



Daily Devotionals – October 30 to November 5, 2021

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

October 30 - 2 Peter 2:1-3

by Rev. Steven R. Gibson

False Prophets and Their Punishment

2 But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive opinions. They will even deny the Master who bought them -- bringing swift destruction on themselves. ² Even so, many will follow their licentious ways, and because of these teachers the way of truth will be maligned. ³ And in their greed they will exploit you with deceptive words. Their condemnation, pronounced against them long ago, has not been idle, and their destruction is not asleep.

Devotion:

This short passage highlights the perils that come from false prophets. These false prophets arose from the people and their purpose was not for the good of Christianity. Exactly what made them false prophets? They brought in destructive opinions that deviated from the canon of faith. They openly deny their Master, which brings swift destruction to themselves. But some people will be fooled and follow them. These false teachers will encourage others to follow their licentious ways and by doing so, the truth will be corrupted. The false prophets and teachers are exploiting themselves, teaching falsehoods because of their own greed. To paraphrase an old saying, "they have made their bed and now they are condemned to lie down in it." Such activity is not permitted and their swift punishment awaits.

We are reminded to test the teachings of a prophet against the accepted and agreed upon orthodoxy of the faith. We need to be weary of anyone who proclaims to have the sole knowledge of God's truth. We need to measure their teachings against the teachings of the Messiah. Needless to say, if they differ, we remain true to Christ.

Think about all the voices that are screaming at us today. Think about how many claim to know the whole truth. They point to themselves instead of Christ. In fact, they have replaced Christ with themselves! Woe to them and woe to those who blindly follow them. May God have mercy upon our souls.

Prayer:

Teach us, dear Lord, the way of your statutes and equip us to be able to spot false teachers. Amen.

October 31 - Joshua 2:15-24

by Dr. Charles Qualls

Rahab's Heroism

15 Then she let them down by a rope through the window, for her house was on the outer side of the city wall and she resided within the wall itself. 16 She said to them, "Go toward the hill country, so that the pursuers may not come upon you. Hide yourselves there three days, until the pursuers have returned; then afterward you may go your way." 17 The men said to her, "We will be released from this oath that you have made us swear to you 18 if we invade the land and you do not tie this crimson cord in the window through which you let us down, and you do not gather into your house your father and mother, your brothers, and all your family. 19 If any of you go out of the doors of your house into the street, they shall be responsible for their own death, and we shall be innocent; but if a hand is laid upon any who are with you in the house, we shall bear the

responsibility for their death. 20 But if you tell this business of ours, then we shall be released from this oath that you made us swear to you.” 21 She said, “According to your words, so be it.” She sent them away and they departed. Then she tied the crimson cord in the window.

22 They departed and went into the hill country and stayed there three days, until the pursuers returned. The pursuers had searched all along the way and found nothing. 23 Then the two men came down again from the hill country. They crossed over, came to Joshua son of Nun, and told him all that had happened to them. 24 They said to Joshua, “Truly the Lord has given all the land into our hands; moreover all the inhabitants of the land melt in fear before us.”

Devotion:

Only five women are mentioned in Jesus’ genealogy, as Matthew’s gospel begins. Okay, let me restate that in a way that is a little more contextual. *Five women made it into Jesus’ genealogy in Matthew!* In ancient middle-Eastern culture, things were done much more patriarchally back then. We know that. Men counted and they were counted. Women and children, not so much. They weren’t even counted.

So, we should first mention the surprise that there were any women at all in Matthew’s documentation. What is so special, then, about these five women? Each of them has their own meaningful place. Rahab may be the most surprising. Why?

Rahab was a harlot.

I can’t sort out all the details. Like why did these roving spies, sent out by the Children of Israel, decide to spend the night at Rahab’s place...of all places? Some point out that in Hebrew, the same word used here could also mean “innkeeper.” But there are too many verbal clues in this story that point to Rahab’s career or business being...the other thing. (*Just ask me sometime; I’m blushing even now*) She was not a follower of Yahweh, it seems. Yet here in Jericho, she received the spies and surmised that God was on their side. She hid them from the search party sent to arrest the spies. After spiriting them to safety out her window, she followed their directions and saved her family when Jericho was sacked by the Hebrews.

Rahab converted to Judaism, it seems. She married a man named Salmon. They had a boy, Boaz, who would one day discover and marry a poor beggar named Ruth...another of the five women who were named in Jesus’ genealogy. Guess who their grandson would be? Jesse...the father of King David. Jesus came from the “house and lineage of David.” The old, old story just rolls on to our day and age. God is always working among and ahead of us. Moving in subtle, mostly undetectable ways until someone looks back and tells about it all.

Prayer:

Lord, may we have faith to trust that you are working among us even now. Moving to accomplish your greatest good. Thank you for using us, like Rahab, as unlikely players in your still unfolding drama! Amen.

November 1 - Matthew 23:1-12

by Dr. Charles Qualls

All Who Humble Themselves

1 Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples, 2 "The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses' seat; 3 therefore, do whatever they teach you and follow it; but do not do as they do, for they do not practice what they teach. 4 They tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on the shoulders of others; but they themselves are unwilling to lift a finger to move them.

5 They do all their deeds to be seen by others; for they make their phylacteries broad and their fringes long. 6 They love to have the place of honor at banquets and the best seats in the synagogues, 7 and to be greeted with respect in the marketplaces, and to have people call them rabbi.

8 But you are not to be called rabbi, for you have one teacher, and you are all students. 9 And call no one your father on earth, for you have one Father -- the one in heaven. 10 Nor are you to be called instructors, for you have one instructor, the Messiah. 11 The greatest among you will be your servant. 12 All who exalt themselves will be humbled, and all who humble themselves will be exalted.

Devotion:

The Disciple's Life. This theme might explain, in part, what Jesus was teaching as today's scripture text was spoken. Our hope may be placed partly in Jesus' second coming. But we have plenty of life that we are supposed to be living -- as a reflection of Christ -- right here and now. So this teaching focuses on how Jesus' followers could live faithfully here and now.

I have reminded you before of a saying I like. "*We don't want to be so heavenly minded that we are no earthly good.*" On rare occasions, I'll come across what I nickname "a super-Christian" who just can't get their heads out of heaven long enough to live here on earth. If you ask them what they did today they might say, "I just praised my Lord." Oh, okay. So you ask them what line of work they are in. "I'm a servant of Jesus Christ." Informative. If you ask them to come pack food kits with the church, you might hear "I would...but I go to Bible Study at that time." Gotcha.

Those are rare Christians, thankfully. For the rest of us, "humility" might be our greater need. We probably ought to do a little work with that word, and maybe dispel some myths that make the concept of humility clash with some of what our culture engrains. When you hear the word *humility*, or its cousin *humble*, what is your reaction? Too many hear these words and think that Christians are to be meek, quiet little doormats. Yet, we know that sometimes a bold faith requires speaking up or doing something that is brave! Maybe God's calling at the moment simply nudges us to do something a little out of our comfort zone. Or...if we're honest, something we simply don't want to do.

So, how can we live with prophetic courage while maintaining a humble presence? That's the challenge of living as Christ lived. Think about your life. Think about the ways in which you put yourself at the center. Does putting others into the focus, now and then, seem like a tough thing for you to do? Be honest with yourself. I think most of us agree with Jesus about the "ought to" part of serving others. Yet, we see in church and within the community that a small core usually do the serving...while everyone else watches. What makes this something you are comfortable with? What makes humbling yourself for others something you are uncomfortable with?

Prayer:

God of our days and Lord of our ways, humble us. Don't break us, we pray. But humble us that we would be useful to you as your servants. Willing to work, give and support others. Amen.

November 2 - 1 Thessalonians 2:13-20

by Dr. Charles Qualls

We Constantly Give Thanks For This

13 We also constantly give thanks to God for this, that when you received the word of God that you heard from us, you accepted it not as a human word but as what it really is, God's word, which is also at work in you believers. 14 For you, brothers and sisters, became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea, for you suffered the same things from your own compatriots as they did from the Jews, 15 who killed both the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and drove us out; they displease God and oppose everyone 16 by hindering us from speaking to the Gentiles so that they may be saved. Thus they have constantly been filling up the measure of their sins; but God's wrath has overtaken them at last.

17 As for us, brothers and sisters, when, for a short time, we were made orphans by being separated from you -- in person, not in heart -- we longed with great eagerness to see you face to face. 18 For we wanted to come

to you -- certainly I, Paul, wanted to again and again -- but Satan blocked our way. 19 For what is our hope or joy or crown of boasting before our Lord Jesus at his coming? Is it not you? 20 Yes, you are our glory and joy!

Devotion:

Because there is a subtle -- but important -- difference between bravery and recklessness, the apostle Paul had a lot to celebrate as he wrote to the Thessalonian believers.

Paul, Silas and Timothy had made a previous visit to Thessalonica, probably not terribly long before this letter was written. However, during whatever time had passed, Paul's return there was hindered by local opposition. Apparently, the local Jewish leaders had gotten so stirred up by Paul preaching about Christ that they banned him from a return. Oh, he could have tried. His life would have been endangered, though. There had been somewhat of an uprising, but now things had calmed down.

Perhaps Paul would even get to return one day soon. Meantime, he has at least been able to send Timothy back to check on them. As this missionary has just returned, now Paul writes what we know as 1 Thessalonians.

Thessaloniki, as the city is known today, remains a bustling port city in its region. There was some wealth there, and likely some even within the fledgling church that Paul helped them to start on his previous visit. The Thessalonian Christians had become known for their ministry and for their generosity. Paul celebrates that. He also begins to answer some issues that Timothy uncovered. Theological differences that had caused some level of division within the church. Questions also about what would happen to their loved ones who had already died in the cause of Christ.

What shines through, in our brief sample that is today's text, is the Apostle's love for the Thessalonians. He sees so much in them that reflects Christ. Noteworthy for us still in our global pandemic, he states his strong desire to gather with them again. Letters simply will not suffice for Paul. Reports from Timothy just won't do. I don't know about you, but virtual (online) worship and Bible Study hasn't sufficed either. They've been a wonderful substitute that 15 years ago, we simply wouldn't have had. But nothing can replace being together. Paul believed it then, I would say the same thing now!

Prayer:

Lord, lead our hearts never to take the gatherings of the church for granted. Help us in our comfort to still yearn for the days when we can regularly be in each other's presence again. The gathering of the Saints is a precious touch of Heaven! Amen.

November 3 - Psalm 128

by Dr. Charles Qualls

Happy Are They!

1 Happy is everyone who fears the Lord, who walks in his ways.

2 You shall eat the fruit of the labor of your hands; you shall be happy, and it shall go well with you.

3 Your wife will be like a fruitful vine within your house; your children will be like olive shoots around your table.

4 Thus shall the man be blessed who fears the Lord.

5 The Lord bless you from Zion. May you see the prosperity of Jerusalem all the days of your life.

6 May you see your children's children. Peace be upon Israel!

Devotion:

Happy is everyone who fears the Lord... Wait, wait, wait. We're supposed to "fear" God?

I have heard again recently that "You can look everything up on the Internet these days." I'd want to caution you a bit about things of the Spirit. With the faith, we'd be sipping from a firehose of sometimes misleading info. For instance, some of the first answers you might get if you searched on "fear of the Lord" or "fear of God" might have to do with a literal fear. I know this because I got curious and tried it. One entry even discussed a phobia of God. I happen to think that's wrong when compared with what the scriptures intended.

So, let me see if I might suggest something a little more accurate. You probably remember the explanation. The proper *fear* of God suggests a less frightful, off-putting image of God. Instead, in this ancient biblical understanding the fear of God is more nearly values like:

- a **respect** for
- an **acknowledgment** of
- an **awe** for
- and here's the important one -- a **submission to**

God. Or, as I like to say, "It's knowing that God is God and you don't have to be."

We get some clues like one in v1 here. An indication that a fear of God means one "...who walks in his ways." Walking in God's ways, as over against our own ways, shows a proper fear that will ironically lead us to *happiness*. Oh, the psalm goes on to demonstrate a fulfilled life in some of the expected patriarchal and cultural measures of ancient Israel. Not surprising. These are in line with other Old Testament descriptions of a good life.

Maybe what we should hear is something more like this --

Happy will be the one who fears the Lord during their lifetime. For they shall walk through life with God, even in challenging times. They shall find the fullness of life that God intended. They shall put their effort and intent into the things of God, and in doing so, find life itself!

Prayer:

Lord, may it be so for us too! Amen.

November 4 - Matthew 15:1-9

by Rev. Steven R. Gibson

The Tradition of the Elders

15 Then Pharisees and scribes came to Jesus from Jerusalem and said, ²"Why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands before they eat." ³He answered them, "And why do you break the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition? ⁴For God said, 'Honor your father and your mother,' and, 'Whoever speaks evil of father or mother must surely die.' ⁵But you say that whoever tells father or mother, 'Whatever support you might have had from me is given to God,' then that person need not honor the father. ⁶So, for the sake of your tradition, you make void the word of God. ⁷You hypocrites! Isaiah prophesied rightly about you when he said:

⁸'This people honors me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me; ⁹in vain do they worship me, teaching human precepts as doctrines.'"

Devotion:

All of us have traditions that mark the important passages in our lives. The church also has traditions that serve to mark theological and important times in the church year. For example, November 1st marks All Saint's Day and Advent begins on November 29 (November 29th is the first Sunday that in-person worship will occur at Franklin Baptist). Families and friends also have traditions such as family meals at Thanksgiving and Christmas. Traditions are fine and good unless we lose sight of the larger picture. Traditions are teachable moments and implant important memories that shape our lives.

What upset the Pharisees and scribes in this passage? They were upset that the disciples did not adhere to the traditions of their elders -- they dared to eat without first washing their hands!

But by focusing on this detail, they missed the larger picture that Jesus addressed in verse 3. He answered them, "And why do you break the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition?" Jesus is speaking to them about their misplaced priorities and exposes them. Traditions that deal with ritual purity are important, but pale in importance to one's obligations to God. The Ten Commandments explained the basics of our relationship to God and to others. How can we argue about ritual and tradition while we are not in the right relationship to God? This is a complicated question that would fill many volumes attempting to address all of its implications, but I will attempt a concise answer.

The scribes and Pharisees were so caught up in the minutia of keeping every single nuance of the law that they did not realize the point of the law. The point is this: greater than even the law that they uphold is the impetus of the law -- love. It was God's love that gave us the law and it was people that corrupted the law. People thought they knew better than God, and so they altered the law for their own convenience. They were fanatical about keeping the law in the strictest interpretation. They were so busy telling others how they should keep the law that they completely overlooked the most important law of all -- the law of love.

So, how are we doing? Are we more interested in reminding others about the law? Or, do we first look at ourselves and our shortcomings? All of us have issues, but regardless of our issues, we need the ability to look at the larger picture -- that God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whoever believes in him might be saved.

Prayer:

Oh God, turn our vision from ourselves to your vision -- love. Amen.

November 5 - Joshua 5:10-12

by Rev. Steven R. Gibson

The Passover at Gilgal

¹⁰ While the Israelites were camped in Gilgal they kept the Passover in the evening on the fourteenth day of the month in the plains of Jericho. ¹¹ On the day after the Passover, on that very day, they ate the produce of the land, unleavened cakes and parched grain. ¹² The manna ceased on the day they ate the produce of the land, and the Israelites no longer had manna; they ate the crops of the land of Canaan that year.

Devotion:

This section represents an important time for Israel. They had progressed from eating manna to eating the produce of the land. They had marked Gilgal and kept the feasts of the Passover, which looks ahead to Josiah's Passover. Gilgal played an important role in the history of Israel -- Samuel anointed Saul king of Israel and later tried to dispose of him because of Saul's violation of God's battle command. Instead of waiting seven days as Samuel had indicated, Saul went ahead and offered sacrifices himself. It was after Saul's disobedience that Samuel appears and denounces Saul for his actions. The price for disobedience is that Saul lost his kingdom to a rival. This is also the first hint of the house of David.

Gilgal was also the place where Saul and David's conflict escalated because Saul did not slaughter all the men, women and children of the Amalekites along with their cattle. But Saul spared their king, Agog and choice

cattle and sheep. His reason in keeping the cattle and sheep was so that he would have the livestock to make a proper sacrifice.

It is at Gilgal that Samuel again meets Saul and relays the message that because Saul has left Yahweh, Yahweh has left Saul. Then Samuel anointed David as Saul's successor. Gilgal played an important place in Israel's history.

This brief summary points to our primary point -- the keeping of the Passover. When the Israelites were in the desert, they depended on manna from heaven and God supplied their need. Now they depend on grain from the land, and again God supplies their need.

But, we need to be careful that we do not become accustomed to God's blessing and take it for granted. This is something that people often do -- that because God has blessed us before, God will continue to bless us.

This lesson is instructive for us because it teaches that our actions matter. I still remember that children's song that contains the following words:

"O be careful little hands what you do.
O be careful little hands what you do.
For the Father up above is looking down in love.
O be careful little hands what you do."

Prayer:

Remind us, O God, that our actions are a reflection of our love for you. Amen.