

2010 Devotionals

JANUARY

"Knowing You, Jesus!"

Monthly Newsletter comment for January 2010

Jesus came "preaching the gospel of the Kingdom" (Mt. 4:23). The message of the kingdom starts with "repentance" (Mt. 4:17). One by-product of repentance is righteous behavior, but more than that, behavior repentance is primarily a deep work of God's Spirit in the soul.

The effects of this deep work of God are taught to us by the King of the Kingdom Himself in His first and greatest sermon called...the Sermon on the Mount (Mt. 5-7). A careful reading of these three chapters will reveal the "inside" work of the King on the interior of His subjects...poor in spirit, mourners, meek, those that hunger for righteousness, pure in heart, and peacemakers suggest significant change in the mind, will, and emotions of His followers. Jesus will talk about sins, such as murder and adultery, but tell us where those sins originate..."in the heart." He tells us to love our enemies and that requires a serious change of heart before it shows in any tangible external ways, especially towards our enemies.

Charitable deeds, prayer, and fasting need to be done in secret, not for public observation. Jesus will tell us to get the plank out of our own eye and watch out for personal hypocrisy or pretense. External signs and wonders can be achieved in Jesus' name by people who don't even know Him.

We are entering 2010. It is a new year and I am hearing the Spirit prompting me about going deeper. Going deeper for me is not about working miracles and leading people to Christ, although that would be wonderful. I would love for the supernatural to become a common place thing in my life. But according to Jesus it is possible to do many awesome things and not even know Him (Matt 7:22-23).

What I have in mind about going deeper in 2010 is not about "doing" as much as it is about "being" in Him and with Him. Going deeper is about a personal revival in my soul with the Living Christ. Will you join me this year in believing for a personal revival in the core of our being? Revival outside of us starts with repentance and cleansing inside our souls. In all revivals throughout the Old Covenant, it started with people repenting and Temple cleansing. The New Covenant is very clear about this; "...believers are the temple of God and *that* the Spirit of God dwells in you...therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Cor. 3:16; 1 Cor. 6:20).

To be found in Him...and to know Him (Phil. 3:9-10) will be a Happy New Year.

Mike

"L'Shanah Tovah"
Weekly Comment – January 3, 2010

Happy New Year! The traditions and customs of people are as varied as there are cultures when it comes to New Year celebrations. Jewish people for example, have a couple of dates each year that have to do with their New Year.

For example, their calendar year started at sunset September 18, of 2009. Only the Jewish year is not 2009, it is the year 5770. The Jewish call their New Year of the holiday Rosh Hashanah (head of the year) a term that does not occur in the Bible. The Bible term is known as Yom Ha-Zikkaron, "the Day of Remembrance" or Yom Teruah, "the Day of Sounding of the Shofar." This day is instituted in (Lev. 23:24 & 25).

They greet one another with the phrase "L'shanah tovah" meaning "Good Year." It is the shortened version of "L'shanah tovah tikatev v'taihatem" meaning "may you be inscribed and sealed for a good year." The sounding of the Shofar to begin the Day of Remembrance was probably a call to repentance for the whole nation.

I have to tell you in all honesty, the Jewish tradition touches my heart. What better way to start our New Year than with the blowing of the Shofar and a call to repentance. What a great way to start by being "inscribed and sealed for a good year."

"L'shanah tovah,"

Mike

Thought for Sunday, January 10, 2010.

Comment for 1/10/10

Psalm 33 tells us to rejoice in the Lord. Yet in these times when businesses are failing and the nation slips deeper into sin, it's easy to focus on those negative realities and not trust in the Lord. Yet as verses 10 and 11 of Psalm 33 tell us that the Lord controls the affairs of men and of nations. His council and His plans, not the plans of men and of nations, will prevail. Let your soul wait for the Lord (vs. 20) and hope in Him (vs. 22) because the eye of the Lord is on those who fear (*reverence*) Him (vs. 18). Psalm 33 is a great psalm that begins with praise because it ends with hope.

So rejoice!

Chris Tootell

"Knowing God"

Weekly comment for 1/17/10

Knowing God does not come natural. What does come natural is being quite the opposite of God. God is infinitely purer, smarter and more powerful than anyone of us or all of us combined.

Knowing God is out of our reach; out of our spectrum of understanding or ability to get our heads around Him. Knowing God requires God's help. God had to find a way to help us know Him and find Him that wouldn't blow our mind.

Obviously man has had trouble in Biblical history just with being introduced to angels. Angels scared men half to death when they appeared to them. I can't imagine what would happen to a person if God in His glorious full form appeared to them! Actually I can imagine what would happen, because God said to Moses, that no man can see God and live (Ex. 33:20).

So we need help in this current state of man we are in, to know God and only God can take the initiative as to how that could happen. In my natural state with my native natural abilities I can't get it done, nor can you, nor can any person in all of history.

So God made a way that the glorious, unapproachable, invisible, thrice holy God could actually become known to sinful limited man—He became a man and dwelt among man accomplishing three things in the process: Saved man from sin; demonstrated to all of humanity how man was created to live and revealed who and what God was like.

Let's draw near to God in 2010!

Mike

"What Really Counts!"

Weekly comment for 1/24/10

The obvious big deal and good news about Jesus is that His coming alone tells us something crucial about God...we are not in this by ourselves. I suspect if there was not the Gospel of Christ, I could pick from the plethora of gods out there or the Pantheon of gods to which the Greeks referred.

Let me say man is somewhere in between desperate and hopeless in rectifying his insatiable quest to find peace at every level and immortality. Peace is not achievable in this world without Christ and he doesn't know yet that he already possesses immortality by reason of his birth.

Conception creates an immortal being which cannot be altered by abortion or death at old age all that can be determined here is where our immortality will be spent forever (Heaven or Hell). The sources to which most individuals look to find peace are at best fleeting and at worst deadly. Finding peace in this world without Christ is impossible because it is temporal, subject to change. People move, walk away, drug induced highs crash, and stocks markets turn on a dime.

In this life peace is only found in Christ, because He demonstrated to all who will believe that even death is not a separation. Those in Christ can have abiding peace because He is ever present. Everything we do in this life can count for eternity if it concerns itself with that which is eternal (immortal) now...PEOPLE.

That's what really counts now and forevermore.

Mike

"Come" (Mt. 14:29)

Weekly comment for 1/31/10

The wind had swooped down unto the Sea of Galilee and the waves were getting pretty choppy (Mt. 14:24, 30). That was not unusual for many of the disciples, as many were fishermen. What was unusual was seeing someone, or something walking on the water. Supposing it was a ghost brought forth an understandable cry of fear (14:26).

What follows is so Jesus and so God, acknowledging their fears and hearing their cries, Jesus identified the ghost—"Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid" (14:27). Then what is so Peter, and frankly so us, blurts out, "Lord if it is you command me to come to you on the water" (Mt. 14:28). Jesus says, "Come!"

Don't we see us in this scene? It is I! Lord if it's you! We are scared to death, worried, sick over something and we can't see that what we are scared about is actually Jesus coming to us.

Next time "winds are contrary" (Mt. 14:24), embrace the storm, it may very well be Jesus coming to you, not no ghost—"Come," he says! Wherever Jesus is, that's the place you want to "come" or "go" as the case may be.

Blessings!

Mike

FEBRUARY - 2010

"Charity Never Faileth" (1 Cor. 13:8)

Monthly Newsletter comment for February 2010

Modern versions of this verse say "love never fails" and in modern speech that is a better defining of genuine love.

But "Charity" is a beautiful word, not only in King James' day (1611), but in Noah Webster's day also (1828). His early dictionary of American English said charity in general is "that disposition of heart which inclines men to think favorable of their fellow men and do them good. In a theological sense, it includes supreme love to God and universal good will to men"—(Charity never faileth).

But what of this charity that never faileth? It would appear that charity faileth a lot! What's up with that! At altars in churches, synagogues, mosques and religious places all around the world, couples promise unending love in one way or another and in five years their love faileth.

Why is this? Why does love fail? Once a year we have necessary fundraising banquets to stock coffers of ministries that exist to serve the poor and often homeless people. Once a year churches hand out thanksgiving baskets for the needy, but surely the needy don't just have need once a year.

Why is this? Why does love fail? Part of the answer can, in my estimation be understood by going back to the original King James translation of 1 Corinthians 13:8: "Charity never faileth." Love fails because our concepts of love are flawed. Western ideas of love are so romanticized it is sickening. In the west, we fall in love! Unfortunately, many of those same folk that fall in love fall out of love as well.

Dating in America has become good training for separation and divorce, because people have become used to having so many heartthrob boyfriends and girlfriends in their formative years. People have become skilled in the art of "dumping" relationships for someone else. Love fails because love is seen strictly as an emotion. In that case, love is not a whole lot different than anger—sometimes you got it and sometimes you don't.

Maybe we should re-adopt the word "charity" as a dominant word for love in our lives. "Charity never faileth" has a different ring to it. Charity, more than the word love, has more movement on it than what love has come to mean. Charity has less feeling to it and more action. So I suggest we exercise charity toward one another from now on—maybe that way we will show charity everyday, instead of a couple times a year.

I charity you – (Now that sounds strange!)

Mike

"The Foundation"

Weekly comment for 2/7/10

"...Righteousness and justice are the foundation of His throne" (Psalm 97:2).

Foundations are crucial to anything! Foundations for any individual must have a bare minimum of absolute values or that person's life will be destructive in both relationships and business. People without mutually agreed on values are unpredictable, unreliable, and in general unprofitable in any endeavor.

I remember the frustration that was mine over inconsistent and unreliable referees in basketball games. When referees had no bottom line absolutes on what was a foul "every time," players would not have any means by which their play could be consistent, it resulted in inconsistent play, or said another way, we would play consistently inconsistent!

We were frustrated and the coach was angry. God isn't anything like that! The bedrock of who He is, remains righteousness and justice. God for example, cannot and will not wink at murder, whether in our estimation, it was justified or not. Murder is murder! Stealing is stealing!

Righteousness is always constant with God, no guesswork involved. His justice is the same way. He could not and will not be judicious one way for the rich and another for the poor.

You shall not "...testify in a dispute so as to turn aside after many to pervert justice. You shall not show partiality to a poor man in his dispute" (Ex. 23:3; Lev. 19:15).

We can trust and follow a God who is consistently the same.

Mike

"Did You Know?"

Weekly comment for 2/14/10

In Oakland California in 1922, Amiee Semple McPherson was conducting some evangelistic ministry. While speaking, she spoke the words "Foursquare Gospel" for the first time.

In context, she was referring to the four cardinal ministries of Jesus Christ the Son of God. Jesus came as Savior for people's sin; He came as Baptizer with the Holy Spirit; He came as Healer of sickness and ultimately He will come again in glory as King of kings and Lord of lords.

Jesus Christ is a perfect, complete Gospel for the body, soul, spirit and eternity. These truths of Jesus as Savior, Baptizer, Healer and coming King are represented in the symbols displayed in the stain glass at the front of the church. The Cross, the Dove, the Cup and the Crown represent His saving work on the Cross, the empowering ministry of His Holy Spirit, His nature to heal and His royal imperative for the future.

Let's enjoy the full Gospel!

Mik

"Honest Inquiry"

Weekly comment for 2/21/10

Honesty is required when studying the Bible. Honesty is also required when we preach it or communicate it to other people. I find a lot of dishonesty, however, with Christians when it comes to "...rightly dividing the word of truth" (2Tim. 2:15). By that, I don't mean they deliberately lie; they just take liberties with Scripture that are not theirs to take.

Truth is there are a number of things in the Bible that are very hard to understand. We know that the disciples on a number of occasions were baffled at what Jesus taught and **"did not understand...and were afraid to ask Him"** (Mk. 9:32). On other occasions the disciples didn't understand what Jesus said and they asked Him to **"...Explain to us the parable..."** (Matt 13:36). At other times the disciples did not understand, but would later come to understand, **"His disciples did not understand these things at first; but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered..."** (John 12:16). Then of course there were a number of times they thought they knew what Jesus meant and were completely off base, **"...why do you reason among yourselves because you have brought no bread"** (Matt 16:8-9).

It is OK not to understand some things that are said in the Bible. The apostle Peter in reference to the epistles of Paul said there are **"...some things hard to understand..."** (2 Pet.3:16). What is not OK is to be flippant about and pretend to know what the Bible says, or be careless or reckless in our study of the Word of God. It is perfectly alright to say, "I don't know" and then ask the Holy Spirit to help you understand. You may get an answer quickly and sometimes you'll keep asking and looking for understanding for a long time, but the answer will come and it will be worth it.

Honesty Inquiry Pays Off.

Mike

"Healing In Christ"

Weekly comment for 2/28/10

Did you know that God is a healer? In fact, He is the Healer! There is no healing that happens to people aside from God Himself willing it. That would include healings that come by way of medical science, because God is that science (knowledge). It would also include healings that take place automatically in the human body, because God created the self-correcting, healing immune system to perform that way.

We know that God wills healing, because Jesus went about healing many with all sorts of infirmities. Jesus said, He always did "...the things that please Him (the Father)" John 8:29.

We also know that healing is part of the atonement of Christ's sacrifice because 700 B.C. Isaiah said, "the Man of sorrows" (Isa. 53:3) "...has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows...wounded for our transgressions...bruised for our iniquities and the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed" (Isa. 53:4-5). This is the Scripture that Matthew quoted from, as Jesus healed all who were sick (Mt. 8:16-17).

Sometimes our experience(s) may challenge the truths spoken to us in Scripture, but our default must always be to what God said, not what we feel or may have experienced.

He sent His Word and healed them (Psalm 107:20; Mt. 8:8, 13).

Mike

MARCH - 2010

"Drinking Deeply"

Monthly Newsletter comment for March 2010

"...through these you may be partakers of the divine nature..." (2 Pet.1:4).

It appears to me that believer's live way below the standard of living. Many nations have means of measuring the standard of living for their citizens. Individual governments use those standards to determine how to boost the quality of life for the people. Governments also compare their standard of living with the standards of other nations.

God has a standard of living for His people. By His standard of living I do not just refer to the 10 commandments. I mean a standard of quality of life and awareness of Him. Jesus tells us that we can **"know"** things that, I am not certain, many Christian folk really know.

For instance, Jesus tells His followers that, if we abide in His Word, we would, **"...know the truth and the truth shall make you free"** (Jn. 8:31-32). He also said that His sheep would follow Him, **"...for they know His voice"** (Jn. 10:4).

John the apostle said that what he wrote, he did so believers in the Son of God would **"...know that they have eternal life"** (1 John 5:13). Further, he said that believers have a confidence in prayer that God hears us and whatever we ask **"...we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him"** (1 Jn. 5:14-15). Paul the apostle challenges us to **"... Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus"** (Phil 2:5).

These and hundreds of other directives and promises are everywhere in the Scripture, but few Christians in the West seem to realize the level of freedom that Jesus said is theirs from abiding in the Word. Few know His voice, as evidenced by their constant wishing they could hear from God. Multitudes of believers cannot say they know they have eternal life and have no confidence in prayer because they can't remember the last direct answer to prayer they experienced. Many don't think in terms of the mind of Christ, but you will hear them referring to the mind they think they are losing.

All of that being considered, the privilege remains for the believer to be "partakers of the divine nature." Perhaps the biggest deterrent, to experiencing the "standard of living" God has designed for believers, is that they are "partakers" in too many other things. Perhaps His people are drinking deeply, but from the wrong standard of living. His standard of living beats any standard of living among all nation combined. There are people going hungry and living at the poverty level in the United States, but that need not be the case with God's standard of living for His children.

They that hunger and thirst after righteousness shall be satisfied (Mt. 5:6)! Those that diligently seek Him shall be rewarded (Heb.11:6)! Let us not forget that, while we are physically in the United States, our "born again" status has made us citizens of heaven—**"...For our citizenship is in heaven..." (Phil 3:20)**. Let me see if I am getting this correct—"the standard of living of the United States or the standard of living of Heaven?" I think my final word is Duh!

Drinking deeply from Him,

Mike

"What Do You Think?"

Weekly comment for 3/7/10

People get goofy ideas and live goofy ways. We sometimes giggle when people say, "that guy has goofy ideas" but truth is, "goofy ideas" wind up as "goofy practice" and that isn't anything to giggle about. Goofy practice or behavior by the way affects not just the "goofy," it affects everyone around them.

I said that to simply say, what we really think about anything actually becomes the way we live life. Hence, what we believe about something or someone, including ourselves, has direct bearing on outcomes to how we live life.

If elected officials for example, think the role of government is to house, feed, clothe, educate, heal, employ, and retire people, then those elected officials will legislate according to what they think and believe.

Christians need to formulate everything they think and believe through a Biblical grid. If we do not cultivate our thinking from a Christ centered Biblical perspective, the alternatives are the embrace of a lie—which is precisely what our first human parents did in response to the serpent's suggestion to them, "has God said" (Gen. 3:1)?

What do you think?

Mike

"Are You On Path?"

Weekly comment for 3/14/10

Today at work, a vehicle came in with really bad windshield wipers, and the windshield was filthy. I had to ask the operator how he could see through such a filthy windshield. He said, "Who needs to be able to see, I know there's a road there, I just need to be able to feel the road." He was joking of course, but his statement can ring true in our spiritual lives.

In our spiritual lives the truth is, there is a road there. We all have a road to navigate in our lives, but can we see it clearly or not? All of us have a lens or windshields we look through, this would be our lens of Truth or what we perceive as Truth. When our windshields are clean, (this is Truth) we can clearly see the path God has set out before us. But when life gets crazy and things seem to be falling apart, our windshield gets dirty and the road can become hard to see; so we try to feel the path & maybe are led astray (this is what we perceive as Truth).

When our spiritual windshields get dirty, we need to have good windshield wipers, and know how to use them. What pray tell, are our windshield wipers? The Word of God (the Bible) and prayer. The Bible is the ultimate in Truth and when our windshield gets dirty from life, it will clear our lens and give us the ability to see clearly. "The Truth can set us free." And prayer of course, lets us focus on God so that we can then focus on the path set before us.

Let's clean our windshields you crazy drivers!

Blessings,

Pastor Scot

"And He Will Be Called Wonderful"

Weekly comment for 3/21/10

From the time of Jesus' birth, until the time of His last week of life on this earth, Jesus "stirred" things up. The wise men asked King Herod, "Where is He who is born King of the Jews" (Mt. 2:3)? That began a buzz all over Jerusalem! 33-years later, Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey in the week prior to His crucifixion. The entire city of Jerusalem was in an uproar as He entered, saying, "Who is this" (Mt. 21:10)?

Full synagogues were "amazed" over Jesus, because at His command "unclean spirits" obeyed Him (Mk. 1:27). When a paralytic man was let down through a hole in the roof of a crowded house and healed by Jesus, the crowd was amazed (Mk. 2:12).

When Jesus calmed the storm on the sea with a word "peace be still," the 12 disciples said, "Who can this be, that even the wind and the sea obey Him" (Mk. 4:41). It didn't matter who the people were; they all stood in wonder of Jesus.

Here is a thought! Could it be, in our culture of entitlement that American Christians have lost their sense of wonder of Jesus, because they have come to believe they are entitled to His forgiveness, salvation, healing, and mercy? I have actually heard one wounded and misguided soul say, "God owes me this, because I didn't ask to be born!" There was not much wonder towards God from him with a "He owes me attitude!"

It is my earnest prayer, that during this year's theme of "Knowing God" and intimacy with Christ, that all of us will be filled with the wonder of Jesus. After all, one of His most well known names is:

"WONDERFUL" (Isa. 9:6)

Mike

"The Day to Start Rejoicing"

Weekly comment for 3/28/10

How much would you have enjoyed being in the throngs of people on that wonderful day the church calls Palm Sunday? Jewish historian Josephus said there were millions of Jews that would converge on Jerusalem during the Passover feasts. Let me put that another way- three million people cram into a city for about two weeks every year that had a normal population of about 50,000. The energy and excitement would have been electric on any Passover year.

But this Passover was special; the much loved Rabbi, Prophet, miracle worker, and suspected Messiah was approaching the Holy City on a donkey. To the giddy delight of the multitudes, the action of Jesus on this Sunday was unmistakable to any Jew—the ancient prophet Zechariah spoke: "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! See, your King comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey" (Zech. 9:9).

Jesus knew exactly what He was doing, because he had just prior to this, instructed two of His disciples to, "Go to the village ahead of you and at once you will find a donkey tied there with her colt by her. Untie them and bring them to Me" (Mt. 21:2).

For three years Jews and disciples were urging Him to declare His Kingship, but He declined. This day in history however, He unquestionably was announcing the long awaited King had come to them... "righteous and having salvation" and 5 days later on Good Friday, He procured salvation for all earthlings on the Cross.

Rejoice O Daughters of Zion (People of God)!

Mike

APRIL - 2010

"Amazing King; Amazing Love!"

Monthly Newsletter comment for April 2010

"Amazing love how can it be that You my King would die for me" are more than words to a modern chorus we sing, it is a reality that changed everything. What was inscribed on the cross of our Savior was, "This is the King of the Jews" (Luke 23:38). True, He was that, but, oh much more—He is the King of glory. He is the King of the Jews and heir to the throne of David, but this Ruler that came out of Bethlehem has roots that not only precede David, they precede all human beings... "His goings forth are from of old, from everlasting" (Micah 5:2).

This King of the Jews, heir to David's throne, is "the Son of the Highest" (Luke 1:32), whose essential nature was one with God before He stepped out of eternity and became clothed with human flesh—the Word that was with God in the beginning... "Was God"... and that Word that was with God and was God, made everything that was made and then "became flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:1, 14). This is the King that died for you and me.

It would be amazing love for any king to die for his subjects, because in the normal order of things, subjects give their lives for their king, not the other way around. But, this King is not a king of a pure natural variety, He is a supernatural King and that is what makes Easter weekend so amazing.

Think about religions for a moment, religions that have a god or gods as the case may be. Buddhists, by the way, have no god! Not one of those religions have this kind of God, with this kind of amazing love. All religions, in one form or another, have their adherents vainly endeavoring to please their god(s) with not a shred of inner peace that they have done enough.

Inside the inner soul of all people is a sense that something is wrong inside their world and in the outer world as well. The dilemma is that there is nothing they know or have seen that gives hope. The value— that better and higher education or bigger and better government will ultimately win the day and all will be well— is proven daily to be a falsehood. That is further complicated by the Christianity of the West. Western brand Christianity is bankrupt. It is seen as worthless by onlookers, because either its adherents are no better off than their non-Christian neighbors, or the non-Christian world sees the Christian religion as an endless and hopeless set of rules to garner the favor of an impossible God.

What is so amazing about Christ is that His death provides the avenue whereby all people can find acceptance with God apart from their "works" (Eph. 1:6-7; 2:8-9). Furthermore, His resurrection is the death of death. His resurrection puts an end forever to the fear of death that held people in bondage (Heb. 2:14-15; 2Cor. 13:4; John 14:19).

At the cross we find amazing love, in His resurrection we experience amazing hope and power. The reality of the amazing love of this King is for EVERYONE!

Enjoy His Life!

Mike

"Christ Is Risen!"

Weekly comment for 4/4/10

*"All authority has been given to Me in Heaven and on Earth.
Go therefore..." (Mt. 28:18-19).*

That is a lot of authority, "All authority in Heaven and on Earth!" That's not just some authority or temporary authority or borrowed authority! It is all authority and "all authority" that has been given.

All this authority is directly connected to what Jesus had just accomplished in Jerusalem. His death provided the perfect, unblemished sacrifice for the sin of every human being on the planet. His resurrection is the guarantee that the sacrifice is more than sufficient and power and rule is now restored to man on Earth, through the Son of God/Son of Man.

The greatest curse, as well as the greatest fear known to man on this planet, is death. When Jesus came out of that grave having been certified dead (by Romans, who know the killing business), everything changed—for everybody!

So when the God/Man announces to His disciples "Go therefore," there is no greater weight "given" in His commission. In other words, if anyone is looking for something more from Him, it ain't going to come, because the One with all authority in Heaven and on Earth has already said, "Go." And Mark adds, "Go...in My name" (16:15, 17).

He is Risen Indeed!

Mike

"...When You Pray..." (Mt. 6:5)

Weekly comment for 4/11/10

These were the words with which Jesus started the now 2000 year famous "Lord's Prayer." He did not start this glorious prayer with "if," but rather "when" you pray.

Prayer is not an option, it is commanded, and it is urged! But let's not miss the beauty in prayer as a command. All of God's commandments are "for us." Think of it this way parent(s), when you give commands to your children not to play or run into the street; is it not for their well-being? Of course! Cars hitting flesh at 25 mph can cause serious owies!

Like all of God's commands or directives, they are meant for our safety, maturity, and blessing. God doesn't impose anything on His children that isn't for their best. Even when God "chastens" (disciplines) His children, He does it for love's sake (Heb. 12:6), because of what it produces in us "...the peaceable fruit of righteousness" (12:11).

The word in the Greek language for prayer is akin to a word that means "draw near." "When" you pray, you "draw near" to God...you come into His presence! It's not at all like going to the principal's office—going to God's office is a really good and comforting thing. You learn how to pray by doing!

Try it you'll like it!

Mike

"Planned or Chance?"

Weekly comment for 4/18/10

The Bible is not vague about this at all. From the opening chapters of the Bible, God made mankind for purpose, not random expression: "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over...everything that moves on the earth" (Gen. 1:28) is the earliest validation of that fact.

Mankind not only has purpose and planned design, but man also has personal cause. Everything, that means everything, is "...of Him and through Him and to Him are all things..." (Rom. 11:36). "...all things were created by Him through Him and for Him" (Col. 1:16). People not only have a point and purpose to their life, they have a person for whom it is all due!

All mankind knows this to some degree "...because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them...they are without excuse...they did not like to retain God in

their knowledge...exchanged the truth of God for the lie and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator..." (Rom. 1:19, 20, 28, 25).

What interests me, is that mankind in general fights purpose and design throughout creation, yet in his own personal life and family and career, wants order and purpose for his being in a major way.

The apostle says one has to work really hard intellectually and mentally to drive God out of the picture. In fact, he has to "...suppress the truth in unrighteousness" (Rom. 1:18). Suppression is hard work!

Embrace His plan and His person!

Mike

"Receive The Holy Spirit"

Weekly comment for 4-25-10

"What man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God" (1 Cor. 2:11-12).

It is remarkable to me that the Holy Spirit is so down played in some sectors of the church today. It's remarkable to me, especially in light of Jesus saying, it is to our advantage that He goes away in order that the "Helper" can come, and clearly the Helper is the Holy Spirit (John 16:7; 14:26).

I know the things in me that no one else knows, unless I tell you. That is essentially the same with God. We will not and cannot know the things of God, unless He informs us by His Spirit.

If we want to know God and the things He desires to freely disclose to us, then we need to receive His Holy Spirit. Jesus instructs us that the Holy Spirit will "guide us into all truth" (John 16:13).

I believe we are living in an age of unparallel darkness and confusion and the need for guidance into all truth is imperative.

Receive the Holy Spirit.

Mike

MAY - 2010

"...Grow Up..."

Monthly Newsletter comment May 2010

...but speaking the truth in love, may grow in all things into Him who is the head—Christ—(Eph. 4:15).

Jesus uses the term "children" on some occasions, referring to His disciples (John 21:5). In one verse, the aged Apostle John uses the phrases little children, young men, and fathers to describe stages of maturing relationships with Christ (1John 2: 13). Peter urges newborn babes to "desire the pure milk of the Word, that you may grow thereby" (1Peter 2:2).

The verse at the top of the page is exhorting believers to not be like children tossed around by all kinds of ideas and doctrines (Eph. 4:14). There are all kinds of teachings and philosophy of men and demons having one end in mind—enslavement.

Believing and speaking the truth is a powerful combination in Christ. Believing within your heart and confessing with your mouth is standard fare for the Christian—young or old. Here, Paul says speaking the truth in love allows for us to grow up.

Babes in Christ need to familiarize themselves with God's Word, for it is a major way to grow. Young men use the Word they have come to trust and obey to fight and overcome the wicked one, because they are strong and the Word of God abides in them (1John 2:14).

In the Message Paraphrase, Jesus asks two blind men if they believe He could heal them; they said, "Yes," and then Jesus said, "Become what you believe" (Mt. 9: 29)!

It is nice to see spring blooming all over Missoula, as winter can seem so dreary and dead; but Christians can and should be always growing, even when there is no evidence of growth.

*Believing in our hearts and speaking the truths we believe from the "Word", causes us to...
Grow up!*

Mike

"Better Than Any Earthly Title!"

Weekly comment for 5/2/10

"But without faith it is impossible to please Him..." (Heb. 11:6)

What is faith? Do you ever ask that question? I think it's a very important thing to resolve, since if we don't have it (faith), we can't please God... and that, we could all agree, ought to be high on our priority list.

We know from Verse 1 that "faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Heb. 11:1). Substance means a "setting under (support)." Vines Bible Dictionary says the word "may signify a title deed as giving a guarantee" to the validity of claim on property.

Hence, "faith" is the title deed to that which at the moment is unseen. Faith is the gift to look into the invisible and apprehend it with assurance.

Confidence that the unseen as yet is more real than the material is the way God has designed us to live. After all, everything that is currently "seen," is temporary (subject to change), but things "not seen are eternal" (2 Cor. 4:18).

Reach in to the unseen as yet and hold onto it like you would a title deed...

It's better than any earthly Title Company.

Mike

"Happy Mother's Day!"

Weekly comment for 5/9/10

Strong's Concordance defines the Hebrew word for "a mother (as bond of the family)." Mothers are that, are they not? The glue that keeps the bond of a family together is the mother.

That of course is not to take anything away from the father, but when was the last time you heard an athlete on the sideline of a football game, look into the camera and say, "Hi dad?" Long time ago I suspect, if ever! My grand children want to come over to Nana's house, not Papa's. Get my point!

Mothers, today is one day in the year that is just simply called "your" day. Husbands do something nice today for the mother of your children. Don't do the dumb thing and watch the basketball playoffs and say, "Why should I do something special for her, she isn't my mother." Or here's a goodie, "mothers day is simply a marketing bonanza for businesses!"

Listen husbands, sons, and daughters, don't blame business for being smart. They capitalize on being smart and promote mothers for a buck. Why don't you be smart and promote mothers out of gratitude! Hmmm! What's in it for you, in being grateful to mother? How about having around the house a real appreciative mom? You know how the saying goes, "If momma ain't happy, ain't no one happy!"

Happy Mother's Day!

Me

"Where Are You and Where Are You Going?"

Weekly comment for 5/16/10

The kiosk's in malls are those handy little map things that points with a red arrow or star "you are here." If you know what you are looking for, the kiosk will show you how to get there from where you currently are standing. Sometimes I look at those things and say, "Duh...I know that I am standing where I am." All kidding aside, when you are in an unfamiliar place and you haven't a clue to where you are, it is really nice to have something or someone point out exactly "where you are."

What is even more scary than not knowing where you are, is that along with that, you have no clue where you are going either...that is the ingredience for aimless wondering in a mall and probable waste.

I never go into a store without knowing exactly what I want or need to purchase. If I do, I won't get what I need and I'll walk out with items on impulse and with less money than I wanted to spend.

Holy Scripture is the kiosk in the mall of life. Thankfully it tells us exactly where we are at (sometimes with brutal truth) and it tells us where we are going or not going with equal bluntness.

Without the kiosk of Scripture, there is no map. And for the soul, without **THIS** kiosk, life will be hit and miss. He or she may have had some good times, met some nice friends along their mall wanderings, but in the end they die and leave nothing behind, except all their stuff they bought at K-Mart or Wal-Mart in all their bored, aimless, wasteful meanderings!

Where are you?

Mike

"What If?"

Weekly comment for 5/23/10

There was a major industry years ago, that on their TV commercial the featured phrase was "What if?" Forgive me for not remembering who the company was or what they were "what if'ng about." What I do remember in the gist of their ad, was a challenge to conventional ways of

doing things. The point was obvious; change the standard operating procedures (SOP) if things are not working and get outside the box in which you are stuck. What if?

This week, I was gripped with the statement that Luke the Evangelist says regarding one of Jesus' parables—I will call it "What if?" The parable is the one of the unjust judge and the widow seeking legal intervention from her adversary (Lk.18:3). In the words of the narrator Luke, not Jesus', he states, "Then He spoke a parable to them, that men always ought to pray and not lose heart, saying..." What if?

The familiar parable in brief said the widow kept coming to the unjust judge and wore him down with her need for the judge said, "...I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me" (Lk.18:5). What if she did not continually come? The truth is, Jesus did not mention the word pray, but clearly that is what Luke said the parable is about. It is about prayer! What if she didn't pray?

Phrases like "who cry out day and night to Him...and will the Son of Man find faith" (Lk.18:7-8) when He returns, are synonymous with prayer. Those are the words of Jesus, "But when the Son of Man comes, will he find on this earth anyone with faith" (18:8)? CEV. What if?

What if we, as people of the Lord (from the Foursquare Gospel Tribe), really start getting after prayer? What if we not only start getting after prayer, but we really have this kind of bulldogged persistency and that kind of trust, that our prayer will change things?

What if?

Mike

"ALETHEIA"

Weekly Comment – 5/30/2010

"The Protestant Reformation" in the 16th century was framed around five phrases that would become the rallying cries of the reformation. More specific, these phrases were called "solas". Sola is Latin for "alone" and in English means "only." The five rallying points to the reformation were: Sola Fide (by faith alone); Sola Gratia (by grace alone); Solo Christo (by Christ alone); Soli Deo Gloria (to God alone the glory); and the last one was Sola Scriptura meaning (by scripture alone).

It is the **"Holy Scripture"** contained in what we call the Bible that formed the authority and the grounds on which the Reformation was launched and sustained. To the Christ and Scripture-centered believers throughout church history, the Holy Scripture (also known as the Canon: "Rule") is the only concrete source of TRUTH that settles everything for faith and practice of the Christian. There can be no other pillar and ground of truth aside from the inspired Word of God. Jesus Himself said, "It is written *man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God*" (Mt.4:4). Just a few verses later the apostle tells Timothy that, **"...all Scripture is given by inspiration of God"** (God breathed) and the apostle Peter adds, **"...that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy (of Scripture) never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit"** (2Tim.3:16; 2Pet.1:20-21).

Scripture is the very Word of God and Jesus said speaking to God in His earthly humanity, **"...Your word is Truth"** (John 17:17) and the Greek word for truth is Aletheia which literally means "not concealed"! God doesn't want His Word or Truth ever concealed and neither did the Reformers. Let's keep it that way!

Aletheia to you

Mike

JUNE - 2010

"CHRIST IN YOU"

Monthly Newsletter comment for June 2010

As a Christian, we know what the Biblical Doctrine of the Incarnation means. The incarnation is all about the eternal Son of God taking on a human form. He, Who had no beginning and Who will have no end was conceived of Divine origin made flesh in the womb of Mary and was born 9 months later at Bethlehem. God in Christ took on a human nature and His birth name is Jesus; because of what He did, His name has become the name above all names (Phil. 2:5-11).

Now that is all marvelous indeed! But the incarnation is more than just some serious Bible truth; it has profound life ramifications for all human beings—past, present, and future. The apostle teaches the theology and necessity of another kind of incarnation, that being the conversion of humanity. Biblically, the New Birth is the gracious gift of God that allows His much loved creature man to find his way back to the original design. The blueprint reads "image and likeness of God," but the natural and fallen man (every human being) does not evidence that image at all. The human nature is irreparably ruined. Hence, God's plan in Christ is the possibility for all people to not be lost, but be saved through Jesus Christ. That possibility is called being "born again."

It is obvious through Scripture that we learn the desperate plight of humanity "...all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God" (Rom.3:23). Mankind is not becoming lost; it is lost, condemned and incapable of saving itself. "... God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God" (Jn.3:17-18).

When a person is "born again" they receive a new nature, which is called the "new man" or the "new creation." In Christ, people get a second chance (of sorts) at being what a real human being was intended to be (2 Cor.5:17; 2 Pet.1:3-4). This is an incarnation of a different kind, "...the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations...has been revealed to His saints. To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: **which is Christ in you, the hope of glory**" (Col 1:26-27). Now that is a mystery and an incarnation of a whole new order. The first and most important incarnation is God clothed Himself in human flesh and the second kind of incarnation is God in His saints. WOW!

This new nature is instantaneous in the rebirth. The transaction between God and a confessing and repentant sinner is immediate. Their legal status before God is "the righteousness of Christ" apart from works and apart from the law (Rom.3:21; 4:6). That being said, major things have changed, but looking like and walking in this new nature is a lifetime process, which is why to one group of saints Paul wrote: **"...My little children, for whom I labor in birth again until Christ is formed in you" (Gal.4:19).**

Christ is to become incarnate in us. The Greek word for "formed" is where our English word "morph" comes from. To the uninitiated or pre-Christian, I urge, "Let the morphing begin," and to the Christian, "Morph on, Dude." The same process is seen in a caterpillar turning into a butterfly, something we call a "metamorphosis" (literally another form).

Until Christ be formed in us!

Mike

"WHY BE BAPTIZED"

Weekly bulletin comment for 6/6/10

"John came baptizing in the wilderness and preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. Then all the land of Judea...went out to him and were all baptized...in the Jordan River, confessing their sins... It came to pass in those days that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee,

and was baptized by John in the Jordan" (Mk.1:4-5, 9).

This incident in the life of Jesus perplexed me for years. The occasion troubled the Baptist himself as well, for Matthew's version said he "...**tried to deter him, saying, I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me**" (MT.3:14)? Jesus responded, "**...Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness.**" **Then John consented (MT.3:14-15).**

When John heard the reasoning of Jesus he consented and baptized Him. You may ask why this perplexes me and why did John not want to baptize Jesus. Remember what it says at the top, "...John came preaching a baptism of repentance...and the people from all over came ...confessing their sins." Therein lays the perplexity. The reason everyone was coming to John was to repent, confess their sins, and be baptized in the Jordan River.

John knew he was in holy presence when Jesus came to be baptized, which was why he said to Jesus he needed to be baptized by Him. In preview form Jesus was going to the cross at His baptism. The apostle shares the truth of water baptism when he says, "Baptism is our identification with the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ (Rom.6:3-6)." That's why Jesus said to John "**...Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness**" (Mt.3:15).

Righteousness is not in the event of being water baptized; it is the public announcement that the one being baptized is now in total identification with Christ's death, burial, and resurrection. The old sinful nature is being laid to rest and a resurrected new nature in Christ is coming out of that burial in water. Water baptism then is the announcement that we are dying to our old sinful nature and taking up the new nature of victorious faith-filled living in Christ.

Be baptized!

Mike

"Blessed To Bless"

Weekly bulletin comment for 6/13/10

"I will bless you...and you shall be a blessing" (Gen. 1:2).

There are many things the Lord promised Abraham and his descendents, and for the Bible record, "...if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Gal. 3:29).

God said lots of stuff to Abraham. But what is before us today is God's promise to bless him and the blessing he receives, he needed to share for "you shall be a blessing."

This in its simplest form, is the life flow of the people of faith...more specifically, people of Christ-centered faith. There are billions of people on earth that have been and are faith-based, but that is not the same thing as being faith-based in Christ. "The promise" made to Abraham comes only to those who believe and have faith in Jesus Christ (Gal. 3:22).

That's the only faith-based program to which that God's promises are connected and released. Faith-based belief in the person and work of Jesus Christ is how people get blessed of God. But we don't stop there; God blesses in order that we will pass the blessings onto others.

Blessed to Bless,

Mike

"It Is a Heart Issue!"

Weekly bulletin comment for 6/20/10

"And he did evil, because he prepared not his heart to seek the Lord" (2 Chronicles 12:14).

This statement was given to king Rehoboam, son of Solomon, by the writer of Chronicles as a commentary to his 17-year reign over Israel. Rehoboam was a bad king! The message paraphrase of that same verse is compelling:

"But the final verdict on Rehoboam was that he was a bad king—God was not important to him; his heart neither cared for nor sought after God."

Well there is a wonderful epitaph for the entirety of one's life work. Here lie the remains of king Rehoboam: "he was a bad king—God was not important to him."

The books of Kings and Chronicles have numerous statements like these about many of the kings of Israel and Judah. Often the statements will be linked to the "heart" of the king, such as he served the Lord, yet not with his whole heart. This God stuff is a heart issue! A modern phrase we could use of Rehoboam was that he didn't give a rip about God.

Real kings and those who think they are don't have much use for the King of kings. Kings throughout history could not have a rival, there was only room for one king on the throne and they were it.

Not all of us will be as obvious as king Rehoboam, "a bad king—God wasn't important to him." But, anytime we chose our own course and not the King of kings, we are saying "God is not important to us."

It is a heart issue!

Mike

"Putting In Courage"

Weekly bulletin comment for 6/27/10

"...encouraging one another..." (Heb. 10:25).

I will pick to be around an "encourager" any and every time I get a choice. We all know what it's like to be around people that have the ministry of the "wet blanket." You know the type I mean: those who just seem to have a gift to throw a wet blanket on you every time.

Their life doesn't seem to be going anywhere and they want us to follow their example. ☺

Another word for these dime a dozen folk, are "discouragers." They have this knack for taking courage right out of your soul in no time.

But the Bible tells us we are to "encourage" people, especially as we see the day approaching. That day is the coming of the Lord! Life is hard enough isn't it, without being around those with a calling to discourage others?

"Encouraging" is the English translation for the Greek word Parakaleo. A few of you went to a women's seminar last month called "Kaleo." ParaKaleo literally means, "To call near," all for the purpose of consoling and encouraging.

Our life can be challenging and national and international events can make life even more disturbing...hence, we all need to be encouragers.

Encouraging is not telling someone something you think will make them feel good...that may be called lying. Encouraging folk is spurring them on in their faith. Encouraging people puts in courage, builds faith in folk, and we all need "courage put in us."

Put courage in another today!

Mike

JULY - 2010

"The Zapper Of Our Strength"

Monthly Comment for July 2010

"...Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life..."

(Luke 12:22).

Easy to say, isn't it? Worry, anxiety, or fret seems part and parcel to the American way of life; more specifically, the way of humanity around the world. In Kabul or Baghdad, the anxiety may be over where the next car bomb is located, while in the USA, the loss of business on the Gulf Coast, due to the no-end-in site oil disaster, is cause of anxiety of another kind.

Nevertheless, Jesus' words remain constant, "Do not worry about your life." The goal of "worry" is to distract man from his greatest resource—God! Jesus tells us to not have "an anxious mind" (v. 29), which is a different word from "worry" (v. 22) and literally is our English word for "meteor." Worry, then, distracts us from God, with thoughts shooting through the expanse of our mind; not stopping until it burns out or hits something. Worry can kill us!

Worry is pointless, because it exhausts strength for the day and leaves nothing accomplished. Corrie Ten Boom says, "Worry empties today of its strength." Worry cannot change anything (v. 25-26). Worry puts emphasis on the same things heathens concern themselves about and leaves non-believers no Christian witness (v. 30). If we live in worry and anxiety, then at what point are we different or any better off than the Christ-rejecting world?

In truth, worry and anxiety are not characteristics of Christian faith. Worry is unbelief, sin. Worry puts the emphasis on self as though self can change things. The Christian faith is not in our abilities at all. The Christian faith is fully vested in the "all power and authority" of Jesus Christ.

The things of this world alone, with all its concerns, expose the shallowness of our faith. The fact that Father knows that we need these things "(v. 30) is a great comfort in challenging trials and disturbances, if we believe He is good. He knows our needs, every one of them! The priority of the believer is to "seek the Kingdom of God" and align our treasure with heaven's (Luke 12:31, 33-34). He is good and He is in control!

"Fear not little flock" (Luke 12:32).

Mike

Jeremiah 1:5 & Ephesians 3:20

Bulletin Comment for 7/4/10

For the last two weeks, I have had the privilege and honor of ministering to your children, and the children of this congregation at our summer camping programs at Dickey Lake.

In my few years of experience, I have noticed that there is something about camps that God honors. Camping programs have been a sacred time of worship, prayer, relationship building, and most importantly, an encounter with the living God. As you read through Scripture, you see stories when God reveals Himself to someone and that person is forever changed!

There are a couple of scriptures that I believe the Lord is speaking over this generation, not just at camps, but for their life.

(Jeremiah 1:5) "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart, I appointed you as a prophet to nations."

So many of our young people today feel like they are lost, forgotten, and have no purpose. Some of our young people might even believe that they are a mistake. That is why Jeremiah 1:5 is so important, having a young person know that God knows them and God does not make mistakes. In fact, Ephesians 2:10 says, "We are God's masterpiece..." (NLT)

It is amazing to see a young person come alive, when they get it in their heart that God knows them, He's called them, and has set them apart.

(Ephesians 3:20) "Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us."

This is the scripture I see when a young person realizes that God not only knows them, but has called them and set them apart. God truly did this at camp, through salvation, being filled with the Holy Spirit, and through physical healings. We truly saw all of these during camp.

I invite you as parents to partner with us even more in future years to come and participate in our camps and retreats, to see God do exceedingly, abundantly above all we could ask or think in our young people.

Pastor David

"Being Good Enough"

Weekly comment for 7/11/10

How good is "good enough?" Have you ever asked that question at any level in your life? How good in sales do you have to be to win sales person of the year trip? How good do you have to be to get the promotion?

What do you have to do to get your father and mother to recognize you and win their approval? How good do you have to be to make your wife (or husband) love you the way you want? Just how much do I have to do or how good must you be to receive the love and favor of God?

Whatever your answer is, multiply by 20 and you still won't be close. So how good does good need to be, or is real good, good enough? My first year in High School I averaged 12 points a game, coach said, "It should have been 20." Second year, it was 18 and coach said, "It should have been 20." The third year, it was 20 and coach said, "With a little more effort, I could have averaged 25." I got the point that I could have averaged 30 a game and it would have never pleased him.

This morning you will see how "good enough" isn't. The question in Jesus' day was, **"What can I do to have eternal life?"** For many, that is still the question. When we live outside of covenant relationship with God, whatever we do, will simply never be good enough.

Now go along now and be a good little boy!

Mike

"Have Faith In God" **(Mk. 11:22)**

Weekly comment for 7/18/10

It is humorous but sad at the same time to hear a non-believer tell someone to "have faith." They may be talking to a neighbor, whose best friend is dying and they will tell them to "have faith."

Sometimes they will even get more bold and say that they will be praying. I always think, "What is their faith in and to whom are they praying?"

I didn't say what I just said to be mean-spirited. It does seem to point out that our culture has become quite colloquial. By colloquial, I simply mean conversation. It is close to saying, "Hi how are you doing," when they don't want an answer and don't really care, or worse, they don't know they are even saying it.

Faith and prayer for that matter are not nebulous thoughts—they are based in Someone very real and concrete. I will leave you this reference from the epistle to Hebrews:

"The fundamental fact of existence is that this trust in God, this faith, is the firm foundation under everything that makes life worth living..."
(Heb. 11:1) *The Message* paraphrase

Have faith in God!

Mike

"Endure: Another Meaning!"

Weekly Comment 7/25/2010

"For the time will come when they will not **endure** sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, *because* they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers" (2Tim.4:3).

This is a scary verse of Biblical truth! The word that caught my eye is "**endure.**" The time is coming when people will just not **endure** sound doctrine (teaching). That time has been mounting for two millenniums with a few bright moments along the way. The 21st Century is not one of those bright moments!

Other translations say: "will not listen to...will have no stomach for...will not bear...will not have patience for...will not put up with." That is a very serious condition prophesied for mankind. What people will be looking for as those days come to complete fruition are voices "...who please them by saying the things they want to hear" (NCV). Here is a truth I want folks to hear loud and clear: **"People can find teachers anywhere anytime who will teach anything that tickles their fancy."**

Literally the word "**endure**" means **"...to hold oneself up against."** The sound doctrine of course is what the believer is to **hold themselves up against.** Unfortunately that is not what is happening all over America. People are holding themselves up against whatever scratches their itching ears.

This kind of admonition to Timothy is as valid now as it was in his day. In fact, those days the apostle spoke about to Timmy are more Latter than ever now.

What are you holding yourself up against?

Mike

AUGUST - 2010

"Government Needs Government"

Monthly Newsletter comment for August 2010

If you listen to the news at all, you have heard of the G.A.O. The G.A.O is the abbreviation for the "Government Accountability Office." In 1921, the G.A.O was established by the Budget and Accounting Act. This Accounting office was established as a watchdog of sorts on Congress itself.

While it may sound like an entrenched government bureau, it is not. The Accounting office is a non-partisan group headed by Comptroller General of the United States, appointed by a President for a 5-year non-renewable term and cannot be removed by the President.

Why mention the G.A.O? I find it amazing actually that Congress felt the need in 1921 to create an independent office, aside from Congress, to audit itself, keep itself in check, and hold its feet to the fire. You may think, "Well if the G.A.O is a watchdog on Congress, then Bowzer must be asleep these days!" But humor aside, don't you find it amazing that our government felt it necessary to have a major point of accountability for its actions and expenditures?

It is amazing and odd to me, because it is an institution of the people, by the people, and for the people that deliberately seeks to submit itself to a very Biblical directive. Jesus' own words say, "...Give an account of your stewardship" (Luke 16:2). But more amazing still, is that public officials believe accountability is crucial and many Christian people in the main have no such belief, nor desire, to be accountable. Listen, dear friends, the Church is not an institution of its own—the Church is of God, by God, and for God. He says living in accountable ways and submitting to authority in our lives is a big thing!

Truth is congressional people who don't like a G.A.O looking over them are congressmen and women who want to live irresponsibly. The same is true of people in the church. Folk who want to do their own thing don't want to be accountable to anyone, so they live in the shadows and don't let people know anything. The results are painful.

It is required that stewards be faithful (1 Cor. 4:2).

Accountability to spiritual government is a good and God thing!

Mike

"Wasted? I Trow Not!"

Weekly comment for 8/1/10

"...Let her alone. Why do you trouble her?"

She has done a good work for Me" (Mark 14:6).

Here, Jesus was responding to the criticism some of the disciples leveled at the woman who broke an alabaster flask of costly oil and poured it on the head of Jesus. They judged this act as an excessive waste (14:3-4) and felt led to share their opinion with those in the house.

Multitudes in this world think the endeavors of Christian people to be a waste of their life. They don't criticize the humanitarian things they do, as many of them do those things as well. They criticize believers for who they do them for—Jesus!

Living a life of moral integrity based on the life and teachings of Jesus, is foolishness to worldings...wasteful in fact!

Doing something for your neighbor or your friend that you can see and maybe even get "praise out of the deed," is one thing; doing something for Jesus, the Man, the myth, the legend, is nonsense. This is to be expected frankly! How can a natural mind comprehend the mind of the spiritual?

When believers criticize something done for Jesus and judge it wasteful and excessive, then we have a problem that solicits the "Let her alone" comment of Jesus. Jesus says, "She has done a

good work for Me. The core value here is that anything that is done purely for Jesus is neither trite nor wasteful.
Wasted on Jesus? I don't trow so!

Mike

"The Few, the Proud, the Disciple"

Weekly comment for 8/8/10

We know Jesus spoke to both large crowds of people and small groups of individuals. He had many one on one encounters as well.

We also know that His message "**Gospel**" was open to all, after all the most famous Scripture in all the world says, "Whosoever believes...shall have everlasting life."

But while His "**Gospel**" is open to all, He does seem to talk people out of following after Him as He does with the three men in Luke 9:57-62. The one guy is invited to follow Jesus, but he asked if he could bury his Dad first! "Let the dead bury their own dead," Jesus said! Wow! That is really tough stuff Jesus!

Obviously, Jesus had it all wrong setting the bar so high. No wonder so "many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more" (John 6:66). Jesus made being a disciple too hard! He didn't get the memo that, if you want a big crowd following you, you must lower the expectations so that everyone can feel good about themselves.

If you read Luke 9:57-62 well, you'd discover Jesus wasn't into big crowds, He was into big people. Big people require a big cost.

Got what it takes?

Mike

"The New Standard"

Weekly comment for 8/15/10

"Let me give you a new command: Love one another. In the same way I loved you, you love one another" (John 13:34).

I suspect the concept of love is the most abused and misunderstood value of all. This is perplexing since everyone everywhere wants meaningful love-filled relationships.

The only possible person who could care less about loving and being loved would be the sociopath. This hapless individual however is probably the way he is precisely because he was not shown love.

If any of you are looking for the Love of loves, it would be defined and demonstrated by Jesus. The old love was "love your neighbor as yourself," but Jesus takes that command to a new zenith, probably because the old command had the loophole "as yourself." The new standard of measuring love is "the same way I have loved you."

In short, the love we all want and need is "the way He loves us"...that would be selfless steadfast love.

Let us give what we want.

Mike

"The Short And The Long Of It!"

I Corinthians 9:24

Weekly comment for 8/22/10

This week represented the last session of one of the classes for YVBI. One of the students (I won't mention any names), just decided not to show up. I called him to get his assignment for the class. In the verbal jesting that followed on the phone, I told him he had short timers attitude, to which he responded, "And what, I suppose you have long timers attitude?" My answer was an emphatic "Yes!"

After I got off the phone, I started to think about what was just said. Was it better to have a long, or a short timers attitude? If you think in the long timers sense, we are in this for the long hall. We are running the race with Christ until death, and then we will be with Him in eternity. Yea! That sounds right, doesn't it?

Wait! Or is it that we are to be purposeful in the short term? We all realize that our time here on earth compared to eternity is but a flash, we also realize that without Christ, many people will spend eternity in eternal torment. If we think in a short timers sense, then we realize we don't have much time to be God's hands and feet here on earth, so we should take as many people with us as we can. Yea! That sounds right too, doesn't it?

I think I've come to the best solution; we can't just have a long or just a short timers attitude. We have to be in it for the short and the long of it. Yea, that's it; I think I've got it! Thanks, Anthony.

Scot

"The New Man"

Weekly comment for 8/29/10

"...and that you put on the new man..." (Eph. 4:24)

The "new man" is what the now life is all about. The "old man" is to be put off and the "new man" put on (Eph. 4:22).

The "new man" could not have happened without the work of Christ and the Holy Spirit. If any man be in Christ he is a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17). "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (John 3:6).

Being born of the Spirit is what Jesus referred to as being "born again." In fact He said, "...you must be born again or one can not see the Kingdom of God" (John 3:3). All people have one birth, not all people have rebirth in the Spirit (John 3:5). Seeing the Kingdom of God, seeing things, people, actions, and movements the way God sees them, requires a life, not a Sunday morning, in the Spirit. Life in the Spirit is intentional; it is daily, moment-by-moment.

The "new man" is "put on" everyday with constant adjustment toward the "new man" throughout the day. How? Starting the day in the Word, in prayer, and sustained throughout the day with repeated short prayers, praises, and reminders of who the Holy Spirit is and who we are in Him. I am and if you are "born again," you are a "new man" also. We are not that "old man" we use to be, we are a new creation. The new man is, "Created according to God in true righteousness and holiness" (Eph. 4:24).

You dah "New Man!"

Mike

SEPTEMBER - 2010

When Political Correctness Is The Last Consideration

Monthly Newsletter comment for September 2010

The early Christian community in Galatia was having their faith rattled by troublemakers. People who claimed to be Christ followers were, in essence, stating that Jesus Christ isn't enough. The apostle Paul said, in contemporary English, that he wished that "everyone who is upsetting you would not only get circumcised, but would cut off much more" (Galatians 5:12 CEV). Wow! That doesn't have too much political sensitivity to it, does it?

Is it ever politically correct to be intolerant? Is it ever right for intolerance to trump the sociability of toleration? For many, the answer is "**never.**" Toleration of all belief systems, even to some misinformed Christians, is a cardinal doctrine, yet without any Biblical warrant.

For the apostolic fathers of the early church, there was no toleration of anything aside from the doctrine of Christ; "Whoever... does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God" (2 John 9). Paul, to the Galatian Church, said that there were some "...who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed" (Gal. 1:7-8).

If the apostles would speak a curse of damnation over anyone, including themselves, if they altered the good news (gospel), I would say that the false mantra in America of toleration of beliefs has no place in authentic Christianity.

When it comes to the complete work of Christ, there are no necessary add-ons. To do so would be endorsing a tragic heresy that Jesus Christ is not sufficient or enough. When it came to the gospel, Paul did not tiptoe around with a political soft peddle of toleration that all roads lead to heaven.

His provocative language here, of cutting off more than circumcision requires (or castrating themselves), was a graphic word picture. The false teachers were saying, "You have to become Jewish (be circumcised) to be Christian (saved)." Paul is saying to the false teachers, "Why not really show your devotion to God and go all the way. This will really prove to God how serious you are and ultimately you won't be able to propagate your false doctrine any longer." So how does Paul's politically incorrect zinger of an illustration against toleration apply to us today? In short, the believer has no wiggle room. Christian faith doctrinally (its core teachings) is intolerant to any other belief system, or as its LORD said: "He who believes in Him is not condemned, but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God" (John 3:18). In another place, Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me" (John 14:6).

We love those of different faith, but we are intolerant of what they believe. People of other beliefs are condemned if they are not converted to the saving faith in Jesus Christ alone!

Solus Christus (in Christ alone),

Mike

"Love Makes It Hard To Hate!"

Weekly comment for 9/5/10

Several Sundays ago, I spoke on "Outrageous Love." When Jesus said, "**Love your enemies**," He shocked people! The people of His day were caught off guard. Romans were shocked and His disciples understandably bewildered. The command to "**love your enemies**" is as shocking today as it was then.

America is getting ample opportunity to love its enemies. To some degree, over the past 100 years, we have had some successes. Our nation has been plunged into some wars it didn't start, but finished and then rebuilt the nations we demolished, because something in the soul of Americans says, "**love your enemies.**"

Today, as in earlier times, we are found fighting another war. This time, the war is different! We are at war with people who don't have addresses, live in multiple countries that are not their own, have no governments but their own, and for the most part we don't even know their names and what they look like. We call them "terrorists!" They don't fight fair and they don't discriminate. Old men and women, to children, are their victims and if they can destroy military targets, that's a plus.

This is a most unusual enemy to love...I mean, where are they so that we can love them? It is almost an impossible question to answer, if it wasn't so simple...love everybody as Jesus Christ did. He knew His denier and betrayer and His executioner, we don't. We might have some of them also. Loving all people may not keep them from hurting us, but it will make it harder for them and we will be walking in the way of the Master.

Love can hurt, but love makes it hard to hate!

Mike

"Good Question!"

Weekly comment for 9/12/10

*"But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night...
since all these things will be dissolved,*

WHAT MANNER OF PERSONS OUGHT YOU TO BE

*in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God..."
(2 Peter 3:10-12)*

New Covenant prophets and apostles were very clear on this...Jesus Christ is returning! He will come as a thief (meaning unannounced and suddenly).

But while His coming will be unannounced and sudden, it will not be unexpected or unknown. Throughout the centuries, every generation has had a season of "the end is near" hysteria without exception and that has been the cause quite frankly, of large segments of population becoming scoffers.

Even going back to Peter's day as he said, "...scoffers will come in the last days...saying, where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation" (2 Peter 3:3-4).

He is coming: "The day of the Lord will come." Jesus said, "I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am there you may be also" (John 14:3). Thomas said in essence, we don't know where You are going nor do we know the way, but Jesus said, "I am the way..." (John 14:5-6).

He is coming and Peter's words are as true today as then, "**...what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness...**" since all of this is going to happen.

Good question huh?

Mike

"Listen Carefully"

Weekly comment for 9/17/10

"Now the Spirit expressly says that in the latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons..." (1Timothy 4:1).

These words would be uncomfoting I believe, were it not for the Holy Spirit and the Word of God. Deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons would be anything that is patently false taught by men and women, but inspired from the devil himself.

Something similar was spoken by Jesus to the religious leaders of His day when He asked them, "Why do you not understand My speech? Because you are not able to listen to My Word. You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do...he...does not stand in the **truth**, because there is no **truth** in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it" (John 8:44).

Deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons are lies from their boss (the devil). These deceptions and doctrines can be out an out lies easy to spot, or they can be dangerous shadings of the **truth**. The people, religious leaders of Jesus' day, were "deceiving spirits," because they "...were not able to listen to His Word" (8:43). His Word is **truth**, because it came from His Father. "Your Word is **truth**," Jesus said speaking of His Father (John 17:17) and Jesus Himself is "the **truth**" (John 14:6).

In brief; then anything and I mean anything that diminishes or deletes Jesus Christ from "the central doctrine," are doctrines of demons.

"Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God...If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him..." (2John:9).

Listening carefully,

Mike

"Praying Wisely"

Weekly comment for 9/26/10

"Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask" (Mark 10:35).

You have to agree, James and John sure weren't shy or indirect! They get an "A" for daring! We don't know exactly what prompted this request, but Jesus had just finished His third prediction to them regarding His upcoming death and resurrection in Jerusalem (Mark 8:31; 9:31; 10:32). These brothers may have figured now is the time to let Jesus know that they wanted to be top dogs in His new administration.

The request irritated the remaining 10 disciples (10:41). It bothered them, not because they were more humble, but probably because they had not thought of it themselves. Jesus' lesson to them all on servant-hood is fair proof of that (10:42-45).

I am seized by the initial response of Jesus to James and John's request, "...you do not know what you ask..." (10:38). Think first about what their request was! They wanted unrivaled access (control) to Christ in His glory and Kingdom (10:37; Mt. 20:21).

One of the truths here, is they did not know what they were requesting. The same word used here for "ask" is translated, "...whatever things you ASK when you pray..." in Mark 11:24.

What they were requesting was a powerful thing to ask for in prayer and they did not know what they were really asking for.

This lesson of course reminds me of Paul's admonition in Romans that "...we do not know what we should pray for as we ought..." (Rom. 8:26). We need the Holy Spirit desperately to help us to pray, because we don't know how and for what we should pray for without Him either (Rom. 8:26, 27).

Praying wisely,

Mike

OCTOBER - 2010

"The God of Promise(s)"
Monthly Newsletter comment for October 2010

"...For all the promises of God in Him (Jesus Christ) are yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God..." (1 Cor. 1:20)

Election years are trying for my soul! Candidates sound like God with all the promises they make to people to get their votes. Too bad they aren't like God, in keeping their promises. I believe the best and honest thing candidates should say in their campaigning would be, "I promise that if elected, I will make no promises," or "I promise nothing, so that, if I am elected, I will not have to break my promises."

We know human promises are flawed! Promises people make are often conditioned by promises others have made to them! Promises that some make are based more on good will and wishes than they are on their ability to follow through on their promises. Because truth has fallen in the streets (Isa. 59:14), there is little believability in things people say, let alone promise.

The verse of Scripture at the top of this comment is refreshing in the world of mindless and powerless chatter!

"...For all the promises of God in Him (Jesus Christ) are yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God..." (1 Cor. 1:20)

God, unlike man's word and promises, is flawless. His promises are not contingent on anyone's promises to Him or anybody's help. His promises are not sourced in good wishes or hope-so's...God's promises, every one of them, are backed in His power and covenant, something human beings know little about.

You see, "God is not a man, that He should lie, nor the son of man, that He should repent" (Numbers 23:19). He can't lie and does not know how to lie, which is why He needs not to repent. Truth telling is the very core of His being. His Word is inexorably bound to His perfection and nature.

His Word is the real "gold standard." God's promises, all of them, are in Christ and, in case you did not know, His name is called the "Word of God" (Rev. 19:13) as well as "Faithful and True" (Rev. 19:11). So when He promises, He is good for it! Yea! He is the God of Promise.

Mike

"Given To Hospitality" (Romans 12:13)

Weekly comment for 10/3/10

Hospitality literally means "fond of guests!" Christian Assembly just finished hosting the Great Northern District Fall Conference. Pastors and their respective church leadership from Montana, North Dakota, Wyoming, and Idaho convened in Missoula, Monday through Wednesday.

You may not know this, but Christian Assembly hosts the Great Northern District offices. We serve over 60 pastors and churches in the four state region.

I want to take this moment to thank all of you who served and helped make this conference a success. How a church receives and serves "guests" is something that says a great deal about that congregation. In fact, "...God is not unfair, He will not forget the work you did or

the love you showed for Him in the help you gave and are still giving to your fellow Christians" (Heb. 6:10) TEV.

I was as proud of you, as a pastor could be, for your labor of love for all these visiting leaders. You, who served, have been part of a beautiful time of refreshing to leaders from four states and I am grateful for your help. By the way, "guests" come to Christian Assembly every week!

Fond of guests,

Mike

"Trusting In God?"

Weekly comment for 10/10/10

I recently had a student walk up to me and ask, "Pastor Dave, what is it you are struggling with most?" My thought to my self was where do I start? Sorting through all the things going through my head, I clearly heard the voice of the Lord ask me, "Are you trusting in Me?" Proverbs 3:5 says, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding..." Sounds simple and basic right? Let's be honest. With all the things the world throws at us, whether dealing with relationships, finances, our jobs, family, or even our faith in God, trusting in God with our whole heart isn't that easy.

I am coming through a season of discouragement in my life that had to do with losing loved ones, frustrations with relationships in my life, and frustrations with ministry. Through all of these things and more, I realized that I am not trusting God. Examining my life, there were three things I looked at and adjusted to help get me through this and to start trusting God with all my heart.

1. Prayer: Where is my prayer life? Married couples always tell me communication in a relationship is the most important thing. I believe this to be true with God. Prayer is the key in our relationship with our Heavenly Father. If we are not praying, we are not trusting.
2. Hearing God's voice: This has to do with meditating on God's Word and waiting to hear His voice. I preach at least once a week. For me, it is asking the Lord to speak "to me" and not just "through me."
3. Simple acts of obedience: Praying, hearing, and obeying.
John 15:10 says, "If you obey my commands, you will remain in My love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in His love." Obeying the Lord is different according to what He speaks. To whatever extent the Lord speaks to us, a simple yes releases the love of God in our lives. If we are not obeying, we are not trusting.

Pastor David

"Too Much of a Good Thing?"

Weekly comment for 10/17/10

"Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called the children of God..." (1 John 3:1).

Obviously, the apostle wants us to know the love of God. John goes on to say that "...not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 John

4:10). Knowing how much God loves us is good, but can there be too much of a good thing there?

Is there too much of a good thing with the love of God? I'm sure all of us would say that is a ridiculous question...there can never be too much love of God in my life...there can never be too much of a good thing!

If I asked that question another way, however, we would see a problem! Can there be too much of the love of God when that is all one is focused on? The answer then becomes, "Yes!"

John will say, "By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him?" (1 John 3:16-17)

If all my life is about experiencing the love of God and not letting it be freely given out to others, then something is wrong. Stagnation and death would set in just as fresh water and fish from the Jordan River run into the Dead Sea and die, because there is no exit from the Dead Sea.

Freely we have received, freely give (Matthew 10:8).

Mike

"How to Pack a Shoe Box"

Weekly comment for 10/24/10

At last week's service we were blessed to view a short video and given a brochure on Operation Christmas Child. The title of the brochure is "How to Pack a Shoe Box." If you follow the directions carefully, you can bring joy and great blessing into the life of a child living in a very difficult situation.

I thought how true this is for us as believers in our walk with the Lord. If we pack our life (shoebox) with the good things of the Lord our lives will be greatly blessed, then we in turn can bless others around us.

Some of the things that should go into our lives (shoebox) are:

1. **Salvation.** John 1:12 "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God..."
2. **The Word of God.** Mark 4:20 "And these are they which are sown on good ground; such as hear the word, and receive it, and bring forth fruit..."
3. **The Holy Spirit.** Acts 2:38 "...Repent, and be baptized... and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."
4. **Prayer.** Matthew 26:41 "Watch ye and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."
5. **Worship and Praise.** Psalm 95:1-2 "(1) O come, let us sing unto the Lord: let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation. (2) Let us come before Him with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto Him with psalms."

Let's put the good things of God into our lives (shoebox), and then we can sit back and enjoy the blessings as they come to us and then are shared with others.

Pastor Ken Wise

"Sounds like the Help I Want"

Weekly comment for 10/31/10

"Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you" (John 16:7).

There is no way any of the 12 could have understood this statement by Jesus. Just ask yourself this question—if you had been with Jesus for three amazing years in a very close relationship, would you be thinking it's to your advantage that He is going to depart from you?

If I had been that close with Jesus, I don't think I would have wanted Him to "depart" and send me someone else—I mean they had no idea who this Comforter, Helper was! If you have this really awesome friend, but he tells you he is leaving you and will be sending "the friend" (Message Version) to you in his place, I'm thinking that isn't going to sit well with me and at first it didn't sit well with them—"...sorrow filled their hearts" (John 16:6, 20, 22). Poor guys! Who wants their best friend in the whole world telling them he's leaving, but he will send them a replacement?

I think this "replacement friend" has a real chance of working, when it's Jesus telling you He is sending another in His place. Jesus hadn't misled the 12 to this point and so they became very open to receiving this other Helper and as a result changed their world...

This Helper will help us change our world too!

Mike

NOVEMBER - 2010

"Rejoice Always"

Monthly Newsletter comment for November 2010

Life does not always go the way I want. Some of you may be tempted to say, "I wish life would go my way just once in awhile."

Life has a way of making us feel like we are the pavement instead of the steamroller, or the conquered instead of the conqueror. Expectations for so many have become points of exasperation and disappointment.

If that is the case, then let me introduce you to a great hymn that dates back 600 years prior to the birth of Jesus. Habakkuk is the guy who wrote this hymn. He is probably a Levite and well acquainted with music and temple worship from his notation at the very end of his prophetic script (Hab. 3:19).

His short hymn of faith:

"Though the fig tree may not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines; though the labor of olive may fail, and the fields yield no food; though the flock may be cut off from the fold, and there be no herd in the stalls—yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation. The Lord is my strength; He will make my feet like deer's feet, and He will make me walk on my high hills" (Hab. 3:17-19).

Habakkuk's world and nation (Israel) was falling apart. Fierce enemies (Babylon) were threatening the nation(s) and chaos was everywhere (1:2-4). This was not at all what he had expected. King Josiah's reforms of just a few years earlier have given way to injustice, lawlessness, and wickedness surrounding the righteous (1:4).

Not a good start to any book I would want to write. But somehow, this Levite, this man of God, sees God in the midst of the mess and ends his epistle with this hymn of faith.

I enjoy the way the "Contemporary English Version" puts his hymn of faith as the conclusion to the anguish he and Israel was experiencing—"But I will still celebrate because the Lord God saves me...the Lord gives me strength...he helps me stand..." (Hab. 3: 18-19).

Just so none of us could think Habakkuk was a fluke by "rejoicing" in tough times, hear his counterpart in the New Covenant—"Rejoice in the Lord always; again I say, rejoice" (Phil. 4:4).

"Always!"

Mike

"Advance His Love"

Weekly comment for 11/7/10

"...fulfill my joy by being likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord of one mind..." (Phil. 2:2).

In a perfect world, with perfect people, in a perfect place, at a...well you get my drift! Regretfully, that perfect everything will have to wait until heaven...you know the place where there is no more death...sorrow...crying...pain (Rev. 21:4).

In the meantime, the church, the Bride of Christ, is right smack dab in the middle of a war zone on planet earth, where taking back ground occupied by enemy forces is not measured in miles, but sometimes in inches.

In a perfect church, with perfect people, in a perfect place, there would not be any conflict or pain either, but there is. Sometimes advancing in positive steps in congregational life is like advancing on the beach at Normandy, slow at times, even bloody! Living life together as His church can be messy.

Why be part of "church" then? Well for one thing, being a part of an assembly of people linked in likeminded purpose, being of one mind and accord is well worth the effort. Having mutual love for each other is a gift that keeps on giving as well.

A perfect world may need to wait until heaven, but a loving batch of people can be a great start to advancing some of that Heaven on earth now.

Advancing His Love,

Mike

*"...I am willing; be cleansed"
(Mark 1:41)*

Weekly comment for 11/14/10

There are many questions surrounding God's will and none as many as those concerning healing. Does God answer prayer? Can God heal or will He heal?

This leper in the opening chapter of Mark's gospel did not content himself with chats around the water cooler regarding God's will or ability—he went right to the source. I doubt this man knew Jesus Christ was God in the flesh, but he certainly knew this man (Jesus) was from God. Or like Nicodemus would say in another place, "...for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him" (John 3:2).

Talking with others about who God is and what His will is has some merit, but when we are in need, talking about God with others about what may or not be His will must cease and going directly to Him is foremost.

The fact that he asks Jesus "if He is willing," is a strong indication that this was not the first time this question came up in his hearing...living among lepers, I suspect the subject of healing and God came up a lot.

Thankfully for him and really for us as well, this leper left the speculation aside and went right to Jesus and asked Him of His willingness to heal—Jesus responded:

I am willing,

Mike

"Thanksgiving"

Weekly comment for 11/21 10

The greatest of all of our national holidays, in my opinion, is Thanksgiving! From my earliest recollections as a child, I can still hear my mother's voice reminding me to say "please" and "thank you." I don't think I am not alone, because your mom probably had told you, "What are the magic words honey" a million times over as well.

What do you suppose was the first thing the first shipload of Pilgrims did when they landed in December 21, 1620? What they did when they landed at what became known as Plymouth, was to kneel on the sand of that beach and give praise and thanksgiving to God for their safe passage.

The address in the journals of Governor William Bradford of that historic moment on the beach is one of the most stirring pieces of history you'll find anywhere.

Why I say that, is because they knew the journey was ripe with the lure of a New World, but also fraught with danger. But the risk was weighed in the hands of their God and the mission of religious freedom and bringing the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the native people of what became known as America. I would like to echo 390 years later the words those first 102 people spoke on the beach at Plymouth, Massachusetts—***THANKS BE UNTO GOD!***

Happy Thanksgiving,

Mike

"Listening to Voices"
COMMENT FOR 11/28/10

Many people make fun of others who hear voices. I understand the humor of their jokes, but it's not fun and often not safe for the people with their physiological misfiring—it can be very lonely and scary for them. However, we all hear voices at some level, but please don't tell my doctor!

I hear the voices of my parents, departed from this life over five years ago. I occasionally hear the voices of my grade school and high school teachers and coaches. I hear the voices of my spiritual fathers in the faith—and I don't mean over the phone! Do you know we hear our own voices repeatedly everyday inside of us? You know that voice you hear when you make a mistake that says, "Why did you do that? I wish I could have a do-over!"

Then there is the voice of the LORD: "God...has in these last days spoken to us by His Son" (Heb. 1:2). Take note of the phrase "last days!" Last time I looked up the meaning of "last" it said it meant last as in "final"—nothing else or nothing new to be spoken about God and man's condition and terms of salvation. Jesus Christ is the final voice speaking to mankind in this age. This is helpful—His voice trumps all other voices!

GUESS WHAT THE FINAL, FINAL THING IS...THE "REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST!"

Mike

DECEMBER - 2010

"It Will Come to Pass"

Monthly comment for December 2010

"And it came to pass..." (Luke 2:1)

Before it "came to pass," there was a long time interval. Before it "came to pass," Caesar decreed that all the world should be registered (Luke 2:1). Before it "came to pass," there was no Roman Empire...there wasn't any empire. Before it "came to pass" is before the "foundations of the world" (Eph. 1:4). Before "it," goes all the way back when there was only God and no time or space at all!

That's when "it came to pass" actually started! Here is a mind provoking truth: In the counsel of God's own mind, there has always been the "Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" (Rev. 13:8).

History is actually **HIS STORY** unfolding. From the creation of the heavens and earth is one long unpacking of His purposes, which all "come to pass."

"It came to pass," after the serpent deceived our first parents, that a promise of "seed" to bruise the head of the serpent was spoken (Gen. 3:15). "It came to pass" that God expanded on the promised "seed" to a man named Abraham that would become a blessing to all the families of earth (Gen. 12:3; 17:19).

That "seed" became the nation of Israel. Prophets rose up, giving more detail to this promised "seed" to bless all the families of earth. Prophets said He would be born of a virgin (Isa. 7:14); He would be heir to the throne of David and have ministry to those in Galilee, who lived in darkness but had seen a great light (Isa. 9:2-3, 7); He would be whipped, spit on and beaten, disfigured by His suffering (Isa. 50:6; 52:14); He would bear our sins and sorrows (Isa. 53:4-5) and be buried in a rich man's tomb (Isa. 53:9).

A thousand years before "it came to pass," King David, the multiplied great grandfather of Jesus (the Christ), described in vivid detail, not only the Messiah's crucifixion (Psa. 22:12-18), but also His resurrection from the dead (Psa. 16:10). And Micah, the prophet, told the people where the "seed" would be born (Micah 5:2).

Then, "...when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman (Gen. 3:15), born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons" (Gal. 4:4-5).

"And it came to pass...that while they were there, the days were completed for her to be delivered...Then the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid, for behold...there is born to you this day in the city of David, a Savior who is Christ the Lord'" (Luke 2:1, 6, 10, 11).

One more thing! What God says "comes to pass." The same "seed" that came once has promised to come again (John 14:3).

Enjoy Christmas—more is coming!

Mike

"Don't Worry"

Weekly comment for 12/5/10

Five times in ten verses (Matthew 6:25-34), Jesus told His audience "not to worry." He even asked them, "Which of them by worrying can add one cubit to his stature?" (Matthew 6:27)

That question is as valid today as it was then. Will all of our worrying change anything even in the slightest? The answer in a sarcastic way is, "yes." Worrying will change a lot, namely our health. Worry can move us from relative health into some serious sickness. Worry can transform a peaceful mind into a chaotic and troubled soul in the space of moments. Left unchecked, that upset disposition can settle into life dominating fears and crippling depression. Saying nothing of how that worrier can put other souls around him/her at "dis-ease" as well.

Jesus does offer a solution! He doesn't say, "Don't worry" and then moves on. Before He tells us not to worry He says something about our "hearts."

He wants to be our treasure (Matthew 6:21).

Mike

"God Is With Us"

Weekly comment for 12/12/10

"...Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel" (Isa. 7:14).

Long before there were Hallmark Christmas Cards sporting this verse, there was this promise 700 years before the virgin conceived (Matthew 1: 18, 20-21). Long before Isaiah lived, Immanuel (God) existed. The prophet Micah speaking of where Immanuel (the Messiah, the Christ) would be born (Bethlehem) said, "...The One to be Ruler in Israel, whose goings forth are from everlasting" (Micah 5:2).

Isaiah prophesied more about the Messiah than any other prophet. Isaiah prophesied the coming of John the Baptist, who would prepare the way of the Lord. He foretold the suffering, death, resurrection, and reign of Christ over all the earth and the millennium of peace, where the "The wolf and the lamb shall feed together" (Isa. 65:25).

The modern church makes a huge thing of the birth of the Messiah and rightly so, but there is a whole lot more to come! I look forward to the rest of the inspired Word to be fulfilled as well!

God is with us,

Mike

"Do You Hear What I Hear?"

Weekly comment for 12/19/2010

"Hark the Herald Angels Sing" is my favorite of all Christmas hymns. The original music to Charles Wesley's lyrics was quite somber and slow. A century later, Felix Mendelsohn composed a cantata to commemorate the invention of Gutenberg's printing press. The music so impressed the English musician, William Cummings, that he adopted Mendelsohn's music to fit the lyrics already written 100 years earlier by Charles Wesby.

That little bit of history as to how the hymn, "Hark the Herald Angels Sing" was written however, is not why it is my favorite of all Christmas songs. It is my favorite, because there is not another piece of music that has so much Christ-centered doctrine stuffed into the three stanzas, sung anywhere on earth.

If people, who sing or hear this hymn at Christmas every year, would truly listen to the words the music conveys, millions of people could get born again around the world every Christmas.

Incidentally, Charles and his brother John Wesley, founders of the Methodist Church in the 18th Century, saw millions of people saved through the ministries of songs and preaching.

"Late in time behold Him come offspring of a Virgin's womb veiled in flesh the Godhead see hail the incarnate Deity pleased as man with men to dwell Jesus, our Emmanuel"

Do you hear what I hear?

Mike

"Twas the Day after Christmas"

Weekly comment for 12/26/10

Does your house look like a war zone or the city dump after Christmas? If it does, you're not alone! And if your house is all a mess, don't complain about it, because there are others who would love a mess, but they don't have any messer-uppers around (they are alone)!

One thing that none of us want is a mess in our souls the day after Christmas! Jesus had some timely words for all of us, if things have gotten messy for us on the inside... "My dear Martha, you are worried and upset over all these details. There is only one thing worth being concerned about, Mary has discovered it..." (Luke 10:41-42) NLT!

Frankly, it doesn't take a Christmas to push any of us into a messy soul. It can be as simple as a couple of days of disorder at home with family, or on the job with our work associates...the Martha in us can rise in an instant with just an un-expectant bounced check. Martha loves Jesus, but she can add unnecessary years to our lives. The moral of this story...

Enjoy the mess!

Mike