



EASTER 2025

VICTORY — IN — JESUS

40 Days of Prayer

PARKVIEW
BAPTIST CHURCH

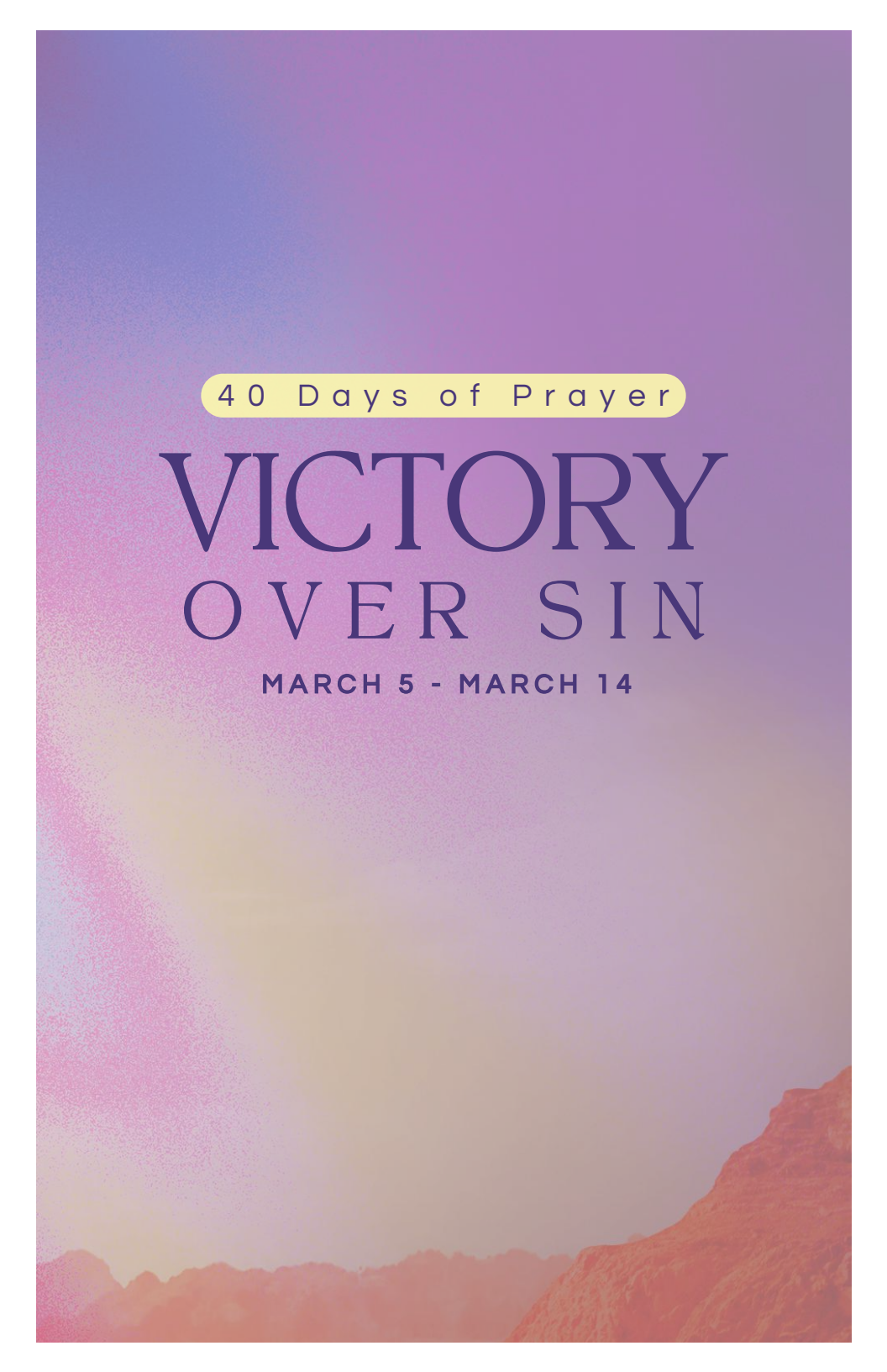


Our 40 Days of Prayer emphasis has become a season I look forward to every year. The period leading up to Easter has been a time when many believers prepare their hearts for the celebration of Easter and Christs death and resurrection. I can think of no practices greater than devoting ourselves to scripture and prayer as catalysts to engage our hearts not only for preparation, but for growth as well.

So, I'm inviting you to join us. Each day you will have a passage of scripture to read, a short devotional thought, and an opportunity to pray. I would encourage you to get a notebook and journal your thoughts and prayers during this time that you might reflect on what the Lord has done and is doing. In addition to the prayer prompts given, would you pray for other requests and needs? Some might be things like your family, our church, those who serve as missionaries, and the church across the world, especially those who are persecuted for their faith.

I am expecting the Lord to do great things through our time of prayer. I look forward to reflecting back on these 40 days with excitement at what he has done.

*Yours In Christ,
Pastor Chris*



40 Days of Prayer

VICTORY OVER SIN

MARCH 5 - MARCH 14



DR. CHRIS DEGEORGE

First Corinthians 15 is a clear declaration of victory through the sacrifice of Christ. Death is swallowed up in victory, and through Christ, it has no hold over us. Sin has brought death. Sin has corrupted everything and in our sins we would perish. But God has accomplished something miraculous through the sacrifice of Christ. He has given us victory over the grip of death. No longer do we have to wallow in fear at the thought of our impending demise because Christ has given a new hope through his resurrection. That is why it says that the perishable must put on the imperishable. There is hope even through death because of Christ. The victory is his, and we share in that victory through our faith in Christ.

My prayer for these 40 days is that we might dwell deeply with our Lord. As we walk through the scriptures considering the victory that we have, may it lead us to worship, make us desire deeper fellowship with him, and cause us to glorify him in everything we face. Will these things be your aim and prayer during this season? Would you commit to earnestly pray for Jesus to reveal the victory that is yours? Would you pray that we would seek to glorify him through all of our days?

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS



DR. CHRIS DEGEORGE

Romans is very clear about the consequences of sin. It tells us about the realities of sin in this world. It is clear that we have fallen short of God's glory, and God's wrath is poured out against all unrighteousness. In the first chapter of Romans we also see that the truth is suppressed by the unrighteousness of those in this world. Their behavior is corrupt, and everything in this world has been corrupted by sin. It's a bleak picture of humanity, a situation where we might not expect any hope to exist.

Yet, we hear in Romans that even while we were sinners, Christ died for us (Romans 5:8). The corrupting power of sin and its alienation from God have all been conquered in Christ. He has given himself that we might be free from the grip of sin. His blood shed for us has paid the debt, satisfied the wrath of God, and given us access to grace. That grace is for our whole life: past, present, and future.

When we trust in Christ, we have cause for hope because he has redeemed what was fallen, and he has promised to bring it to fulfillment. As we pray today, let us remember what Christ has accomplished. He has brought hope to you and me where we would have had none. Christ is our victory over sin.

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS



TODD SUMMERFORD

"All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). You read about that in yesterday's passage.

"The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23a). Now that's bad news.

Our holy God has not just turned a blind eye to sin. He is serious about sin. Payment for the penalty of sin is required. We have justly earned our "wages" (death) because of our sin. Somebody must pay the price.

Praise God that his eternal Son took on flesh, perfectly satisfied the law of God, died a perfect death to perfectly atone for sin, and was perfectly raised to life by the only omnipotent God! Because of these things, those who trust in Jesus through faith can experience salvation from the just consequences of their sin. Your sin wasn't simply overlooked. It was taken on and paid for by the holy Son of God.

We should be saddened and broken over our sin, but we do not have to live in guilt! The death of Christ on the cross frees us from the weight of sin!

His stripes were ours! His death was ours! And now his life is ours!

Praise God for his perfect plan of salvation. Thank him for the perfect sacrifice of Christ that frees you from the penalty of sin. Ask him to cause you to run to him when you do sin.

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS



MICHAEL PEELER

My sin—oh, the bliss of this glorious thought— My sin, not in part, but the whole, is nailed to his cross, and I bear it no more; Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord, O my soul! ("It Is Well with My Soul," Horatio Spafford)

The hymn writer, Horatio Spafford, beautifully summed up what Christ did with my sin. It was completely forgiven by his shed blood. The penalty of my sin was paid by his ultimate sacrifice. That fact should leave me daily proclaiming, "Praise the Lord!"

When I first understood my need for forgiveness of sin, I was nine years old. Little did I realize as a child that, although Christ did forgive my sin, I would spend my remaining years on earth being purified from all unrighteousness. Due to my sinful nature, I daily fall short of the glory of God. But God, being rich in mercy continues to demonstrate the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward me through Christ Jesus (Ephesians 2:1-7). My need for his forgiveness was not a simple one-time request as a child. Instead, it is a moment-by-moment dependence upon the work he alone has done, a daily cry for the Holy Spirit to convict me where I fall short.

Isaiah 53 reminds me that Christ was despised. Rejected. He was a man of sorrows acquainted with grief. He was oppressed. Afflicted. Judged. Yet there was a purpose for it all: Redemption. Mine. Yours. Everyone who would believe. "My righteous servant will justify many, and He will carry their iniquities" (Isaiah 53:11b).

God knew I would turn to my own way, and yet, because of his love for me, he allowed his only Son, Jesus Christ, to endure the agony of the cross for my redemption. In every circumstance and through every moment of each new day, God's mercy and forgiveness for sin is still available to all who call upon Him. He alone is the one who can make it well with my soul. Praise the Lord that he continues to do so!

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS



DR. CHRIS DEGEORGE

This passage considers the incredible steadfast love of the Lord. He is one who demonstrates his love by the overcoming of our iniquities. The coming of Christ is the ultimate way that God tramples our iniquities underfoot. Through his sacrifice we have been given grace. Sin is overcome, and this is a testimony to the steadfast love of the Lord. Have you considered how incredible the character of God is that he would offer this opportunity at such great cost? We have been blessed immeasurably by Christ's perfect and sufficient sacrifice.

As you pray today give thanks for the steadfast love of God. If there is unconfessed sin in your life, bring it to him to be forgiven!

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS



Romans 3:21-31

RIGHTEOUSNESS IN CHRIST

DR. CHRIS DEGEORGE

Paul came to the realization that all of his self-generated efforts at righteousness were not capable of giving him peace. He reflects upon this reality in Philippians 3, when he gives his list of accomplishments. He came to reckon all his previous desires and goals as nothing compared to knowing Christ. In fact, Paul says he suffered the loss of all things gladly that he might know Christ, because he realized the peace and fulfillment that came from knowing him..

Therefore, Paul strains forward to the high calling in Christ. He labors to glorify the one who gave his life for him. In Romans 3 we see our inability to be righteous in our own efforts or through our sufficiency. Instead, it is only through Christ that we are declared righteous.

As you pray today, ask the Lord to give you the strength to press on toward his high calling in Christ. Pray for fellow brothers and sisters in Christ that they may be motivated to do the same.

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS



1 John 4:10

CHRIST THE PROPITIATION FOR SIN

DR. CHRIS DEGEORGE

The love of God can be clearly seen in the depths of the sacrifice Jesus willingly gave. He himself came to be the “propitiation” for our sin. This word describes to us that Jesus is the means of our forgiveness. It came through him. It came through his sacrifice. And it is great love that is demonstrated in the process.

God’s love is demonstrated in the sending of Christ for us. John reminds us of the extravagance of God’s love. In John 3:16, we see that God’s love resulted in the sending of Christ. He gave his Son that we might be reconciled to life eternal. When we couple this with the realities of sin’s impact and our condition, it is truly remarkable that we have been loved in that way. Through faith in Christ we have been given the inheritance of a son, even though we have fallen short of the glory of God which we were created to display.

As you pray today thank God for the incredible love he has shown us in Christ. Ask him to give you the desire to share that love with others around you.

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS



DR. CHRIS DEGEORGE

Thinking about Jesus' presence in the beginning leads us to think about his role in Creation. John acknowledges this by saying, "All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made" (John 1:3). Then, in Genesis 1:26, we see the creation of man: "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." God's creative work is magnificent. To think of the Trinity, present at Creation and acting to create us, is an incredible thought. This reality should bring us to a place of worship. As we look to Easter and consider our Savior, the presence and involvement of Christ in Creation is one that should bring us to a humble reflection on all that he gave. Considering Jesus acting in creation and then giving himself on the cross brings us face to face with the reality of our sin's weight and consequence. God himself was the only sufficient sacrifice and the only sufficient Savior.

As we reflect on the weight of our sin, it should bring several responses. We should be repentant, grateful, and motivated. Would you pray that these responses might be evident in your life? Would you ask the Lord to forgive you? Thank him for all that he gave. Ask that he would motivate you to live holy and obediently. That motivation should then translate into a desire to serve others. Would you lift these things before the Lord today?

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS



DR. CHRIS DEGEORGE

We have been given freedom in Christ. This passage is detailing that freedom through the presence of God. This freedom is not from ourselves. No, the sufficiency for all things comes through Christ. Paul is clear about the realities of the sufficiency of Christ in all things. He is sufficient for our salvation and our sanctification. So, we grow in grace and realize that he has removed the veil. The adherence to the letter of the law has been replaced by the sufficiency found in the grace of Christ. Our freedom in the new covenant is not from ourselves, but from Christ. All of this should lead us to walk in freedom free from despair and hopelessness through Christ's victory over sin and the grave.

As you pray today, ask the Lord to fortify your heart with the truth that he has given us freedom. Thus, we can walk with the abundant hope of eternity as our consolation through the difficulties of this life.

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS



Romans 5:1-10

HOPE THROUGH HIS SACRIFICE

DR. CHRIS DEGEORGE

There are many points to be made about this passage of scripture. It is a complete picture of the impact of the gospel on our lives. But perhaps the most striking feature is the hope that we have been given in Christ. The struggles of this life have an equipping effect on our lives. While they are not enjoyable, and certainly we might wish for different circumstances, they are refining. Paul is clear that the sum effect of all of this is hope. Hope sustains us, and it will not disappoint us in any way. It will prove itself in the end, because that hope is founded upon Christ. His victory over sin and death, and preparation of an eternity for us, yields confidence in what he will accomplish in us. As Philippians 1:6 tells us, "He who began a good work in you will be faithful to bring it to completion of the day of Jesus Christ." And this is our hope!

Today as you pray, would you rejoice in past and present adversities? Would you pray for God to accomplish his work through them? Would you also pray for others who are experiencing them even now? Let's pray that we might endure and our experience would be the cultivation of great hope for our future.

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

40 Days of Prayer

VICTORY OVER DEATH

MARCH 15 - MARCH 30



John 11:25-27

I AM THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE

MARCH
15

DR. CHRIS DEGEORGE

Martha was broken. Definitely understandable when you consider that she had just lost her brother, Lazarus. She is broken and hurt. Jesus gives her consolation, which she receives, but he also reminds her of the power of God. Jesus is the resurrection and the life. We receive all things through him. He proclaims to Martha the truth that would ultimately raise her brother from the grave. That power is also at work today. Jesus, the resurrection and the life, is able to impact our lives. He has won the victory, and that changes our lives. As we consider his power, it should give us freedom and victory in life!

Today would you thank him that he is the resurrection and the life? Would you ask him to give you the peace in the abundant life that he has given to us?

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS



TODD SUMMERFORD

“Lord, by this time he stinketh” (John 11:39). Those are the words uttered by Martha (in the King James Version) when Jesus finally arrived in Bethany after the death of Lazarus. By this time, Lazarus had been dead four days. Martha was rightly concerned that her brother’s body would not be in great condition, and she feared the smell would be horrendous. If only she understood who Jesus is.

Lazarus was actually dead when Jesus arrived, having been placed into a tomb that was sealed. Jesus had the stone removed from the tomb’s opening and called into the darkness for Lazarus. The formerly dead man then came hopping out of the tomb (at least that’s how it plays out in my mind)! Jesus had the grave clothes removed from Lazarus, who surely was astounded at what had happened. The power of God was on display!

You have already read earlier in this devotional that sin leads to death. If you are in Christ, an experience similar to Lazarus’ situation has occurred. Jesus has called into the grave and raised you back to life! He has satisfied the penalty of sin and defeated the grave! This is something only the power of God could do! Rejoice today in the power of your holy God!

Praise God for his victory over sin through his Son. Ask him to help you recognize his power in your life, not just for salvation, but for daily victory over sin and for obedience. Ask him to use your life to magnify his power to others.

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS



MERLIN LIVERMAN

The Bible teaches us, “And without faith it is impossible to please God, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek him” (Hebrews 11:6, NASB).

In today’s passage, we see two people who were in desperate circumstances. One was about to lose his daughter, and the other one was suffering from a critical disease. Both came to Jesus believing he could help them. When Jesus saw their faith, he immediately went with Jairus to see his daughter. On their way, the woman reached out to touch his cloak and was healed. Jairus found that his daughter had died before Jesus arrived at his house, but Jesus raised her from the dead.

Our Lord wants to reward our faith. It is so important that we continue to seek our Lord and to wait on his answer believing in faith.

As you pray today, keep your requests before the Lord. Ask God to increase your faith as you ask, seek, and knock.

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS



1 Corinthians 15:53-55

CHRIST'S RESURRECTION

MARCH
18

DR. CHRIS DEGEORGE

Paul details the importance of the resurrection. It reveals the power of God to do all that he promised. He has saved us and reconciled us to God. The resurrection points to an incredible future for those who have followed him. Death is swallowed up in victory, and it has no hold on us anymore. Jesus has given us that. It should change the way that we live to consider that Jesus has done this for us. The hope of that future should give us a purpose extending beyond just this life. We are promised resurrection with Christ. So if eternity with him is our future then we can endure anything. thus Paul challenges us to be steadfast and immovable! Are you living faithfully being armed with the truth that Jesus will raise you to eternal life? This should motivate you in all things through your life.

Let us pray today that the Lord would give us a firm perspective in the hope that he has given in the resurrection. His victory guarantees ours, so let us also thank him for his work.

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS



1 Corinthians 15:1-11

HOPE IN THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST

MARCH
19

DR. CHRIS DEGEORGE

What hope is there without the resurrection? The resurrection is the demonstration of the power of God and the sufficiency of Christ. Without it everything is in doubt. But because Christ has overcome death, the power that he has is on display. We do not serve a Christ who is dead. No, he is alive! The one who has been raised will raise us! This is an incredible truth that should impact our every step. This life isn't all there is, and physical death is not the end. There is an eternity beyond, and when we know Christ the promise of that eternity is that we would be present with him for it. That is a glorious hope that we have. It is a hope which should make us continually exalt in the God of our salvation.

As you pray today would you consider the hope of eternity and the essential aspects of the resurrection? Would you thank God for this awesome hope and determine to make that truth known to others?

In the days that follow you will find several reflections on the resurrection. As you pray, may they encourage you!

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS



TODD SUMMERFORD

I am a list-maker, though it's more of a necessity than something I enjoy. I struggle to remember things unless I have it written down for me. The problem is that life happens between the moment I was asked and when the time arrives to take care of that request. I need a reminder.

Remembering was important for the women who arrived at Jesus' tomb on Sunday. These women had experienced a flood of emotions over just a few days. Though we are not told how they felt as they "stood at a distance watching" the crucifixion of Jesus (23:49), we can be fairly certain they felt great sorrow and grief. What did they feel as they followed Joseph of Arimathea to the tomb where Jesus' body would be laid (23:55)? How about as they prepared the "spice and ointments" for Jesus' body (23:56a)? What emotions did they experience as they observed the Sabbath (23:56b)?

When the women remembered Jesus' words, imagine the sheer joy they felt. Jesus had told them he would be killed, but he would be raised back to life. Surely as the two angels reminded them of these words, their emotions shifted from tremendous sadness to exuberant joy! Perhaps there was a sense of great wonder as they pondered the reality of the resurrection.

In life's distractions and overwhelming moments, take care to remember the Lord! Rejoice in the wonder of his faithfulness!

Ask God to help you not miss his great glory. Confess the times when you are distracted from the wonder of God. Consider things that reveal his glory in creation and praise him for his power.

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS



Luke 24:11,12
PETER FOLLOWS

MARCH
21

DR. CHRIS DEGEORGE

Peter ran to see what the women were reporting to him. They said Jesus had risen. Of course many considered it with skepticism, but Peter had to see for himself. He ran to look into the tomb where Jesus was placed. He marveled at the things that he had heard and seen. There Peter was no doubt thinking of all that Jesus had told them about what he would suffer, but also about his promise that he would be raised. As it all began to sink in, Peter was in awe. Do you still consider with awe the realities of the resurrection? That Jesus has overcome death? His resurrection demonstrates to us that God's promises and power are unmatched. The same that he did in the life of Peter, he can do in our lives as well. We must rely on his power with the great consolation of victory over death through Christ.

As you pray today, ask the Lord to draw you near to him. Pray that you would be able to comprehend the impact of his great power on our lives.

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS



Revelation 5 gives us such an incredible description of heaven. The central focus is the Lamb who was slain - Jesus, our Savior. The feature of this passage is that Jesus is worthy of worship. The words we have consistently been using to describe him as sufficient and supreme yield the realization of his worth. His worth means that he should receive all that is due to him. This is the worship of heaven. They ascribe all that is due to Jesus. This should also be our worship. We must give to Jesus all that is due to him.

Our aim should be to ascribe all that he is due because he is worthy. Our worship should be built around this truth. Let us pray that we might consistently render what is due to Jesus. Let us also labor that our lives might accurately reflect the worth and glory of Christ.

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS



DR. CHRIS DEGEORGE

The disciples were afraid. They likely expected that it would not be long before those that crucified Jesus would come for them. There, behind a locked door, they were met by the resurrected Jesus. I would imagine this immediately changed their hearts. The disciples realized Christ had fulfilled what he promised. So, are you hiding behind a locked door? Are you fearful to live in faithfulness to Christ? Many reasons could keep us from being faithful, but the realities of Christ's resurrection should motivate us toward faithfulness despite any cost. That was the impact of the realization of Jesus' resurrection on them, and it should be the impact of his resurrection on us.

Would you pray today that the Lord would remove any fear that you might have of being faithful? Ask him to give you boldness to proclaim his gospel through your life.

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS



TODD SUMMERFORD

"I forgive you." Those are some of the most powerful words we can speak to another person. Though Peter doesn't audibly hear those words from the Lord Jesus, the forgiveness he experienced was overwhelmingly freeing. He would go on to be a pillar in the early church, the Lord accomplishing great things through him.

Peter had denied knowing Jesus, and he was vehement about not knowing this man who was standing trial (Luke 22:54-62). Following the death of Jesus, Peter likely felt intense guilt as he remembered how Jesus had told him of his approaching denial. He needed to experience and rest in the forgiveness of the Savior. And Jesus freely gave it to him.

Sin and the guilt which accompanies it are crippling in the life of the Christ follower. Though we will sin, the forgiveness we receive from Jesus when we confess (1 John 1:9) frees us from the burden of guilt. Today, spend some time rejoicing in the reality that God's grace is sufficient for you to experience forgiveness no matter the circumstances.

Thank God for forgiveness. Ask him to help you become aware of sin in your life and lead you to confession. Give him praise for freeing you from the guilt of sin through the work of Christ on the cross.

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS



DR. CHRIS DEGEORGE

An unexpected meeting on the road for these men yielded an incredible realization. Christ had risen. They spoke of the burning of their hearts as he spoke to them on the road. He explained to them the Scriptures concerning him. What a thought to think of Jesus explaining the ways the Bible spoke about him. What Jesus did was to reveal truth to them. The realization of his resurrection should give us a different perspective on all of life. That truth changes not only how we think of the challenges in our lives, but also how we live through them. Let us live faithfully because we know that Christ is risen, and he will raise us up also.

Let us pray that the truth would impact our hearts to cause us to live faithfully.

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS



DR. CHRIS DEGEORGE

David's words from the pit of despair are the words of Jesus from the Cross. "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me" (Psalm 22:1)? These words are recognized as a fitting description of David's circumstances and foreshadow the events of Jesus' crucifixion. It is a plea for God to bring rescue. Even during those bleak circumstances the rescue of God is expected. When we consider bleak circumstances such as these, we realize that through them God brought rescue from sin and restoration to fellowship with him. This was through Jesus' life laid down. The recognition of this is the final part of Psalm 22. Jesus is worthy of worship, and he has acted to bring salvation. David's confidence is realized in Jesus. The afflicted shall eat and be satisfied. Those who seek him shall praise the Lord! Let us tell this to everyone!

As you pray today, consider the struggles we may face. Maybe there are difficulties you are facing today. In Christ we have been given grace for all moments. Let us ask him for grace to provide strength in this today!

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS



TODD SUMMERFORD

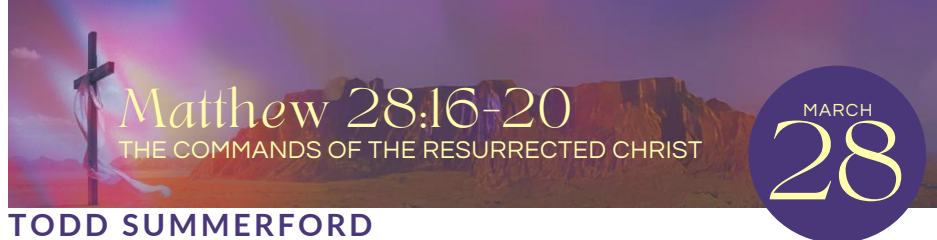
"Picture or it didn't happen!" As cell phones with cameras became ubiquitous and social media introduced the posting of pictures, that phrase became pretty common. You could tell a fantastic story about something that you did or experienced, but your listeners might demand pictures to prove what you are saying.

Thomas basically desired the same thing when the other disciples told him they had "seen the Lord" (John 20:25). His reply was a demand for tangible evidence. "I won't believe it until I've seen it!" There is a sense of this experience in the life of every follower of Jesus. Though we can read the truth of the Bible and see a sliver of the great glory of God through it, our faith may often be tested by doubt. We certainly can see the effects of God's work in us and around us. But as we wait to see him in eternal glory, Satan schemes to derail our faith. One of his devices is doubt.

With Horatio Spafford, the author of the great hymn "It Is Well with My Soul," we cry, "and Lord, haste the day when my faith shall be sight!" Oh, the joy awaiting us when we see our Savior face to face! Press on in faith today!

Confess to the Lord any doubts you may have. Ask him to help you persevere in faith when doubts arise. Ask him to place opportunities in your path to encourage another person who may be experiencing doubt.

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS



Do you remember Paul Harvey? Ask someone what the Great Commission is, the final words of the risen Christ to his disciples, and they will likely quote or paraphrase verse 19 and the first part of verse 20: “go and make disciples.” But let me tell you the rest of the story!

The Great Commission actually begins in verse 18 when Jesus describes the perfect authority that he has as the eternal Son of God (“all authority”). He then issues the command to make disciples by going, baptizing, and teaching. His marching orders actually end with the assurance that he is with his disciples “to the end of the age.”

Sharing the gospel can be scary. In some areas of the world, being a Christian can actually get you killed. But let’s be honest with ourselves. In America, our fear is that we will make somebody mad or cause them to not like us. But, we can have boldness to obey these final words of our great Savior! Recognizing his perfect authority and perfect presence changes everything!

And now you know....the REST of the story!

Ask the Lord to give you boldness for evangelism. Pray that he would give you opportunities to clearly share the gospel with someone. Think of at least one lost person, and pray for him or her by name.

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS



DR. CHRIS DEGEORGE

The book of Acts is an incredible recounting of what the Lord did in and through the early church. Before his ascension, Jesus called his disciples to be faithful to tell others about what he had done. He called them to be witnesses as those who shared in the work of his earthly ministry, to share the message of the glorious gospel. He didn't just tell them what to share, but also where they should go to share it - from Jerusalem and to the end of the earth. This command is now ours to live out. We are to take the gospel everywhere, from our neighborhoods to the nations. We are called to share this message that Jesus has overcome sin, death, and despair. He has done it in our lives, and he will do it in the lives of others.

As you pray today, would you ask the Lord to give you words that you might faithfully testify to the truth of the gospel? Would you ask the Lord to make you bold in sharing and being a witness?

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

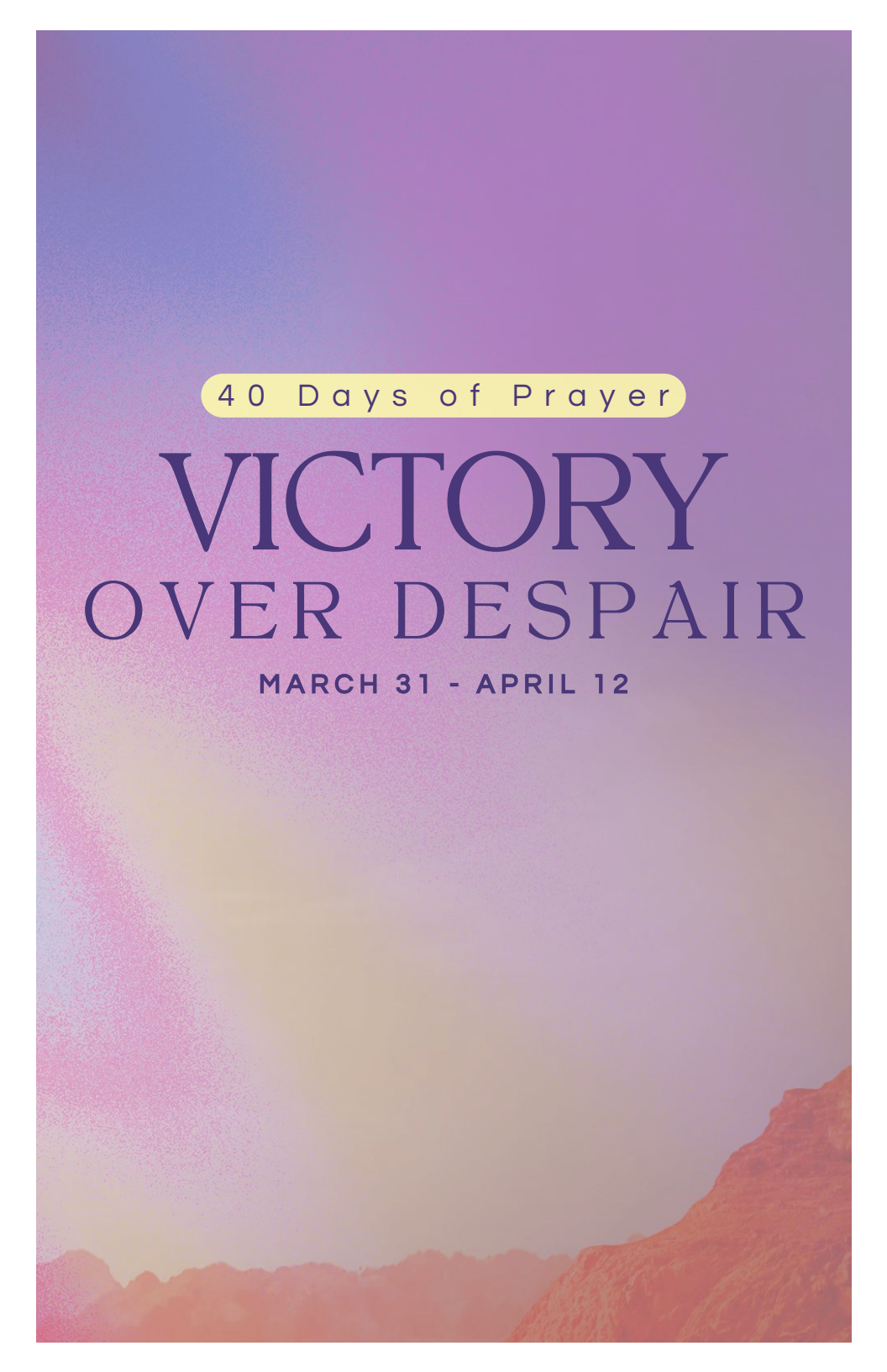


DR. CHRIS DEGEORGE

Paul struggled against false teaching which claimed there was a mystery to be revealed and understood. In his struggle, he sought to make people aware of the realities of what Christ has done. He classifies the mystery as having been revealed in Christ. No more wondering about how to find peace, and no more looking for rescue in anything else. Jesus alone has brought these things to us, and he has brought them to Jew and Gentile alike. In Christ there is salvation for all who would believe.

Would you thank God for Jesus, and would you praise him that there is no mystery to be sought and found except to recognize that Jesus is Lord? Would you pray for those who are searching that they may come to realize what Paul is speaking of in this passage?

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS



40 Days of Prayer

VICTORY OVER DESPAIR

MARCH 31 - APRIL 12



Isaiah 42:1-4

THE BRUISED REED

MARCH
31

DR. CHRIS DEGEORGE

Life can be hard. Sometimes we might wonder if all of the hardship will overwhelm us. This passage points to the awesome truth of Jesus' love. He has brought justice and forgiveness. God has fulfilled the promise that he made to send the Messiah. He will not break the bruised reed or snuff out the faintly burning wick. There is solace and comfort found in the Son of God. Where we might be driven to despair, he stays faithful to show us that we do not have to be in despair. Jesus will sustain us no matter how bad it becomes around us. He will lead us on until we see him face to face. I hope that we will be encouraged for present and future experiences. Christ is sufficient to guard us from these things for this life and for all of eternity.

Would you ask the Lord to strengthen your heart that you might be able to stand firm in moments of trial? Would you pray that he would guard you from ever despairing in your circumstances?

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS



Isaiah 9:2

LIGHT HAS DAWNED

APRIL

1

TODD SUMMERFORD

Has your power ever gone out for a lengthy amount of time? Anyone who has ever been affected by a hurricane knows the struggle of having no power for days on end. Much rejoicing occurs when power is restored!

Isaiah's prophecy concerns a much larger issue than the restoration of electricity. Sin had plunged Israel (well, everyone) into darkness. All was "darkness and distress" (Isaiah 5:30). They needed light. For those "in anguish" (Isaiah 9:1), a light was coming!

We know that this "great light" was revealed in Jesus. Sin has darkened the hearts of all people. But Jesus shines brightly into the darkness! Our sin separates us from God. But Jesus reconciles us with God, bringing us into relationship on the merit of his work.

This work of Christ is more than "power restoration" like what is experienced after a hurricane. We didn't have light before Jesus. We lived in darkness. But in Christ, the darkness of sin has been overcome! Rejoice, Christian, in the light of Christ!

Praise God for having overcome the darkness of sin through Jesus. Ask him to help you live in the light of Christ.

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS



2 Corinthians 4:1-12

POWER FROM GOD TO OVERCOME

APRIL

2

DR. CHRIS DEGEORGE

This passage is a wonderful demonstration of the power of the gospel on our lives. While we recognize the troubles and challenges that exist, we are motivated by something that transcends these troubles. Paul points to the truth of our victory through the power of Christ. Even though we are afflicted and struck down, persecuted and perplexed, we are not forsaken, crushed, abandoned, or driven to despair. This power over despair is one that we must remind ourselves about regularly. We may face the same types of challenges that Paul faced. We may endure the same difficulties endured by the early church. We can endure them with hope through the recognition of the gospels power over everything. We have the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ. That should take away any fear.

Would you pray that the Lord would take away your fear and give you confidence in the power of Christ? Would you also pray for believers around you and around the world to know this incredible truth as they face persecution and hardship?

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS



Hebrews 12:1-4

CONSIDER HIM

APRIL

3

DR. CHRIS DEGEORGE

The writer of Hebrews is encouraging a people gripped by persecution. They are weighted down and are close to quitting. They are encouraged through a challenge that puts the focus on Jesus as the very center of their gaze. While encouraging them to persevere, he reveals to them the way that they will make it through their circumstances. They are to consider Christ and fix their gaze upon him. Reflecting on his sufferings, and the reality that they were given for them, should encourage these believers tremendously. The writer says to particularly consider that Jesus shed his blood for them. Jesus endured faithfully, and so should they. Sometimes we may feel we are ready to quit. Our circumstances and the challenges of this life often collide to cause grief and push us toward despair. But, in Christ, we can endure. We can run the race with perseverance because we are sustained by the one who has been tempted in the same ways, yet without sin. Our High Priest, Jesus Christ, sustains us in our faithfulness.

Would you pray today that he would give you the grace to persevere no matter your circumstances? Ask him to help you fix your gaze on him that you might continue faithfully?

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS



DR. CHRIS DEGEORGE

The life that Jesus lived was a life that experienced the same types of things we experience. He knew pain, hardship, sorrow, fatigue, hunger, temptation, and on down the line. Yet, he remained perfect and completely committed to God. He is sufficient, and the life he lived demonstrates that sufficiency. Our encouragement, then, is that we can draw confidently to his throne, receive mercy, and find grace when we are in need. When we have sinned, our tendency might be to run away from the mercy of God or feel we cannot ask for forgiveness. The sufficiency of Jesus' blood and sacrifice should tell us that we can approach God without fear of whether he will forgive us. It should not make us treat sin casually or as no big deal, but instead remind us of the complete work of Christ and how it impacts us.

Today as you pray would you take those words to heart? Maybe you need to repent, or maybe you need grace for a circumstance you are facing. Would you approach his throne boldly? Remember that it is not because you are worthy or deserving, but because he is sufficient!

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS



James 1:2-4

CONSIDER IT JOY

MERLIN LIVERMAN

After reading these verses for today, I call your attention to 1 Peter 1:6-7 (NASB): “In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”

James tells us our trials produce endurance or steadfastness. We know our Lord Jesus is with us in times of trouble, and he will never leave us or forsake us. We know he loves us and will give us his grace to help in time of need. He is hearing our prayers, and he will answer us. He is causing, “all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to his purpose” (Romans 8:28, NASB). We are learning to trust our Lord no matter what we are going through because he is giving us his peace and, yes, his joy in the midst of our trials.

All of this is endurance. We know God is with us no matter what the circumstances. All of this produces in us a perfect result - mature, complete, and lacking in nothing.

Let us pray today for God’s wisdom and grace as we go through difficulties and trials in the fallen world. Also, pray for others who are suffering.

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS



2 Corinthians 11:16-12:20

MY GRACE IS SUFFICIENT FOR YOU

APRIL

6

DR. CHRIS DEGEORGE

The Apostle Paul spoke of a thorn in the flesh that he asked for God to remove. When we consider all that Paul did for the gospel and in faithfulness to the Lord, we might get the idea that surely God would remove this thing from Paul. Yet, Paul's request isn't granted. Instead, there is a message that comes as a part of the answer to his prayer: "My grace is sufficient for you." Paul was reminded, and he would say elsewhere in his epistles, that he had learned to be content in all of his circumstances. He was acquainted with relying on the grace of the Lord to sustain him no matter the circumstances he faced. In the midst of our lives there will be moments where we may struggle and desire for the Lord to take away our circumstances. Even though we pray, they may stay the same. Let us learn to rely on the strength that comes from his grace. And with Paul, may we say that we have learned the secret of being content in all circumstances. We can do all things through Christ who gives us strength.

As you pray today, would you ask the Lord to help you understand what it is to rely on his grace and to be content no matter what circumstances you face?

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS



DR. CHRIS DEGEORGE

The cross that Jesus suffered was an excruciating death. All of his life built toward the culmination of the Incarnation when he laid down his life. He endured this “for the joy set before him.” In the book of Philippians, we see the realities of this joy in the exaltation that God would give Jesus, giving him, “the name that is above every name” (Philippians 2:9). The passage in Hebrews points to the reality of how Jesus would be exalted. The life he lived in submission and perfection and with all he demonstrated qualifies him to be exalted above all. This is the joy set before him! He endured the cross, despising the shame, and now rules at the right hand of God! What a joy to consider the realities of Christ’s life laid down for us!

Today, would you recognize what Jesus gave on our behalf? Would you also see that it was for the joy set before him. Would you surrender to him and exalt him above all? Would you pray that others might come to this joy-giving reality?

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS



Revelation 7:13-17

THE LAMB WILL WIPE AWAY EVERY TEAR

APRIL

8

DR. CHRIS DEGEORGE

Life is often difficult. I recently had the opportunity to spend some time with a group of believers who are struggling greatly. They weep because they can see no end to the painful moment. Much of the New Testament acknowledges the hardships that can be expected in this life. Today's passage indicates the presence of hardship, but also the realities of what God will accomplish in the end. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. Final comfort and consolation will come to God's children through his power and might as he restores all things and fulfills all things. Where we are tempted to despair and lose hope, we must keep our eyes fixed on the horizon of eternity. No matter the trials faced in this life, we can experience the joy of undimmed and unbroken fellowship with the Lord free from the presence of despair.

So, are you struggling? Are you burdened or in despair? Let us pray for the Lord to give us hope in his promise.

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS



DR. CHRIS DEGEORGE

Elijah has just watched God provide an incredible victory, but he goes from there to immediate discouragement. Jezebel is determined to kill him. He feels like he is all alone. In those moments, God provides for Elijah in an incredible way. In our moments of despair, it's important to realize that God will bring comfort to us. He revealed himself to Elijah that day through the gentle whisper. He encouraged Elijah that he was not alone and that ultimately God would prevail.

Would you pray that God would instill in you the same peace that he gave to Elijah that day? Whether you are on the mountain or in the valley, pray that God would give you comfort in his presence?

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS



Matthew 17:1-9

JESUS SETS HIS EYES TO THE CROSS

DR. CHRIS DEGEORGE

Jesus' transfiguration points to what he would soon accomplish. The disciples were able to get a firsthand glimpse of his glory. They were also blessed to see Moses and Elijah, faithful servants of the Lord, ministering to Jesus with little time to go before he would lay his life down. They were both faithful men. Flawed but faithful. They had known despair, and they had known the provision of God, which the disciples would soon need in abundant supply. They were, no doubt, encouraging Jesus in his faithfulness and spurring him on toward fulfilling God's plan. They want to stay, but Jesus had redemption to accomplish. He set his face to the cross. As you think about the challenges this life might bring, would you rest in Christ? By remaining in him we are able to stand. God's power and his ability to sustain his servants should challenge us to persevere through any despair in this life.

Would you pray today that God would give you confidence in his power to sustain? Would you ask him to help you to be faithful in all things?

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS



Colossians 1:15-20

THE PREEMINENT CHRIST

DR. CHRIS DEGEORGE

Not only was Jesus present *in* creation, and an agent *of* creation, but Colossians tells us that he continues to *sustain* creation. “In him all things hold together” are the words Paul uses to describe what Jesus is doing. Paul also reveals the reality that Christ “is the image of the invisible God.” Jesus shows us God, and he upholds his creation. These truths cause our view of Christ to grow. That understanding continues to grow through our consideration of the cross, the resurrection, and the realities of Jesus’ return. We are left, as the old hymn says, to “stand amazed in the presence of Jesus the Nazarene and wonder how he could love me a sinner condemned unclean.” This is a marvelous reality. May our 40 days be completely enveloped with this truth of the marvelous grace that we have in our amazing God. He has shown us himself by becoming flesh, dwelling among us, dying for us, canceling the penalty of sin, and conquering death and the grave.

Would your prayer today acknowledge the fullness of Christ? Would you thank him for his sufficiency and glory amid his sustaining work? Would you praise him for the truth of his life-giving grace? Let us continue to make our prayers full of the worship of our Great God!

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS



DR. CHRIS DEGEORGE

The Apostle Paul's life had been completely changed by Jesus. He recounts where he was before Christ and after he came to know him. What he had considered the greatest gain was now nothing to him. Instead, he had come to realize knowing Christ was the greatest thing. Paul then says he presses on toward the high calling of Christ to be faithful to him.

Paul's effort is to forget what is behind and press on to what is ahead. Spiritually mature believers are to think this way. Striving to know Christ and being faithful in all things is what we should pursue. So are you pressing on? Are you putting aside temptation to despair and toiling to be faithful no matter your circumstances?

Pray that God would strengthen you to press on to the upward call of God in Christ Jesus, and put away despair.

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

40 Days of Prayer

HOLY WEEK

APRIL 13 - APRIL 20



DR. CHRIS DEGEORGE

As we begin our focus of prayer this week, we are thinking through where Jesus was and what he was doing on these days. Much happened and many were impacted. Certainly the events of the end of the week are those we often focus on, but each day of this week bears a significance we should not overlook.

On the first day of the week, Jesus entered Jerusalem with his face set to the cross. As he came in, people lauded him and praised him. Many did not understand the full weight of what Jesus would endure. Many thought this was their king coming to take up his reign. It shouldn't be lost on us that some of these same people who cried, "Hosanna," also shouted, "Crucify him!" While Jesus is the King who reigns, he was not going to do it in the way they expected. His Kingdom would be a heavenly one. We should evaluate our hearts to ensure that our expectations and beliefs about Jesus are in accordance with what the Scriptures say. We might have the tendency to think that Jesus simply wants us to have health, wealth, and happiness, or to think that a life given to Jesus will be free of problems. While Jesus tells us we will be blessed, it doesn't mean the absence of challenge or struggle. Jesus promises us peace and abundance, but those blessings we receive are through his presence with us. While we may struggle and endure hardship, we are promised that we will never walk alone. Jesus has given us his presence. So, let us live in light of the presence of the Lord. We should put away the desires and deeds of the flesh and live lives of holiness before him. As we are faced with the presence and reality of the Messiah's coming to our lives, may it be our hearts would bow as we cry, "Hosanna," and lay our crowns at the feet of the King of kings.

As you pray today, ask the Lord to deepen your understanding of what it means to surrender to him. Would you pray for others also, that they might know the Lord and dwell with him deeply?

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS



Luke 19:45-20:1-8

CLEANSING THE TEMPLE

APRIL

14

DR. CHRIS DEGEORGE

Jesus was confronting the reality of what people had begun to do in the temple. What should have been a place of worship was being made into a place for profit. Jesus was moved by zeal for his Father. It is important that we consider what we do in our church and in our lives. Certainly many who were going about their everyday practices in the temple were shocked at Jesus' actions and words. Yet, as we really look at the opportunism that was being demonstrated in the temple, we can see how out of line it was. Jesus was confronting the reality that the purpose of the temple was being obscured by those who desired for their own profit. We must guard ourselves from this trap. It would be easy for us to begin to fall victim to the same attitudes which would lead to the same actions. Let us guard ourselves from these attitudes and actions.

Pray today that any improper attitude within your heart would be removed. Pray the Lord would convict us of any actions that would obscure the purposes he has for his Church.

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS



TODD SUMMERFORD

This parable of the fig tree really serves as a warning to Jesus' disciples. He has just described events surrounding his future return and the final judgment. The end is coming. At some point. We need not worry over the details of when it will happen, but we need to remember that it is coming.

What do we do in the meantime? Fret and worry? Indulge ourselves? Push it out of our minds? If you continue reading in Luke 21, you find Jesus give his disciples an idea of what we should do as we await the promised return of our Savior.

"Be on guard." "Be alert at all times." "Praying." I am willing to admit that I am often like the disciples in the Garden of Gethsemane (Matthew 26:36-46). They couldn't even stay awake "one hour." I believe Jesus is referring to much more than just their physical slumber. Their inability to keep their eyes open is symbolic of not being on guard and watchful.

Do we let our guard down, exposing ourselves to the "flaming darts" of Satan (Ephesians 6:16)? Do we become unmindful of spiritual warfare? Do we pray?

The return of the Lord is coming! What will you do while you wait?

Ask the Lord to give you courage to stand firm as you await his return. Pray that he would give you strength to always be alert and on guard. Ask him to help you pray.

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

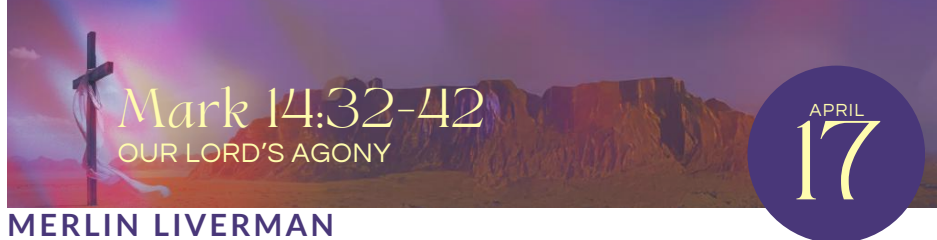


DR. CHRIS DEGEORGE

This passage brings us face to face with the raw reality of what was happening the final week of Jesus' life. In these verses we see a beautiful act of sacrifice and anointing of Jesus and a grieving betrayal from one so close to him. In both, we see the purposes of God unfolding, and the stage being set for Jesus to give the ultimate sacrifice. Present here are two distinct attitudes. In Mary's anointing, we see a heart of love for Christ overflow into an extravagant offering and act of worship. In Judas, we see one who was as close in proximity to Jesus as he could be, and yet he was consumed by selfishness and pride, unwilling to truly bow to Jesus. We must consider whether we are more like Mary or more like Judas. We may not want to admit we could be harboring attitudes like Judas, who scoffed at the gift Mary poured out on Jesus, but we could easily fall into this kind of trap. Mary's heart was utterly devoted to Jesus and it overflowed into her actions for him. May that devotion be ours.

Let us pray our hearts would overflow with devotion and love like Mary. Pray that the Lord would give you a heart of gratitude for all he has given.

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS



MERLIN LIVERMAN

In this scripture, we see all things coming to a climax as to the reason and purpose of our Lord coming to this world. He came to set his face to accomplish the purchase of our salvation: to give his life a ransom for our sins. All this was falling upon our Lord Jesus as he entered the garden. He "began to be very distressed and troubled. And he said, 'My soul is deeply grieved to the point of death.'"

Remember the words of Isaiah when he wrote, "Surely our griefs He Himself bore, and our sorrows He carried; yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the chastening of our well-being fell upon Him, and by His scourging we are healed. All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us has turned to his own way; but the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him" (Isaiah 53:4-6, NASB).

As the songwriter said, "Oh, what a Savior!" Oh, how we praise him for his great love, mercy, and compassion for us! We give him all of our gratitude and thanksgiving each day for suffering and dying so that we might have this great salvation God has so graciously given to us! And, especially during this week of remembrance, we worship him!

Let us pray for the salvation of those who do not know him as their Savior.

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS



TODD SUMMERFORD

“Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29)! These words of John the Baptist ring in my ears as I read today’s passage. It is a lengthy passage, but as I read it in preparation for writing today’s devotion, I was captured by verse 41.

As one of the thieves “railed at” Jesus, begging him to save them from the torture they were experiencing, the other thief came to a realization. Although the two thieves had certainly earned the sentence of death, “this man” (Jesus) had done nothing wrong. Even one of the centurions declared the innocence of Jesus.

Like the criminals hanging beside Jesus, we have rightly earned our sentence (Romans 3:23; 6:23). Apart from Christ, we stand condemned before the holy God. Oh, but the spotless Lamb...

The cross was cruel. Jesus suffered a horrific death. As the spotless Lamb, he has made perfect atonement for sin. For all who call on his name, their sins are taken away and placed on the Lamb, that they might have life! Praise God for the spotless Lamb!

Thank God for the spotless Lamb who has made atonement for your sin. Praise the Lord for the reconciling work of Christ on the cross.

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS



TODD SUMMERFORD

A thick veil separated the innermost part of the temple (Holy of Holies) from the rest of the temple. This curtain separated the earthly dwelling place of God from the dwelling of sinful mankind. Only the High Priest could enter the Holy of Holies, and he could only do so once per year on the Day of Atonement. You can read the details in Leviticus 16.

But Jesus' death changed everything! When the curtain was torn in two, it signified that the sacrifice of Jesus was the final atoning sacrifice. The sacrificial system was no longer necessary because of the perfect sacrifice of the spotless Lamb (remember yesterday?!).

Those who trust in Christ for salvation now have access to the Father, but we must remember that it's only through the Son. The High Priest was required to enter through the veil of the temple. We enter the presence of the holy God through the Son. The writer of Hebrews says, "we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh" (Hebrews 10:19, 20).

Spend a few moments just sitting with the truth that you can go directly before the Father because of the work of the Son. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide your prayer, thanking the Lord for his faithfulness in your life. Praise him for the final, perfectly atoning sacrifice of Jesus.

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS



DR. CHRIS DEGEORGE

We have victory in Jesus!

Christ is risen!

Sin and death are broken! Despair is taken away!

As we reflect today, I pray you have been challenged to draw nearer to the Lord. James promises us that if we would draw near to him, he will draw near to us (James 4:8). So, continue drawing near!

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

Have a prayer request?
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