

Daily Bible Reading



EXODUS
EPHESIANS
PSALMS

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inbox starting tomorrow.



Foreword

As Christians we believe not only that God speaks to us through his word...

"All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness" (2 Timothy 3:16)

...but also that the opportunity to listen to him is precious.

"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" (Psalm 119:105)

Through the pages of the Bible, we meet Jesus, the true Word of God. So, use these notes to help you regularly open your Bible and – even if it is only for a few minutes in your day. Allow God's Word to challenge, rebuke, comfort or encourage you, and point you to Jesus. We hope this leads you into prayer and assists you to commit each day to do "the good works God has prepared in advance for us to do" (Ephesians 2:10).

St Paul's Daily Bible Reading Team

This Booklet

On Monday and Tuesday, we will follow the sermon series from Exodus 19–32.

From Wednesday to Saturday, we will explore the riches of Paul's letter to the Ephesians.

Each Sunday, we will meditate on a Psalm.

As usual, we will include a mix of commentary and questions.

MONDAY, 20 APRIL

EXODUS 19:1–9

God's Treasured Possession

What is the greatest blessing a nation could hope for?

1. How has God already shown his love and care to the Israelites (4)? Remind yourself of all that has happened so far in the escape from Egypt.
2. God calls for their obedience in response (5). How does this show us that the choice of Israel is through God's grace, not a reward for Israel's works?
3. What are the three identities God gives the Israelites (5–6). Dwell on each one for a moment. Why do you think the Israelites were so quick to promise obedience in response?

You are God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light (1 Peter 2:9b)

Give thanks to God that we are still his treasured possession through Jesus Christ. Pray that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light, to those whom God places in your path today.

TUESDAY, 21 APRIL

EXODUS 19:10–25

How to Approach a Holy God?

What preparations would you make to meet the King or Prime Minister?

We would not come unprepared to an appointment with someone important. We would wear our best clothes, maybe even buy a new outfit, get a haircut, shower and brush our teeth. The Israelites are told that they must prepare themselves to approach God's holy mountain. They are to consecrate themselves and to wash their clothes (10). While we may not be clear exactly why or how consecration was to happen, there is a foreshadowing of the law that will be coming later in Exodus. It is clear that they cannot come as they are. Meeting a holy God requires preparation.

The people prepare themselves carefully to meet their Lord for the first time. This is what the whole exodus has been leading to. They meet him in assembly – a gathering of his people. The word for assembly is the same word used for “church” in the New Testament.

They follow the instructions and approach the mountain. Imagine their trepidation, they have recently seen the power and might of the Lord in the Plagues, Passover and the Red Sea. As they, perhaps fearfully, approach Mount Sinai, they see fire and smoke; they feel the mountain trembling and hear blasts of a trumpet (18–19). Truly this is an impressive and terrifying sight.

As Christians, how do we prepare to meet God? We see from this passage that approaching God is no small matter. Hebrews 10:19 – 24 reminds us that by ourselves, we too cannot approach God. It is through Jesus alone that we have been made holy. As unholy sinners, we cannot approach our holy God, except through Jesus, who gave his life to open the way for us.

Are you rightly approaching God through Jesus? Or are you trying to approach God in your own (insufficient) righteousness? Pray that you would be convicted of your dependence on Jesus for your access to the Father.

WEDNESDAY, 22 APRIL

EPHESIANS 1:1–2

To the Saints

How do you identify yourself?

Ephesians presents *“a big picture, with cosmic dimensions, of God and his world for us to take in”* (Moore College Correspondence Course p5). Though an ancient letter, its message is timeless. In these opening two verses we are introduced to the author, the recipients and the message. What links these? The Lord Jesus Christ, himself.

The author announces himself as *“an apostle of Christ Jesus”*. He was chosen by Christ, by the will of God, and therefore speaks with authority. Believers then, and now, need to listen to Paul because he writes in the name of Christ. Although the letter is addressed specifically to the Ephesians, it is likely this was used as a general teaching letter for other churches – and so also addresses us!

Paul is writing to the *“saints”* in Ephesus – meaning the Christian community, those set apart, who are faithful to Christ Jesus. Paul has a particularly close relationship with this church, having spent 2–3 years living amongst them, preaching and teaching (Acts 19–20). His tearful farewell with the Ephesian elders as he headed to Jerusalem – where he would be arrested and sent to Roman imprisonment– demonstrates his close relationship to this group.

“Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ” may seem a conventional greeting, but actually encapsulates much of the message of this wonderful letter. It is *“by grace”* that we are saved, by God’s undeserved mercy. We read in Chapter 2 that *“Christ himself is our peace”* – reconciling us to God and to one another through his death.

Lord thank you for this letter, for Paul’s love and care for fellow believers and the great truths he teaches them. Help me to listen to you as you speak through your word. Amen.

THURSDAY, 23 APRIL

EPHESIANS 1:3–10

The Riches of God's Grace

If you had to list the blessings you enjoy – what would be your top three?

Re-read this rich passage in which each verse contains important truths.

1. Underline or list the actions God has taken for us and for his glory. (Hint – there will be at least one in each verse). Pause and reflect on the list you have created.

2. How does this passage emphasise that these blessings – and God's salvation plan for the recipients of the letter (and us)– go far beyond earthly limitations?

3. Look again. How do we see the centrality and headship of Christ developed over these verses?

Lord, you deserve all praise and thanks for your great plan of salvation. Thank you that, through the riches of your grace and love, I am blessed, chosen, adopted as a son, made holy and blameless by Jesus' blood. Amen.

FRIDAY, 24 APRIL

EPHESIANS 1:11–14

Chosen

Recall when you first accepted Christ as your Saviour and Lord. How did it feel?
How did your world change?

1. Paul has earlier proclaimed that all believers were chosen (4) and predestined (5). In verse 11 the “we” refers specifically to the Jews. How does Paul explain the role of the Jews in God’s plan of salvation?

2. In verse 13 “you also” refers to the Gentile believers. They heard “*the word of truth*,” the “*gospel of salvation*”. How does being “*included in Christ*” highlight what happened to them in relation to those who “*were the first to hope in Christ*”?

3. Think through the metaphors used about the Holy Spirit (13–14) – “*marked by a seal*,” “*a deposit guaranteeing inheritance*”. How does this reassure them (and us) that our salvation is secure?

Thank you, Lord, that every believer – no matter our ethnic background – is “*included in Christ*”, sealed by the Holy Spirit and assured of our eternal inheritance in your kingdom. Amen.

SATURDAY, 25 APRIL

EPHESIANS 1:15–22

Prayer and Praise

Who do you pray for regularly? How do you pray for them?

1. How do verses 15–17 model some ways to pray for other believers?

2. Focus on verse 18 and 19a. What are the three things Paul wants the Ephesians to know – and why might this help them (and us) in their daily walk of faith?

3. How do verses 19–22 expand your understanding and appreciation of God's mighty power and the place of Jesus in God's eternal plan? Do you find this reassuring, though awe-inspiring?

Pray verses 17–19a for a fellow believer inserting their name. Perhaps you might like to pray this prayer for yourself as well.

SUNDAY, 26 APRIL

PSALM 141

Protect Me

Protect me, Father—not just from danger, but from drifting.

Psalm 141 is a prayer shaped not by panic, but by closeness to God. David's concern reaches deeper than the dangers around him; he is equally aware of what could quietly unravel him from within. He asks the Lord to guard his mouth and his heart, knowing how easily faithfulness can slip through careless words and misplaced desires (1–4). For David, protection begins within the heart.

Rather than resisting correction, David receives it with humility. He recognises that loving rebuke can be an act of grace—one of the ways God preserves his people and keeps them walking in truth (5–7). His confidence is not rooted in self-control or strength, but in the Lord who sees fully and judges rightly. With steady trust, David fixes his eyes on God as his refuge, certain that the Lord will hold him fast even as evil collapses under its own weight (8–10).

Where David prayed for guarded lips and a faithful heart, Jesus lived this obedience perfectly. He did not respond to insult with retaliation, nor to temptation with compromise, but entrusted himself entirely to the Father (1 Peter 2:23). In Christ, the prayer of Psalm 141 is fully embodied.

This psalm speaks gently yet clearly into our own moment. We live in a world where words are scrutinised and motives questioned. Psalm 141 reminds us that God does not leave his people to guard themselves. In Christ, and through the Spirit, we are kept. Protection for the Christian is not the absence of opposition, but the assurance of God's faithful presence within it.

Dear Lord, Guard our hearts and our words. Keep us faithful under pressure and shape us into the likeness of Christ. As we go, may your Spirit guide us and your presence be our refuge. Amen

MONDAY, 27 APRIL

EXODUS 20:1–21

The Ten Commandments

As a Christian, do you strive to keep these Ten Commandments?

We know that we are saved by grace (Ephesians 2:8) yet somehow the Ten Commandments still seem really important.

1. What is the focus of the first four commandments? As Christians, what impact should these commandments have on our lives?

2. What is the focus of the last six commandments? What do these teach us, as Christians about living rightly in God's world?

3. How does Jesus' reply to the question, "which is the greatest commandment?" (Mark12:28–31) inspire us to do more than just obey?

As we read the Ten Commandments, we know that we are not saved through following them. But through them, we see God's holiness reflected and expressed in everyday life.

Reflect on the Commandments. Pray that your salvation – a gift from God through Christ's death for you – would be expressed through the way you relate to God and those around you.

TUESDAY, 28 APRIL

EXODUS 20:22–21:11

God's Laws, God's Character (1)

What do we do with specific laws which seem out of date or confusing?

God's laws reveal something of his character, in a way that the Israelites of this time could understand. God's character will ultimately be revealed in Jesus, but the laws contain glimpses of his heart for humanity and for humans in community.

The first thing that God is concerned with is how his people relate to him. They are not saved because of their obedience to the law – they have already been saved from slavery in Egypt and made God's special people. The saving LORD is a God who speaks, rather than a God who is seen. Therefore, his people are not to make images of him, or put other gods alongside him (notice the parallels between verse 23 and the first two of the ten commandments). It is important to relate to God in the way that he desires.

God's second concern is about his people in slavery. There are parts of this section that are troublesome to us. We don't find all the answers here, and I suspect we won't, this side of heaven. What is noticeable is that Hebrew slaves, male or female, have certain rights. Having come out from abject slavery in Egypt, Israelite slaves are now to be protected from abuse. Though some believers were still slaves in New Testament time, we are told there is "neither slave nor free ... for you are all one in Christ" (Galatians 3:28). Christians have rightly worked to end slavery around the world.

God is the same God today – a God who speaks, and who cares about how the most vulnerable people in society are treated. He is to be approached as a holy God, who values and protects his people.

Pray that God would help you to know him better. Pray for wisdom to see God's priorities in every part of his word.

WEDNESDAY, 29 APRIL

EPHESIANS 2:1–5

But God...

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 6:23)

Having established God's end-point, "to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ" (1:10), Paul now outlines how this was working out in the Ephesians' experience. The majority were Gentiles. Before becoming Christians, they were spiritually dead, lifeless in terms of relating to and living for the one true God. They lived by the ways of this world which are not the way God intends it to be. They also were following the deadly ideas of Satan at work creating ways to mislead people.

Paul then expands this to everyone (3), including Jews, and this applies to everyone today. The default position of the disobedient human race is to satisfy the desires and thoughts of our sinful nature (the flesh). People are able to think of ways to justify their behaviour, such as "this is the way God made me" or "it brings me pleasure" but Paul says we all deserve God's wrath.

What is the way out of this dilemma? God acts in love to bring life.

The main aspect of God's character is love and we can rely on it when we turn to him (1 John 4:16). By grace, he gives us a new life even while we were spiritually dead and his enemies (Romans 5:10). This life is grounded in Jesus' resurrection. God has lifted us out of our old life to our new place with Jesus in the heavenly realm. We accept this by faith; it is true now but not fully yet while we continue to live in this world.

*"To God be the glory! Great things He has done!
So loved He the world that He gave us His Son.
Who yielded His life an atonement for sin,
And opened the Life gate that all may go in."*

(Frances Jane van Alstyne. 1820–1915)

THURSDAY, 30 APRIL

EPHESIANS 2:6–10

Saved by Grace

*"Amazing grace! how sweet the sound,
That saved a wretch; like me!"*

(John Newton, 1779)

The Concise Oxford Dictionary gives the theological definition of grace as "The unmerited favour of God". Grace is frequently mentioned throughout the Bible. Some examples are God's revelation of himself to Moses (Exodus 34:6), the description of Jesus at the start of John's Gospel (John 1:17) and the greeting at the start of Paul's 13 letters and Peter's 2 letters.

In yesterday's reading Paul said that God had lifted us out of our old life to take our place with Jesus. He now expands on God's purpose in pouring out his grace. The church is to show to the whole creation the immeasurable riches of God's grace shown in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. This display continues in "the coming ages", the limitless future. Our citizenship is now in heaven, our salvation is secure and we are with Christ at God's right hand. All this is dependent on the great love of the Lord Jesus who purchased our salvation by willingly taking our punishment on the cross.

Paul goes on to point out that our salvation is entirely God's work. It is received through faith. Foulkes commentary says "this faith is best defined as turning to God with a sense of need and weakness and a willingness to receive what He offers, to receive the Lord himself. (John 1:12)". In verse 10 Paul writes of us doing good works. These are not to earn our salvation but an essential response to God's kindness giving us a love for others. We are his handiwork. We have nothing to boast about. We have just to joyfully do the good works our Lord has prepared for us.

Thank God for the tremendous generosity of his grace shown in his kindness to you in Christ Jesus and ask for his help to continue to grow in grace.

FRIDAY, 1 MAY

EPHESIANS 2:11–16

No Longer Excluded

"...I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb."

(Revelation 7:9)

1. In Old Testament times, Jews had a special relationship with God. Everyone who was not a Jew was known as a Gentile. What does Paul say was the situation of the Gentiles (12)? How would the Jews have regarded them (and you)?

2. What has changed for Gentiles who have accepted Jesus as Lord (13)?

3. How has peace between Jew and Gentile been achieved by Jesus? How does Paul explain Christ's purpose – and our unity in him?

Thank you, Heavenly Father, that we are all equal in your family, with no barriers, because of what Jesus did on the cross. Help me to grow like him. Amen.

SATURDAY, 2 MAY

EPHESIANS 2:17–22

Built Together

“you also, like living stones, are being built into a temple of the Spirit...”
(1 Peter 2:5)

In verses 17 and 18 Paul continues yesterday’s argument that in Jesus’ death he has ended the hostility between Jews and Gentiles. They both now have a new life with equal standing before God. The barrier between them has been broken down and peace has been announced (17). Now, as fellow citizens with every other Christian, they belong to the household of God.

In Old Testament times God had a dwelling place on earth among his people. At first this was the tabernacle, of portable construction, made at Mount Sinai after receiving the Ten Commandments. It existed during the years Israel spent in the wilderness and for many years in the promised land until David’s son (King Solomon) built the temple in Jerusalem. The centrepiece of the tabernacle and temple was an inner sanctuary, the Most Holy Place, where God resided.

After Jesus’ death and resurrection, Paul sees God’s dwelling place on earth as a spiritual temple, not made of any earthly building but of people. The Lord Jesus is the cornerstone with individual Christians being built together in him. This becomes a dwelling place in which God lives by his Spirit (22).

This can also be seen as applying to individual churches as well as to the one complete church which will be revealed when Jesus returns. So, the challenge for each of us is to keep in step with the Spirit in playing our part in growing this spiritual temple.

Heavenly Father, thank you for the privilege of being called one of your children. Thank you that you are building your holy temple and for including me in it, through your Spirit. Please help me to be faithful and obedient. Amen.

SUNDAY, 3 MAY

PSALM 142

Rescue Me

Rescue me, Father—when no refuge remains.

Psalm 142 comes from a cave, where David is pursued and without refuge, yet he does not turn inward or fall silent. He pours out his complaint before the Lord, bringing his trouble honestly to the one who alone can rightly hear and respond (1–2).

When David's spirit grows faint, he rests in the assurance that the Lord knows his path completely, including the hidden snares laid against him (3). Though David feels overwhelmed, God is neither surprised nor unaware; he sees both the path ahead and the danger along it.

David acknowledges his deep loneliness. He looks for help and finds none—no refuge and no one willing to stand with him (4). Yet this honest admission leads not to despair, but to faith. Cut off from earthly security, David confesses that the Lord himself is his refuge and his portion in the land of the living (5).

From this confidence flows a plea for rescue. David knows deliverance must come from beyond himself (6). His prayer looks beyond survival toward restoration and praise among God's people (7).

Psalm 142 points forward to Jesus Christ, who entered suffering and abandonment more fully than David, entrusting himself wholly to the Father (1 Peter 2:23). Where David prayed for rescue, Jesus became its means, securing the decisive deliverance of God's people so that, even when circumstances remain unchanged, believers are never abandoned (Romans 8:38–39).

Dear Lord, please help us when we feel scared or alone. Help us trust you and remember that Jesus is always with us. Amen.

MONDAY, 4 MAY

EXODUS 21:12–36

An Eye For an Eye...

What do you think of when you hear 'love your neighbour'?

Jesus taught us that the Law and the Prophets hang on '*Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.*' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: '*Love your neighbours as yourself.*' (Matthew 22:37–40). Last week we saw something of how God called the Israelites to love him. Today's passage focuses more on loving your neighbour.

1. In what ways are the Israelites to relate to each other after an offence has been committed? What is the difference in consequence for accidental and deliberate offence?

2. To our modern eyes these punishments are harsh, but in the context of an ancient society, what do they show God's people about the value of human life and living in harmony?

3. Read Matthew 5:38–48. How does Jesus' teaching change your understanding of this passage and the way you are to love your neighbours?

Pray over your answers to the questions – pray that God would help you to reflect critically over your life, especially the way you treat others.

TUESDAY, 5 MAY

EXODUS 22

God's Laws, God's Character (2)

"You are to be my holy people" (22:31). What does holiness look like today?

1. How do the laws about property (1–15) show us God's intentions for trust and mutual accountability within the community?

2. Focusing on verses 16–20, how might these laws remind people of their need to be holy?

3. What do verses 21–30 show us about what God values?

4. What can you learn about God's character from these laws? How do you see those aspects of God's character more clearly in Jesus?

Father God, some of the Old Testament commands are hard to understand or apply to our present day situations. Please Lord, help us to trust, love and obey you, knowing that nothing makes us holy except the blood of Jesus. Amen.

WEDNESDAY, 6 MAY

EPHESIANS 3:1–6

Heirs Together

What do you consider the great social dividers of our day? What are the big bridges of those divides?

Paul famously wrote this letter while under house arrest. He calls himself a prisoner of Christ Jesus because he was jailed for preaching the gospel, but also as a way of recognising that Jesus is the ultimate authority, not Rome.

There are a few words in this passage that might be confusing. When Paul mentions the 'administration of God's grace', (2) he doesn't mean 'administration' in the clerical sense. The meaning leans more towards the medical sense of the word. God's grace is administered in the same way one might administer medicine or medical aid.

Whenever Paul uses the word 'mystery' he is not describing something that is unknown, but something not widely known. It's like a secret, but instead of keeping it to himself, Paul wants to tell as many people as he can, including the Ephesians.

In verse 6 he reveals the mystery – the uniting of Gentiles and Jews in the body of Christ. Note the emphasis on their unity -- they are "heirs together", "members together" of one body and "sharers together in the promise of Christ Jesus".

This is a theme that runs through Ephesians. And Paul notes that it is through the gospel that this mystery of unification is occurring. The good news he preaches isn't simply good news for Israel, but for everyone.

Give thanks that God has made all Christians co-heirs with Christ. In the church, we have a unity with God and each other that will be made complete in Heaven.

THURSDAY, 7 MAY

EPHESIANS 3:7–9

Through Grace

Carrying the Olympic Torch is both a service and a privilege. When was the last time you felt privileged to serve?

1. In Acts 9:15, Saul – on his way to persecute Christians in Damascus– encounters Jesus. Soon after, the Lord proclaims that Paul *“is my chosen instrument to carry my name to the Gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel”*. How does this help us understand Paul’s description of how he became a “servant of the gospel (7–8)?

2. Paul preaches to both Jews and Gentiles. So why might he be singling out Gentiles in verse 8?

3. Paul obviously feels he has been given a great privilege (8). Why would he be so full of joy at the task he has been given? What is it he must “make plain” (9)?

Preaching the gospel is our duty and our privilege. Let us pray that we would feel both honoured and obligated to spread God’s word.

FRIDAY, 8 MAY

EPHESIANS 3:10–13

God's Eternal Purpose

Students represent their schools whenever they wear their uniform in public. What people/ organisations do you represent?

Who are 'the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms' (10) and how will the church demonstrate to them the wisdom of God? Ephesians has often mentioned "heavenly realms". We are blessed there (1:3), Christ sits at God's right hand there above all other powers (2: 20–23). So here we can understand these "rulers and authorities" to be spiritual beings under Jesus, who have not been given full understanding of God's plans – until now.

The church (that's us) is God's way of making his manifold (many and varied) wisdom known to the angels. I find that incredibly humbling and (to be honest) quite intimidating. I often feel unworthy to be God's representative even to other humans, let alone to represent his wisdom to angels! It is a powerful reminder of God's greatness that he can use imperfect messengers such as us to communicate such a perfect and wonderful message.

We're told that this is according to his eternal purpose. What purpose is that? We're told in Ephesians 1:10 that it is the unification of all things to Christ, and 3:12 expands upon what that unification will look like. We can now, all – Gentile and Jew– approach our holy God with confidence.

Why are Paul's sufferings the glory of the Ephesians? Because his suffering for them is a testament to the power of the gospel and their importance to him. They may be dismayed to hear he is suffering, but because of Paul's imprisonment God's plan can be shared with many and it will lead to him writing this letter, which keeps us interested in the church in Ephesus almost two thousand years later.

Let us pray that we would live and speak in a way that glorifies God, for his sake, and for the sake of all who see and hear us.

SATURDAY, 9 MAY

EPHESIANS 3:14–19

Established in Love

Who could you pray this prayer for?

1. What does Paul ask the Father to do to ensure Christ will dwell in our hearts (16–17)?

2. What does Paul want the Ephesians to understand about Christ's love (17–19)?

3. How will knowing this love change them (and us)?

Let us pray the prayer in this passage for ourselves and for our church.

SUNDAY, 10 MAY

PSALM 143

Answer Me

Do you sometimes feel anxious when God isn't answering your prayer? How might you keep praying to God in those times?

This Psalm is a chiasm, where the opening and closing verses pair together, leading to the main thought at the centre. David opens and closes his cry for God's help by focusing on His character – He is faithful, righteous and with unfailing love (1,12). David also identifies himself as God's servant.

Next, he describes the distress he is in -- he is pursued and crushed by his enemies (3), like dwelling in the darkness. At the other end of the psalm, he asks God to rescue him from these enemies (9). More than this, he wants to be taught God's will (10). David's distress leads him to trust God more. He meditates on what God has done (5), he thirsts for God (6), and he has entrusted his life to God and His unfailing love (8).

At the heart of this psalm is the sense of urgency, where David desperately wants God to "answer me quickly" (7). It may have been some time that David has been crying to God (see Psalms 140-142), but his prayers have not yet been answered.

In his desperate time of distress, David continues to trust in God, focusing on who He is rather than on why he deserves to be saved (he admits he is not righteous in verse 2). When we face similar situations, we should adopt David's mindset and also build our trust and relationship with God.

Dear Lord, please answer me quickly in my times of trouble, not because of what I have done but because of who you are. Thank you for being faithful and righteous, and that your love for me never fails. Help me to entrust my life to you, and teach me your will for me. Amen.

MONDAY, 11 MAY

EXODUS 23

Obedient Faith Community

Think of one way that following Jesus impacts the routines of your ordinary life – daily, weekly or in the festivals you celebrate.

1. In verses 1–19 there are three categories of laws in this passage (1–9, 10–13, 14–19). Write a summary sentence for each category. For each category ask yourself – what is the purpose of this section? What does Israel gain out of living this way? What do we learn about the nature of God’s relationship with Israel from this passage?

2. In verse 20–33, God makes great promises of care and protection to his people. What is the most important (and only appropriate) response they need to make (24–25)?

While we can and should turn to God to provide for our physical needs, our primary need is spiritual: our relationship with him. This relationship does not depend on our strict obedience to rules and rituals.

3. How is your relationship with God going? Do you view a relationship with him as the biggest blessing in your life? What Australian idols or gods are you tempted to turn to instead of the true and living God?

Dear Lord, help me to honour you above all else and help me to live a blameless and righteous life. Thank you that through Jesus I am freed from the burden of trying to keep a list of rules and rituals in order to be right with you. Amen.

TUESDAY, 12 MAY

EXODUS 24

Covenant Confirmed

Is there anyone whose place you would absolutely love to be invited to for dinner, not just to eat their food, but to spend time with them and get to know them?

1. What does the Lord ask of his people? How do they respond?

2. What is the significance of Moses going up the mountain to meet God in this passage? How do we see the difference between God's power and their humanity?

That Moses, Aaron and the elders "see" God (10) is perplexing given all that we have heard already about God's holiness in Exodus, and what we will see later in Exodus 33. At the same time, to eat and drink with God represents the goal of the sacrificial system – close communion with the living God, sharing a meal with him at his table.

3. How does it feel to know that you have now been invited into God's presence, through Jesus and by his blood, to share around his dinner table? (Hebrews 13:22–24)

Dear Heavenly Father, thank you that you move towards your people and make it possible for us to be in relationship with you. Please help me move towards you by listening to you in your word and talking to you in prayer. Amen.

WEDNESDAY, 13 MAY

EPHESIANS 3:20–21

Immeasurably More

When you pray, how do you finish your prayers?

Have you ever given much thought to how you end your prayers? There's no magic formula or rule you must follow. You don't have to say "in Jesus' name we pray, Amen". But it's a good thing to think through our words and our meaning when we do pray. Paul has written these verses as the end to his prayer, and they are packed with adoration and truth! Sometimes our prayers just sort of trail off, or we say a quick 'amen' to wrap up some loose thoughts. Instead, perhaps we could try ending our prayers with an expression of trust or faith that God has heard us.

We have many reasons to believe God has heard our prayers, and not only that he has heard them but that he cares about them and has the power to answer them. In fact, as Paul says, God is able to do immeasurably more than anything we could ever think to ask and immeasurably more than anything we could even imagine. Just think about that for a moment. God can not only do more than we ask, but more than we can imagine. Not just more, immeasurably more!

We can often slip into the habit of praying out of duty or habit (which aren't bad things in themselves) rather than out of the belief that prayer is powerful, or more accurately, that the one we pray to is powerful. A little phrase like the one Paul uses here might remind us and assure us of the one to whom we entrust our prayer and at the same time give him the honour he deserves.

Spend some time reflecting on how you might 'entrust' your prayers to God. Can you show him that you trust him with your prayer through the words you use?

THURSDAY, 14 MAY

EPHESIANS 4:1–6

Unity of the Spirit

What sort of things do you think are important to have in common with someone before you can have a friendship with them?

1. What do you think it means to be a prisoner for the Lord?

2. We are called to live out our faith/our calling in the context of the church. What might it look like to live out verses 2–3 alongside other Christians?

3. The Jews and the Gentiles were two very different people groups; it would have been hard with those differences to become united and become one. How do verse 4–6 help you to understand the basis of your unity with other Christians?

Pray that God would give you opportunities to love other Christians and be united with them by the faith you share.

FRIDAY, 15 MAY

EPHESIANS 4:7–13

Grace Given

"Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?"
(1 Corinthians 15:55)

Imagine a king riding through towns on his way home after securing victory on the battlefield. That is the image here Paul paints for us. Jesus has won the battle with his death and resurrection. Death is defeated, and so he freed us from the fear and captivity of death (we are the captives he has freed)! Whilst the battle is won, it is not completely over yet, in the meantime he gives gifts to his people to help keep them safe. The gifts and the grace he give are listed in verse 11, they are people who will help equip the church and build the church up (see also Eph. 3:2, 7–8).

Paul writes an explanation of the phrase 'when he ascended', but for us modern readers today Paul's use of the phrase 'lower earthly regions' is what causes confusion. The most likely explanation is that Paul is referring to when Christ *came down* from heaven to earth and became a man. It's unlikely that he is referring to Christ going to hell or some other 'lower region'. Christ's ascension is when he was raised and went up into the heavens where is above all rulers and authorities.

The victory is won, Jesus is the victor! He keeps us safe and he builds us up. He grows us together, alongside one another, and he transforms us to be mature and like himself. He is above all, powerful and watching over his people. Our great king!

Pray that Jesus would continue to sustain his church and build us up strong. Thank him for his grace and most of all that he has freed us from death and given us new life.

SATURDAY, 16 MAY

EPHESIANS 4:14–16

Joined to the Head

Are there other people that have helped you as a Christian to stay strong in following Jesus?

1. The previous passage has explained how Christ has graciously provided for the church to be built up until we “reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God”. How will this prevent us behaving like infants (14)?

2. What do you think stops people from following Jesus? What does this passage warn us against? How might this relate to “speaking the truth in love” (15)?

3. Why do you think it’s important that Jesus grows his people as one body joined together as opposed to growing us each individually?

Pray that God would continue to grow you alongside your fellow brothers and sisters in Christ into maturity.

SUNDAY, 17 MAY

PSALM 144

Deliver Me

Are you eagerly waiting for God to deliver you from your present struggles? Do you find confidence knowing God has delivered you from your past struggles?

Much like the last few psalms, David continues to pray to God for deliverance from his enemies. He first praises God for past deliverance, calling Him “my fortress, my shield and my deliverer” (2). David continues to “take refuge” in God because of the past victories He has granted.

David then prays for present deliverance. The imagery of smoke, lightning, arrows and mighty waters (5-7) shows how serious the threat is to David. Even though God has rescued David in the past, he still needs to keep asking for deliverance from present threats. David reminds us it is important to keep praying and asking God for His help throughout our lives.

David finally prays for future prosperity. He describes a nation flourishing in healthy offspring (12), abundant food and livestock (13), safety from foreign nations (14) and blessing from God (15). God had granted Israel these things at a point in history (see the reign of King Solomon in 1 Kings 1-10), and today we need to be careful not to expect prosperity from God in the same way.

Instead, we should remember the greater deliverance and promise of blessing we have in Jesus Christ. Jesus has delivered us from our greatest threat – sin and the devil (Hebrews 2:14-15). Our future prosperity is ultimately found in the new Jerusalem (Revelation 21) when Jesus returns.

Dear Lord, thank you for being my fortress, my shield and my deliverer. Thank you for delivering me from sin and death through Jesus Christ. Please help me to keep trusting you to deliver me from my current troubles. Please help me look forward to the new Jerusalem when Jesus comes back. Amen.

MONDAY, 18 MAY

EXODUS 25–26

Welcome... But Not Welcome

When was the last time you created something? How much effort did you put into every small detail?

The Tabernacle was a grand tent, or marquee, that would represent God's home among his people (25:8). As the true and living God, and as Israel's King, his tent was to be the most glorious of Israel's tents – expensive materials, gold, silver, and gems, would all contribute to the magnificence of this tabernacle. Even the furniture inside would teach Israel about God's nature and their relationship with him.

God gives the Israelites details for three special items that are to be in his Tabernacle: the ark, the table, and the lampstand. The ark, with winged cherubs above it, represented the throne of the God who is served by angelic creatures and moves on the wings of the wind. The covenant law, placed inside the ark, details the shape of how God will rule over Israel. The table, with fresh bread placed upon it daily, symbolises God's provision for his people, while the lampstand conveys the light of his presence with them. Aside from the symbolism of these pieces of furniture, the colours and designs and amount of gold is clearly intended to create a very beautiful dwelling for God. God's home, like God himself, is simply glorious.

God's tabernacle was only ever meant to be temporary, pointing beyond itself to God's heavenly home. Through Jesus, we can now look forward to joining God in his even more glorious and beautiful heavenly dwelling place. Revelation 21 describes a city with gates and walls of the most precious gemstones, and with a main street of pure gold. That is where God invites us to live with him for eternity!

Heavenly Father, thank you that you provide ways for your people to meet with you – the Israelites through the Tabernacle, and us through Jesus. Help me to see your splendour and glory and worship you in every aspect of my life. Amen.

TUESDAY, 19 MAY

EXODUS 27–28

Priestly Uniforms

What is one thing you've done because you thought it could make you acceptable to God?

1. Consider the uniform that was commanded for Aaron and the priests. What kind of status would this have given the priests within the community of Israel? Why were the priests so significant? (Consider, in particular, 28:11–12, 21, 29)

2. What impression do you get of what it is like to enter God's presence in the Holy Place? Could you have wandered in there whenever you liked? (Consider, in particular 28:35–43)

3. We need a priest if we who are impure and sinful are to come near to God without dying. How does the description of the priests in Exodus enhance your appreciation for Jesus as our great high priest? (See Hebrews 4:14–16 to see the start of a comparison between Jesus and these old covenant priests).

Father God, thank you that you have always made it possible for your people to become acceptable to you – the Israelites in sacrifices and the Aaronic priesthood, and us through Jesus' better sacrifice and better priesthood. Please help me to rely on Jesus alone for my holiness and not on my own works. Amen.

WEDNESDAY, 20 MAY

EPHESIANS 4:17–19

Mind and Heart

What mostly occupies your mind and heart in your spare moments?

Throughout the Bible, and especially in the New Testament, is the encouragement to get our thinking right and the importance of our mindset. In this short passage, Paul shows up the lifestyle of those alienated from God focusing on the futility of their thinking and how it darkens or clouds their understanding of God and life in general.

When he talks about “Gentiles” (17), he is not simply talking about non-Jews who have no knowledge of God’s laws, but both Jews and Gentiles who live out of touch with God and are absorbed in the ways of secular society -- in other words, much like non-Christians in our current society.

But to Christians, he says, *“Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind...”* (Romans 12:2) Can you think of some current “patterns of this world” that we might be tempted to follow? Putting yourself first? Acquiring lots of money?

So how do we renew our minds? Surely, as we read God’s word and come to understand his ways, aligning ourselves with God’s way of thinking. Using Daily Bible Reading notes is a great way to do that!

Paul goes on to say that these Gentiles’ hearts are hardened (18). Not only have they lost all sensitivity to what’s right or wrong, but are increasingly ignorant of God’s ways. Because of this moral insensitivity, “anything goes” – sensuality, lust, impurity.

Jesus often spoke of the heart as being the source of evil (Mark 7:21,22) unless we are renewed by God’s Spirit. In Proverbs 4:23 we read, *“Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life”*.

“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.” (Philippians 4:8)

THURSDAY, 21 MAY

EPHESIANS 4:20–28

New Creation and a New Wardrobe

"Let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles..."
(Hebrews 12:1)

1. How does Paul contrast the old way of living and the new way of living as a Christian? Can you think of practical ways a Christian can follow "the truth that is in Jesus" (21)?

E.g., see the meditation verse from yesterday's comment.

2. *"Put off... be made new... put on."* (22–24) Which of these words from these three verses suggest decisive action, and which suggests a continuing process?

3. In 2 Corinthians 5:17, Paul talks about the Christian as a "new creation". What do you think that means? Why do we still need to *"put on the new self, created to be like God"* (24)?

(Consider Romans 8:5 which says: *"Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires."*)

4. Stop that! ... Start this! What two examples does Paul give in verses 25–28 of stopping something and starting something? What effect would they have on a Christian fellowship?

"Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me." (Psalm 51:10)

Help me not to follow the ways of this world, but be changed by the renewing of my mind. In Jesus' name, Amen.

FRIDAY, 22 MAY

EPHESIANS 4:29–32

Stop That! ... Start This!

In this short passage, can you find instructions to stop doing certain things and things to start (or continue) doing?

Paul further mentions sinful things that can destroy fellowship with Christians and the things that will help build others up. He says it's not good enough to stop doing sinful things like unwholesome talk. A Christian's speech should be encouraging and beneficial to those who listen. Proverbs 10:11 says *"The mouth of the righteous is a fountain of life."* Or again, *"A word aptly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver."* (Proverbs 25:11)

Paul then goes on to show the effect our sin has on God himself in the person of the Holy Spirit. God is not unmoved by our sin, as shown in the word "grieve". Only someone in relationship with someone else can be grieved, thus showing that the Holy Spirit of God is a person not just a force or an influence. His presence in our life also guarantees our future hope of eternal life.

Verse 31 outlines a list of sinful habits to be rid of or to stop doing. These are all aspects of living the self-life – "bitterness, rage, anger, brawling and slander and... every form of malice". Rather than grieving God's Spirit, we need his help to overcome and replace these attitudes with loving-kindness, compassion and forgiveness.

Our pattern for doing this is always the Lord Jesus Christ. He didn't wait till we were ready to admit our fault, but *"while we still sinners, Christ died for us."* (Romans 5:8). He spoke forgiveness from the cross (Luke 23:34) and tells us in the Lord's prayer to forgive others as he forgives us. What a challenge to be like Jesus!

Father, we ask that you will fill our minds and hearts with the knowledge of your great love for us so that we, in turn, can grow in loving-kindness, compassion and forgiveness towards others. In Jesus' name, Amen.

SATURDAY, 23 MAY

EPHESIANS 5:1–7

The Christian Lifestyle

It has been said that an idol is something we think of and do a lot of with our time. Jesus said *“Seek first God’s kingdom and his righteousness”* (Matthew 6:33)

1. Jesus is the perfect example of love and sacrificial giving (1, 2). What should be the Christian motivation in imitating him in our dealings with one another?

2. Paul sets a high standard when he says that there isn’t to be even a hint of sexual immorality among Christians or impurity or greed (3). How do these verses contrast with values and norms in our society?

3. What 3 sinful habits in our speech go against God’s standard of holiness (4)? What positive action does Paul suggest?

4. Paul gives a solemn warning for Christians who expect to inherit God’s kingdom. What is it (5)? Why are immorality, impurity and greed forms of idolatry? What must the Christian do to be rid of them?

Father, please forgive us when we put other things before you and make idols of them. Give us repentant hearts and a desire to live following the example of our Lord Jesus. In his name we pray, Amen.

SUNDAY, 24 MAY

PSALM 145

Praise the Lord Forever

How often is your prayer to God praise from beginning to end?

1. This psalm lists and explores many attributes of the LORD. Write down, or underline each one of "The Lord is..." statements (and any other descriptions of God's character).

2. For each one, now reflect on how that has been demonstrated in God's Word and in your own life.

3. The psalmist does not want to keep such wonderful news to himself. The first and last verse of the psalm show his commitment to praising the LORD publicly. How could you do that too?

Use the psalm to praise God in prayer.

"Lord you are worthy of praise because..."

MONDAY, 25 MAY

EXODUS 29

A Ceremony to Set Apart

What's the longest time you've spent getting ready for an event?

In this passage we see a 7-day process of what it will take for Aaron and his sons to be made priests. The term used here is that they are being "consecrated". What does it mean to be consecrated? It is to be set apart to serve God.

This process is quite detailed and seems a bit gruesome to our 21st century ears. We hear descriptions of blood and internal organs alongside instructions to splatter the blood and burn the organs. But why is this important? In the case of a sin offering, blood signifies the forgiveness of sins, with guilt symbolically transferred from a person to an animal (so 15 –18). But in verses 19 – 21, something else is going on – this is not a sin offering. Instead, it is as if the priests are metaphorically dying with the ram, so that they now belong completely to the LORD, from head to toe.

We find out the purpose of this big process at the end of the chapter: so the LORD can meet with the Israelites and speak with them (42–43). However, this isn't a permanent solution – it is necessary for the burnt offering to be made regularly (42). Thankfully, in his great salvation plan, God has now provided us with a permanent solution in the blood Jesus shed on the cross to make us holy forever.

Father God, thank you that you have always provided a way for your people to be holy in your sight and to have a relationship with you. Please help me to remember the blood Jesus shed on the cross which now makes both these possible for me. Amen.

TUESDAY, 26 MAY

EXODUS 30

Worship Instructions

"...but God demonstrates his own love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

(Romans 5:8)

Atonement can be defined as "at one-ment" – the state of being at one. This is what God provides for his people through various methods so we can be at one with him, in perfect relationship.

1. What two ways are mentioned here as being part of the process of atonement for the Israelites (7–16)?

2. What is the purpose of using the washing basin, anointing oil and incense (17–38)?

3. Read Hebrews 9:6–14. How does Jesus' death and resurrection change everything?

Dear Lord, thank you for your care for your people and that you move towards us in relationship. Thank you that you have made us one with you through Christ. Help me to trust in Jesus' eternal sacrifice of atonement as the source of my unity with you. Amen.

WEDNESDAY, 27 MAY

EPHESIANS 5:8–16

Learning to Live in the Light

What does it really mean to live differently in a world that feels unchanged?

Paul reminds believers that they are no longer in darkness but are now “light in the Lord.” This reflects a deeper reality already established in the letter—that God has made his people his dwelling place, his living temple by the Spirit.

1. If we are now God’s dwelling place, what does it practically mean to “live as children of light”? How might God’s presence in us shape the way we think about everyday decisions?
2. From the perspective of being God’s temple, what does it look like not only to avoid darkness but to bring light into situations, relationships, or environments?
3. How does understanding ourselves as God’s dwelling place reshape how we use our time, priorities, and opportunities in daily life?

Heavenly Father, you have brought us out of darkness and made us your dwelling place. Help us to walk in your light with wisdom and truth. Shape our lives so that we reflect your presence and bring glory to your name. Amen.

THURSDAY, 28 MAY

EPHESIANS 5:17–20

What Fills You Shapes You

God no longer fills a building—he fills his people. What does that look like in practice?

1. Paul contrasts being “drunk with wine” with being “filled with the Spirit.” What is Paul suggesting about what controls or shapes a person’s life—and how would that be evident in a community that is God’s dwelling place?

2. Notice that the results of being Spirit-filled are outward and relational (speaking, singing, addressing one another). What does this suggest about whether a Spirit-filled life can ever be purely private or individual?

3. Paul links Spirit-filled life with joy and thanksgiving “always and for everything.” How can God’s presence shape our inner attitude toward circumstances, both good and difficult?

Gracious Father, you have made us your dwelling place by your Spirit—fill us, that our hearts may be shaped by your presence. We ask that your Spirit would overflow in us with joy, gratitude, and worship, so that our words and lives reflect Christ together. Amen.

FRIDAY, 29 MAY

EPHESIANS 5:21–32

Love That Gives Itself

What if marriage was never meant to be about you—but about revealing something far greater?

Before addressing relationships in Ephesians 5, Paul has already presented a foundation for relationships: *God has chosen, redeemed, and adopted a people in Christ, and is now building them together into his dwelling place by the Spirit* (1:3–14; 2:19–22). This new humanity is marked by unity, humility, and love, grounded in Christ’s self-giving work on the cross (2:13–16; 3:16–19). Therefore, all relationships within the Christian community are to be shaped not by power or status, but by *Christ’s sacrificial love and the shared reality of belonging to God’s household*.

1. Paul begins with “*submit to one another out of reverence for Christ*” (21). How does mutual submission reshape the way we think about authority, roles, and relationships within the Christian community?
2. How does Christ’s self-giving, sacrificial love redefine leadership and responsibility within marriage?
3. If believers together are God’s dwelling place, how does marriage serve as a visible expression of that deeper spiritual reality?

Lord Jesus humble our hearts to serve one another in love. Teach us to submit to each other in reverence to you. Amen.

SATURDAY, 30 MAY

EPHESIANS 6:1–4

Children and Parents

In God's household, every relationship shares in the raising of a child.

1. How is the command "Children, obey your parents in the Lord" particularly directed to those still under parental authority, and what does it look like for children to obey in a way that reflects their relationship to Christ?

2. How is honouring differ from obeying, especially for adult children who are no longer under direct authority, and what might honour look like in practice across different life stages?

3. Fathers are instructed not to provoke their children, but to bring them up in the "training and instruction of the Lord". How does this redefine parental authority as something formative and Christ-orientated rather than controlling or harsh?

Heavenly father, you have made us your household and dwelling place by your Spirit, shape our lives and relationships to reflect your love and holiness. Teach us to walk in the light together so that we may glorify your name. Amen.

SUNDAY, 31 MAY

PSALM 146

The Lord is Faithful Forever

Where do you look for help and hope?

1. Why should we not put our trust in human leaders (3–4)?

2. How does the psalmist describe the LORD (5–6) and how would this inspire confidence?

3. Verses 7–9 describe the LORD's care for the vulnerable. In the synagogue at Nazareth, Jesus applied a similar verse from Isaiah 61 to himself, *proclaiming* "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing" (Luke 4:21). How does this description challenge or encourage you?

Lord, help me to put my hope only in you. Thank you that you, the Maker of heaven and earth, care for me and for others in need when we look to you. Help me too to praise you as long as I live. Amen.

MONDAY, 1 JUNE

EXODUS 31

Skills and Rest

What's one skill God has gifted you with? How could you serve the Lord with it?

In the first half of this passage, we see that God gifts his people with all the skills necessary to fulfill his commands (6). He gives his Spirit, wisdom, artistic and carpentry skills and more (3–5). We know that God does this for us too – he gives us as a church all the things we need amongst the people that make us up. How has God gifted you to serve our church and beyond?

In the second half, the Lord presents the Israelites with the gift of a Sabbath day, one day of rest each week. The Sabbath had already been commanded earlier (Exodus 20:8–11; 23:12), but perhaps it is repeated here after all the instructions for the tabernacle to ensure that the Israelites didn't override one command of God with another – even constructing God's tent was not a reason to work on the Sabbath.

So, must we have a Sabbath day today? This is a big argument between Jesus and the Jewish leaders (e.g., Luke 6). Paul seems to not make a big deal about it for Gentiles (Col 2:16–17). And yet, the Sabbath is held out as an example of the eternal rest that we look forward to (Hebrews 4:9). So, though for Christians the Sabbath is no longer a command punishable by death, perhaps it is still something of a natural rhythm that we can joyfully accept from God's hand.

Heavenly Father, thank you for the gifts and skills you've blessed me with. Please help me to use these to build up the church. Thank you also for the gift of rest. Please help me to graciously accept the gift of rest so that I can be sustained to continue serving you and your people. Amen.

TUESDAY, 2 JUNE

EXODUS 32

The Golden Calf

Think of a time you've witnessed two groups who should have been aligned, acting in complete, ironic, contradiction to each other.

The chapter plays out almost like an ironic movie scene: in one frame we see God's great love as he gives Moses the covenant law (15) to help his people live faithfully and enjoy life with him, yet, in the other frame we see that what's concurrently happening down the mountain is those very people building a golden calf – in clear rejection of the LORD as their God. And it is painful to watch as they so willingly give all the good things they received from God's hand over to their new "god" – even giving credit to the calf for the Exodus (2–6, 18)! We can only imagine how offensive this was, leading to our Holy God burning in anger (10).

Amazingly, even knowing all that the people had done (and were doing), we see Yahweh's great mercy as he still allowed Moses to play a mediator for the people's sins, and relents from destroying them then and there (11–14). Then, the irony of the two scenes is truly addressed in full: as Moses is confronted with the people's disgusting behaviour himself, he breaks the tablet with the commandments which had already evidently been completely broken in the hearts of the people (19–20).

There was great forgiveness for those who were willing to repent and change their ways in obedience to God; there were also great consequences for those who weren't (25–35). This continues to be true today as we've all received the gift of grace through the Lord Jesus – so let us not forget to reject the temptation of sin daily, to truly live as God's people, with the help of his Spirit.

Are there idols that you worship in God's place? Pray for the Holy Spirit to help you as you fight off temptation and grow in your obedience to the Lord each day.

WEDNESDAY, 3 JUNE

EPHESIANS 6:5–9

Slaves and Masters

What do you know about slavery in the ancient world and today?

We have no personal experience of slavery – though most of us will have an idea of the cruelty and inhumanity that has been perpetrated throughout history, and even today, by those who see vulnerable humans as property or commodities rather than people made in God’s image. So these verses cannot simply be re-applied to contemporary workplaces, but we can all learn from the radical commands that transform even such an exploitative system as slavery.

Both master and slave are to see themselves as under – and answerable to – one Master – Christ himself (5,9). They are reminded that he watches over everyone, rewarding those who do good, whether slave or free (8). For slaves, their daily drudgery is dignified as service and given meaning – they are to think of themselves as serving the Lord, and therefore to work wholeheartedly. Masters are reminded not to use their position to threaten or coerce. They may be privileged here on earth – but the Lord has no favourites (9).

All of Ephesians has been showing them their deep unity in Christ. Whoever they are, they have access to eternal riches and blessings. If Jesus is their Lord and Saviour then they have been adopted as sons by God, are members of God’s household, part of the holy temple built together in the Lord. All believers are part of Christ’s body – which builds itself up in love.

Perhaps this helps us in any relationship between Christians where there is a power imbalance, based on workplace hierarchies. We are to remind ourselves that we are all slaves to Christ – and that we are answerable ultimately to him for our actions and our treatment of others.

Lord, we pray for an end to slavery and the workplace exploitation of vulnerable people. Help us in our own workplaces to work as if we are working for you, conscientiously and with integrity, treating those “under” us with respect. Amen.

THURSDAY, 4 JUNE

EPHESIANS 6:10–13

Be Strong in the Lord (1)

...He said to me "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me.

(2 Corinthians 12:9)

1. How does verse 10 remind us that our own weak strength does not matter?

2. Chapter 1:21 tells us that Christ is "far above all rule and authority, power and dominion". How is that reassuring when we realise what kind of battle we are in – and with whom (11–12)?

3. In these 4 verses we are told to "take your stand", "stand your ground" and "after you have done everything to stand". What enables us to stand against the mighty powers ranged against us (10,11,13)?

Lord, thank you for this reassurance that it is your strength that matters – not mine. Enable me to "take my stand", protected by your mighty power. Amen.

FRIDAY, 5 JUNE

EPHESIANS 6:14–18

Be Strong in the Lord (2)

Do you think of yourself as a soldier in a battle?

Armour seems quite remote from our daily lives – and it was perhaps for the Ephesians too, except for the sight of Roman legionaries marching past prepared for battle. For us, this familiar passage may bring to mind past children’s talks or Sunday School lessons where we watched someone be decked out in cardboard armour. Or perhaps you start to think of your favourite medieval or fantasy movie and have visions of brave knights holding their ground on the body-strewn battlefield.

We rarely think of ourselves as soldiers in a battle. So we can see this armour as another example of God’s amazing blessing. We are given this armour, we have not only not earned it, we don’t even know we need it! But the enemy ranged against us is very powerful far beyond our own ability to resist. God ensures that we, frail, faltering humans are fully equipped with what we need to not only resist, but defeat. We have only to put it on – and use it!

What will protect us? Truth, righteousness, the gospel of peace, faith – and our salvation. These will allow us to take our stand, in the strength of the Lord. How can we go on the attack? With the Word of God (the sword of the Spirit) and prayer – not lukewarm occasional requests, but constant prayer of all types, not just for ourselves but for all the others fighting alongside us.

Lord, thank you that though we are in a battle against evil, you equip us with everything we need to take our stand in your strength, knowing that you have already won the victory. Help us to take up this armour you provide and to be constant in prayer for all the other believers in the battle. Amen.

SATURDAY, 6 JUNE

EPHESIANS 6:19–24

Ambassador in Chains

What do you ask others to pray for you?

1. Paul is in prison – but he does not ask the Ephesians to pray for his release. What does he ask them to pray for? How should this help them (and us) to focus on what is truly important?

2. What is Tychicus' task? How does this remind us of the mutual love between Paul and the Ephesians?

3. Paul finishes as he began – with grace and peace. But what is the different focus of verses 23–24 from Chapter 1:3?

Lord, thank you for fellowship with other believers. Help us to support each other to make known your great love for us and the grace and peace you offer us in Jesus. Amen.

SUNDAY, 7 JUNE

PSALM 147

Extol the Lord

Do you think of singing praises to God as a duty or a delight?

The focus of this Psalm is on the people of God, with references to Jerusalem (2,12), Israel (2), Zion (12) and Jacob (19). These point readers to the old covenant people of God, but now, as we have been reading in Ephesians, the new covenant people are both Jew and Gentile, made one in Christ.

In each of the 3 sections (1–6, 7–11 and 12–20) we begin with praise and then move to God’s action in Creation, which is mirrored in his care for the church.

Firstly, we read of God gathering his people – a comfort to them after the exile. Here the reference to the stars (4) reminds them of God’s promise to Abraham that his descendants would be as numerous as the stars. It reminds us, too, that God knows each believer and we can trust in his wisdom and power to gather even the most scattered remnant.

Then, after another call to sing praises in verse 7, we focus on God’s provision for us and our dependence on him. Despite our modern “chains of supply” we are still dependent on good weather for the growth of crops and animals. We may, mistakenly, think these are supplied to us by the strength of workers – both animal and man. But verse 11 points us to the real source of all we need. It is a great encouragement – the LORD delights in us and his love is unending!

Finally, we praise the LORD for his blessings of security, harmony and abundance (13–14), and we see the power of his Word. Not only does he command the snow, frost, and hail both to fall and to be melted, but he has revealed this same powerful wisdom to us through his laws and decrees (19).

Thank you, Lord, that you are wise and powerful. Help me to put my trust only in your unending love. Amen.

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