

# November 2019 Congregational Devotions

## "Here A Little, There a Little"

Pastor Bill

Isaiah 28:10 (NKJV)

For precept *must be* upon precept, precept upon precept, Line upon line, line upon line, Here a little, there a little."



## **November 1 – Friday**

### ***“Seeing Light”***

For with You is the fountain of life; In Your light we see light.

**Psalm 36:9 (NASB)**

The first of our passage declares that God is the fountain of life (Jer. 2:13); all life flows from Him. Also, God is the fountain of light. Just as there no life without Him, there is only darkness for us if we are left to yourselves. Many years ago, I learned from this verse, I can only light clearly in His light alone.

Why is this so crucial? Because light in God, when brought to us, becomes truth. When such illumination comes to a heart, the first things, the primary things, the essential things are discovered.

This light far exceeds knowledge. It is the discovery of the Lord Himself. If we see Him, we see light; if we see light we will fall to the ground (Acts 9:3-4) – stunned and in awe. Instruction will not have this impact on us. We may listen and read much instruction but still lack deep transformation. When the light of Psalms 36:9 dawns in our heart, we become blind to one world and opened to another.

Please note the brilliance of God’s light, it first blinds and prostrates us; and then opens our eyes to see. Light is painstakingly meticulous as when it shines we are softened, humbled and broken. All that is Laodicea (Rev. 3:18) must be able to see before it can receive the Lord’s promise. Now you know why I continually emphasize this verse to our church. For our instruction to be fruitful, the hearers must let it be saturated with God’s light – He is fountain of life and light.

**Pastor Bill**

## November 2 – Saturday

### ***“Warfare In The Invisible Realm”- Pt. 1***

<sup>3</sup> For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, <sup>4</sup> for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. <sup>5</sup> *We are* destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and *we are* taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ,

#### **2 Corinthians 10:3-5 (NASB)**

Here is a passage containing pivotal truth for a sound mind. 2 Cor. 10:3-5 is pivotal to my own soundness of mind – to whatever degree I can claim soundness. I have memorized and love it in the NASB.

The effort of the devil, unbelief and the world to break the back of God’s purpose in your own resolve will begin at this point. While unbelief and our own flesh can get us into enough trouble there are such things as direct assaults upon us from the adversary who seeks to steal and destroy the possibilities of purpose and joy from our life. Many are unable or just do not recognize those things and consequently, don’t know how to declare war and return an attack.

- *According to flesh* (v. 3) — This does not mean a carnal commitment to indulgence but that though we walk in a material realm, the conflict we’re engaged in **transcends that realm**.
- *Weapons of warfare* (v. 4) — Our resources are not found in or limited to human reasoning. Their dynamic comes **from God**.
- *Strongholds* (v. 4) are **barricades against your future**, against your life being fulfilled according to God’s creative purpose for you. An example is the walls of Jericho (Joshua 6). Israel’s successful attack defies human logic, but illustrates the victory of people who move in the purposes and resources of God.
- *Imaginations and thoughts* (v. 5) are said to be things that **exalt themselves**. They are **personified**—meaning, they are **beings** exalting themselves against God’s purpose in you.

Everything the adversary does is intended to reduce to rubble the image of God’s purpose in you. God has something in mind for you. The adversary would like to erase that prospect from your mind by seeking to sell you what is *his* mind for you. He does that by something the Scripture identifies as *thoughts and imaginations* that have another source than just the rising of creature thoughts or imaginations—these thoughts come from Hell.

**Pastor Bill**

## November 3 – Sunday

### “Warfare In The Invisible Realm”- Pt. 2

Consider this, the word *fortresses* (ochyrōma) *strongholds* is an accurate rendering i.e., *a dungeon*. The word *speculation* (logismous) means arguments, false reasoning, something *calculated*. It has to do with things that are treated as forts or citadels to be conquered. This has to do with **systematic lines of reasoning** (consider our word “logic”). It’s virtually mathematical, referring to the orderly presentation of a philosopher making his case for what he sees as truth in a logical presentation. With *logismos*—the presentation of his case—is also *diatribo* (consider “diatribe”), the philosopher’s attempt to **wear down** through debate any argument presented by a challenger.

The “every thought” (noēma) means device or thought suggestive of evil intent or purposes. These are thoughts and imaginations that are uncontrolled, wild, inaccurate, untrue, devilish and set against God.

Let’s bring this home to our personal lives. These disputes come in quiet moments, following a situation where it seems there would be something to argue, and starts *rubbing on that point*. The rubbing, the wear and tear on a person’s mind can bring tragic results. People become broken under constant *assault that argues against their worth and value*, not only to their perspective as an individual, but in the worth and value of what God sees in them.

Every priest has a sense of call. The specifics of it vary, but the call that God gives to each one of us is up for grabs in hell’s agenda, the strategies of the flesh and deceit of the world, every day. They will work in tandem to do anything to wear you down *just a little more* to suggest that this was a pipe dream or invention of your making. Have you ever found yourself wondering, *Is this my idea or God’s? Why are things happening this way? Is it me? That’s it—there must be something wrong with me.*

*We are not talking about a casual pursuit of holiness; we’re talking about the bottom line issue. I listen to believers who say the reason they’re not seeing breakthrough is because, somehow, they haven’t done enough or they haven’t prayed enough. I do not argue against the disciplines and their ability to make our heart available, but there is a constant badgering from this triad that seeks to wear us down with such arguments.*

We are exhorted and encourages here to put yourself in contest with the greatest argument of all against them—the *argument of Calvary*. In the words of the classic song, *I need no other argument, I need no other plea; it is enough that Jesus died, and that He died for me.* The Cross is the ultimate argument for the enormity of your personal value not only of your eternal soul, but of the ministry to which God called you.

**Pastor Bill**

## November 4 – Monday

### *“Reverence In Our Heart”*

“but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always *being* ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence;

#### **1 Peter 3:15**

Dr. Walter Martin, the founder of Christian Research Institute, challenged me to memorize and live this verse. He would declare, “If you walk as the fragrance of Christ, be sure people will ask questions and you need to be able to give a response.” Here are some insights the Spirit has assisted me with over the years.

Our lack of reverence for the Lord’s abiding Presence is the reason we lack the power of the Spirit. The reason for this is that many have not seen the glory of His indwelling company. As a result, the church experiences quite a mixture, those who recognize the Lord’s ownership of their lives and others who are still their own masters. Revelation and illumination that our hearts are God’s dwelling place will transform the walk of any believer.

The word "sanctify" in our text is the translation of a Greek word meaning "to set apart" in contrast to being afraid. The exhortation is to set apart Christ as Lord in the heart. Peter was exhorting believers to set apart the Lord Jesus, as Jehovah, Very God, in their hearts, giving first place to Him in obedience of life. The word *Kurios* also has the idea of "master" in it. Thus, the second Person of the Triune God was to be lord and master of their lives. He was to be their resource and defender when persecution came.

Not only are we to find a refuge in Christ Jesus in setting Him apart as Lord of our lives, but we must be ready to give an answer to those who ask questions on why and what do we believe. The words "give an answer", according to Wuest, are the translation of a Greek word used as a legal term in the courts. It means literally "to talk off from," and was used of an attorney who talked his client off from a charge preferred against him. He presented a verbal defense. The exhortation is to Christians to talk the Bible off from the charges preferred against it, thus presenting for it a verbal defense. This attitude calls for an intelligent grasp of the hope and skill in presenting it.

This defense of the Scripture, Peter cautions us, must be conducted in a spirit of gentleness and fear. The Christian who defends the Faith once for all delivered to the saints, must not deal with the opposition in a high-handed, domineering way. He must follow in the footsteps of the One who said of Himself, "I am meek and lowly in heart." He must defend the Faith with fear in his heart. "This fear is self-distrust; it is tenderness of conscience and is watchfulness against temptation.

## November 5 – Tuesday

### *“...And Peter...”*

"But go, tell His disciples and Peter, 'He is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see Him, just as He told you.' "

**Mark 16:7**

It is still a clear memory for me when Pastor Valentine ministered this word on a snowy Easter morning. The words “and Peter” cause tears to fall. Why? What makes Peter different from the others? Three days before the resurrection, Peter not only denied the Lord before men, he even denied the Lord before a maid who was despised by others at that time. But the Lord wanted Mary to tell the disciples and make sure Peter knows about His resurrection. The words “and Peter” have a very deep meaning!

If any of us share Peter’s experience, it would be easy to think: “The sin which I have committed is not a common sin. I cannot draw close to the Lord anymore. The Lord has already forsaken me. I told the Lord that I would die for Him, and the Lord said that before the cock crowed twice, I would deny Him three times. I did not fall before the high priest or before the powerful Pilate, but before the questioning of a maid. I denied the Lord once, twice, and finally I even swore in my denial of the Lord. What type of man am I? I confess He is the Christ, the Son of the living God. Then, I end up denying Him. I cried with regret, I have no idea how the Lord is going to treat me.. He knew what I had done. What should I do? I dare not come close to Him anymore. I dare not approach Him because there is a sin which separates me from Him.”

Here was a fallen, sinful Peter, a Peter who had denied the Lord. Yet the Lord specifically mentioned him. This is the gospel! Do we know that once the Lord saves you, He saves you eternally? Although you may be discouraged, the Lord will never be discouraged. A sinful person like you may feel shame in turning back to Him, but the One you have sinned against considers that there is nothing wrong in returning to Him. Why should you keep focusing of your failure when His focus is so much larger?

Among the four Gospels, only the Gospel of Mark records this matter. The Gospel of Mark was dictated by Peter and written down by Mark. The words “tell His disciples and Peter” were specifically dictated by Peter. These words might not have been important to other people, but they were very important in Peter’s heart. When the Holy Spirit was writing the Bible, He specifically wanted to show us that, even though these few words were considered unimportant by Matthew, Luke, and John, they were very unforgettable and important to Peter who dictated the Gospel of Mark. “And Peter” had special meaning for him. Each remembrance of these words was sweet. Words of grace are especially memorable to the person who receives the grace.

## November 6 – Wednesday

### *“How Jesus Travels With The Disappointed”*

*Scripture: Luke 24:13-32*

While today’s devotion a two paragraphs of Scripture, I share you the first Easter narrative to come alive to me. As we begin, let’s note that the two walking are common, ordinary disciples and one does not even have a name. They were in deep discussion concerning the events of the last three days – an interaction tinged with sadness of disappointment

We might ask a question here: Would you travel with those who are disappointed in you? Despite the experience of death and resurrection fresh upon Him, He thought it important to come to these disappointed disciples. The risen Lord joyfully travels with those in distress seeking light.

We read, “But their eyes were prevented from seeing Him”. Yes, grief will have that sort of effect on us. All of our visual vigor is spent on what we have lost. The Lord’s death shattered their hope. But that is not all, His death shattered their trust. Those two strands of grief will prevent us from seeing Him.

The Lord’s question of vs. 17 (please read it), is Jesus entering the maize of perplexity. He is beginning to enter in to unravel the tangled complexities of their difficulties and sadness. Let me restate that simply, the Lord is measuring the frame surrounding the picture of grief.

When Jesus rhetorically says, “What things?” – the despondency of the soul surfaces – a volatile button touched. I appreciate the movement of the Lord here, He will not have them rack their brains with half-finished facts (messages by angels, Peter and Mary).

We see in verse 25 (again, please read), Jesus begins to reframe the picture by instructing them first. With Mary, it was revelation, then instruction – reversed order here. Why? Her grief was personal and theirs was causal. To them, Jesus was fatal to His claims of Messiah. The instruction for us is this: we cannot understand the resurrection or believe it until we understand the meaning of His death. “*He* who was delivered over because of our transgressions, and was raised because of our justification (Rom. 4:25).

A chance companion must part company when the destination is reached (vs. 28). Here we see one of the conditions of revelation to the disappointed: *He will not stay with us uninvited*. When disappointed we must invite by *desire* by opening our hearts to His entrance. *Where the Lord is invited as guest – He becomes the host*. What a strange scene with this stranger at the head of the table.

As their eyes are opened to recognize Him (vs. 31), the Lord vanishes – “It is to your advantage...” (John 16:6-7). To the disappointed Jesus says:

- 1) If you will, I will travel with you on the journey.
- 2) I will encourage you to speak of your perplexity and sorrow.
- 3) I will cast on My Word.
- 4) If you will, I will come into your house.
- 5) I will, reframe and transform the picture.

## November 7 – Thursday

### “When The Journey Gets Dangerous”- Pt. 1

Scripture: Acts 27:4-28:14

Here is a segment of the historical narrative of Acts that sprang to life for me eight years ago. The structure will be different than my norm by securing particular verses from the account.

#### Acts 27:4

“...the winds were contrary”.

Different types of journeys abound (business, marriage, health, parenting, etc.) and one common thread brings all of them together. We want them to be **conflict-free**. However, the winds on Paul’s journey were antagonistic, obstinate, uncooperative, defiant and stubborn. Anyone able to connect?

We are never called to a lifetime of coasting. Certain evidences point to a posture of **cruising** and **musings**, heading for a **bruising** and definite **losing**:

1. Prayer ceases to be a vital part of life.
2. Satisfied with Bible knowledge already required.
3. Sin indulged – no uproar in the soul.
4. Money & material things become a pre-occupation.
5. Tears dried up – unmoved by pain.
6. Spiritual values become passive and faith is restricted.

#### Acts 27:7

“And when we had **sailed slowly** for a good many days, and **with difficulty** had arrived off Cnidus, since the wind did not permit us to go farther...”

Observe the slowness of progress as measured, gradual, bit by bit, a snail’s pace. Here is the difficulty - storms – each season has its storms.

1. Spring: Tornadoes – destructive storms.
2. Summer: Thunderstorms – frightening.
3. Fall: Hurricanes – overwhelming.
4. Winter: Blizzards – stops everything.

So, in each season of life, storms may inhibit our progress and slow us to a snail’s pace.

#### Acts 27:9

“And when considerable time had passed and the **voyage was now dangerous...**”

At his point, The journey is no longer fun. It’s not just storms but our journeys are not always *with the company we would choose*. If God meant for me to get to Rome at least it didn’t have to be with criminals and low-life. How many times does God bring people into our life we would never choose of our own volition.

## November 8 – Friday

### *“When The Journey Gets Dangerous”- Pt. 2*

#### **Acts 27:12-16**

And because the harbor was not suitable for wintering, the majority reached a decision to put out to sea from there, if somehow they could reach Phoenix, a harbor of Crete, facing southwest and northwest, and spend the winter there. [13] **And when a moderate south wind came up, supposing that they had gained their purpose**, they weighed anchor and began sailing along Crete, close inshore. [14] But before very long there rushed down from the land **a violent wind, called Euraquilo**; [15] and when the ship was caught in it, and could not face the wind, we gave way to it, and let ourselves be driven along. [16] And running under the shelter of a small island called Claudia, **we were scarcely able to get the ship's boat under control.**

God's journeys will seldom allow the *control* we want. We can hold the hand of the one in control. Some will say, "I want off this ship – I don't like how long it takes or the people I have to journey with!"

#### **Acts 27:20**

And since neither sun nor stars appeared for many days, and no small storm was assailing us, from then **on all hope of our being saved was gradually abandoned.**

Our journeys can start so smooth, so anticipatory but often end in despair and hopelessness! In these moments, the heart just settles in for surviving and staying safe. The tragedy is giving up when we are on the threshold of victory.

#### **Acts 28:14**

**“... thus we came to Rome.”**

**There Is A Promise – we will make it by His design and faithfulness** - For as many as are the promises of God, in Him they are yes; therefore also through Him is our Amen to the glory of God through us (2 Corinthians 1:20).

**Pastor Bill**

## November 9 – Saturday

### *“Speaking To The Need Of The Moment”*

Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God. <sup>13</sup> But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is *still* called "Today," so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

#### Hebrews 3:12-13

The second warning in Hebrews (first is *drifting* – Ch. 2) comes to our attention here with a proactive spiritual movement – *encouragement* – as an antidote to hardness of heart. What do I mean by the term? Foundationally, *encouragement is an expression that motivates someone to continue to walk in Christ, even when life is nonsensical and excruciating.*

What is in this text is radical because it calls for *a deep commitment, not to sharing ourselves, but to sharing the Lord by ministering grace to people's needs – focused on the needs of the moment.*

Instead of being focused on a *total transparency of myself*, Paul's direction involves a definite motivation shift, to exercise purpose of our words. Simply stated, in a heart-heart community, people are sensitized to *speak words that penetrate beyond* people's layers.

Not so much what we say, but *why* we say it. Not just to say the right thing but to cultivate from grace the *right motive*, which releases sincerity in the church.

What is the cost of such ministry to a congregation? It is at least the following and maybe more:

- 1) The desire to be *cared for* by someone stronger than me must be released, to be *dependable* rather than *dependent*;
- 2) I must never disregard the impact of my words on others;
- 3) The character of an encouraging community will not *only know about* God but be *actually experiencing* Him;
- 4) We maintain the commitment to minister to others even when others fail us;
- 5) The ministry of encouragement must have an awareness that people are hurting more than we know, fearful and confused by life;

Words vocalized through layers never encourage and actually create pressure. People are both valuable and *fearful*. When this is reflected in our communication, such words will encourage and affirm. May our hearts be so motivated to proactively within our community, move against unbelief and at the same release faith (which works by love), that we establish a priority on the ministry of encouragement.

**Pastor Bill**

## November 10 – Sunday

### “Brotherly Faithfulness To The Drifting”

But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is *still* called "Today," so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

#### Hebrews 3:13

Those of you who know my heart in teaching the Word realize how often I quote this passage in Hebrews as a crucial call to our church. To "encourage one another daily" is to call attention to and stir up one another for discharging our mutual duties. But in performing this obligation we are sadly lax: like the disciples upon the mount of transfiguration (Luke 9:32) and in Gethsemane (Luke 22:45), we too are very dull and drowsy and in constant need of both exhortation and incitation. As fellow pilgrims in a hostile country, as members of the same family, we ought to have "care for one another" (1 Cor. 12:25), to "love one another" (John 13:34), to "pray one for another" (James 5:16), to "comfort one another" (1 Thess. 4:18), to "admonish one another" (Rom. 15:14), to "edify one another" (1 Thess. 5:11), to have *peace* one with another" (Mark 9:50). Only thus are we really helpful one to another. And, note, the exhorting is to be done "daily," for we must not be weary in well doing. *While* it is called "Today" warns us that our sojourn in this scene is but brief; the night hastens on when no man can work.

"So that none of you will be hardened" adds force to the duty enjoined. The implication is unmistakable: hardness of heart is the consequence of neglecting the means for softening it. Clay and wax which are naturally hard, melt when brought under a softening power, but when the heat is withdrawn they revert again to their native hardness. The same evil tendency remains in the Christian. The flesh is "weak," our heart "deceitful"; only by the daily use of means and through fellowship with the godly are we preserved.

"By the deceitfulness of sin." Here is the cause of the evil warned against and upon which we need to be constantly upon our guard. It is the manifold deceits of sin which prevail over men so much. The reference here is to the corruption of our nature, with which we are born, and which we ever carry about with us. It is that which, in Scripture, is designated the "flesh," the lustings of which are ever contrary to the Spirit. This is one of the principal characteristics of sin: it deceives.

Think how different it might have been for Israel if they had daily encouraged one another instead of falling to negativism and grumbling and quarreling. Isolation, and particularly isolation from the mutual encouragement of the body, is a dangerous thing. In isolation we are "prone to be impressed by the specious arguments which underline worldly wisdom."

We are to encourage each other daily, not just on the first day of the week. We need to humbly say to the drifting, "Today, brother, today, sister, listen to his voice, so that you may not be hardened by sin's deceitfulness, making tomorrow's repentance and faith more difficult."

**Pastor Bill**

## November 11 – Monday

### “Neglect Of Encouragement: Small-Minded Community”

But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is *still* called "Today," so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

**Hebrews 3:13**

All daughters of Eve and sons of Adam are impacted by the negative patterns or relating birthed by sin. One of the prominent precedents is the *fear of exposure* and the *anticipated rejection* to follow. Such fear drives people into hiding, as the original couple, to protect ourselves with *defensive layers*. We come to church as if we are headed out in a winter storm, heavy layers of protection before venturing out. Whatever layer works, we keep it readily available for use when the next wintry blast of rejection approaches.

We are using the term *layer* to describe whatever we do or don't do to guard us from the dreaded exposure and to avoid fear. Therefore, we become like lovers kissing through a pane of glass: *layer-layer* relationship. This is so costly to a church as it produces *a surface community* living in shallow interchanges that does no more than a small pebble thrown into the ocean.

When a community becomes *layered*, the meetings consist of protecting ourselves from each other or using others to enhance our “self-esteem”. Please hear my heart here, in a surface community people *do not* touch each other, *experience* each other and *no encouragement* can take place.

When people listen to truth from behind layers, they will not be moved. The purpose in a surface community is not movement toward transformation of the deepest kind but, but to continue in a *protected life of comfort*. Layered people are programmed to maintain **some level of personal comfort**. To do so people must flee from the face of truth to avoid Biblical self-examination. For such communities the complaint is, “The teachings really don't do much for me.”

The synergy of a surface community spawns large numbers of unencouraged people. The truth ministered in this type of environment impacts in one of two ways:

- 1) Biblical revelation, illumination or inspiration **cannot penetrate** the layers;
- 2) Truth will strengthen fears and thus **reinforce the layers**.

Nice, but layered relationships, that neglect Biblical truth may promote happy, fuzzy and warm feelings but eventually end in mere sentimentality. Truth to these types of communities will promote *complacency* or *intimidation*. In contrast, truth presented in grace to an encouraged community will promote *deep transformation* or *rebellion*.

**Pastor Bill**

## November 12 – Tuesday

### “Time of Visitation”

"Go and gather the elders of Israel together and say to them, 'The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, has appeared to me, saying, "I am indeed **concerned about you** and what has been **done to you** in Egypt.

#### Exodus 3:16 (NASB)

The ESV declares, “I have observed you...”, implying the principal thought of God initiating and delivering blessing to us. I recall the emotion, the trembling of heart and the thought, “It can’t be possible...”, as I spoke to myself softly, “God is concerned about me and what has been done to me” – wow!

The Hebrew verb **pāqad** occurs three hundred times with a range of meanings. The primary connotations include “to number,” “to appoint,” or to “visit”. In this text God, out of His heartfelt concern, visits His people in a positive sense and involves God blessing them in a variety of ways. For example, He brings them out of Egypt (Gen. 50:24); comes to assist them (Exod. 13:19); provides sustenance and breaks a famine (Ruth 1:6); and promises release from captivity (Jer. 27:22; 29:10).

The source of this revelation is Ex. 2:24, “So God heard their groaning...”. ‘Heard’ is **shāma** which refers to God’s ability to understand humans language, not just the obvious words, but the human sighing of great anguish. Our Lord is able to interpret our groans of grief, oppression, rejection and our own failures. And His heart is aroused by our sighs and in response visits us with blessing.

Will you let faith bring you the good news, , “God is concerned about you and what has been done to you”? Then you have opened the door of your heart for His visitation to you. What a Savior!!!

**Pastor Bill**

## November 13 – Wednesday

### “Personal Revelation” – Pt. 1

<sup>17</sup> that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him.

<sup>18</sup> *I pray that* the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints,

**Ephesians 1:17-18**

Very personal are the insights which God reveals to us in Paul’s Letter to the Ephesians. We cannot fail to notice this one element – in this letter God causes Paul to two prayers: the one prayer as mentioned in chapter 1, and the other prayer that is mentioned in chapter 3. The first prayer is for vision whereas the second prayer is for, shall I say, other-centered edification. In the first chapter Paul’s prayer is for us to know our particular relationship with the Lord, while in the third chapter his prayer is for us to experience our relationship with the Lord in context of the church. My thrust is at present is to concentrate on the prayer found in the first chapter of Ephesians.

Specifically, Paul asks that we would have the vision of our heart enhanced regarding three things: *hope*, *riches*, and *power*. Observe the words in this prayer: “*I pray that* the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe”.

First, let’s look at *hope*. Paul wants us to have revelation of “**the hope of His calling**.” Our hope has its **source in our election**, which took place before the creation of the world ([Eph. 1:4](#)). It is sealed in us by the Holy Spirit, given as a delightful down payment of what is to come. This hope is the grand hope of being manifested with Christ in glory—“the hope of the glory of God” ([Romans 5:2](#)). “When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory” ([Col. 3:4](#)). Paul prays that we will see in our heart and experience the wonder of this colossal hope.

Second, *riches*. The prayer is that our eyes will be opened as to “the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints.” What he wants us to see is that *we are God’s riches*—“his possession,” as [verse 14](#)! Scholar F. F. Bruce declares: *Paul prays here that his readers will appreciate the value which God places on them, his plan to accomplish his eternal purpose through them as the first fruits of the reconciled universe of the future, in order that their lives may be in keeping with the high calling and that they may accept in grateful humility the grace and glory thus lavished on them.*

## November 14 – Thursday

### “Personal Revelation” – Pt. 2

There we have it: **we are his treasures**. God’s people are of more value than the infinite number of His created worlds in the universe. What a celebration! It is the longing of the Spirit that we will see this with our heart’s eyes.

Finally, *power*. Here Paul stacks synonym upon synonym in an attempt to describe the incredibly indescribable. With the Greek synonyms inserted, [verse 19](#) reads like this: "...and his incomparably great power [*dunamis*] for us who believe. That power [*kratos*] is like the working [*energia*] of his mighty strength [*ischus*]." Paul has layered these synonyms to express the highest power possible. The language is exhausted describing this power of the resurrection ([Eph. 1:20](#)). What we must see and lay hold of is that the same power that raised Jesus from the dead can bear directly on our lives now. This astonishing power transforms our destiny from eternal darkness and separation to children of God and gives us deliverance over sin in our lives. This power will be seen visibly someday in the resurrection of our bodies, for no created power in the universe can do that. This same power is operating in and for those of us who believe right now! Paul would ask, "Does your heart see it?"

Yet, there is more. J. I. Packer suggests the following three elements: "First, knowing God is a matter of *personal dealing*.... It is a matter of dealing with him as he opens up to you, and being dealt with by him as he takes knowledge of you.... Second, knowing God is a matter of *personal involvement*, in mind, will and feeling.... The believer rejoices when his God is honored and vindicated, and feels the acutest distress when he sees God flouted....

"Equally, the Christian feels shame and grief when convicted of having failed his Lord.... Third, knowing God is a matter of *grace*. It is a relationship in which the initiative throughout is with God—as it must be, since God is so completely above us and we have so completely forfeited all claim on his favor by our sins."

Packer concludes, "What matters supremely... is not... the fact that I know God, but the larger fact which underlies it—the fact that *he knows me*." It is Greek scholar, Kenneth Wuest, who adds, "Paul is praying that a permanent work of the Holy Spirit be done in the human spirits of these saints, that their inner spiritual capacities for understanding the truth may be the recipients of a lasting benefit, and this with a view to their knowing three things".

Therefore, you are immensely precious in God's eyes as His inheritance. He is glorified in you, and this glory is valuable. Check this, you, yes, you are part of the wealth that God possesses, dearer to Him than all the splendors of creation.

## November 15 – Friday

### “Personal Love”

<sup>18</sup> may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to *know the love of Christ* which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God”.

#### **Ephesians 3:19**

The italicized emphasis is mine. Let us note this is a progression of the first prayer of Eph. 1:1:17-18 and is the culmination of the second – “that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man,” (3:16).

Let’s examine the word “comprehend” (*katalambanō*) from verse 18. The comprehension of this verse is conceptual knowledge – that which from the intellect. Literally, it means to apprehend or to grasp.

In verse 19, conceptual knowledge gives way to experiential knowledge (*ginōskō*) – a knowledge that is gained by experience. This is not speaking of our love for Christ but His love for us. The greatness of it exceeds intellectual knowledge – it is the eyes of the heart being enlightened to see and experience it. Indeed, this is the purpose of personal revelation.

The word "surpassing" is a participle of *hyperballō*, "to throw over or beyond, to transcend, exceed, excel." This love surpasses knowledge, *gnōsis*, "experiential knowledge." That is, no matter how much the saint experiences of the love of Christ, yet there are oceans of love in the great heart of God that have not been touched by his experience. One is reminded of the words of that saint of old who penned the following lines on the walls of his cell regarding the love of God; "Could we with ink the ocean fill, and were the skies of parchment made; were every stalk on earth a quill, and every man a scribe by trade; to write the love of God above, would drain the ocean dry; nor could the scroll contain the whole, though stretched from sky to sky."

The saints are to have an experiential knowledge of the love of God "in order that you might be filled with all the fullness of God."

*That the Christ might finally settle down and feel completely at home in your hearts through the faith, in love having been firmly rooted and grounded in order that you may be able to grasp with all the saints what is the breadth, and width and height and depth, and- to know experientially the experiential-knowledge-surpassing love of the Christ in order that you may be filled up to the measure of all the fullness of God. **Wuest's Word Studies.***

## November 16 – Saturday

### “Prevailing Love”

<sup>14</sup> For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died; <sup>15</sup> and He died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf.

#### 2 Corinthians 5:14-15 (NASB)

A young man named Rick came to the Canadian province of Alberta to visit. He was a great skier, originally from here in Michigan, so one of his Alberta goals was to ski the big ones—the Canadian Rockies.

Rick set out with confidence early one morning, promising me tales of powder perfection when he returned. It was his face that was snow-white the next night.

“What happened, Rick?” a friend asked.

“Well,” he said, “I’m a pretty good skier in Michigan, but I thought the slopes would be a little tougher up here. So when I got off the lift the first time I thought, ‘None of those namby-pamby beginner runs for me, but maybe I shouldn’t try a triple diamond Extreme run the first time. I’ll start out slow with one of these Moderate runs.’ So I edged over to where the sign was pointing, and I slid to the top of the slope. When I looked down I just about died! I’d never seen a run this hard before! I fell six times before I got to the bottom!”

The mountains nearly did him in. Mountains can do that. They look beautiful on our calendars and computer screen savers, but up close and personal they can be deadly.

Our mountain of love in 2 Corinthians is like that – for the love of Christ controls us. That is, it governs us. Up close and personal such a wonderful love is unequivocally overwhelming. The Greek word also means 'to restrain,' a sense which many adopt here: 'The love of Christ restrains me from acting for myself.' This is a more limited sense, and is not required by the usage of the word, which is often used to express the idea of being pressed as by calamity or sorrow. In this passage it coerces, or presses, and therefore impels. It is the governing influence of love which controls the life.

There is a metaphor implied in the word *constrain*, denoting that it is impossible but that every one that truly considers and ponders that wonderful love, which Christ has manifested towards us by his death, becomes, as it were, bound to him, and *constrained* by the closest tie, and devotes himself wholly to his service.

*If one died for all.* This design is to be carefully kept in view — that *Christ died for us, that we might die to ourselves.* The exposition is also to be carefully noticed — that to *die to ourselves is to live to Christ;* or if you would have it at greater length, it is to renounce ourselves, that we may *live to Christ;* for Christ. redeemed us with this view — that he might have us under his authority, as his peculiar possession. Hence it follows that we are no longer our own masters. (Calvin)

**Pastor Bill**

# November 17 – Sunday

## “Releasing Love”

.....and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To Him who loves us and released us from our sins by His blood—

### Revelation 1:5

A wonderful passage, one of the first I memorized, and a passage full of meaning. Let's examine the highlights:

**The faithful witness:** A witness is the embodiment of the truth – if he is a true witness. Jesus was *THAT!* Jesus as the faithful Witness was a, we may say *THE*, faithful Representation of God's Mind concerning man. What God intended man to be, what the whole race of men had failed to be, Jesus became *THAT:* a faithful Representation of God's Mind in the creation of man. That is how we must look at Him while here on the earth: not just following His steps, noting His words and His actions, being interested or even fascinated with His teaching and with His mighty works. But looking deeper, deeper into His heart, into His mind, His whole mentality, His whole Spirit, looking deeper to see what kind of a Man this is. Perfect Love, Perfect Faith, and Perfect Obedience – perfect in these three things, and that is how He was the faithful Witness to God's thought concerning man. He was a perfect Representation of God's Mind. In that way, He was a “*faithful Witness.*”

**The firstborn of the dead:** Check out Colossians 1:18. The risen Christ regarded in His relation to the dead in Christ. He was not the first who rose from the dead, but the first who so rose that death was thenceforth impossible for Him (Romans 6:9); rose with that resurrection-life in which He will finally bring with Him those who sleep in Him (1 Thessalonians 4:14).

**The ruler of the kings of the earth:** Through resurrection He passes to glory and dominion (Philippians 2:9). He possesses over all the kings of the earth the pre-eminence which kings have over their subjects. No language could more sublimely denote his exalted character, or his supremacy.

Now, please note, The One who bears the testimony of these three titles *is the One who loves us!* Nothing more to be said. He is the lover of our soul and proof is seen in this doxology to Christ – we are released (washed or loosed), the two oldest manuscripts read, *freed* (loosed as from a bond) us. For “washed,” see Ps. 51:2, 7. Isa 1:16, 18. Ezek 36:25. Heb 10:22: and for “loosed,” compare Matt 20:28. Heb 9:12. Rev 5:9. In either case this is the fulfillment of Psa.130:8, “He shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities.” This can only be understood in terms of substitution.

“God has the first word. It is He who founds the relationship. His design, His choice, His calling – these are decisive. All that Agape can mean proceeds from Him. When men love God, that is the immediate reflection of the love which streams down from heaven on the elect.”<sup>1</sup>

What a love! What a Christ!

---

<sup>1</sup> E. Stauffer, “Love” pg. 56

## November 18 – Monday

### *“The Order Of Growth In The Kingdom”*

<sup>26</sup> And He was saying, "The kingdom of God is like a man who casts seed upon the soil; <sup>27</sup> and he goes to bed at night and gets up by day, and the seed sprouts and grows—how, he himself does not know. <sup>28</sup> "The soil produces crops by itself; first the blade, then the head, then the mature grain in the head. <sup>29</sup> "But when the crop permits, he immediately puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come."

#### **Mark 4:26-29**

In the previous parable (Matt. 13:3-23, *The Sower*), our Lord stressed that the Kingdom would be characterized by seed being scattered on the ground. The emphasis of the Parable of the Sower is represented by four types of ground, representing four states of heart. The fate of the seed seems to be determined by the four different conditions of the soil – one of which is called “good ground”. Perhaps one of the questions to ask is how does growth occur on the good ground?

Let’s examine the phrase *the soil produces crops by itself*... Greek scholar Kenneth Wuest provides this intriguing understanding: "The words "of herself" are the translation of *automate* which is made up of *autos* "self," and *mema* "to desire eagerly." The word means in its totality, "self-moved, spontaneously, without external aid, and also beyond external control, with a way and will, so to speak, of its own that must be respected and waited for." We get our word "automatic" from this Greek word *automate*. There is only one other example of its use in the New Testament, where the gate opens to Peter of its own accord (Acts 12:10). The earth, therefore, brings forth fruit automatically. The nature of the soil, the weather, and the cultivation of the plant, all enter in. But the secret of the growth is in the seed itself”.

Spiritual development depends on the life inside the seed itself – which forms the mystery feature of growth – it occurs as the seed reproduces itself into new life. Therefore, formulas and self-help models are not the source of advancement. How freeing and comforting that the “incorruptible seed” we are born of will replicate itself without the need of external agents. That seed of course is Word of God increasing our faith to produce its own fruit.

This is why spiritual growth is simple and enigmatic, albeit, not easy – and the reason this Kingdom parable is my favorite. Tender, beautiful, strong and mysterious, indeed the seed within you will bear much fruit of itself and we will not know exactly how. But you are invited to rejoice in the harvest!

**Pastor Bill**

## November 19 – Tuesday

### *“Faithful Promises”*

“....and His eyes were like a flame of fire”.

**Revelation 1:14 (NASB)**

When I saw Him, I fell at His feet like a dead man. And He placed His right hand on me, saying, "Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last,

**Revelation 1:17 (NASB)**

The next three days represent three of my life “sections” in the book of Revelation – a book full of promise, encouragement and the unfolding of who Jesus Christ is. May we begin with a portion from Ch. 1.

The Ascended Lord sees everything in its perspective and in the substance of its depth. Indeed, this can be discomfoting to those moving new dimensions of spiritual life. After all, Heb. 4:12 declares, “And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do”.

Yet this is precisely why the Lord **laid his right hand upon John** – the same the Lord Jesus did at the Transfiguration to the three prostrate disciples, of whom John was one, saying, Be not afraid. The "touch" of His hand, as of old, imparted strength, tenderness and encouragement.

It is right after this touch that the Ascended Lord reveals to John the spiritual conditions of seven different churches. These states were quite varied from thriving to actually being dead spiritually. But the impressive actuality to me is that no matter what the state of the particular church might be – *the Lord always left a promise to it.*

The sincere in heart need not draw back from the “eyes like a flame of fire”, seeing through every motive, every thought and every plan. Because whatever our spiritual state is – the Ascended Lord has a promise for us.

Do not shrink back from what He sees in you that is lacking or bound in difficulty. Let hope arise in who you are today because a promise is waiting to be released in your life!! Recognize you are in the prophetic stream of what God is doing on the earth. Receive the release of life that has been discharged in Messiah, and the ability to overcome that opposition—is with you as surely as it was with Messiah, because the same Spirit that anointed Him has come upon them.

We are the same as early believers were—relatively undistinguished people, but people to whom God has given the gift of eternal salvation, and to whom He has given the power of His Spirit. And when the Spirit comes, He wants to overflow through us to the people around us—people we might otherwise have nothing to do with.

**Pastor Bill**

## November 20 – Wednesday

### “A Rainbow Of Promises”

*Scripture: Revelation 4*

One of my favorite portions of Revelation is actually a summons to look at Jesus who calls His people to worship:

“**Come up here**”: Step through the open door. He says first, *I want to deal with your dilemma.*

“**Gaze at the throne**”: The Creator is in position; your circumstance is not beyond His ability to find a remedy.

“**There are resources abounding**”: There are hundreds of them for you in the Word.

Four times in the Book of Revelation you find this pattern, worship precedes the next stage of divine release of the verdict that rids the works of darkness and their control, and releases the purposes of Almighty God. He says, *Now, have I got a place for you. But when you get there, begin to worship Me.* Whatever is sealed against the will of God in your life, circumstance, realm of influence, will be loosed, so that the will of God be done.

John is being summoned beyond the limits of where he is. His circumstances restricted his ability to do what he would like to do. It is a mix of circumstantial concerns, and personal concerns that have you trapped. Jesus calls His people to a transcendent moment. The way you find it is in the worship of the Living God. The beginning point is recognizing that He sees where you are, and He calls, “Come up here!”

A voice calls, and that door is opened to transcend whatever may be those limitations. Three things happen when that door opens:

“**I saw a throne.**” John is saying, *I was brought to a reminder that everything I deal with—as problematic as it may be, it is trivial by comparison with the grandeur and the glory of that throne.*

**He saw those worshipping around the throne.** And they’re worshipping the One who is the Creator. This is not only the One who rules above all, this is **the One who is able to take nothing and bring about anything that’s needed.** In other words, you are never at your wit’s end. *COME HOME and step through the door.*

**There’s a reason for that rainbow around the throne.** The rainbow isn’t just pretty; it’s the **reminder of a promise.** There are some who have been battered and scarred by circumstance, and the Lord says, *Step in, look at the throne, see the Creator who’s able, and the rainbow of promise for you.*

## November 21 – Thursday

### “A Lofty Invitation”

<sup>4</sup> Then I *began* to weep greatly because no one was found worthy to open the book or to look into it; <sup>5</sup> and one of the elders said\* to me, "Stop weeping; behold, the Lion that is from the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has overcome so as to open the book and its seven seals." <sup>6</sup> And I saw between the throne (with the four living creatures) and the elders a Lamb standing, as if slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God, sent out into all the earth. <sup>7</sup> And He came and took the book out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne.

#### Revelation 5:4-7

The book represents the secret purposes of God about to be revealed. The designs and methods of Divine Providence, toward the church and the world, are stated, fixed, and made a matter of record. The counsels of God are altogether hidden from the eye and understanding of the creature. The creatures cannot open it, nor read it; the Lord only can do so. Those who see most of God, are most desirous to see more; and those who have seen his glory, desire to know his will. But even good men may be too eager and hasty to look into the mysteries of the Divine conduct. Such desires, if not soon answered, turn to grief and sorrow. The impact was loud wailing was normally reserved for intense mourning, such as for a person's death.

The "lion of Judah" alludes to Genesis 49:9-10, which predicted the Davidic dynasty and was understood Messianically in later Jewish literature (4 Ezra, the rabbis). "Root of David" alludes to Isaiah 11:1, 10 (Jesse was David's father), which suggests that the Messiah would come after the Davidic line had seemed cut off.

The word "overcome" means prevailed *Greek*, "conquered": absolutely, as elsewhere (Rev. 3:21): *gained the victory*: His past victory, confirmed in the Ascension, over all the powers of darkness entitles Him now to open the book.

His Ascension authority will also break the seals in the book of your life. Only Jesus is worthy to loose these personal seals – behind which are the deep mysteries of God for your life. Oh, – how deep are these mysteries and how sad when they remain unopened. While brothers and sisters may assist us in various functions of body ministry – only the Lion of the Tribe of Judah can unlock the inscrutable ways of God in the tapestry of your life.

Respond to the call to "come up higher" (Rev. 4:1) – dwell at His throne and watch the Ascended Lord make known the deep footprints in your walk and the beautiful canvas He is painting with such tender yet great detail. It's there – "*The Spirit, not content to flit around on the surface, dives into the depths of God, and brings out what God planned all along*" – 1 Cor. 1:10 The Msg.

## November 22 – Friday

### *“The Delight Of My Delights” – Pt. 1*

<sup>3</sup> O send out Your light and Your truth, let them lead me; Let them bring me to Your holy hill And to Your dwelling places. <sup>4</sup> Then I will go to the altar of God, To God **my exceeding joy**; And upon the lyre I shall praise You, O God, my God.

**Psalm 43:3-4 (NASB)**

The comprehensiveness of the implications of this Scripture that brings it close to the top of my life verses. Check out other translations, italicized emphasis mine:

Then will I go unto the altar of God, *unto the God of the gladness of my joy*:

**Psalms 43:4 (Darby)**

Then will I go to the altar of God, to God, my joy and my delight.

**Psalms 43:4 (NIV)**

There I will go to the altar of God, to God—the source of all my joy.

**Psalms 43:4 (NLT)**

Jonathan Edwards, the renowned Puritan, taught that the destruction the fall brought upon our soul consists in our losing the nobler and more benevolent principles of our nature, and falling completely under the power and government of self-love. . . . Sin, like some powerful bite, constricted our soul to the very small dimensions of selfishness; and God was forsaken, as well as other people, and we (all of mankind) retired within ourselves, becoming totally governed by narrow and selfish principles and feelings. Self-love became absolute master of our soul, and the more noble and spiritual principles of his being took flight to be with us no more.

People who are governed by this self-love, he says, "place [their] happiness in good things that are confined or limited to themselves, to the exclusion of others. And this is selfishness. This is the thing most clearly and directly intended by that self-love which the Scripture condemns." He says this is what Paul has in mind when he says in 1 Corinthians 13:5, "Loves seeks not its own." That is, true, spiritual love is not governed by a narrow, limited, confined pursuit of one's own pleasure.

Edwards further states that self-love is confined and narrow and selfish - and not virtuous - until it embraces or delights in God. If self-love embraces family, but not God, it is not virtuous. If it embraces country, but not God, it is not virtuous. If it embraces all the nations of the world, and not God, it is not virtuous. Why not?

**Pastor Bill**

## November 23 – Saturday

### *“The Delight Of My Delights” – Pt. 2*

Edwards simply says, until self-love rises to embrace God, it embraces "an infinitely small part of universal existence." In other words, his treatment of self-love, like everything else he wrote, was aimed at defending the centrality and supremacy of God in all things.

Following his train of thought on God's centrality, Edwards declares God is glorified within Himself these two ways: 1) By appearing . . . to Himself in His own perfect idea [of Himself], or in His Son, who is the brightness of His glory. 2) By enjoying and delighting in Himself, by flowing forth in infinite love and delight towards Himself, or in his Holy Spirit . . . So God glorifies Himself toward the creatures also in two ways: ( By appearing to . . . their understanding. 2) In communicating Himself to their hearts, and in their rejoicing and delighting in, and enjoying, the manifestations which He makes of Himself. . . . God is glorified not only by His glory being seen, but by its being rejoiced in. When those that see it delight in it, God is more glorified than if they only see it. His glory is then received by the whole soul, both by the understanding and by the heart<sup>1</sup>.

Therefore, "*True religion, in great part, consists in holy affections.*"<sup>2</sup> Edwards develops this premise by stating, "Love is not only one of the affections, but it is the first and chief of the affections, and the fountain of all the affections. From *love* arises *hatred* of those things which are contrary to what we love, or which oppose and thwart us in those things that we delight in."<sup>3</sup> Notice how "delight in" is interchangeable with "love."

What this means is that the battle for joy -that is, the battle to delight in God above all other things, the battle to be satisfied in God above all competing satisfactions in the universe-is the main battle in the universe. The reason the battle for delight in God--the battle to be satisfied in God and love God--is infinitely important is that ***delighting in God is essential to glorifying God***, and glorifying God is why the universe was created.

**God will not be the center of my life – my thinking – emotions and will unless He is the center of my joy!**

---

<sup>1</sup> Jonathan Edwards, *The Dissertation Concerning the End for Which God Created the World*, in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 8, ed. Paul Ramsey (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1989), 526, 531.

<sup>2</sup> The Religious Affections, Part I, Section 1.

<sup>3</sup> Jonathan Edwards, "Essay on the Trinity," 118.

## November 24 – Sunday

### “Tomorrow’s Promises”

Now it came about after the death of Moses the servant of the LORD, that the LORD spoke to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' servant, saying,

<sup>2</sup>"Moses My servant is dead; now therefore arise, cross this Jordan, you and all this people, to the land which **I am giving to them**, to the sons of Israel.

<sup>3</sup>"Every place on which the sole of your foot treads, **I have given it to you**, just as I spoke to Moses.

#### Joshua 1:1-3 (NASB)

My fondness for the opening segment of the book of Joshua (Ch. 1-3) is grounded on three powerful dynamics of transition in the passage: 1) The Israelites were transitioning from a nomadic tribal existence to becoming a people of extended warfare; 2) A new generation and a fresh leadership was now a reality. How would the promises of God apply in this time of transition; and, 3) Joshua's loss of a mentor, sponsor, friend to whom he was dependent on out of respect & love.

The promise of God is always full of possibilities. We see this in vs.1 as the Lord speaks (creates possibilities) for Joshua. Words of promise from the Lord is the reason God gave His Son to birth the church, the possibility for every life and the reality for our hope for the future. So, in this passage we see the *Promise* and *Possibility*.

(vs. 2) **The Problem???** The uncertainty of transition! God's word to Joshua concerning Moses is not a surprise or sudden revelation to Joshua. If anyone was aware of Moses death – it was Joshua. God is saying, “A turning point in your life is upon you. I have created this moment and your responsibility to seize the opportunity given and not to depend on anyone else but walk with Me in the uncertainty.”

(vs. 3): **The Price???** The removal of dependence! The Jordan river is the boundary that separates Israel from the Borders of the Promised Land. It is indeed a formidable boundary. Joshua no longer has the support & encouragement of Moses. The price of possessing the promise is the removal of our dependence upon someone who has been a blessing to you; or been a problem to you. It is time to come to terms with the price of the promise: ***That situation is dead!!!***

**“I am giving .....I have given” - vs. 2-3:**

? What He has spoken, He sees as *already completed*.

? What He has completed, He invites us *to lay hold of*.

God is saying, “Get up and move, and it will begin to happen.”

**Pastor Bill**

## November 25 – Monday

### *“Tomorrow’s Power”*

<sup>4</sup> "From the wilderness and this Lebanon, even as far as the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and as far as the Great Sea toward the setting of the sun will be your territory. <sup>5</sup> "No man will *be able to* stand before you all the days of your life. Just as I have been with Moses, I will be with you; I will not fail you or forsake you.

#### Joshua 1:4-5

Vs. 4 is the **definition of their future** which exceeds what was received as these dimensions are not realized until the kingdoms of David & Solomon (1 Kgs. 4:21). The point is, when God defines our future it will be much more than we can comprehend or even realize in our lifetime.

How can this be? The Manifest Presence of God is promised to fulfill His promises (vs. 5). Therefore, we:

*Pursue* the future with patience;

*Embrace* the future with wisdom;

This is more than coming to terms with salvation, more than being accountable to God, it is hearing & believing the voice of the Spirit at this critical time in history:

**“I want you to see your place in My purpose.”**

**God has a deep love and purpose for and in each of us.** He loves the idea He has for your life, and He wants it to be fulfilled. Active faith brings the reality of **His Promise** for our **purpose**. Yet, promise is not about that which will allow us to pursue our own indulgent ways; **promise has to do with purpose**—with the **unfolding of what we are made to be**.

Here’s where **the Joshua journey takes a serious turn**. Joshua sets out from Acacia Grove and comes to the Jordan, lodges there and prepares to cross over with all of Israel. The Lord tells Joshua to command the priests who bear the ark of the covenant to enter the Jordan and for the people to follow. But this is **flood season**; not a time to try to cross a river. But the Lord tells Joshua it’s the time and the place to lead the people across. Like Joshua, all of us face such moments – *watershed moments* – where saying “yes” to God’s becomes a **major stretch of faith**.

**Pastor Bill**

## November 26 – Tuesday

### “Tomorrow’s Watershed Moment”

<sup>3</sup> and they commanded the people, saying, "When you see the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God with the Levitical priests carrying it, then you shall set out from your place and **go after it**." <sup>4</sup> "However, there shall be between you and it a distance of about 2,000 cubits by measure. Do not come near it, that you may know the way by which you shall go, for **you have not passed this way before**." <sup>5</sup> Then Joshua said to the people, "Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the LORD will do wonders among you." <sup>6</sup> And Joshua spoke to the priests, saying, "Take up the ark of the covenant and cross over ahead of the people." So they took up the ark of the covenant and went ahead of the people.

#### Joshua 3:3-6

Please note the end of vs. 3 – “go after it” – there it is, the passion to pursue even when circumstances aren’t lining up as we would like. This is the worst possible time to cross the river as it is flood season. Yet, God declares to them and to us, “*There’s no such thing as a worst possible time with Me.*”

At the close of verse 5 we read this: “you have not passed this way before.” OK, the circumstances are not the best and now You are asking us to move in new territory of our lives. What implications arise here? It is as if God is saying: “*as you go forward, you need to pay attention to how I **direct** and **pace** you, because you are unfamiliar with what I am doing here.*” This is how faith speaks to the unfamiliar in our lives.

Joshua speaks a word of wisdom to the people who are entering into unknown circumstances at a very inopportune time (vs. 6):

- **Let God go *first***
- **Watch God make the way**

The Lord’s instruction in watershed moments of our life is this: Sometimes we’d rather sprint through—*Let’s get through here and get it over with fast; you never know when this wall of water might break through and come down again.* Our challenge is to move forward in the face of the unreasonable, but to walk at God’s pace because He is always a good-sense God as well as an awesomely mighty One. Be encouraged this day to move forward in the adventure—to reach out, on His terms, for everything He has for you.

- **Walk at the *pace* God is taking you.**
- **While you are waiting, things are *happening*.**

**Pastor Bill**

## November 27 – Wednesday

### “A Morning Presentation”

<sup>15</sup> For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as *we are*, yet without sin. <sup>16</sup> Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

#### Hebrews 4:15-16

What do we mean by the term Kingdom? The kingdom is double-edged and is connected to two frames of time. First, God through Jesus Christ is currently *recovering* man from a double loss – *relationship* with God and *rulership* under God. It is being realized *presently*, in personal ways by the power of Holy Spirit in the church.

Secondly, the kingdom will be realized *finally* in consummate ways at the return of Jesus Christ where His triumph is fully manifested.

Currently, we define the Kingdom as God’s rule of grace in the world and involves the ministry of blessedness. We present our hearts to the Lord to start the morning and invite Kingdom rule in our life for the day.

With such a great invitation from the book of Hebrews, an invitation at our worst, we can start our day by coming His Throne presenting ourselves and receiving the mercy and grace needed to walk in the Kingdom for the day. Here is a simple, yet profound, Morning Presentation:

#### A. Let’s Petition The Lord To Search Our Hearts. (Psalms 139:23-24)

Search me, O God, and know my heart;  
Try me and know my anxious thoughts;  
And see if there be any hurtful way in me,  
And lead me in the everlasting way.

#### B. Let’s Ask The Lord To Remind Us Of The Dangers Of Self Deception.

##### (Jeremiah 17:9)

"The heart is more deceitful than all else  
And is desperately sick;  
Who can understand it?"

#### C. Let’s Set A Monitor On Our Mouth & Heart. (Psalm 19:14)

Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart  
Be acceptable in Thy sight,  
O LORD, my rock and my Redeemer.

#### D. Let’s Ask For Help In Keeping His Purposes In View. (Psalm 90:12)

So teach us to number our days,  
That we may present to Thee a heart of wisdom.

## November 28 – Thursday

### “*Gratitude – A Grace That Produces Sweetness*”

“Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe;”

#### Hebrews 12:28

It would seem instinctive within the season to examine the parameters of gratitude this Thanksgiving 2008. Yet, in doing so, I would like to move this engaging grace from the realm of human obligation/duty to a heartfelt response of the heart when touched by His Spirit. I have no quarrels with the ancients who termed thankfulness and gratitude as a duty of the believer – it is – but the word “duty” seems to invite the energy of human enterprise in contemporary thinking. Therefore, let’s experience gratitude as a grace worked in the heart appropriated by faith and walked out by the Spirit.

First, what do we mean by the term, ***thanksgiving***, of which gratitude is the grace? It is gratitude for all the benefits of divine Providence, especially for the general and personal gifts of redemption. The very term most in use shows this; it is *charis*, which is the grace of God in Christ, operating in the soul of the believer as a principle and going back to Him in gratitude: “Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!” (2 Cor. 9:15). The ethical gratitude of Christianity connects every good gift and every perfect gift with the gift of Christ. Moreover, it is a thanksgiving that in the Christian economy, and in it alone, returns to God for all things: *in everything give thanks*. This characteristic flows from gratitude. The rejoicing that we have in the Lord, and the everlasting comfort we possess in Him, makes every possible variety of divine dealing a token for good. The Christian privilege is to experience gratitude in all things: “for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus” (1 Thes. 5:18). (Heb. *tôdâ*; Gk. *eucharistia*)

This means that we thank God for hearing and answering—thank Him for what He has done and is going to do for all men. We are to give thanks in all things. How can we thank God for terrible trials such as accidents and death and sin? We can not; this is not what Scripture means. What God means is to thank Him for His Presence and power as we walk through such trials. In Christ Jesus there is victory and triumph over all, no matter how terrible. Therefore, *in everything* (not *for everything*)—as we walk through all—thank God for the victory He has given us through Christ. The grace of gratitude makes this possible and delivers us from being a ***grumper*** to possessing a ***sweetness of soul***.

**Pastor Bill**

## November 29 – Friday

### *“Gratitude – A Radical State Of Being”*

“...always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father;”

**Ephes. 5:20**

The context of our verse 20 is the experiencing the fullness of the Spirit, “...but be filled with the Spirit”, (Ephes. 5:18). Those full of the Spirit are “always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.” These words have sometimes been misappropriated through a literalness which has done great harm to many sincere believers. The words “for everything” have been interpreted without reference to God's character or to the absurdity of thanking God for something he loathes. The false reasoning is that “for everything” means literally for everything regardless of how evil it is. Some have taken what they call “unconditional praise” to be the key to spiritual victory. Thus they praise God for a spouse's adultery, a daughter's rape, a child's death, a church split, a fellow Christian's fall. True, we praise God for being God in the midst of these miseries and for being able to bring good out of evil. “But,” as John Stott says, “that is praising God for being God; it is not praising him for evil. . . . God abominates evil, and we cannot praise or thank him for what he abominates.”

Nevertheless, the fullness of the Spirit does call us to a radical spirit of gratitude. We are to thank God in the midst of difficulties for everything which is consistent with his Fatherhood and his loving Son. It is a dimension and flow of spiritual life with an emanating aroma of pleasantness and amiability.

The fullness of the Spirit rules out a grumbling, complaining, negative, sour spirit. Brothers & sisters, ***no one can be Spirit-filled and traffic in these things***. In our emptiness, we characteristically mourn what we do not have: another's house, car, job, vacation, even family! Such thanklessness indicates a life missing the fullness of the Holy Spirit no matter what anyone claims as their encounter.

On the other hand, a tender, thankful attitude announces the Presence of the Spirit. What an argument for the reality of Christ and the life-changing power of the gospel in a world which has forgotten to be thankful (cf. Romans 1:21).

**Pastor Bill**

## **November 30 – Saturday**

### ***“Gratitude Begins With A Silenced Heart”***

“...having been firmly rooted and now being built up in Him and established in your faith, just as you were instructed, and overflowing with gratitude”.

**Col. 2:7**

OK, we might as well take the plunge here. But a word of warning – not many will follow the path leading to a soul filled with gratitude. Why do I say that? Because the insanity of our own hearts (Eccl. 9:3), tends to lead us in paths of perpetual cul-de-sacs. Here is the central problem. Many consider their pain a greater problem than their sin. Therefore, whatever eases our pain is justified. Scary, isn't it? Well, here is the condition of soul of such a person: a “warranted” demandingness. Oh, how the Spirit is grieved and quenched by this cancer of soul.

How then do we embrace the truth so that our demanding hearts are overwhelmed by gratitude? The answer, in part, is to be silenced by the gravity of our condition. God's disruptive response to our impatient demands transforms our anger into gratitude and deadness into life. The silence that deeply changes our hearts is the hush that comes when we are caught flatfooted in our insistence and found to be without excuse. The silence is coming to an end of our demand with God over how life should go for us. It is also the pulsating heart saying, “I want God more than anything.”

It is the sudden and utterly disconcerting loss of our presumptive, arrogant notions about life and God that silence our hearts to ponder God's ways “I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear; But now my eye sees You;” Job 42:5 (NASB). You see, silence is the quieting of our relentless insistence toward God that life go well with us. Then we meet the God we think should meet our demands. We then find that He is all we feared, for sure, but infinitely more kind than we could have ever imagined. Psalms 73:22-23 (NASB), “Then I was senseless and ignorant; I was like a beast before You. Nevertheless I am continually with You; You have taken hold of my right hand”.

Here it is, the famous punch line – the knockout - mercy is persistently meaningful only to the degree I am silenced by the enormity of my refusal to love God and others with my whole heart, soul, strength, and mind. Ah, that is the heart in which gratitude is sown because repentance becomes a lifestyle and who is forgiven much will love much.

**Pastor Bill**