made available to us. We know that He is a good God, and He will supply all that is needed.

Call to Action:

Identify the situations that have robbed you of contentment.

Decide to have an attitude of gratitude and trust. Where necessary, get help on how to take practical steps to grow your income and alleviate financial pressures.

Further reading;

Romans 8:17-18 Mathew 6: 25-34



"Fellowship with other believers strengthens our identity in Christ."

"In community, we grow, support, and sharpen one another."

"Our identity is enriched through the love, accountability, and unity found in fellowship."

WE CAN DO ALL THIS

Scripture reading: **Philippians 4:13**I can do all this through him who gives me strength
(Phil4:13)

As we have read earlier in our devotionals, we know that Paul was under arrest and awaiting trial before the Roman Emperor. As he wrote, he hinted that he might not come out of his imprisonment alive because Emperor Nero was very brutal to Christians (Phil. 1:20–21; 2:17). In this context, Paul writes that he learned the secret of being content. Paul was at peace with his circumstances because he didn't rest his hope on them but God.

In its true essence, this verse is about a different kind of victory. It is about how we respond when we face challenges and hardships in our Christian lives. Can we have victory through suffering?

When we read "all this" in the current NIV, instead of "all things" or "everything," depending on the Bible Translation, it's a lot clearer that the passage is referring to specific things—all the things Paul has been talking about—not "all things" in the sense that we can do anything. The preceding verses (11–12) clarify that he learned to be content "in every circumstance." When Paul writes "all this," he refers to all those situations or circumstances he has grappled with during his missions as a gospel-bearing Apostle – a mix of good, bad, and ugly.

The spirit of Christ, who dwells in believers, empowers us to be victorious even in the midst of trials. In fact, the phrase "the one who gives me strength" indicates continual strengthening. It is important to underscore that we need a great walk with God to continue to experience the strength that He provides through His Spirit.

This year, I have found this scripture verse more profound than any other time in my Christian life. As a disciple, I have never been willfully saddled with so much spiritual responsibility: legions of meetings, shepherding issues, overseeing multiple ministries. welfare issues, business, health, and family. Talk about the challenge of extreme multitasking! It became obvious to me that my natural ability to cope is indeed limited and that I will soon burn out. Whose work is this? I asked myself. The One I serve is all-powerful and always with me (Mat 28:20). Yes! I can do all these by the power of Him, who continually gives me the strength and need to triumph wisdom in this seemingly insurmountable scenario. This realization engenders calm and victorious confidence. It is true!

We are all often in faith-testing and overwhelming situations. This verse is meant to speak to our hearts in those situations.

It is humbling to recognize that things will happen to us beyond our control. At the same time, we can be glad knowing that God's infinite power is always available for us to tap into and triumph.

Apostle Peter alluded to this in 1 Peter 4:11

"If anyone serves, he should do it with the **strength God provides**, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ..."

Conclusion

It's an assurance that we can do whatever God calls us to, not whatever we want. And we use His strength to accomplish His task to His glory. As we end our 40-day journey, let us be filled with joy, faith, and thanksgiving. We are so much in Christ. And through Him, we can become everything God has called us to be.

Call to action

Thank God today for seeing you through this 40-day journey. Recap important things you learned. Ask God for His strength to help you grow and fulfill your identity as His child.

Further reading: 2 Cor 4:1-10; Eph 1:18-19; 2 Pet 1:3; Col 1:29

We Can Do All This

"With Christ as our strength, there is no limit to what we can achieve."

"Empowered by His Spirit, we can overcome every obstacle and accomplish all things."

"In Christ, we find the power and courage to do all things, for His glory and our good."

t has been a glorious 40 days of learning more about our identity in Christ – who we are and who we are called to be. The journey of growth and transformation continues! We reach the finish line only when we see the Lord face to face. As we press on with renewed confidence from the Spirit, let us be encouraged by Paul's prayers for us:

Ephesians 3:17-20

And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ and to know this love that surpasses knowledge – that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

Now to Him who can do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine... to Him be glory in the church and Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever! Amen.

1 Thessalonians 5:23-24

May God, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole Spirit, soul, and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The One who calls you is faithful, and He will do it.

2 Thessalonians 2:16-17

May our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God our Father, who loved us by His grace, give us eternal encouragement and good hope, encourage your hearts, and strengthen you in every good deed and word.

Amen!

THE ICHTHYS (FISH) SYMBOLE

Origin

• The symbol is based on the Greek word *ichthys*, which means "fish". The letters of the word are an acronym for the Greek phrase lesous Christos Theou Yios Soter, which translates to "Jesus Christ, Son of God, Savior".

History

• The symbol first appeared in Christian art and literature in the 2nd century AD. It became popular in the late 2nd century and spread widely in the 3rd and 4th centuries.

Significance

• The symbol held great significance in early Christian history. It was used as a secret form of communication during a time when Christians faced persecution in the Roman Empire.

Theological overtones

- The fish symbol has many theological overtones, including: Christ fed 5,000 people with two fish and five loaves.
- Christ called his disciples "fishers of men".
- Water baptism, practiced by immersion in the early church, created a parallel between fish and converts.
- Jesus symbolically connected the three days and nights that Jonah spent in the fish with the time that would elapse between his crucifixion and resurrection.

Variations

• Some modern variations of the symbol, called the Jesus fish, contain the English word Jesus in the center, or are empty entirely.



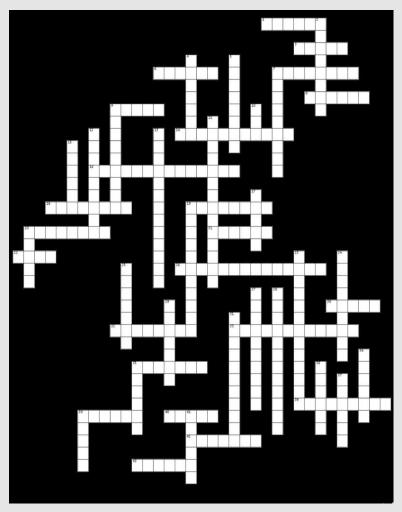


CHRISTIAN IDENTITY CROSSWORD PUZZLE

Use the clues on the next page to fill in the words missing in the puzzle.

Words can go across or down.

Letters are shared when the words intersect.



Turn to next page for clues

CLUES TO THE PUZZLE

ACROSS

- 1. When we are one in purpose
- 3. Our state when we come into Christ
- 6. without stain
- 7. It shows who we are
- 8. the good news
- 9. The evidence of God's presence.
- 14. we represent Christ
- 16. we can't do without each other.
- 18, when God wipes our sins away
- 19. offspring
- 20. A native of a place
- 21. What we put on for our protection
- 22. What binds us together
- 26. when we hold each other responsible.
- 30. God's word
- 32, with confidence
- 33. When we come together
- 35. personal integrity
- 38. When we think not worldly
- 39, when we give along to God.
- 40. Here, there is no darkness
- 42. When our shackles are taken away
- 43. Of lowly spirit



Use the clues to fill in the words mission in the puzzle.

Words can go across or down.

Letters are shared when the words intersect.

DOWN

- 2. total commitment
- 4. God's dwelling.
- 5. Without sin
- 7. When you keep yourword
- 9. When we exhibit good conduct
- 10. our heavenly father
- 11. be made separate
- 12. When disciples were called in Antioch
- 13. it uplifts our heart
- 15. When we talk to God
- 17. our saviour
- 19. Eager to do what is right
- 20. What awaits us in glory
- 23. When we do things God's way
- 24. As if we never sinned
- 25. our Goal
- 27. when we come together
- 28. when you keep yourword
- 29. When we are favoured
- 31. when we move from one state to another
- 34. A mark of integrity
- 35. God's dwelling place.
- 36. the title of Jesus
- 37. Non like if
- 39. without worry or anxiety
- 41. When we are endowed by God.

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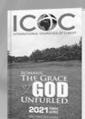




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IDENTITY: WHO WE ARE IN CHRIST

A 40 day devotional from selected letters of Apostle Paul

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