



## Daily Devotionals – October 2 to October 8, 2021

By Dr. Charles Qualls and Rev. Steve Gibson -- Franklin Baptist Church

**October 2 - Philippians 2:14-18; 3:1-4**  
**by Rev. Steven R. Gibson**  
***Shining as Lights in the World***

<sup>14</sup>Do all things without murmuring and arguing, <sup>15</sup>so that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, in which you shine like stars in the world.

<sup>16</sup>It is by your holding fast to the word of life that I can boast on the day of Christ that I did not run in vain or labor in vain. <sup>17</sup>But even if I am being poured out as a libation over the sacrifice and the offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you -- <sup>18</sup>and in the same way you also must be glad and rejoice with me.

3 Finally, my brothers and sisters, rejoice in the Lord.

### **Breaking with the Past**

To write the same things to you is not troublesome to me, and for you it is a safeguard.

<sup>2</sup>Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of those who mutilate the flesh! <sup>3</sup>For it is we who are the circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God and boast in Christ Jesus and have no confidence in the flesh -- <sup>4</sup>even though I, too, have reason for confidence in the flesh.

### **Devotion:**

Paul begins this section hinting at a skirmish in the church, but why? Is there evidence of arguing or complaining in the church? The apparent answer is no. If there is not a problem, why even mention it? It appears that V14 sets up V15 where Paul says that the Philippians are “children of God without blemish or blame in a perverse generation.” Contrast this with the Israelites who have been accused of being blameworthy and described as not being children of God. Paul turns this notion on a dime and inside out: Christians have become God’s children, and they must live without blame in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation. Because they did not want to be called unworthy children of God, they are commanded to avoid murmuring and arguing. Christ’s attitude and actions allow those who are in him to live as God’s blameless and innocent children. This is contrasted with Israel, who was called to the same standard, but failed to live up to the standard.

Paul then moves back to his circumstance. He is ready to be poured out for God (which sounds like his death), but he seems at peace with that decision. Whatever the case, Paul rejoices over the outcome and encourages the Philippians to rejoice over him as well. Throughout this section, Paul’s instructions are to live “in a manner worthy of the Gospel of Christ.” This type of living does not contain a detailed list of rules to adhere to and follow, rather this means that we respond in the same self-giving love of God. In other words, this is the Gospel. This is what God is like, and this is what God expects you to be like. Work out what this means for yourselves!

So we have an understanding of what Christian obedience looks like: Not following a series of laws (Judaism), but patterning our actions after Christ’s actions.

- 1) Christian obedience is understood as a response to God’s grace

- 2) Our response is based on the response of our Lord Jesus.
- 3) Because we are in him and he in us, we are able to make the same response.
- 4) Because we are in community with him, selflessness and concern for others is paramount.
- 5) Our obedient response becomes a powerful witness.

**Prayer:**

God of all compassion, have mercy on us when we try, but fail. Empower us to be your faithful disciples. Amen.

**October 3 - John 7:40-52**  
**by Dr. Charles Qualls**  
***Division Among the People***

40 When they heard these words, some in the crowd said, "This is really the prophet." 41 Others said, "This is the Messiah." But some asked, "Surely the Messiah does not come from Galilee, does he? 42 Has not the scripture said that the Messiah is descended from David and comes from Bethlehem, the village where David lived?" 43 So there was a division in the crowd because of him. 44 Some of them wanted to arrest him, but no one laid hands on him.

45 Then the temple police went back to the chief priests and Pharisees, who asked them, "Why did you not arrest him?" 46 The police answered, "Never has anyone spoken like this!" 47 Then the Pharisees replied, "Surely you have not been deceived too, have you? 48 Has any one of the authorities or of the Pharisees believed in him? 49 But this crowd, which does not know the law -- they are accursed." 50 Nicodemus, who had gone to Jesus before, and who was one of them, asked, 51 "Our law does not judge people without first giving them a hearing to find out what they are doing, does it?" 52 They replied, "Surely you are not also from Galilee, are you? Search and you will see that no prophet is to arise from Galilee."

**Devotion:**

There once was a great preacher. Two people heard the same sermon, and then discussed it afterward. First to speak up was a woman from the right side of her city. Which was in the right part of the country. She was cultured, affluent, and loved the finer things in life. "I couldn't get past his accent. He just didn't sound...you know...very smart. He was a little subdued; there was so little energy. He talks slowly. I didn't get anything from that."

Second to render an opinion on the same sermon -- from the very same preacher -- was a person more from his part of the country. The Southern part. He said, "I knew his exegesis would be spot on. But, his hermeneutic was helpful to me. I have read some of his PhD work, which was published in a book several years ago. It was fun to hear him work that into this sermon. You know the archbishop of Canterbury just had him speak in the cathedral while he was over in England delivering the preaching lectures at Oxford."

One person, paying attention to all the wrong and most shallow of things. The other, listening with an attentive heart. Catching all the right things! Oh, how we can value so many of the meaningless factors of life. Meanwhile, the truly important gifts can slip right past us. Right before the text for today's devotional, this happened --

***On the last day of the festival, the great day, while Jesus was standing there, he cried out, "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me, 38 and let the one who believes in me drink. As the scripture has said, 'Out of the believer's heart shall flow rivers of living water.'"***

Instead, someone in the crowd said, "Isn't he from Galilee?! He can't be the One. No legitimate prophets ever come from Galilee." The religious leaders likewise rejected Jesus.

Here was God-come-near, standing right in their midst. Jesus the Christ was speaking words of life to them, and all they could do was haggle over his pedigree. Nothing he offered, and nothing he taught them, landed. Nothing connected. Pearls before swine. We can do better. We have a chance to get past the surface things and listen for the voice of God in each other. God is beckoning us to do just that.

**Prayer:**

Lord, open our hearts. Speak to us, and move within us that we might recognize your voice giving us words of life. Amen.

**October 4 - Isaiah 5:1-7**

**by Dr. Charles Qualls**

***What Concerns God?***

Let me sing for my beloved my love-song concerning his vineyard: My beloved had a vineyard on a very fertile hill.

2 He dug it and cleared it of stones, and planted it with choice vines; he built a watchtower in the midst of it, and hewed out a wine vat in it; he expected it to yield grapes, but it yielded wild grapes.

3 And now, inhabitants of Jerusalem and people of Judah, judge between me and my vineyard.

4 What more was there to do for my vineyard that I have not done in it? When I expected it to yield grapes, why did it yield wild grapes?

5 And now I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard. I will remove its hedge, and it shall be devoured; I will break down its wall, and it shall be trampled down.

6 I will make it a waste; it shall not be pruned or hoed, and it shall be overgrown with briars and thorns; I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it.

7 For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the people of Judah are his pleasant planting; he expected justice, but saw bloodshed; righteousness, but heard a cry!

**Devotion:**

*Justice and fairness.* If the mere mentions of those get you disinterested in Bible study, this isn't going to be your day. Like most of the prophets, issues around these two concepts are at the center of God's issues with ancient Israel. We can't understand early Judeo-Christian history without them. We also can't very well read much of our Old or New testaments absent humanity's constant struggle to stay on the right side with these.

When you read these verses, don't you hear the tone we associate more with the biblical book *Song of Solomon*? It reads very much like that genre of biblical literature, but the message is harder here in the prophet's words. God is the vineyard owner and Israel (humanity in reality) is the vineyard. God has invested in growing something special here. Something that should have yielded an output that would be the pride of all Creation. Instead, a plot twist (as our lesson writer will term it) has shown humanity now crossways with God. Wild, invasive and useless grapes have grown in this vineyard.

God was sounding the alarm by using the prophet Isaiah. The Creator was not letting up as we read Isaiah's poetic love song here in Ch5. God had expected goodness and right living. God had expected camaraderie and fairness. Where there should have been justice, there was instead crookedness and a callous spirit. Where there should have been peace, there was sometimes violence and war.

We need to be careful though. In this poem, the exile and destruction of Israel is foretold. What does this mean for God's willingness to cause pain as punishment for unfaithfulness? Instead, maybe we should hear God "allowing" what may naturally happen to a weakened, distracted and morally decaying people who were once great? The longer I live, I believe that God's worst punishment to us in this life can be to simply leave us to the consequences of our living.

One prominent, conservative voice declared that Hurricane Katrina in 2005 was actually God's hand of judgment on New Orleans and the debauchery that can sometimes be found there. Besides the questionable theology, the biggest problem with that logic may have been that the French Quarter was about the only part of downtown New Orleans that was spared in the storm! Instead of playing God, we do better to follow God.

**Prayer:**

Help us to find life by caring about the things you care about. Help us to be faithful with justice, love and fairness to each other, that we may live in peace with you. Amen.

**October 5 - Psalm 119:49-56**

**by Dr. Charles Qualls**

***Hope in God***

49 Remember your word to your servant, in which you have made me hope.

50 This is my comfort in my distress, that your promise gives me life.

51 The arrogant utterly deride me, but I do not turn away from your law.

52 When I think of your ordinances from of old, I take comfort, O Lord.

53 Hot indignation seizes me because of the wicked, those who forsake your law.

54 Your statutes have been my songs wherever I make my home.

55 I remember your name in the night, O Lord, and keep your law.

56 This blessing has fallen to me, for I have kept your precepts.

**Devotion:**

"Remember your word to your servant..." What do you hear when you read those words?

The writer of this psalm takes comfort in God's promises. The request that God would "remember" God's word to them is a bit fascinating. This request is for God to do what the writer believes God has done for others. For the Lord has kept promises. Our Bible is the story of God being faithful and trustworthy.

Interestingly enough, though, the single thing most mentioned is the "ordinances" or law God has given. That appears to be the greatest portion of the psalmist's comfort and hope. In our modern day and place, can you think of a single municipal law that is a source of ongoing hope for you? Probably not.

If we look at the whole of Psalm 119, rather than just the portion assigned to us today, we find out that God's law truly is at the heart of the happiness and thanks being expressed. So, how could this be? Rather than finding God's commandments and laws restrictive, how are they sources of promise and hope instead?

God's commands or "law" are supposed to be our pathway to life!

Never intended to beat each other up with, these laws are instead given so that our quality of experience with each other would be healthy and pleasing. They give to Creation structure where structure is needed. But they also lend freeing possibility within their scope. Granted, Christians do not usually find the cause-and-effect between keeping God's laws with actual closeness to God like the ancient Hebrews did.

Still, the psalmist has tapped into something here. We should explore this piece of a psalm. We should ask questions of the psalmist.

**Prayer:**

Lord, help us to see the love you have built into your ways. Your commands and precepts lead us to life, if will but allow you to lead us. Open our hearts to follow you. Amen.

**October 6 - 2 Corinthians 5:17-21**

**by Dr. Charles Qualls**

***Everything Has Become New!***

17 So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! 18 All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; 19 that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us. 20 So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. 21 For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

**Devotion:**

Monday mornings are interesting times for pastors. On rare occasions, we may arrive at the office fairly satisfied with yesterday's sermon. More often, deep down, we may already have a short list of "things I wish I'd said" or even worse -- a feeling that we fouled off the pitch rather than hitting a homerun.

If we're being real, though, on a practical level we know that yesterday's sermon is over and this week's has to be researched, written and internalized. That is a Monday morning fact. We kid ourselves that our words of yesterday "landed," but we learn eventually that most of our sermons can be forgotten all too quickly. If we or our church members misbehave, we sometimes wonder if we are accomplishing anything at all.

I know what it feels like to be a pastor. I wonder though: What does it feel like to be God?

***So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!***

That's what the apostle Paul wrote in his second letter to the Corinthian believers. That's the way faith is supposed to work. Accepting Jesus Christ as our Lord, and as our savior, is not just about avoiding Hell. If my church members could learn just one thing -- that would be it. It's not about grabbing the "fire insurance" when we are 9 or 10 years old and then living the rest of our lives in hopes that God and the church will leave us alone.

New creatures. Different. Transformed by the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. A reflection of our Creator. Led by the Holy Spirit to live better than we will on our own.

This is what real faith in Christ is about. This is what Paul was writing about. This is what Christ died for. Not just to keep you and me out of Hell. But also to keep us from making life together Hell on earth. Instead, to bring the Kingdom of Heaven closer now. Here.

**Prayer:**

Lord, may it be so. Help us to be reflections of you. Transform and renew us, that you would be proud of us on balance. Amen.

**October 7 - John 11:45-57**  
**by Rev. Steven R. Gibson**  
***The Plot to Kill Jesus***

<sup>45</sup> Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what Jesus did, believed in him. <sup>46</sup> But some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what he had done. <sup>47</sup> So the chief priests and the Pharisees called a meeting of the council, and said, "What are we to do? This man is performing many signs. <sup>48</sup> If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and destroy both our holy place and our nation."

<sup>49</sup> But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, "You know nothing at all! <sup>50</sup> You do not understand that it is better for you to have one man die for the people than to have the whole nation destroyed." <sup>51</sup> He did not say this on his own, but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus was about to die for the nation, <sup>52</sup> and not for the nation only, but to gather into one the dispersed children of God. <sup>53</sup> So from that day on they planned to put him to death.

<sup>54</sup> Jesus therefore no longer walked about openly among the Jews, but went from there to a town called Ephraim in the region near the wilderness; and he remained there with the disciples.

<sup>55</sup> Now the Passover of the Jews was near, and many went up from the country to Jerusalem before the Passover to purify themselves. <sup>56</sup> They were looking for Jesus and were asking one another as they stood in the temple, "What do you think? Surely he will not come to the festival, will he?" <sup>57</sup> Now the chief priests and the Pharisees had given orders that anyone who knew where Jesus was should let them know, so that they might arrest him.

**Devotion:**

This portion of John follows the raising of Lazarus, which caused considerable attention. Jesus's actions caused many to follow and believe, which is the beginning of the end for Jesus. Jesus was doing the will of his Father and the people could not comprehend his actions.

When we are backed into a corner, most of us focus on survival. Survival is the underlying reason for the people to act. How did they act? They talked to the chief priests and Pharisees and voiced their concerns. The chief priests and Pharisees then involved the council with this pressing problem.

They were afraid for their way of life, their homes, their villages and families. In their minds, the Roman authorities would soon intervene with this Jesus problem. The last thing that they wanted or desired was the Romans to come to town and destroy their holy place and their nation. (v48) They were fearful, anxious, and did not know where to turn.

This is the point in the story that the chief priests and Pharisees heard the words that Caiaphas uttered. His argument was simple -- what is the worst action, to kill one man or to kill the nation? His words align with his prophecy as high priest that Jesus would die for the nation and also to gather the dispersed nation of Israel. So, the plot and plan are now in effect. From that moment forward, they plotted to kill Jesus.

Have you ever plotted against Jesus? Have you ever known what Jesus wanted you to do, but failed to act?

What does this passage teach us?

We must be open to the Spirit's movement in our lives.

We must determine the Spirit's instructions and then act.

We must be willing to understand the implications of obeying the Spirit of God.

If we act hostile toward Jesus, Jesus will find another avenue to work.

**Prayer:**

God of infinite compassion, deal tenderly with your children. Mercifully lead them toward the attributes of Jesus so that we may partake in your work. Amen.

**October 8 - 1 Peter 5:1-5; 12-14**

**by Rev. Steven R. Gibson**

***Tending the Flock of God***

5 Now as an elder myself and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as one who shares in the glory to be revealed, I exhort the elders among you <sup>2</sup> to tend the flock of God that is in your charge, exercising the oversight, not under compulsion but willingly, as God would have you do it -- not for sordid gain but eagerly.

<sup>3</sup> Do not lord it over those in your charge, but be examples to the flock. <sup>4</sup> And when the chief shepherd appears, you will win the crown of glory that never fades away. <sup>5</sup> In the same way, you who are younger must accept the authority of the elders. And all of you must clothe yourselves with humility in your dealings with one another, for

“God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.”

**Final Greetings and Benediction**

<sup>12</sup> Through Silvanus, whom I consider a faithful brother, I have written this short letter to encourage you and to testify that this is the true grace of God. Stand fast in it. <sup>13</sup> Your sister church in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you greetings; and so does my son Mark. <sup>14</sup> Greet one another with a kiss of love.

Peace to all of you who are in Christ.

**Devotion:**

Our lesson is almost at the end of the letter, and the significance of the words are self-explanatory. The writer begins by proclaiming his credentials and why the people should listen to him. The writer is an elder and someone who has experienced firsthand the suffering for Christ. So this is written as a bit of motherly or fatherly practical advice.

The list is long, but not exhaustive: Tend the flock, exhort the elders not under compulsion but willingly, be examples to the flock. The result of these actions will be rewarded when the chief shepherd appears. Added to this list is the injunction to the younger members to follow the teaching and leading of those in charge. Perhaps the most telling charge is to “clothe yourselves in humility,” because “God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.”

This section is a primer for church leaders and serves as a reminder for us to check our egos and to serve and love those in our flock. If our attitude becomes one of grumbling, then we need to rethink our calling. In essence, our humility or lack of humility is not based on our relationships with others, but our stance before God.

Do you remember the motto of Franklin Baptist? “Every member a Minister.” This motto is derived from one of the tenants of Baptist polity -- the soul competency of the individual. The individual does not need the minister to pray for them because they have the same access to God as the minister. As such, these words are for all who bear the name Christian.

It is our job to continue to do the work of Christ until we are called home to be with the Lord.

**Prayer:**

Faithful God, forgive our unfaithfulness. Amen.