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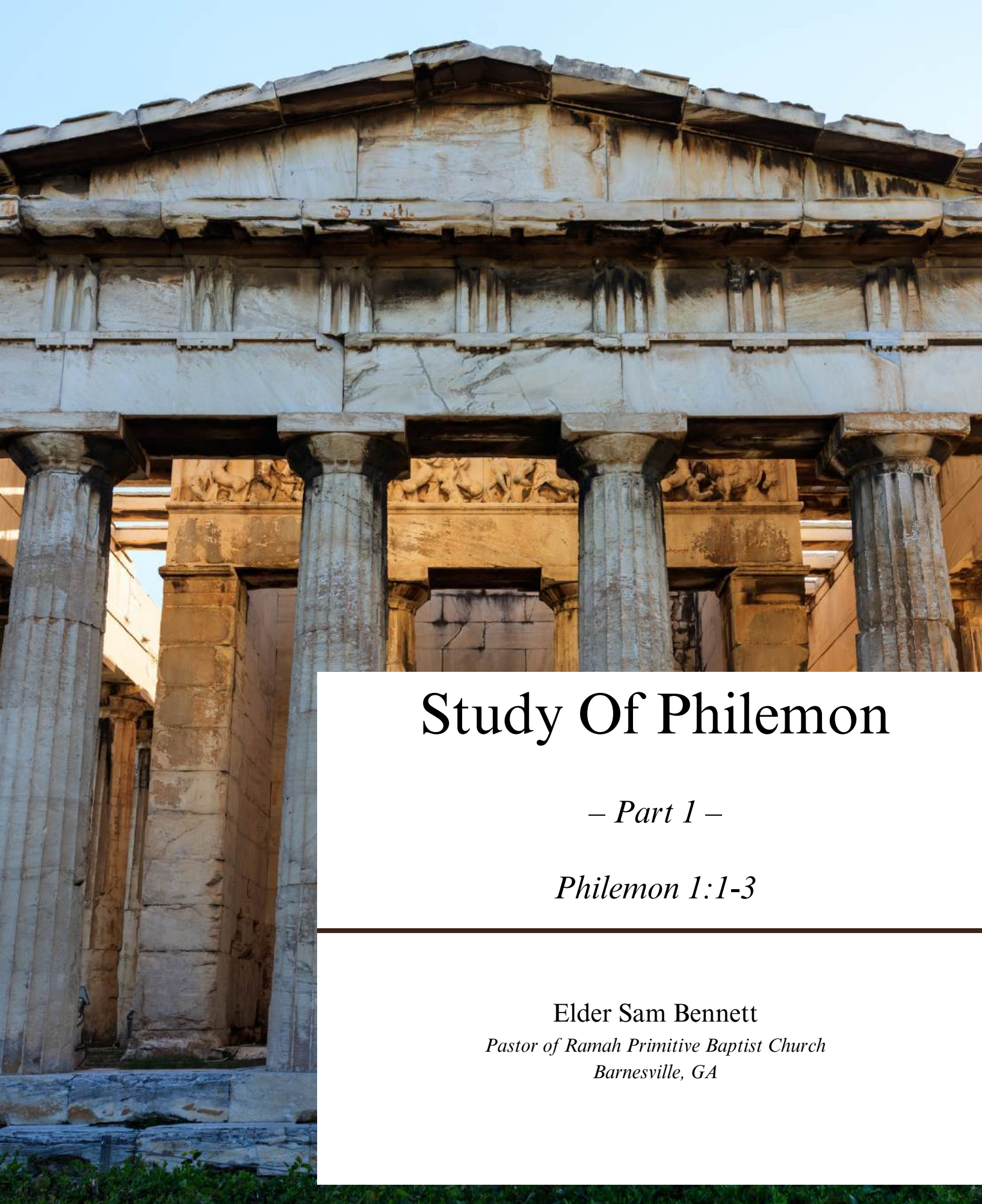

Study Of Philemon

– Part 1 –

Philemon 1:1-3

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Introduction

This article will begin a brief series of messages from the letter of Philemon. If you need some help finding Philemon, that may be because it is a short book. It is the shortest work from the Apostle Paul that we have in Scripture. Philemon is situated between Titus and Hebrews. It may be easiest for you to start in Revelation and begin turning back toward the middle. It is easy to flip past Philemon. There are no chapter divisions, and there are only twenty-five verses. Most of you could read the whole thing in just few minutes. There are some Greek names that are not so easy to pronounce, but otherwise this letter is rather simple and straight forward.

This book of Philemon is a personal epistle. Philemon is a personal letter from the Apostle Paul. We must understand that this letter is addressing us through a specific, narrow appeal.

If you have read Philemon, or heard messages from this letter, you may recall that it centers around a run away slave by the name of Onesimus. We will learn more about Onesimus in a few weeks. Our focus this lesson will be the address and greeting in the first three verses.

> **Philemon 1:1-3**
> *(1) Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother, To Philemon our beloved friend and fellow laborer, (2) to the beloved Apphia, Archippus our fellow soldier, and to the church in your house: (3) Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

We will find practical application in this letter of Philemon. Our aim in this study is to see how shared faith shapes our relationships with other believers. As Christians, we have Christ in common with other Christians. Since we have Christ in common, we also have certain expectations of other believers as well as certain obligations to other believers. In this letter, Paul demonstrates how that common belief in the same Savior shapes the way we treat each other.

Let us now see how our text displays a common faith that shapes the relationships of those who are mentioned in it.

As with most New Testament letters, we know right away who wrote it. Right here in verse one, we read that it was Paul who wrote this letter. He also gives us some other important information. He is not a free man. He tells us right away that he is a prisoner. If any of us were to receive a letter from a prisoner today, we might be suspicious. Why is the prisoner in prison? Today, prison is reserved for those who have committed serious crimes. Prisoners are in prison as punishment for what they have done, and to protect citizens from any further crime that prisoner might commit. Paul had been imprisoned by the Roman government. What serious crime should we expect to the be cause of Paul's imprisonment? What had Paul done? Was he a thief or murderer or a trafficker? No. Perhaps it was a "white-collar" crime like extortion or grand larceny or embezzlement? No, it was not any of those things. Then perhaps Paul had been engaged in terrorist activity or had incited others to violence against the citizenry of Rome, or maybe he had masterminded a plan to assassinate Caesar and overthrow the government? No, and no. Maybe, Paul had failed to pay his taxes? No. The text tells us all we need to know. Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ. Paul's crime was preaching the gospel! He was guilty of pointing sinners to Christ for salvation. Jerusalem could not allow that. To the Jewish mind, Jesus Christ was a man, therefore He could not be God. Rome could not allow it, because Romans were only allowed to worship Caesar. His crime was speaking against Jewish tradition and Roman culture. Paul was guilty of telling the truth! You may be thinking that sounds ridiculous. Consider for a moment how dangerous the truth is in our day.

Paul was content to be found guilty of preaching the truth of God's Word. Paul was confident that his dedication to boldly and indiscriminately preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ was the reason for his imprisonment, and he accepted it. Paul knew that God is sovereign. That is to say that God rules over all things. There is no higher authority. No one can cause God to change His mind or bend His will. There is no one can over-rule or overthrow God. Therefore, Paul

accepted that he could only be imprisoned if God allowed it. We should see Paul's imprisonment as a testimony of the effectiveness of the Gospel. That new religion called Christianity was seen as a threatening message by those who were in positions of power. The Gospel had mass appeal, and many were being drawn to Jesus, and the government feared losing control.

If Paul had not been in prison, this letter might never have been written. God places us where He intends for us to be, so that we might carry out His purposes. If Paul had not been under house-arrest in Rome, he may not have been there when Onesimus arrived. Remember, it was Paul who wrote, "And we know that all things work together for good to those who love the Lord, to those who are the called according to His purpose."

So, by comparing this letter to other writings that bear the same name, we know that this is the man once know as Saul of Tarsus, who is now known as Paul. He is an Apostle of Jesus Christ, and at this time is a prisoner because of his dedication to Christ and the message of the gospel. He also notes that Timothy is included as one sending greetings. Paul calls Timothy "our brother". Paul was not biologically related to Timothy. Paul met Timothy on his second missionary journey. We find that in the book of Acts, chapter sixteen. Timothy was the son of a Greek father and Jewish mother. So, when Paul says, "our brother," he does not mean that in the natural sense. Timothy was a brother in Christ.

The two of them had faith in Christ in common. Timothy was a protege of Paul. They traveled together for a while, and Timothy eventually became the pastor of the church in Ephesus. If you are reading in the King James Version, you find Timothy called Timotheus in Acts, chapter sixteen, and Colossians, chapter one. This is the same Timothy in our text. He is the same Timothy that is addressed by Paul in two personal letters in the New Testament. Timotheus is simply the original Greek version of the name Timothy. Notice also that Paul speaks for more than himself. He says "our brother" not "my brother". If Paul had said "my" we would understand that he was speaking only for himself. Since

Paul has used the plural "our" then it stands to reason that he is speaking of a shared relationship. Paul and Timothy are brothers in Christ in common with those to whom this letter is addressed.

Earlier, we stated that this is a personal letter. To be clear, personal letters are addressed to specific people. This letter is addressed to Philemon. Paul shows a familiarity with Philemon as he describes him beloved friend and fellow laborer. Those are two different descriptions. Philemon is beloved of Paul. They share a common faith in Christ, and Paul has implied that by calling Timothy "our brother," but now he leaves no room for doubt. Paul loved Philemon. He held him in high esteem, and he had great admiration for him. They were friends, they were brothers in Christ, and Paul loved him. That describes some of our relationships, does it not? Paul also called Philemon a fellow laborer. Philemon was engaged in ministry. He was working together with Paul for a common cause, that being the gospel of Christ. They were brothers in Christ, they loved each other, and they were working together in ministry. Verse one gives us plenty of information to help us understand this letter.

We must not overlook the fact that Philemon is not the only person addressed in this letter. The second verse mentions other people. To the beloved Apphia, Archippus our fellow soldier, and to the church in your house:

This is the only mention of Apphia. Some modern translations say, "our beloved sister Apphia." That is an assumption made by the translators. Apphia is a woman's name. While it is possible that Apphia and Philemon were siblings, most scholars assume that Apphia was Philemon's wife because of the context of the rest of this verse. We can draw the some of the same conclusions about her as we did about Philemon. She was a believer. They shared a common faith in Christ, and Paul's love for Apphia was the same as his love of Philemon.

The other named individual is Archippus. He is mentioned in one other verse in Scripture. We find that in another of Paul's letters. Colossians, chapter four, verse seventeen, And say to Archippus, "Take heed to the ministry which

you have received in the Lord, that you may fulfill it." This verse supports what we read in the letter to Philemon, where Paul refers to Archippus as our fellow soldier. Paul is being somewhat poetic here. Fellow soldier and fellow laborer are synonymous. Archippus had ministry in common with Philemon and Paul and Timothy. Paul may have chosen the word soldier as a word of recognition for the boldness Archippus had shown in ministry. However, given the verse from Colossians, it seems likely that Paul was encouraging Archippus to charge forward in preaching the gospel while surrounded by a hostile, Pagan culture. We do not have these details in the text, but some have suggested that Archippus is the adult son of Philemon and Apphia.

Before we go any further in our text, there are a few things we should note: Paul and Timothy are the senders of greetings in this letter and Colossians. Archippus and Onesimus are both mentioned in both letters of Philemon and Colossians. Most Bible scholars agreed that both of these letters were sent by the same messenger. And there may have been another letter that is not in our Bibles.

It is mentioned in the fourth chapter of Colossian letter, verse sixteen Now when this epistle is read among you, see that it is read also in the church of the Laodiceans, and that you likewise read the epistle from Laodicea. No one knows what happened to that letter to the Laodiceans, but both of them were to be read by both churches. This letter to Philemon was personal, and intended for him and his household, and the church that met in his house. That is what the remainder of verse two says, "and to the church in your house:" There are at least two possibilities for us. There was more than one church in Colossae, but at least one met in Philemon's house. Or, this letter, which was separate from the letter to the Colossians, was not intended to be read in Laodicea. There is a third plausible but perhaps less likely possibility, and that is that Paul considered of all of Philemon's family to be a church. Adam Clarke suggests that Archippus was the pastor of the church that met in Philemon's house. Other historians have commonly held to the idea that Philemon was a leader of a church in Colossae because it is mentioned that the church was in his house. It was common in the first few centuries that

local churches met in homes. According to Dr. William Hendriksen, the oldest purpose-built church meeting house dates to some time around the year 232.

Now that we know who wrote this letter, and to whom the letter was written, let us take few moments and examine the greeting. Verse three of the text is as follows: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Sometimes, you may hear me read something similar as a benediction to close our worship gatherings. Benediction does not mean closing prayer, although some call a closing prayer a benediction. Benediction comes from Latin, and it means good speech, or good spoken words. In our text, Paul is extending good words in writing to Philemon, Apphia, Archippus, and to the church that meets in Philemon's house, from Paul and Timothy. This is a wonderful greeting. Few greetings carry such weight. This greeting is absolutely consistent with everything that Paul has written thus far. This is greeting Christians ought to use to greet each other. It is found all thirteen letters of the Apostle Paul.

Romans 1:7
To all who are in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

1 Corinthians 1:3
Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

2 Corinthians 1:2
Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Galatians 1:3
Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ,

Ephesians 1:2
Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Philippians 1:2

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Colossians 1:2

To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ who are in Colosse: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

1 Thessalonians 1:1

Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

2 Thessalonians 1:2

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

1 Timothy 1:2

To Timothy, a true son in the faith: Grace, mercy, and peace from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord.

2 Timothy 1:2

To Timothy, a beloved son: Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

Titus 1:4

To Titus, a true son in our common faith: Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ our Savior.

You may have noticed that Timothy and Titus are also greeted with mercy. Those three letters are pastoral letters. Those three letters are from an Apostle to pastors. I do not know of any pastor, myself included, who does not appreciate the blessing of mercy.

So, we are not surprised to find the same greeting employed in the writings of the same man. This is more than just a courtesy. It is more than simple consistency, although we must remark that he does use this greeting consistently. It is a greeting of blessing. What does he mean?

Grace is favor that we have not earned. It is favor that we do not deserve. Grace is pure goodness towards us. Grace is a gift that says more about the one giving that goodness than it does about us as those who receive that goodness.

In the letter to the Ephesians, Paul tells us plainly that it is by grace that we have received salvation. We have not done anything to earn it, and we certainly do not deserve it, but God Who has loved us with an everlasting love has been gracious to us and has provided salvation for us. There are no strings attached. There is no expiration date. There is not an if/then clause. It is not a contract. It is an undeserved, unmerited, unearned favor. Believers have been made the beneficiaries of the eternal covenant grace, and it has been sealed by the blood of Christ. In this greeting, Paul is drawing our attention to who we are and why. Imagine reading this letter for the first time. Imagine you are Philemon. Your dear friend and brother in Christ has been imprisoned for preaching the truth of God's Word. That same Word that you heard from him has been a blessing to you. That Word that you heard from him was accompanied by a divine work of the Holy Spirit who revived you from spiritual deadness and gave you new life Christ. That gospel message is the reason why you have hope, and it is the reason why your friend is in chains. And the one who is imprisoned greets you with a reminder of the grace of God. My beloved brother, we have this faith in common because we both have received the grace of God Who sent Christ to save us. We have only read the third verse of this letter. Tell me now, if this was addressed to you, what request from the Apostle Paul would you deny him?

Paul is not wishing this upon Philemon. He is not praying that God would bless Philemon with divine grace and peace. He is reminding Philemon that he has received God's grace and that peace between God and man has been established

by the God-Man Jesus Christ. God's Word tells us that we are sinners. That is what we are. God is Holy, and Righteous, and Good. We are not. We are not anywhere near Holy, or Righteous, or good. God has every reason to be hostile towards us, because we are by nature hostile toward Him. We are separated from God because of sin. The only thing our sin deserves is death. We cannot undo what we have done. We cannot remake ourselves into anything except what we already are. The divide between Holy God and sinful man is an infinite span. And in our spiritually dead state, we have no idea how helpless we are. We cannot make peace with God, because we have no acceptable peace offering. Our best is not good enough. Our best is filthy rags. Peace can only be realized when the hostilities have been settled. Peace means we are not at odds because we have no reason to be at odds.

Philemon :1-3

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

That greeting is more than a reminder. It is an assurance of salvation. How?

Ephesians 2:13-16

(13) But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. (14) For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, (15) having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, (16) and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity.

It is an undeserved gift. He did that for us, because He loved us, and not because of anything we have done or could do. And the result is peace.

Romans 8:1

There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.

God has graced us with the gift of salvation because the sacrifice of Christ has settled the debt we owe for our sins against God, and His blood so sufficiently satisfied God's wrath that He remembers our sin no more.

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Fellow laborer and brother in Christ, we have this faith in common because we have this salvation in common given to us God. We are bound together in common work by a common love and for a common cause. Our shared faith shapes our relationships. Are we loving each other as we should?

Is Honesty The Best Policy?

Lesson #10 - A Study In Christian Ethics

Romans 12:17

Elder Patrick McCoy

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Daily Devotions:

Monday	Jesus Was Honest	1 Peter 2:21-22
Tuesday	Zacchaeus	Luke 19:1-8
Wednesday	Speak The Truth	1 Kings 22:6-14
Thursday	False Testimony	Exodus 20:16
Friday	Satan Is A Liar	John 8:44
Saturday	Speak Truth In Love	Ephesians 4:15
Sunday	Love For The Truthful	Psalm 15:1-3

Devotional Reading: *Proverbs 6:16-19*

Lesson Scripture: *1 Kings 22: 6-14*

Introduction

The old-fashioned virtues of honesty and integrity are, all too often, missing today in our American society. In many cases, a man's word is no longer his bond. It's the day of the fine print. All of us life hitters are braced for the proverbial "curveball."

Newsweek Magazine said, "Cheating is so prevalent in U. S. schools and colleges that the cheater seems almost to be the normal college student. So widespread is the practice of cribbing that many students do not look upon it as being morally wrong. They call it, 'The Good Neighbor Policy' or 'The Wandering Eye.'"

The United States Military Academy has a Cadet Prayer which is repeated every Sunday in their chapel service. It reads, "Make us choose the harder right instead of the easier wrong, and never to be contented with half truth when the whole truth can be won. Endow us with courage that is born of loyalty to all that is noble and worthy, that scorns to compromise with vice and injustice and knows no fear when right and truth are in jeopardy."

A young man was telling his friend about a dishonest thing he had done. He said, “Of course I know that it was not exactly straight, but...” His friend remarked, “In other words it was crooked!” The man said, “Well, I wouldn’t want to call it crooked, but it wasn’t exactly straight.” The friend countered, “Remember this. A line is either straight or it is crooked. If it is not exactly straight, it is crooked.”

Point of Discussion:
Give examples of “bending the line” and “half truths.”

What Is The Truth?

According to Webster truth is that which is reliable, trustworthy, faithful, sure, genuine and sincere.

The Greek word for honesty is “kalos.” It means that which is “good” and “admirable” and “becoming.” It also carries with it the ethical meaning of what is fair, right, honorable, and of such conduct as deserves esteem.

Jesus Christ is supreme example of honesty. The Apostle Peter wrote, “Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps. Who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth” (1 Peter 2:21-22).

The Greek word for guile is “dolos.” It means “to decoy” or “to bait.” Jesus baited no one. No trickery. No deceit. Just the purest heart that ever beat and the truest love that was ever given.

That’s what Zacchaeus needed one day. His little ship in life had run aground. He’d been wheeling-and-dealing a long time. The people despised him. He had cheated them often. His tank was on empty. But one look at the Savior and he was never the same. He got a new heart. He immediately started making restitution. Read Luke 19:1- 8.

Someone has said, “Honesty is the best policy.” No, I believe this. Honesty is the only policy!

Point of Discussion:
Have you ever deceived someone?
Give examples. Remember “Honesty is the best policy.”

Telling The Truth
1 Kings 22:6-14

Telling the truth is not easy for us, but God demands that we do that. The 9th Commandment tells us not to lie. Exodus 20:16 says, “You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.”

One of my first pastors told his congregation, “Tonight I plan to preach about the sin of lying. To help you understand my sermon, I want you all to read Jude chapter 3.”

That night, as he stood to deliver his sermon, he asked for a show of hands. He wanted to know how many had read Jude 3 that afternoon. Several hands went up. He smiled and said, “Jude only has 1 chapter. I see that I have the right crowd for my sermon on the sin of lying.”

Jesus says the devil “is a liar and the father of lies” (John 8:44). He does not hold to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language.

Husband and wife must be true to each other – that would solve a lot of problems. Parents must explain the truth to their children and help them understand. We must teach children to be honest and tell the truth.
Jesus always use the phrase, “Truly, truly, I said to you...”

Point Of Discussion:
Why is it important for husbands and wives to tell the truth?
Why is it important to tell our children the truth?
What message are we giving our children if we say that Jesus, Santa Clause, Easter Bunny, Tooth Ferry are all real and later tell them only Jesus is real? Why should they believe us about Jesus?

Old Testament Example

We want to learn from one man in the Bible, an Old Testament prophet Micaiah. If you want an example your children can follow, here it is – in 1 Kings 22.

He lived in the days of wicked King Ahab of Israel. The King wanted to pick a war with his neighboring country Aram (Syria), claiming that one of the cities in their land belong to Israel – Ramoth Gilead. King Ahab asked his friend King Jehoshaphat (Judah) for help and he was given this advice: "First seek the counsel of the Lord." (v.5).

So King Ahab brought together his prophets – 400 of them... "Shall I go to war against Aram or should I not?" The false prophets did not really consult God... They just wanted their own ways. "Go," they answered, "for the Lord will give it into the king's hand." (v.6).

Ahab's friend Jehoshaphat must have been a little skeptical about 400 prophets all agreeing so completely on something. So he asked Ahab, "Is there not a prophet of the Lord here whom we can inquire of?" (v.7).

Ahab said there was – Micaiah, the no. 401 prophet – but he said, "I hate him because he never said anything good about me, but always bad." (v.8).

Personal Application:

- Why do you suppose Micaiah had a problem saying anything good about Ahab?

You see, truth is not always nice, but it's the truth. Ephesians 4:15 – "Instead, speaking the truth in love..." Telling the truth sets us free – Jesus: "Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." (John 8:32).

- What is the meaning of Paul's statement, How do you tell the truth in love?

- How does the truth make you free?

The Lord loves those who are truthful – Psalm 15:1-3

Digging Deeper

So they decided to send for Micaiah. A messenger was asked to fetch Micaiah. And he said to him (v.13), "Look, as one man the other prophets are predicting success for the king. Let your word agree with theirs and speak favorably."

Questions For Discussion:

1. Bro/Sis, do you have this experience, when someone comes to you and asks you to tell a lie? Are you going to help him?
2. Or tell the truth and risk losing your friend or be ill-treated?
3. Or you want to be accepted and so you tell a lie so that your friends will welcome you into their group...

Micaiah said, "As surely as the Lord lives, I can tell him ONLY what the Lord tells me." (v.14).

He was not afraid of anybody. He was not afraid of the consequences. In fact, he was only afraid of God – he HONOURS God – He would only say what God wants him to say

Read Proverbs 6:16-19 and discuss.

Three Important Principles About Truth

Principle (1)
SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

Majority does not mean its right. We have 400 against 1. Yet all those 400 were wrong. If the world says so, it doesn't mean right. If all your friends do that, it doesn't mean right.

What is important is the truth – what God would say. What the Scriptures say. We stand firm on that, not on the majority. When children are in doubt, search the Scriptures with them. Understand what God thinks is more important than how the world thinks, or how our friends think.

Before the 2 kings and 400 false prophets, Micaiah stood his ground and told them the truth. He said openly that the 400 false prophets were lying.

(v.23) "God has decreed disaster for you." – the war will be a disaster. The King was not happy. And his man went up to Micaiah and slapped him in the face (v.24). He was persecuted for telling the truth!

He said that King Ahab would die in the war: The King refused to listen – he said, "Put Micaiah in prison until I return safely." (v.27). Micaiah declared (v.28), "If you ever return safely, the Lord has not spoken through me." Then he added, "Mark my words, all you people!"

King Ahab died in the war. He tried to disguise himself, yet he was killed. We cannot run away from the truth. Numbers 32:23 says when you sin against God, "... you may be sure that your sin will find you out."

Question:
How can we try to hide the truth and not be honest with others?

Principle (2)
THE TRUTH BRINGS BLESSING – SET US FREE

It's better to tell the truth that hurts – but bring good, bring healing and blessing, than to tell a lie that feel good but then kills you.

Proverbs 27:5-6

(5) Better is open rebuke than hidden love. (6) Wounds from a friend can be trusted, but an enemy multiplies kisses.

Question:
Why is open rebuke better than hidden love?
Rough truth is better than polished falsehood.

Principle (3)
HONOUR GOD ABOVE ALL ELSE

Micaiah was hated for telling the truth, because it wasn't good news to Ahab. It's better to be unpopular for telling the truth, than to be loved for telling a lie. We must not tell a lie to gain acceptance. You may gain man's favor but incur God's wrath.

We can't run away from the truth. We all have to face the truth, if not today, someday. If not this world, then before God one day.

3 students at Michigan State University were up visiting friends at Lake Superior State University in Sault Ste. Marie. They partied really hard over the weekend and by Sunday they were so hung-over that they could not make the drive back. They both had a biochemistry test on Monday that they missed.

They called their teacher when they got back into town on Monday and told him that they had gotten a flat tire up north. The teacher responded very calmly

and told the students to simply come in and take the test on Tuesday. The students were very happy with the understanding professor.

When the boys came into class on Tuesday, to take the test the teacher had put the boys in separate rooms just so they would not cheat. The teacher trusted the boys, but he did not want them to have any temptations. The boys were fine with this... they knew their material.

The first page had a difficult chemistry problem on it but both boys figured the problem out. The boys turned to the second page and the question said... "Which tire?"

Conclusion

It pays to know the truth and live by it. Truth brings blessings...

Dear friends, we have been deceived by the devil... not knowing what is true. Since Adam's time the devil has been lying to us about who God is, what He can or cannot do... for some, he put a lie that God don't even exist. We're living under a bondage – to a lie... When a person lies, you're in fear of the truth – you're worried that someone who finds out, you're always on the lookout, living in anxiety... always afraid, always covering up...

God revealed to us the truth - that we are created and loved by Him. And Jesus has already died on the cross for our sins. He is "the way, the truth, and the life."

Personal Journey
And Purpose

(www.mensgroup.org – “Original Study”)

READ:

Scripture Reference Proverbs 19:21 says, "*There are many plans in a man's heart, Nevertheless the LORD's counsel—that will stand.*"

New International Version "*Many are the plans in a person's heart, but it is the Lord's purpose that prevails.*"

What are the personal plans that are on your heart, or in your thoughts?
Write and discuss your response.

Our journeys are very different and of course, very personal. Some journeys take a long time and entail significant pain and confusion. Other individual journeys can be much shorter and less agonizing to experience

Whatever your personal "life journey," you will not find peace and happiness unless you discover and accept God's purpose for you. Until you come to this realization, you will have difficulty finding true joy, contentment and serenity in your life. You will always feel as if something is missing in your life, something that is keeping you from feeling full, secure and joyful

In Jeremiah 29:11 it says, "*For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope."*

New International Version *"For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."*

Did you know that God has plans "only for you," and His plan is for you to prosper now and in the future? Knowing this should help you feel loved, protected and unafraid of the future.

In Deuteronomy 2:7 it says, *"For the LORD your God has blessed you in all the work of your hand. He knows your trudging through this great wilderness. These forty years the LORD your God has been with you; you have lacked nothing."*

New International Version – "*The Lord your God has blessed you in all the work of your hands. He has watched over your journey through this vast wilderness. These forty years the Lord your God has been with you, and you have not lacked anything.*"

This Scripture from the Old Testament affirms the Lord's faithfulness in watching over the Israelites for 40 years in the desert. Do you know God's faithfulness has, is and will always be with you?

REFLECT:
Questions below help us pause and consider how the passage above applies to our life.

- Do you believe God has a plan, "**just for you**?" If you know God's plan is for you, what is it? If you don't know, what do you "think it might be?"
  Write and/or discuss your response.

- If you really do not know God's purpose for you on earth, how can you discover it? What tools can you use in your journey of discovery and enlightenment? Is prayer a tool you can use? Why?
  Write and/or discuss your response

APPLICATION CHALLENGE:
When we are faced this month with questions of following our own personal desires or discovering and following God's plan for us, help us to pray fervently for God's direction. Help us to discover God's purpose for us and give us the strength, humility and grace to follow His direction.

We understand knowing your purpose for us does not mean life necessarily gets easier, or less trouble free. We do know it means our "life's journey" becomes better knowing God is in our hearts and on our side. We know His Holy Spirit will live in us and guide us in our life's journey.

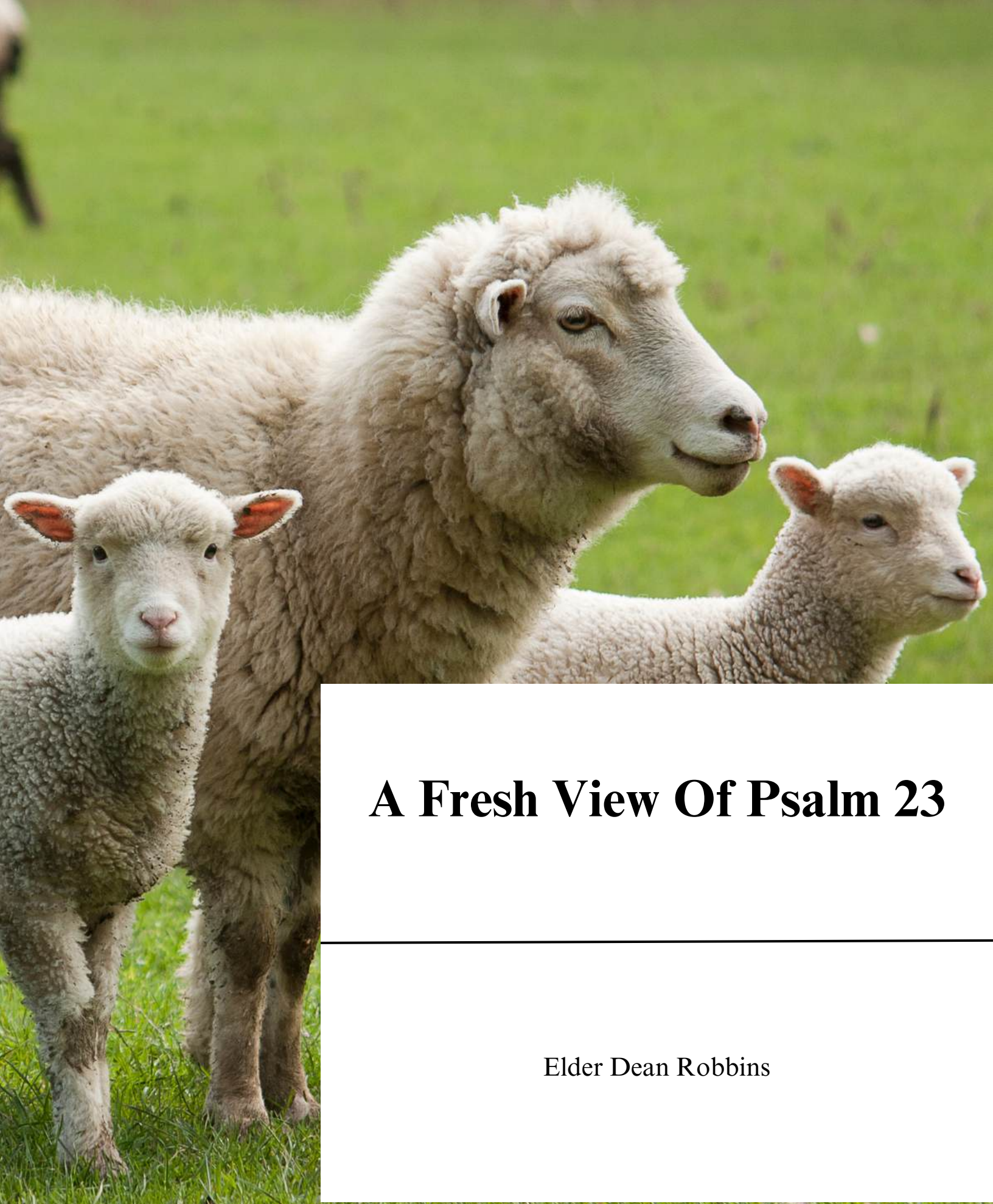
DISCIPLESHIP STUDY QUESTIONS:

Below are three discussion questions based upon Scripture encouraging discussion and/or personal reflection.

- Isaiah 14:24 says, "*Surely as I have planned, so it will be, and as I have purposed, so it will happen.*" Holy Bible – New International Version. Do you now believe with your heart and soul that God does have a specific personal plan for you on Earth? What are some of the skills and abilities you have enabling you to fulfill His plan for you?
  Write and/or discuss your response.

- Jeremiah 23:20 says, "*The anger of the Lord will not turn back until he fully accomplishes the purpose of his heart. In days to come you will understand it clearly.*" Holy Bible – New International Version. What does this Scripture say to you regarding God's seriousness about the plan he has for you? How will you know if you are following his plan and purpose for you?
  Write and/or discuss your response.

- Psalm 16:11 says, *"You make known to me the path of life, you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand."* Holy Bible – New International Version. How do you know when you are following God's plan and purpose for you? Do you currently feel the joy and blessings of knowing you are following the plan? What does it feel like?
  Write and/or discuss your response.



A Fresh View Of Psalm 23

Elder Dean Robbins

Comfort Food, you have heard that phrase before. It is a phrase you may intuitively know what it is, but it is one that may be difficult to give a good definition. I came across this definition I thought was rather good. It is, "food associated with emotional comfort, familiarity, and a sense of well-being, often connected to home, family, or positive memories.

That is a good understanding of what "comfort food" is, don't you agree? Well from a spiritual perspective, would not it be appropriate to think of this much beloved Psalm as the believer's "comfort food" for their souls. For it has fed the souls of countless numbers of God's people through the ages. It is connected to the Christians true home, his true family, and the positive memories of it continue to be a source of encouragement. This is especially so for those who have gone through the hardest and darkest of times. One of the hardest and darkest of times is the death of a loved one. Psalm 23 has been the most popular passage read at funeral services. To hear while walking through the valley of the shadow of death the LORD is there walking with us is wonderfully comforting.

Now in this article, though we may not see anything new with respect to meaning of the words themselves, I do wonder if there are ways of thinking about this Psalm that may be new or different. Perhaps some things you may not have considered before. And so, I thought I would share a couple of thoughts that would add some context or meaning to these much-beloved words.

First, this Psalm can be thought of in context of expressing thanksgiving. Though this Psalm contains no words such as "thanks" or "thanksgiving" as in other Psalms like for example, Psalm 50, verse 14 – "Offer to God thanksgiving, And pay your vows to the Most High," yet if we would read this Psalm with a spirit of thanksgiving, we might see it in a new light.

We know we need the Lord's provision. We need his guidance. Here in verse one, there is this declarative statement made by David – *The LORD is my Shepherd I shall not want*. How thankful are you that the LORD is your Shepherd

who leads you? How thankful are you that the LORD, your Shepherd, provides for your needs?

Try reading this Psalm, pausing after each sentence, and then offering a prayer of thanksgiving for what has been revealed. Give thanks to the LORD that there is not a need that you have that God is unable or unwilling to give to you.

John Calvin in his commentary of the Psalms, writes …that it "is neither intermingled with prayers, nor does it complain of miseries for the purpose of obtaining relief; but it contains simply a thanksgiving."

So… while this Psalm is a "go-to" one to find comfort and even hope in the tough times, we should also see it and read it as a Psalm of thanksgiving; being thankful for the LORD being our Shepherd.

Second, consider the Shepherd imagery carries with it both a royal and a covenantal meaning. The Shepherd imagery in the Psalm has a royal connotation. For kings in the Near East in biblical times would have been looked upon as those who guide, protect, and even feed the people that they rule over. Benevolent Kings would desire to care for the people they would rule over and that was the case with many of the Kings of Judah. David, the writer of these words, would be the prime example of this.

There are a couple of passages that speak to the king being considered a shepherd to the people he ruled over. From 2 Samuel chapter 5, "Then all the tribes of Israel came to David at Hebron and spoke, saying, "Indeed we are your bone and your flesh. Also, in time past, when Saul was king over us, you were the one who led Israel out and brought them in; and the LORD said to you, 'You shall shepherd My people Israel, and be ruler over Israel'" (Verses 1, 2).

In Psalm 78, "He (speaking of the LORD) also chose David His servant, and took him from the sheepfolds; From following the ewes that had young He

brought him, to shepherd Jacob His people, And Israel His inheritance. So, he shepherded them according to the integrity of his heart, and guided them by the skillfulness of his hands" (verses 70-73).

And in Ezekiel chapter 34, there is the rebuke of God of "shepherds of Israel." The LORD said, "Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy and say to them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD to the shepherds: Woe to the shepherds of Israel who feed themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flocks?'" (Verse 2).

So, the Kings of Israel would be identified as Shepherds. By David identifying the LORD as his Shepherd, he is speaking of the Divine King of Kings and Lord of Lords. This King of kings is like a Shepherd who cares, feeds, and protects his people.

And so is our King, Jesus identified as our Shepherd. He describes himself as the "Good Shepherd. Jesus says "The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly. "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep" (John 10:10, 11). The Good Shepherd is ruling and reigning upon his throne right now interceding for us.

And so, the point is that when thinking of this well-beloved Psalm, we should see this thought of Royalty in the words – the Lord is my Shepherd. This then leads to this thought of seeing the Psalm in terms of a covenant relationship. All these wonderful words of provision of our great Shepherd-King speaks to the covenant relationship that God has with His people.

This covenant relationship is based upon God's unconditional love. Notice in vs 1 David says, the LORD is **"my"** Shepherd. That word "MY" speaks of a covenantal relationship. All these wonderful provisional blessings are given to us because we are God's children. Because we are God's children, He is faithful to us.

Because he loves us and is faithful to us, He will…

- Lead us to green pastures and still waters.
- He will restore our souls.
- He will lead us in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.
- He will walk with us through the valley of the shadow of death.
- He will comfort us with his rod and staff.
- He will prepare a table for us before our enemies.
- He will cause the cup of mercy and grace to run over.
- He will bring us to that place of dwelling with Him forever.

His love and his faithfulness, these speak of his covenantal relationship with us and so Psalm 23 should be viewed as covenantal Psalm. These are covenantal promises given to us by our Shepherd King. We are guaranteed to receive such blessings because our Shepherd King reigns with absolute sovereignty.

May these thoughts provide a fresh view of this most beloved Psalm. And in so being, may it be this spiritual comfort food for your soul!

News & Updates

MUSIC
WORKSHOP

JUNE 2 - 5, 2026

THE SOJOURNERS' SONG

LIVING THE CHRISTIAN LIFE AS SOJOURNERS AND EXILES

WEEK NIGHT ACTIVITES

On Tuesday night of Music Workshop 2026, we will gather in the auditorium for a Modern Hymn Worship Service. This will be a spiritual time of worshiping our Lord together with modern hymns and a few medleys including old hymns. We will be led by a small choir with various instrumental accompanists. You will receive a small songbook from which we hope you draw inspiration for the worship services in your home church.

Wednesday night will be a change from previous years. It will be this year's "fun night." Drawing inspiration from this year's Olympic games and our nation's semi quincentennial, we will be hosting "Music Workshop Olympic Games." Everyone will be divided into three teams to compete in a variety of feats of (musical) strength. For each competition, the groups will need to select an individual or group of individuals to represent the team. We will be awarding the gold, silver, and bronze to each competitor. We hope you bring your competitive spirit, and most importantly, be creative and have fun!

On Thursday evening, we are excited to be hosting a concert performed by Jubal Ministries. We have enjoyed their music in previous years are looking forward to hearing them at Metter Primitive Baptist Church. These musicians come from various churches in the region to worship with congregations across Georgia and even around the world. We hope you are blessed by this concert on our penultimate evening together.

The Sacred Concert – Friday, June 5, 2026, 7:30 PM

The Sacred Concert, held on the last night of Music Workshop, is one of the highlights of the week. Practicing for this beloved event isn't the only thing that fills our Workshop days, but we do practice diligently each day to learn wonderful music, which we can present to the Lord in worship, while also hoping to edify and encourage God's people in their own devotion.
For More Information, check out the website:
https://www.pbmusicworkshop.com/

Progressive
Primitive
Baptists

SOUTHERN STATES BIBLE CONFERENCE 2026

Theme:
How To Be A Christian

Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf.

– 1 Peter 4:16

July 6-9, 2026

Epworth By The Sea
St. Simons Island, GA

Click Here To Visit Our Website

Elder Jason Solomon

Topic:
Let Your Light Shine

Elder Scott Riner

Topic:
The Law Of Christ

Elder Kurt Bacon

Topic:
Communication

Elder Darren Carter

Topic:
Going The Extra Mile

Elder Steve Taylor

Topic:
Humility Is Greatness

Elder David Summerford

Topic:
Prayer

Elder Lee Chambers

Topic:
Mind Your Treasures

Elder Dean Robbins

Topic:
Judge Righteous Judgement

Elder Pat McCoy

Topic:
Ask

For Registration Information:
Contact: Pat Flowers, Treasurer
726 Ogeechee Dr. E, Statesboro, GA 30461
Phone: (912)-601-9925 (C)
Email: spflowers690@gmail.com

Registration Forms

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CENTRAL STATES BIBLE CONFERENCE

JULY 21 - 23, 2026

VINCENNES, INDIANA

COST OF CONFERENCE:
ADULT – $80 / UNDER 18 - $55

Housing:
Due to renovations of Clark Hall on the Vincennes University Campus which has housed our attendees in the past, housing this year will be off campus in local hotels. We have contracted with Hampton Inn and Comfort Suites for very reasonable rates, and also received rates from Holiday Inn Express. Please make your own reservations at a hotel of your choice, noting reservation deadlines for contracted hotels.

Hampton Inn, 2863 Ford Rd., Vincennes, IN
Rate: $119 plus taxes
Phone: 812-316-0999 Group Name: Central States Primitive Baptist Bible Conference
Reservations must be received by Saturday, June 20, 2026 for guaranteed rate.

Comfort Suites, 2555 Hart St., Vincennes, IN
Rate: $100 plus taxes
Phone: 812-882-2244 Group Name: Central States Bible Conference, Account: 5266453
Reservations must be received by Monday, July 13, 2026 for guaranteed rate.

Holiday Inn Express, 2720 Battery Rd., Vincennes, IN
Rate: $144-154 plus taxes
Phone: 812-886-6333

This is a one-year change as housing will be back on the campus next year.

Social Gatherings:
It has been a tradition to arrive on Monday evening (July 20) for a musical 'jam' session of hymns and fellowship following supper. In the past, we have also gathered on Wednesday evening for a social time. We are trying to secure an area at one of the hotels to continue these traditions, and will pass along the information as soon as details are finalized!

Conference Schedule will be similar to previous years, but may change slightly due to housing off campus and not having the luxury of going to our dorm rooms to relax as in the past! The Program Committee is working hard to put together a group of great speakers to feed your hearts with inspiration through the word of God!

Services will be held in the Fort Sackville rooms of the Beckes Student Union on the Vincennes University campus (unless otherwise noted on the program). Parking while on campus will be in the lot behind Beckes Student Union. Shuttle carts will be available to shuttle attendees from Beckes Student Union to the dining hall for Tuesday and Wednesday lunch and dinner (breakfast on your own at hotel or before arriving on campus).

To register, please contact Sister Bonita Lenger by July 10, 2026
lengerb55@gmail.com – (573)-808-1186

OBITUARIES

Akins, Edwin Eugene (Deacon) –
October 14, 1937 to May 4, 2026
Statesboro Primitive Baptist Church, Statesboro Georgia.

Paulk, Marvin Junior (Elder) –
October 6, 1952 to May 24, 2026.
Mt. Union Primitive Baptist Church, Ambrose, Georgia.

Webb Jr., James Lindy (Elder) –
August 12,1951 to May 15, 2026.
Garden City Primitive Baptist Church, Garden City, Georgia.

STATEMENT OF FAITH

In accord with the historical position of the Primitive Baptists, the editors of The Banner-Herald subscribe to the scriptural principles stated in the 1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith. The following is an abbreviated statement upon that confession.

- We Believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the Word of God, inspired and inerrant, and the only rule of faith and practice.

- We Believe in the only true and living God. That there are three persons in the Godhead, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and that these three agree in one, are coequal, coeternal, and coexistent.

- We Believe in the total depravity of the entire human family; that is, sin pollutes man's faculties - his heart, mind, and will - and he is unable to recover himself from his lost and ruined estate.

- We Believe in particular, eternal, and unconditional election, the effectual calling of the elect, and the final perseverance of the saints.

- We Believe Jesus Christ to be the Son of God, the only Savior and Redeemer, and that Salvation is by His grace alone.

- We Believe that believer's Baptism and the Lord's Supper are the ordinances of the church of Jesus Christ. We Believe the only baptism taught and recognized in the Bible is immersion. We Believe the Lord's Supper is a memorial of our Lord's death and should be regularly observed in the church. We Believe that the washing of the saint's feet is an example of humility and service to be observed by the church.

- We Believe that no minister has the right to administer the ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper but such as are called by God and come under the imposition of hands by a presbytery.

- We Believe in the resurrection of the just and the unjust; that the just shall be raised, changed, and fashioned like unto the glorious body of the Son of God, to dwell in heaven forever, soul and body reunited; and, that the unjust shall be raised, soul, and body reunited, and consigned to punishment in hell forever.