

Dear Pathway Family,

Happy New Year!!! It is great to know that, even with all the discord in our world today, our God remains constant. We don't have to worry about Him changing and becoming "of this world" like our nation seems to have become. ***Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever*** (Heb. 13:8).

We can't all go out into the missions field, but we can all be missionaries from our homes. We can share with others what God has done for us, and we can share His Word. Always ensure you have a spare Bible and an extra January pathway wherever you go. You never know when the opportunity will arise to give someone in need the comfort and support of God's Word. This year, I challenge you to make it your New Year's resolution not to let a day go by without sharing with at least one person the wonderful gift that God has given to us.

And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen (Matt. 28:18-20).

In His Love,

Jennifer

I have decided to follow Jesus;
I have decided to follow Jesus;
I have decided to follow Jesus;
No turning back, no turning back.

. Tho' none go with me, I still will follow;
Tho' none go with me, I still will follow;
Tho' none go with me, I still will follow;
No turning back, no turning back.

My cross I'll carry till I see Jesus;
My cross I'll carry till I see Jesus;
My cross I'll carry till I see Jesus;
No turning back, No turning back.

. The world behind me, the cross before me;
The world behind me, the cross before me;
The world behind me, the cross before me;
No turning back, no turning back.

And God said, Let Us make man in Our image, after Our Likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth (Gen. 1:26).

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him; and without Him was not any thing made that was made (John 1:1-3). Today, we begin our journey through the Old Testament, in which is recorded the history of mankind's relationship with God. Yet if we choose to read it solely as a book of history, claiming that, with the coming of Christ, nothing that is written here has any direct bearing on our lives, then we are cheating ourselves out of a fully realized relationship with our Lord and Savior. Jesus did not come into being as a newborn baby in a small, dark stable in Bethlehem; He has been in existence since BEFORE the beginning, and he was one with God when He stated ***Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness.***

For there are Three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these Three are One (I John 5:7). The Father's plan that was set into motion in the Garden of Eden is the plan of the Son. To fully understand that plan, we must avail ourselves of every word of Scripture given to us by God. ***But He answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God*** (Matt. 4:4). Only through starting at the beginning will our understanding of our need for a Savior be complete.

In the Garden of Eden, we are introduced to the serpent (3:1), who we will later discover is known by many names, among them Lucifer, Satan, the adversary, the accuser, the enemy, the devil, and the dragon (Is. 14:12; Matt. 13:39; I Pet. 5:8; Rev. 12:10; 20:2). With his entry into the Garden, mankind first experienced temptation. ***And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and***

ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil (Gen. 3:4-5). It is important to note that sin was introduced into this world not by the serpent but by the conscious choices of Eve and Adam. At the moment of temptation, they shifted their confidence from the wisdom of God to the wisdom of self, and in so doing, they forfeited the authority and protection of the Word of God over their hearts, consciences, and understanding. In that moment, they suffered spiritual death, which was passed through their offspring unto all mankind (Rom. 5:12).

Satan is still roaming this world, seeking to deceive and lead astray. The very temptations that he placed before Eve, ***the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life*** (1 John 2:16), he regularly places before each of us. Yet we do not have to face him alone. Through the complete revelation of God's Word, we have been given every tool necessary to resist the devil in all his forms.

Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you (James 4:7).

Thought for the Day: *God's plan is not evolving; it does not change with worldly events. It is perfectly and continually on-going.*

Christ Revealed: As Creator (Gen. 1:1; compare John 1:1-4,14; Col. 1:13-17; Heb. 11:3). As the **Seed** (Descendant) of ***the woman*** (Gen. 3:15; Is. 7:14; 9:6-7).

Word Studies: 1:2 **face** = surface; 1:6 **firmament** = the open expanse of the heavens; 1:29 **meat** = food; 2:3 **sanctified** = made holy for God to use; 2:10 **heads** = rivers; 2:11 **compasseth** = surrounds; 2:14 **Hiddekel** = the Tigris; 2:15 **dress** = take care of; 2:24 **cleave** = be joined; 3:1 **subtile** = cunning; 3:13 **beguiled** = deceived; 3:17 **hearkened** = yielded to suggestion to disobey God; **sorrow** = toil, labor; 3:24 **keep** = guard.

Pray For Staff: Jennifer Palafox, Bible Pathway Ministries President • **Government Officials:** Sen. Bob Menendez(NJ), Rep. Terri Sewell(AL), Rep. Derek Kilmer(WA), Rep. Diane Harshbarger(TN) • **Country:** Monaco (30,508) Southeastern France • Major Languages: French, English • 90% Roman Catholic; 10% Other (Protestant, Jewish, Muslim) • **Prayer Suggestion:** Pray persistently (Is. 62:6).

Optional Reading: Matthew 1

And Adam lived an hundred and thirty years, and begat a son in his own likeness, after his image; and called his name Seth: And the days of Adam after he had begotten Seth were eight hundred years: and he begat sons and daughters: And all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years: and he died (Gen. 5:3-5).

This is the book of the generations of Adam. In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made He him; Male and female created He them; and blessed them, and called their name Adam, in the day when they were created (Gen. 5:1-2). Throughout the history of the modern church, there has been much discussion of what it means to have been created ***in the likeness of God***. For centuries, Scholars have debated if this 'image' was in the literal or figurative sense, each side arguing passionately about what they felt to be our indelible connection to God. A close examination of Scripture, however, appears to settle this question.

Adam and Eve were created perfect ***in the likeness of God***. They carried His spirit with them (Gen. 2:7), and they were without sin. When they deliberately turned against God in the Garden of Eden, they suffered spiritual death (Rom. 5:12). No longer did they exist ***in the likeness of God***, but rather according to the sinful nature of natural man. In confirmation of this, we read, ***And Adam lived an hundred and thirty years, and begat a son in his own likeness, after his image; and called his name Seth.***

Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me (Ps. 51:5). Seth was born in the likeness of Adam; in other words, Seth was born spiritually dead, as are all that have come after him. ***And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others*** (Eph. 2:1-3).

So, are Christians everywhere wrong when they claim to have been made in the image of God? No, far from it! God, in His boundless mercy and love, desired that our spiritual lives be restored to us. ***For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life*** (John 3:16). During His ministry on earth, Jesus explained that all who fully accepted Him as their Savior would be spiritually reborn (John 3:3-6). ***Therefore if any man be in Christ, He is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new*** (II Cor. 5:17). At the moment of this rebirth, we are restored to ***the likeness of God***.

Reborn in His image, Christ has given us back the birthright bestowed on us by our Creator that Adam, in his arrogance and pride, so carelessly threw away. ***But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God*** (John 1:12-13).

And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created Him (Col. 3:10).

Thought for the Day: *God's will is to restore us to His image; through Christ, we are closer to him than those of the Old Testament.*

Christ Revealed: Through Abel's blood sacrifice (Gen. 4:4-7). Christ is ***the Lamb of God*** (John 1:29; see Heb. 9:22; 11:4). Man's best achievements can never take the place of Christ's death on the cross, which ***cleanseth us from all sin*** (I John 1:7).

Word Studies: 4:1 **knew** = had intercourse with; 4:4 **had respect unto** = approved; 4:6 **fallen** = angry, resentful; 4:15 **a mark** = a sign of protection; 4:18 **begat** = fathered; 4:22 **artificer** = metal craftsman; 4:23 **to my wounding** = for wounding me; 5:22 **walked with** = believed in and was obedient to; 6:2 **sons of God** = followers of God; **daughters of men** = worldly women; 6:6 **repented** = grieved.

Pray For Staff: Tiffany Parisi • **Country:** Mongolia (2,953,190) East-central Asia • **Major Language:** Khalkha Mongol • **Societal abuses and discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice** • 53% Buddhist; 3% Muslim; 2.1% Christian; 2.9% Shamanist; 0.4% Other; 38.6% None • **Prayer Suggestion:** Remember that God hears and answers our prayers (Is. 65:24).

Optional Reading: Matthew 2

And the LORD said unto Noah, Come thou and all thy house into the ark; for thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation (Gen. 7:1).

Controlled by worldly appetites and carnal desires, mankind quickly spiraled out of control, perverting and despoiling God's creation. In just ten generations (Gen. 5), evil had taken root to such an extent that God knew He had to intervene. ***And the LORD said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth Me that I have made them*** (6:7). The sinful nature that Adam and Eve had loosened onto the world had led it straight to the brink of annihilation. All would have been well and truly lost had it not been for the righteousness of one man.

Adam and Eve had been given charge of paradise, surrounded and uplifted by all the blessings of God, yet they had willfully chosen to defy His authority and turn their back on His Word. Noah was born into a depraved world and weighed down by the innate sinful nature that was bequeathed to him by Adam. Yet, Noah consciously chose to walk with God (6:9), and through his obedience, he brought the blessing of continued existence to the entirety of God's creation. God called to Noah, ***and Noah did according unto all that the LORD commanded him*** (7:5).

The world we live in today shares many similarities to the world of Noah's time. Familial murder is commonplace (4:8), the sacrament of marriage has been twisted and is taking place outside of the perfect will of God (4:2-3; 6:2,4), and everywhere we go, we find hearts set on selfish, evil intents. Following God in such an environment is hard, but Noah is a testament to us all that it is not impossible. ***By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith*** (Heb. 11:7).

Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were

saved by water. The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ (I Pet. 3:20-21).

Just as He did with Noah, God has laid on every receptive heart the call to enter into the true Ark, the salvation of Jesus Christ our Lord. Noah was given specific instructions; if he wanted to survive, he had only one option open to him. So it is with us today. Salvation can be found in Jesus and Jesus alone (John 14:6; Acts 4:10-12). Through His Word, God has shown us our need and introduced us to His Son; the next move is up to us.

If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory. Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience (Col. 3:1-6).

Thought for the Day: *Sometimes, it can feel as if we are the only ones living according to God's will. This is not a cause for despair; so long as someone keeps the candle burning, others will flock to its light.*

Christ Revealed: Through the Ark (Gen. 7:1,7; Acts 4:12; I Pet. 3:12,20). Christ is our Ark of safety. ***Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come*** (I Thess. 1:10).

Word Studies: 8:1 **asswaged** = subsided; 8:3 **abated** = decreased; 8:21 **sweet savour** = symbolic of satisfaction; 9:9 **Covenant** = binding agreement with qualifications given by God; 9:13 **bow** = rainbow; 9:20 **husbandman** = farmer.

Pray for Staff: Ryan McCrary • **Government Official:** Gov. Ned Lamont(CT) Rep. Eli Crane (AZ), Rep. Katie Porter (CA) Rep. Marc Veasey (TX) • **Country:** Montenegro (650,036) Southeastern Europe • Major Languages: Serbian, Montenegrin • Religious Freedom • 72.1% Orthodox; 19.1% Muslim; 3.4% Catholic; 1.3% Atheist; 1.5% Other; 2.6% Unspecified • **Prayer Suggestion:** Humble yourself and reverence the Word of God; He will look upon you with affection (Is. 66:2)

Optional Reading: Matthew 3

And it came to pass, when he was come near to enter into Egypt, that he said unto Sarai his wife, Behold now, I know that thou art a fair woman to look upon: Therefore it shall come to pass, when the Egyptians shall see thee, that they shall say, This is his wife: and they will kill me, but they will save thee alive. Say, I pray thee, thou art my sister: that it may be well with me for thy sake; and my soul shall live because of thee (Gen. 12:11-13).

When we think of Abram (Abraham) today, we think of a man wholly devoted to the Lord whom he served. We think of God's magnificent promise, ***Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing*** (Gen.12:1-2), and Abram's unquestioning obedience, ***So Abram departed, as the LORD had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him: and Abram was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran*** (12:4). We revere him as our most cherished spiritual ancestor, ***And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise*** (Gal. 3:29), and we hold him up as an example of unquestioned righteousness, ***And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness*** (Gen. 15:6).

Abram was indeed all of these things, and there is much we can learn from his actions of faithful obedience, but we do ourselves a disservice if we choose to view him as a perfect man and ignore the Scripture passages that recount his faults. Here, as we read of a man acting out of mortal fear, we are offered a godly understanding of obedience by faith.

The fear of man bringeth a snare: but whoso putteth his trust in the LORD shall be safe (Prov. 29:25). Abram trusted in the Lord's Words implicitly; there is no record of His ever disobeying a direct command. Yet, like so many of us today, Abram seemed to have difficulty remembering that God was still in complete control even when He was silent. When famine struck, he sought refuge in Egypt without consulting the Lord.

He begged His wife, Sarai, to reveal only that she was his sister, so ***my soul shall live because of thee***. At that moment, Abram believed that it was his responsibility, not God's, to protect himself and his family by any means necessary. While he had in no way abandoned the faith that had led him to Canaan, he had not yet learned to 100% trust in that faith.

The LORD is on my side; I will not fear: what can man do unto me (Ps. 118:6)? Once we have surrendered our lives to God, we are His. It is our privilege and responsibility at that point to walk in His will and to trust in His protection. God does not want us merely to follow Him when He speaks; He wants us to continue following Him even when we perceive Him to be silent. Abram lied in an attempt to save his life, but what he failed to realize at the time was that his life was held in the hands of God—it didn't need saving.

And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear Him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell (Matt. 10:28).

Thought for the Day: *Jesus alone was a perfect man; there has never been another. So when we judge ourselves against the saints, we should see our potential, not our superiors.*

Christ Revealed: As the Promised Seed of Abram (Gen. 12:3,7; comp. Matt. 1:1; Acts 3:25-26; Gal. 3:16). Abram was a type of Christ who leads the way to a far better promised land (John 14:2-4,6; Heb. 11:8-10).

Word Studies: 10:5 **isles of the Gentiles divided in their lands** = they became separate nations; isles was a term used by the Hebrews to designate all countries accessible to them by sea, including those of Europe.

Pray For Government Officials: Rep. Emilia Sykes (OH) • **Country:** Montserrat (5,215) Caribbean • **Major Language:** English • **Religious Freedom** • 67.1% Protestant; 11.6% Roman Catholic; 1.4% Rastafarian; 6.5% Other; 2.6% None; 10.8% Unspecified • **Prayer Suggestion:** Seek God in prayer with your whole heart, and He will hear you (Jer. 29:12-13).

Optional Reading: Matthew 4

And Abram said, Behold, to me Thou hast given no seed: and, lo, one born in my house is mine heir. And, behold, the word of the LORD came unto him, saying, This shall not be thine heir; but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir. And He brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be. And he believed in the LORD; and He counted it to him for righteousness (Gen. 15:3-6).

From the moment he was called out of the land of Hebron, Abram (Abraham) had been facing a trial of faith. Although he had stumbled on occasion, such as when he acted out of fear and lied to the Pharaoh about the identity of Sarai, his wife, he continued to grow daily in his relationship with the Lord. When trouble arose between his herdsmen and those of his nephew, Lot, Abram moved swiftly to keep the peace (Gen. 13:8-9). When Lot cunningly chose the choicest land for his own, Abram willingly ceded it to him, trusting God to provide (13:10-12). Later, when Lot became embroiled in the politics of the land and was taken prisoner during an attack on Sodom and Gomorrah, Abram reacted not out of fear but out of love and faith. His brother's (nephew's) life meant more to him than his own, so he armed his trained servants and pursued the enemy (14:14). ***Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends*** (John 15:13).

Under the protection of God, Abram rescued not only Lot and his household but also recovered all of the plundered goods and captives from both Sodom and Gomorrah. Per the custom of the times, the king of Sodom offered the spoils of war to Abram and his confederates. This might have been the most significant spiritual test yet, but Abram passed it with flying colors. The tribute would have greatly increased Abram's wealth and power, but he cared more about bringing glory to God than about his worldly status (Gen. 14:22-23).

After these things the word of the LORD came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward (15:1). Abram had greatly pleased

the Lord in both word and deed, and God seized the moment to remind him of the promise He had bestowed. Abram loved and trusted God, but he was still confused. He couldn't understand 'how' the Lord's promise could come about, seeing as he had no children. It is important to note that God's reply to Abram does not answer his inquiry. God never says 'how,' only that it WILL be, and, in that moment, God's Word becomes enough for Abram. ***And he believed in the LORD; and He counted it to him for righteousness.***

All of his spiritual trials had led up to that moment of clarity – the realization that God's Word was absolute and that nothing could be deemed impossible with God. Abram would continue to live for many years in the faithful service of God, but it was at that moment, when ***he believed in the LORD*** with all of his heart and soul, that he became His son.

For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness (Rom. 4:3-5).

Thought for the Day: *Denying the world control over us should be an empowering and fulfilling experience. If it is a painful one, then we have not been wholly successful.*

Christ Portrayed: By the high priest, Melchizedek, who ***brought forth bread and wine*** (Gen. 14:18-20; Heb. 4:15-16; 5:5-10; 7:1-4). Today Christ is our High Priest who is interceding in prayer for us. He alone is deserving of our gifts and service to Him. ***Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, And He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them*** (Matt. 26:26-27).

Word Studies: 13:6 **bear** = support; 14:5 **smote** = subdued; 14:18 **Salem** = Jerusalem; 14:20 **tithes** = gifts of the first 10% of all material or financial increase; 14:22 ***I have lift up mine hand unto the LORD*** = Abraham made an oath (promise) to God.

Pray For Government Officials: Gov. Mike DeWine(OH) • **Country:** Morocco (32,987,206) North Africa • Major Languages: Arabic, Berber Languages • Northern Morocco becoming fertile ground for Islamic Radicalization • 99% Muslim; 1% Christian; about 6,000 Jews • **Prayer Suggestion:** Know that the Lord is loving and merciful to His children (Jer. 31:9).

Optional Reading: Matthew 5

And Abraham drew near, and said, Wilt thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked? Peradventure there be fifty righteous within the city: wilt thou also destroy and not spare the place for the fifty righteous that are therein? That be far from Thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked: and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from Thee: Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? And the LORD said, If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare all the place for their sakes (Gen. 18:23-26).

Today's reading contains a somewhat confusing and frequently misinterpreted passage. At the conclusion of their meal, the Lord and his traveling companions, having revealed themselves to Abraham (Abram), prepare to take their leave. ***And the LORD said, Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous; I will go down now, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto Me; and if not, I will know*** (Gen. 18:20-21). The companions then set out towards Sodom, but Abraham stood in front of the Lord, clearly struggling with the concept of divine judgment. ***And Abraham drew near, and said, Wilt thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked?***

What comes next has often been interpreted as an intense bargaining session in which Abraham pleads for the lives of the righteous, and God acquiesces to his demands. This, of course, is patently ridiculous. ***God is not a man, that He should lie; neither the son of man, that He should repent: hath He said, and shall He not do it? or hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good*** (Num. 23:19)? Abraham was neither attempting to interfere in the will of God nor questioning the Lord's moral integrity. Humbly, with full knowledge that he was speaking to the Creator of all things, Abraham sought to understand the limits of God's grace.

From fifty, to forty-five, to forty, to thirty, to twenty, to ten, Abraham interceded with God for the lives of the righteous. At each level, God revealed that if that number were to be found,

He would ***spare all the place for their sakes***. God already knew what He would find when He reached Sodom. He knew that there was no longer any means by which her people could be saved, but He persisted in His conversation with Abraham so that Abraham could realize the limitless nature of God's grace.

The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance (II Pet. 3:9). By the end of his conversation with God, Abraham recognized that God's judgment was balanced by justice, tempered with mercy, and administered with love. Abraham's questions sought to determine at what point God believed that evil negated the value of good. God's answers made it clear that He did not administer judgment on a 'graded curve' or by the balance of the scale. By the end of the conversation, Abraham understood that faith meant trusting God to make the 'right' call for everyone involved.

And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come (Matt. 24:12-14).

Thought for the Day: *We need never bargain with God for our lives; if we hand them over to Him, they will be secure.*

Christ Revealed: As the **Seed** of Isaac, **Jesus . . . Which was the son of Jacob, which was the Son of Isaac** (Gen. 17:19; Luke 3:23-34; Heb. 11:18).

Word Studies: 16:6 **hardly** = harshly; 16:7 **fountain** = spring; 16:14 **Beer-lahairoi** = well of the Living One who sees me; 16:16 **fourscore** = 4 x 20 = 80; 17:1 **be thou perfect** = live to please the Lord; 17:10 **be circumcised** = a physical sign of accepting the Covenant of God; 17:20 **beget** = be father of

Pray For Staff: Gilbert Palafox • **Government Official:** Rep. Frank Lucas (OK) • **Country:** Mozambique (24,692,144) Southeastern Africa • Major Languages: Emakhuwa, Portuguese, Xichangana • Religious Freedom • 28.4% Roman Catholic; 27.7% Protestant; 17.9% Muslim; 7.3% Other; 18.7% None • **Prayer Suggestion:** Express your gratitude for the loving-kindness of God (Jer. 32:17-18).

Optional Reading: Matthew 6

And it came to pass, when they had brought them forth abroad, that he said, Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed (Gen. 19:17).

The Bible does not give us many details about the character of Lot, Abraham's nephew. We know that he was a man motivated by material desires (Gen. 13:10-11) and that since parting with his uncle, he had achieved a position of reasonably high social standing in the town of Sodom, as is evidenced by his presence at the city gate (19:1). By his greeting to the strangers (angels), we know that He was a courteous man (19:2-3). Peter later recounts that Lot was, at least nominally, a righteous man who believed in godly principles and was offended by the morals of his chosen city. ***(For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds;)*** (II Pet. 2:8).

Yet, although he deplored the violence and immorality that surrounded him, he looked upon it as a fact of life that must be accepted so that he could financially support his family in the manner that they 'deserved.' He was willing to stand up for his principles (to a point), yet the compromises he readily accepted as the price of living in harmony with those around him—such as offering up his virgin daughters to be raped (Gen. 19:8)—proved just how far from God he had fallen. Lot was so sure he 'needed' his worldly contacts to survive that he still attempted to barter with God even after He announced His intent to save Lot from destruction. Fearing poverty and hardship in ***the mountain***, he begged instead to be allowed to settle in the city of Zoar (19:19-22). In His permissive will, God allowed it, but it was a decision that cost Lot dearly. Instead of being safely in the mountains and away from the influences of evil, they remained on ***the plain***, still within sight of their former dwellings. For Lot's wife, the temptation to look back in yearning at the lifestyle she was losing was too great, and she became frozen into a pillar of salt (19:26).

From this description of Lot, it appears he would easily fit in with many of our modern-day Christian congregations. There

are many today who struggle with fitting in. These individuals want to serve the Lord, but they also feel obligated to take care of their own through whatever means necessary. They believe that, because they live in a fallen world, they must adapt to societal norms in order to succeed. They live with a divided heart; privately and with like-minded individuals, they embrace the teachings of God, but publicly, they stand down, compromising the principles of God's Word so that they can succeed in a world that increasingly denies his existence.

Compromise with the world may bring peace and prosperity for a season, but at what price? Every day, in 'good,' 'Christian' households across the nation, parents are devastated to discover that one of their own has turned away from the path of God and has become lost in the worldly culture surrounding them. Too late, they realize the mixed message they have been sending. Is there really anything that society can offer us that is worth so great a risk?

For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows (1 Tim. 6:10).

Thought for the Day: *We must live in this fallen world, but that does not mean we must become part of it.*

Christ Portrayed: By Isaac, the promised son of the Covenant of God (Gen. 21:12). As a true son of faith, he submitted to Abraham, without hesitation, to being sacrificed, as did Christ to His Father. Christ the only begotten Son set us free from the Law by imparting to us, through the "born again" experience, a true desire to keep the Word of God through Christ who dwells within the true believer (Matt. 26:28; Mark 14:24; Luke 22:20; 1 Cor. 11:25; also Heb. 8:6; 12:24).

Word Studies: 19:1 **at even** = in the evening; 19:2 **tarry** = stay; 19:3 **pressed upon** = urged; **unleavened bread** = bread without yeast; 19:4 **compassed** = surrounded; 19:5 **know** = have homosexual relations with; 19:8 **as is good in your eyes** = as you wish; **shadow** = protection; 19:9 **sojourn** = live temporarily

Pray For Staff: Jennifer Palafox • **Government Officials:** Sen. Rand Paul(KY), Rep. Jeff Duncan(SC), Sen. John Thune(SD), Rep. Jonathon Jackson(IL) • **Country:** Namibia (2,198,406) Southwest Africa • Major Languages: Oshiwambo Languages • Religious Freedom • 80-90% Christian; 10-20% Indigenous Beliefs; Small Numbers of Other (Muslim, Jewish, Bahai, Buddhist) • **Prayer Suggestion:** Call unto the Lord, and He will give you strength to overcome (Jer. 33:3).

Optional Reading: Matthew 7

And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of. And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son, and clave the wood for the burnt offering, and rose up, and went unto the place of which God had told him (Gen. 22:2-3). And Abraham said unto him, Beware thou that thou bring not my son thither again. The LORD God of heaven, which took me from my father's house, and from the land of my kindred, and which spake unto me, and that sware unto me, saying, Unto thy seed will I give this land; he shall send his angel before thee, and thou shalt take a wife unto my son from thence (Gen. 24:6-7).

Today's chapters can be summed up in just one word: trust. Abraham implicitly trusted in God. He did not simply trust God to do what was best for him; he took himself completely out of the equation. He trusted God to do what was best, period. He took God at His word without asking for proof or explanations. We see this trust in the aborted sacrifice of Isaac (22) and again in the purchase of a family burial plot when Sarah died (23). It is also evident in Abraham's instructions regarding finding a wife for Isaac (24). Although the Lord had promised these lands to Abraham's descendants, the land was still foreign soil at the time of these Scriptures. Abraham and his family were alone, set apart by religion and customs, yet Abraham's trust in the promises of God kept them there.

What do we mean when we say we trust in the Lord? Do we mean that we trust Him to give us a good life? Do we trust that He will make everything work to our advantage? If either of those statements reflects your belief, it is time to pull back and look at the larger picture. ***Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like Me, Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure (Is. 46:9-10).***

God's plan was set into motion at the moment of creation. Before the darkness was parted (Gen. 1:1-3), God knew everything that was to follow. To trust in Him is to trust in the innate perfection of His plan. If we have accepted Jesus as our Lord and Savior, then we can trust that eternal paradise is waiting at the end of our earthly life. In the meantime, we must trust that God knows best and allow ourselves to be used by Him without question or condition. This is what Abraham did. Although he was blessed above all mortal men, he did not have an 'easy' life, nor did he expect one. He lived his life trusting in God, and in that, he was content.

Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me (Phil. 4:11-13).

Thought for the Day: *Trusting in God means we always have a guide to lead us away from the pit of despair, even when all hope seems lost.*

Christ Revealed: Isaac's submission to his father and his willingness to be offered (Gen. 22:7-10) illustrates Jesus, who submitted to His father and willingly offered His life as a sacrifice for our sins. I lay down (give up) ***My life that I might take it again. No man taketh it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself*** (John 10:11-18).

Word Studies: 22:3 **clave** = split; 22:12 **fearest** = have reverential, heartfelt sub- mission to; 22:14 **Jehovah-jireh** = the Lord will provide; 22:17 **seed** = descendants; **gate** = place of authority and entrance to the city; 22:24 **concubine** = secondary wife without inheritance rights; 23:6 **sepulchres** = places of burial, graves, tombs; 24:5 **peradventure** = what if; 24:8 **oath** = sworn promise; 24:12 **send me good speed** = grant me success; 24:14 **damsel** = virgin maiden; 24:16 **fair** = beautiful; **known** = had sexual relations with.

Pray For Staff: Tiffany Parisi • **Country:** Nauru (9,488) South Pacific Ocean • Major Languages: Nauruan, English • Religious Freedom • 45.8% Protestant; 33.2% Roman Catholic; 14.1% Other; 4.5% None; 2.4% Unspecified • **Prayer Suggestion:** Pour out your heart in prayer to the Lord for your children (Lam. 2:19).

Optional Reading: Matthew 8

And I heard thy father speak unto Esau thy brother, saying, Bring me venison, and make me savoury meat, that I may eat, and bless thee before the LORD before my death. Now therefore, my son, obey my voice according to that which I command thee. Go now to the flock, and fetch me from thence two good kids of the goats; and I will make them savoury meat for thy father, such as he loveth: And thou shalt bring it to thy father, that he may eat, and that he may bless thee before his death (Gen. 27:6-10).

God asks for our obedience in all things, but He does not need us to bring His plans to fruition. When Rebekah was pregnant, ***and the LORD said unto her, Two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels; and the one people shall be stronger than the other people; and the elder shall serve the younger*** (Gen. 25:23), He was simply informing her of what would be, not enlisting her aid to bring it about. Jacob was the heir to the Abrahamic covenant because that is what God proclaimed—the actions or intentions of Isaac, Rebekah, Esau, and Jacob had no bearing on that fundamental truth.

But just because our actions cannot fundamentally alter God's plan does not mean that they cannot affect the path our lives will take. When Rebekah compelled Jacob to disguise himself as Esau in order to receive the blessing Isaac intended to bestow on his elder son, she set into motion a series of events that would set brother against brother (27:41) and send Jacob into a 20-year exile (27:43-45; 31:41). ***And his mother said unto him, Upon me be thy curse, my son: only obey my voice, and go fetch me them*** (27:13). Rebekah's self-imposed curse was heavy indeed; Scripture gives us no indication that she ever saw her beloved Jacob again.

God used the scheming of Rebekah and the deception perpetuated by Jacob to bring about His glory, just as He uses all things. ***And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose*** (Rom. 8:28). His plan suffered no setback, nor was its radiant perfection dimmed. Yet for Rebekah and Jacob,

the reverberating consequences of these sinful actions would be felt for years to come. ***Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap*** (Gal. 6:6).

If we could go back in time and ask Rebekah why she did what she did, we would likely find that she acted to prevent Isaac from blessing Esau contrary to the will of God. While that sounds like righteous reasoning on the surface, a closer examination reveals a disturbing level of belief in self and an overall lack of faith in God. Rebekah boldly appointed herself interpreter and executor of God's plan for her children's lives, then she set out to bring it about by any means necessary. She never once stopped to consider how far outside of His established will her actions took her.

Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal? Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege? Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonourest thou God (Rom. 2:21-23)?

Thought for the Day: *Devious, prideful actions can never be justified by the claim of doing them in God's name for the furthering of His plan; His perfect will would never lead us into sin.*

Christ Revealed: As the spiritual Seed that would bless ***all the nations of the earth*** (Gen. 26:4; Gal. 3:16).

Word Studies: 25:6 **concubines** = secondary wives without inheritance rights; 25:8 **gave up the ghost** = died; 25:16 **castles** = settlements; 25:21 **intreated** = prayed earnestly; **was intreated of him** = granted his prayer; 25:23 **two nations** = the Israelites and the Edomites (36:9); 25:29 **sod** = cooked, boiled; 26:3 **Sojourn** = Live temporarily; 26:8 **sporting with** = showing loving affection to; 26:9 **of a surety** = clearly; 26:10 **lightly** = ignorantly, **have lien** = have had sexual relations; 26:11 **charged** = warned, commanded, ordered.

Pray For Country: Nepal (30,986,975) Southern Asia • Major Languages: Nepali, Maithali • Limited Religious Freedom • 81.3% Hindu; 9% Buddhist; 4.4% Muslim; 3% Kirant; 1.4% Christian; 0.5% Other; 0.4% Unspecified • **Prayer Suggestion:** Praise the Lord for His faithfulness and mercy (Lam. 3:22-23).

Optional Reading: Matthew 9

And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, So that I come again to my father's house in peace; then shall the LORD be my God: And this stone, which I have set for a pillar, shall be God's house: and of all that Thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto Thee (Gen. 28:20-22).

Jacob, grandson of Abraham and chosen heir to the promise, led a rather colorful early life. At his heart, he was a simple man who took delight in home and family (Gen. 25:27), but Scripture also shows us that he was quick-witted and ambitious. As a young man, he struck a cunning bargain with his impulsive brother Esau to obtain the birthright of the firstborn (25:29-34). Later, he listened to his mother's advice and donned a disguise to deceive his father and receive the blessing Isaac intended to bestow upon Esau (27:1-30). Jacob succeeded in this subterfuge, sending Esau into a murderous rage (27:31), which resulted in Jacob fleeing to his mother's homeland in search of refuge (27:42-45).

Jacob had been raised in a Godly household. We know from God's revelations to Rebekah during her pregnancy with the twins (25:23) that God had chosen him as heir to the promise given to Abraham and carried through Isaac. Still, it is not until his first night on his own after his self-imposed exile that we have any record of Jacob having a personal relationship with God. Here, the Lord came to him in a dream and imparted to Jacob the same promise he had given to his Grandfather Abraham (28:13-15). Jacob's response to this dream is at once heartening and troubling. It is heartening because it is clear that Jacob recognizes God and is willing and eager to serve Him, but it is also troubling that Jacob feels the need to place conditions on his service, almost as if he believes he has the right to barter with God. ***And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If God will... then shall the LORD be my God.***

Had Jacob possessed a little more faith, he would have realized his 'conditions' were completely unnecessary. God had already promised him everything that he was asking of Him.

And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of (28:15), and God never breaks His word. Jacob, however, was accustomed to bartering and scheming. He did not yet understand that neither were effective—or even truly possible—when dealing with God.

Jacob continued on to ***Padan-aram***, where he lived for 20 years in the service of his crafty uncle/father-in-law Laban (31:41). During this time, Jacob fell in love (once), married (twice), and became a father many times over. As he served under his self-absorbed and oftentimes less-than-honest father-in-law, Jacob learned the true meaning of patience and humility. He also learned the importance of placing his whole trust in God, without reservation or condition.

Blessed is the man that trusteth in the LORD, and whose hope the LORD is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit (Jer.17:7-8).

Thought for the Day: *There can be no prenuptial agreement when it comes to our relationship with God. If we are with Him, we gain everything, but if we leave Him, we forfeit it all.*

Christ Portrayed: By Joseph who was born (Gen. 30:23-24) to save and preserve his people (50:20). Jesus was born to offer eternal life to all mankind (41:56-57).

Word Studies: 28:1 **charged** = commanded; 28:11 **lighted upon** = came to; 28:15 **keep thee** = watch over you with care; 28:17 **How dreadful is this place** = What an awesome, wonderful, holy place; 28:18 **poured oil upon** = anointed; 28:19 **Bethel** = House of God; 29:3 **mouth** = opening; 29:7 **high** = early in the; 29:12 **brother** = relative; 29:17 **tender eyed** = unattractive; 29:25 **beguiled** = deceived; 29:26 **It must not be so done** = It is not customary

Pray For Staff: Judy McCrary • **Government Officials:** Sen Chris Van Hollen(MD) • **Country:** Netherlands (16,877,351) Western Europe • Major Language: Dutch • Religious Freedom • 30% Catholic; 20% Protestant; 5.8% Muslim; 2.2% Other; 42% None • **Prayer Suggestion:** Lift up your heart to God in prayer (Lam. 3:41).

Optional Reading: Matthew 10

And the messengers returned to Jacob, saying, We came to thy brother Esau, and also he cometh to meet thee, and four hundred men with him. Then Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed: and he divided the people that was with him, and the flocks, and herds, and the camels, into two bands; And said, If Esau come to the one company, and smite it, then the other company which is left shall escape (Gen. 32:6-8).

For 20 years, Jacob prospered under the guiding hand of God. But now, as he followed the Lord's direction to return to his own lands, he was overcome with fear and dread. Living with the unfair practices of his uncle/father-in-law had given him a better understanding of the grievous hurt he had dealt his brother, and he was concerned that Esau's anger had grown even fiercer during the time they had been apart. Therefore, when his ***messengers*** reported, ***we came to thy brother Esau, and also he cometh to meet thee, and four hundred men with him***, he feared the worst. Yet even in his fear, Jacob was no longer the same man who had fled from his father's house two decades before. He now knew to whom his life belonged and to whom he needed to turn.

The prayer prayed by Jacob was simple and direct. He restated the promise that God had made to him, ***And Jacob said, O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac, the LORD which saidst unto me, Return unto thy country, and to thy kindred, and I will deal well with thee*** (Gen. 32:9), and entreated of the Lord to protect him and his family. ***Deliver me, I pray thee, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau: for I fear him, lest he will come and smite me, and the mother with the children*** (32:11). Afterwards, he gave instructions to his herdsman, settled his family down for the night, and set himself apart to pray.

This second prayer is revealed to us not in words, but in actions. ***And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day*** (Gen. 32:24). All night long, Jacob contended with the angel of God (Hos. 12:4), coming face to face with his own insignificance while, for the

first time, fully realizing his all-encompassing need for God. When at dawn, the being instructed Jacob to let him go, **And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh**, Jacob realized that he could NEVER stand to be without the Lord. Therefore, with renewed faith and determination, Jacob stated, **And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me** (Gen. 32:26). At last, he understood—with God at his side, fear was unnecessary. **The Lord is on my side; I will not fear: what can man do unto me** (Ps. 118:6)?

Thus, it was with faith and confidence restored that Jacob went forth to meet Esau. He walked out calmly, with humble penitence, allowing his brother to see the man he was now with God at the fore of his life, leaving behind forever the person he used to be. **And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed** (Gen. 32:28).

Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new (II Cor. 5:17).

Thought for the Day: *The only reason to fear moving forward in life is if, in doing so, we attempt to leave God behind.*

Christ Revealed: **As the Angel** (Messenger) **of God** who guides and provides our necessities (Gen. 31:11-13; Matt. 6:33; John 10:30).

Word Studies: 31:2 **not toward him** = not favorable; 31:7 **suffered** = permitted; 31:15 **counted of him** = considered by him as; **devoured also our money** = spent the money he got for us as dowries; 31:18 **of his getting** = which he acquired; 31:19 **images** = household idols; 31:30 **longedst after** = are homesick for

Pray For Staff: Jennifer Palafox • **Government Official:** Rep. Michael Turner(OH) • **Country:** New Caledonia (267,840) South Pacific Ocean • **Major Language:** French • **Religious Freedom** • 60% Roman Catholic; 30% Protestant; 10% Other • **Prayer Suggestion:** Pray for godly discernment to know His will (Ezek. 44:23).

Optional Reading: Matthew 11

Then Jacob said unto his household, and to all that were with him, Put away the strange gods that are among you, and be clean, and change your garments: And let us arise, and go up to Beth-el; and I will make there an altar unto God, who answered me in the day of my distress, and was with me in the way which I went (Gen. 35:2-3).

From our readings to date, we know that Jacob served the One True God, as did his father and grandfather before him. We have seen Jacob grow in his faith and learn to trust in the leadership and provision of the Lord. We watched as he wrestled with God's messenger and came to understand the fullness of his need for God. One might think that from that point on, Jacob would have been bathed in righteousness and therefore immune to the world's temptations, but as we continue in the Book of Genesis, we are forcefully reminded of the fallen nature of the world in which we live.

And the LORD said unto Jacob, Return unto the land of thy fathers, and to thy kindred; and I will be with thee (Gen. 31:3). Jacob heeded the Lord's call, packed up his household, and in near-perfect obedience, traveled to the border of Canaan, where he purchased a parcel of land and erected an altar to God (33:19-20). Scripture does not tell us why Jacob chose to settle here. Perhaps he had been taken in by the fertile land that so easily supported his herds and flocks. Maybe he enjoyed the welcome he received from the native Canaanites, who were eager to work with the wealthy stranger to their mutual advantage (34:21). Perhaps he still feared that living in close proximity to his twin would move the other man to anger and believed that settling on the outskirts of the land instead of returning to the home of his father would be the more prudent move. Whatever his reason, Jacob stopped just short of total obedience.

Jacob lived there in prosperity and peace for ten years, no doubt feeling richly blessed. Not until tragedy struck did Jacob begin to understand the consequences of near-perfect obedience. In the aftermath of Dinah's rape (34:1-2) and her brothers' acts of revenge (34:13-29), Jacob was angry that his relationship with his neighbors had been irreparably damaged.

But then God spoke, once again urging him to return to the lands of his birth (35:1), and something fell into place inside Jacob's heart. He took a long, hard look at his household and realized it had become polluted and spiritually unclean. He had allowed its focus to drift from God and had become encumbered by the trappings of the society in which he had willingly lived. His current situation was not caused because God had looked away; it was he who had looked away from God.

Once Jacob realized what he had done, he wasted no time wallowing in guilt or remorse. He immediately moved to remove the temptations of sin from within his household and return their sole focus to the will of God. The example set here by Jacob is one that we all would do well to follow. Once we realize we have strayed, it is imperative that we humble ourselves and return at once to the path that God has placed before us. Only in true repentance will we be able to seek redemption.

If My people, which are called by My name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land (II Chr. 7:14).

Thought for the Day: *We walk with God when we walk the path He has set for us. If we diverge from this path, we walk alone.*

Christ Revealed: As **God Almighty**, El Shaddai, the All-Sufficient One (Gen. 35:11). Jesus is, ***I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty*** (Rev. 1:8).

Word Studies: 34:2 **defiled** = raped; 34:3 **his soul clave unto** = his heart was set on; (see 34:4,12); 34:7 **wrought folly in** = brought dishonor and shame into; 34:19 **deferred not** = did not delay; 34:20 **gate** = place of administration; 34:27 **spoiled** = plundered; 35:1 **Bethel** = House of God; 35:2 **strange** = false.

Pray For Staff: Ryan McCrary • **Government Official:** Rep. Sheila JacksonLee(TX), Rep. Cliff Bentz(OR) • **Country:** New Zealand (4,401,916) South Pacific Ocean • Major Language: English • Religious Freedom • 44.3% Christian; 2.1% Hindu; 1.4% Buddhist; 1.3% Maori Christian; 1.1% Islam; 1.4% Other; 36.1% No Religion; 8.2% Not Stated/ Unidentified; 4.1% Objected to Answering • **Prayer Suggestion:** Pray daily to your Father in heaven (Dan. 6:10).

Optional Reading: Matthew 12

But the LORD was with Joseph, and shewed him mercy, and gave him favour in the sight of the keeper of the prison (Gen. 39:21).

Following the events surrounding Dinah's rape, Jacob experienced a spiritual renewal (Gen. 35:1-15). Joseph, having still been a young and impressionable boy at the time, reaped the benefits of that renewal and flourished under the direction of both his earthly and heavenly fathers. Thus, at seventeen, we find that he is honest and forthright, often to the great dismay of his elder brothers (37:2-11). With envy and hatred in their hearts, they conspired to do away with their father's favorite son (37:19-20). Ruben, the eldest, talked the others out of cold-blooded murder, but he did not possess the strength of character necessary to stand against them completely. At his suggestion, Joseph was stripped of his coat and placed in the pit. Ruben intended to retrieve him later and return him home to their father, but before this could occur, the other nine sold him to passing Ishmaelite merchants for 20 pieces of silver (37:25-28).

As a slave in the land of Egypt, Joseph had every cause to be bitter and angry at his circumstances. Yet Scripture records that the exact opposite occurred. ***And the LORD was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian*** (39:2). Instead of turning inward in bitterness and fear, Joseph lived confidently under the guidance of God. He stood firm in the principles of God even when doing so caused him to lose everything a second time. ***There is none greater in this house than I; neither hath he kept back any thing from me but thee, because thou art his wife: how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God*** (39:9)?

By that point, most of us would probably have been saying, "What have I done to deserve this? Why has God turned His back on me?" Joseph, however, never lost faith. He never doubted his own actions, which were undertaken in the service of the Lord, and he never doubted the caring presence of God. Consequently, ***the LORD was with Joseph, and shewed him mercy, and gave him favour in the sight of the keeper of***

the prison. Even in prison, Joseph counted his life as a success because it was lived for the Lord.

Although much of today's reading is focused on Joseph, chapter 38 steps outside that narration for a moment and returns us to the land of Canaan, where we read of the marriage of Judah, Jacob's fourth-born son, and the birth of his first three sons (38:1-5). We learn of the marriage and subsequent death of his oldest son, Er, and the duplicity and death of his second son, Onan (38:7-10). We read of Judah's broken word to his daughter-in-law, Tamar (38:11-14), which resulted in the crafty conception of twin sons born to Tamar and fathered by Judah (38:27-28). Finally, we witness the birth of Perez, the "impatient" twin who "broke through" and was delivered first, even though his brother's hand had already emerged. As Perez drew his first breath, God established the next link in His chain, the line of descent that would continue, unbroken, until the coming of the Messiah and the fulfillment of God's most enduring promise.

For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life (John 3:16).

Thought for the Day: *The difficulty or ease of the roads we travel will become insignificant when we arrive at the judgment seat of God.*

Christ Portrayed: By Joseph, who was rejected by his own brothers, sold for 20 pieces of silver to Gentiles, and unjustly imprisoned, but who eventually became their savior and a world ruler (Gen. 37:28; 41:39-40).

Word Studies: 37:2 **evil report** = of sinful things they were doing; 37:7 **made obeisance** = bowed in respect; 37:11 **observed** = pondered; 37:22 **rid** = rescue; 37:29 **rent** = tore his clothes as an act of grief; 37:34 **sackcloth** = a coarse, loose cloth worn as a sign of mourning; 38:2 **took** = married

Pray For Staff: Tiffany Parisi • **Government Official:** Rep. Thomas Massie(KY) • **Country:** Nicaragua (5,848,641) Central America • Major Language: Spanish • Religious Freedom • 58.5% Roman Catholic; 23.2% Protestant; 0.9% Jehovah's Witness; 1.6% Other; 15.8% None • **Prayer Suggestion:** Confess your sins to the Lord; He is merciful and forgiving (Dan. 9:4-9).

Optional Reading: Matthew 13

And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, See, I have set thee over all the land of Egypt. And Pharaoh took off his ring from his hand, and put it upon Joseph's hand, and arrayed him in vestures of fine linen, and put a gold chain about his neck; And he made him to ride in the second chariot which he had; and they cried before him, Bow the knee: and he made him ruler over all the land of Egypt (Gen. 41:41-43).

Thirteen years had passed since young Joseph had been sold into slavery as a result of the jealousy and hatred of his older brothers. Over that period, Joseph experienced incredible highs (being placed in charge of Potiphar's household (Gen. 39:5-6)) as well as devastating lows (being falsely accused by Potiphar's wife and thrown into prison (39:14-20) and being "forgotten" by the chief butler when he first appeared before Pharaoh). His rapid turns of fortune must have, at times, caused him great discouragement, but even while at his most troubled, he never doubted the presence of God. Joseph trusted that God had a plan for his life. He endured his trials, not sorrowfully, but with the profound certainty that God's cause was just. ***He sent a man before them, even Joseph, who was sold for a servant: Whose feet they hurt with fetters: he was laid in iron: Until the time that His word came: the word of the LORD tried him (Ps. 105:17-19).***

It wasn't until Joseph was called before Pharaoh that the godly purpose behind all that he had endured began to reveal itself. Pharaoh's dream had been sent by God. Therefore, only God could interpret it. Yet in a land of pagans, whose ears were open to hear the answer? At this point, the butler remembered his promise to Joseph and presented him to Pharaoh. ***And Joseph answered Pharaoh, saying, It is not in me: God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace (Gen. 41:16).*** Pharaoh recognized God's wisdom in Joseph and ***said unto Joseph, See, I have set thee over all the land of Egypt.***

How marvelous are the ways of God! Over a span of 13 years, he took a young Hebrew (39:14) shepherd boy and transformed him into the second-highest official in the land of Egypt. In the light of God's plan, all of Joseph's past experiences were made

clear. His brother's betrayal brought him to Egypt. His time in Potiphar's house taught him how to manage effectively, and his subsequent imprisonment put him in the position to be noticed by Pharaoh. Finally, the length of his imprisonment allowed him to learn patience and to mature in his faith so that he would be ready to serve in the fullness of God's time.

God has a plan for each of us, a plan that only He is aware of in full. For some of us, the fulfillment of this plan might be easy and joyous, requiring only that we live in the grace of God and share His great love with those around us. For others, the path is less clear. Yet no matter how many obstacles we must overcome or trials we must endure, we can rest secure in the knowledge that God is in control, and He will bring us through.

For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps (1 Pet. 2:19-21).

Thought for the Day: *Any life without God, whether quiet or tumultuous, ends hopelessly. No matter the hardship, a life with God is one to rejoice in.*

Christ Revealed: By the wisdom of Joseph (Gen. 41:39). ***Christ; In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge*** (Col. 2:2-3).

Word Studies: 40:1 **butler** = cupbearer, chief servant officer; 40:3 **in ward** = in custody; 41:3 **ill favoured** = very skinny; **brink** = bank; 41:5 **rank** = large full grain; 41:6 **blasted** = blighted; 41:18 **fatfleshed** = fine looking; 41:33 **discreet** = of wisdom and discernment; 41:35 **hand** = authority

Pray For Staff: Judy McCrary • **Government Official:** Rep. Randy Feenstra (IA), Rep. Michael McCaul (TX) • **Country:** Niger (17,466,172) Western Africa • **Major Language:** French • **Religious Freedom** • 80% Muslim; 20% Other (Indigenous Beliefs, Christian, Bahai) • **Prayer Suggestion:** Commit your fears to the Lord; He will give you peace and strength (Dan. 10:19).

Optional Reading: Matthew 14

Then Judah came near unto him, and said, Oh my lord, let thy servant, I pray thee, speak a word in my lord's ears, and let not thine anger burn against thy servant: for thou art even as Pharaoh (Gen. 44:18). It shall come to pass, when he seeth that the lad is not with us, that he will die: and thy servants shall bring down the gray hairs of thy servant our father with sorrow to the grave. For thy servant became surety for the lad unto my father, saying, If I bring him not unto thee, then I shall bear the blame to my father for ever. Now therefore, I pray thee, let thy servant abide instead of the lad a bondman to my lord; and let the lad go up with his brethren. For how shall I go up to my father, and the lad be not with me? lest peradventure I see the evil that shall come on my father (Gen. 44:31-34).

When reading the chapter leading up to Joseph's revelation of his identity to his brothers, we most often focus on his extraordinary forgiveness and understanding. However, if we look at the brothers as a whole, and Judah in particular, we see that God has even more to teach us. Twenty years ago, these ten men were controlled by jealousy and hatred and had conspired to kill their brother. ***Come now therefore, and let us slay him, and cast him into some pit, and we will say, Some evil beast hath devoured him: and we shall see what will become of his dreams*** (Gen. 37:20). Now, however, through the grace of God, they have been redeemed. It is not that circumstances had changed—their father Jacob still openly favored Rachel's sons over the rest (42:4,28)—but rather that God had changed their hearts. Instead of jumping at the opportunity to get rid of Benjamin the way they had Joseph, Judah pleaded to allow his younger brother to return safely to their Father, even if it meant losing his own freedom. ***I pray thee, let thy servant abide instead of the lad a bondman to my lord; and let the lad go up with his brethren. For how shall I go up to my father, and the lad be not with me?***

Joseph, who had already forgiven his brothers in his heart, was greatly moved by the changes he saw in them. These were no longer men fueled by hate; they freely admitted to them-

selves their past sins (42:21-22) and were determined not to repeat them, no matter what the cost to themselves. ***Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends*** (John 15:13).

It is a popular belief today that people can't change their innate nature. We base our interactions with others on logical assumptions, such as accepting that we must be on our guard when dealing with a known narcissist/liar because they will always put their own interests first. What God has revealed here flies in the face of our so-called logic. With the Lord's help, it is possible for anyone to change. When interacting with others, even those who have wronged us in the past, we need to take our cues from their current behavior rather than how we remember them from before. Just as God encourages us to learn and grow in our faith, so too does He work continuously in the hearts and lives of others.

A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh (Ezek. 36:26).

Thought for the Day: *To believe that people truly cannot change is to have no hope for oneself; we are all born into sin.*

Christ Revealed: Through Joseph's dealings with his brothers. Christ deals with us in such a way as to bring about our confession of sin and a recognition of His forgiving love. In a similar way, He reveals His sovereignty over the affairs of life (Gen. 45:5-8,15; compare Rom. 5:8; Eph. 1:17,20-22).

Word Studies: 43:1 **sore** = severe; 43:6 **ill** = badly; 43:7 **straitly** = specifically; **tenor** = we merely answered his questions; 43:17 **bade** = ordered; 43:25 **the pre- sent against Joseph** = present - gifts; **against** = before; 43:28 **made obeisance** = bowed low in respect; 43:30 **bowels** = heart; **upon** = toward; 43:32 **set on for him** = set a place for him; **abomination** = detestable thing; 43:34 **messes** = servings

Pray For Staff: Kevin Jennings • **Country:** Nigeria (177,155,754) Western Africa • Major Languages: English, Hausa • • 50% Muslim; 40% Christian; 10% Indigenous • **Prayer Suggestion:** Seek the Lord's forgiveness with a repentant heart, knowing that God will graciously receive you (Hos. 14:1-2).

Optional Reading: Matthew 15

And God spake unto Israel in the visions of the night, And said, Jacob, Jacob. And he said, Here am I. And He said, I am God, the God of thy father: fear not to go down into Egypt; for I will there make of thee a great nation: I will go down with thee into Egypt; and I will also surely bring thee up again: and Joseph shall put his hand upon thine eyes (Gen. 46:2-4).

Two days ago, we read of how Jacob's focus had fallen away from God and the despair that had enveloped him. Today, we joyfully bear witness as both Jacob's focus and his hope are restored by the Lord who never gave up on him, even when Jacob appeared to forget God. When Jacob learned of Joseph's survival, his first instinct was to immediately go to his son (Gen. 45:28). Yet instead of blindly following that impulse, Jacob first journeyed to Beer-sheba and offered sacrifices to God.

Scripture does not go into detail about Jacob's motivation for the sacrifices, but it was likely two-fold. First, and probably foremost in his mind, Jacob came before the Lord in celebration. He made sacrifices of praise and worship, thanking the Lord for Joseph's miraculous return. The second reason might not have been as prominent in Jacob's thoughts, but it would have been even more important to his well-being. Jacob came to reconnect with God. He had allowed his grief and anger to anchor him to the world and draw him away from his Lord, and now he was attempting to rectify that to the best of his ability. With an open heart, Jacob knelt before God. ***And God spake unto Israel in the visions of the night...And He said, I am God, the God of thy father: fear not to go down into Egypt; for I will there make of thee a great nation: I will go down with thee into Egypt; and I will also surely bring thee up again.***

Well over a century earlier, the Lord had promised Abraham, ***And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years; And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance (15:13-14).*** The time had now come for that plan to be put into

motion. Did Jacob know of this promise? Did he understand that his family's sojourn in Egypt would extend well beyond the lifetimes of his children and grandchildren and would gradually fall to the level of servitude and slavery? Scripture does not contain the answer to this question. What Jacob knew or guessed of the future is unknown. What we do know is that Jacob entered Egypt confidently, without fear or regret. For the first time in years, he knew beyond any shadow of any doubt that he was walking in the will of the Lord, and he was content.

Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God (Heb. 12:1-2).

Thought for the Day: *We can never stray far enough from the path God has set for us that it cannot be found again.*

Christ Portrayed: By Joseph, who was placed by God second only to Pharaoh (Gen. 41:39-40) in order to sustain life and give provision (47:15-17). Jesus said: ***The Bread of God is He which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world*** (John 6:33).

Word Studies: 46:4 **shall put his hand upon thine eyes** = will close your eyes when you die; 47:4 **sore** = severe; 47:6 **of activity** = skillful at their craft; 47:13 **fainted** = suffered, were exhausted; 47:18 **not ought** = nothing; 47:20 **prevailed over them** = continued to be severe; 47:21 **removed them** = moved them as servants; 48:6 **issue, which thou begetteth** = your children

Pray For Country: Niue (1,190) South Pacific Ocean • Major Languages: Niuean, English • No legislative restrictions on religious belief or practice, or legislation which prohibits discrimination on the grounds of religion, nor guarantee of freedom of religion • 61.2% Ekalesia Niue; 8.8% Latter-Day Saints; 7.2% Roman Catholic; 2.4% Jehovah Witness; 1.4% Seventh-Day Adventist; 8.4% Other; 8.7% Unspecified; 1.9% None • **Prayer Suggestion:** Fast, sanctify yourself, and unite in prayer with others as you cry unto the Lord (Joel 1:14).

Optional Reading: Matthew 16

Judah, thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise: thy hand shall be in the neck of thine enemies; thy father's children shall bow down before thee. Judah is a lion's whelp: from the prey, my son, thou art gone up: he stooped down, he couched as a lion, and as an old lion; who shall rouse him up? The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be (Gen. 49:8-10).

God always keeps His promises. **Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed** (Gen.12:1-3). Here, at the close of the Book of Genesis, we are privileged to witness the birth of the **great nation** promised to Abraham. As Israel, the dying patriarch, addressed this disparate band of brothers, he spoke with God-imparted wisdom, offering blessings, warnings, and prophecies to his sons and all of their descendants to come.

But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in His presence (I Cor. 1:27-29). What do we know of Judah, the fourth-born son of Jacob and Leah? We know that, as a young man, he was crafty and greedy (Gen. 37:26). We know he had a questionable taste in wives, willingly marrying a native Canaanite (38:2), and that of the three sons he sired with her, two were so wicked in the sight of the Lord that He (God) slew them (38:7-10). We know that he was not always a man of his word (38:11,14,26) and that he saw nothing wrong with patronizing prostitution (38:15-18). We know also that he grew into a man willing to publicly admit his wrongdoings (38:26)

and that he was prepared to trade his own life for the life of his brother (44:33-34). Even more than all of this, we know that Judah, imperfections notwithstanding, was God's chosen vessel through which the future of His people was assured. ***The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto Him shall the gathering of the people be.***

Here, in the first book of the Old Testament, God's plan for the salvation of the entire world is boldly outlined. Only 70 people strong, God entrusted this small family unit with the truth of the ages, knowing that from them would spring the living Word. The men to whom this truth was given were deeply flawed, but that did not change their usefulness to God. Every action that they and their descendants would take for the next 2000 years would be used by God to prepare the world to receive His Son, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof (Rev. 5:5).

Thought for the Day: *God's message is greater than any man who would spread it; our failings cannot blemish it, and our accomplishments pale in comparison.*

Christ Revealed: ***The sceptre shall not depart from Judah . . . until Shiloh*** (the Peacemaker) ***come*** (Gen. 49:10). As the Messiah who would come. ***Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed*** (Rev. 5:5).

Word Studies: 49:8 **in the neck of** = in control over; 49:10 **sceptre** = ruler's staff of authority; 49:26 **The blessings of thy father have prevailed above the blessings of my progenitors** = The blessings I have received are greater than those received by my ancestors; 50:15 **will certainly requite** = will fully repay.

Pray For Government Officials: Rep. Maxwell Frost(FL), Rep. Carlos Gimenez(FL) • **Country:** Norfolk Island (2,210) South Pacific Ocean • Major Language: English • Religious Freedom • 49.6% Protestant; 11.7% Roman Catholic; 8.6% Other; 23.5% None; 6.6% Unspecified • **Prayer Suggestion:** The promises of God should be an encouragement to you to seek God in prayer (Amos 5:4,6).

Optional Reading: Matthew 17

And it came to pass in those days, when Moses was grown, that he went out unto his brethren, and looked on their burdens: and he spied an Egyptian smiting an Hebrew, one of his brethren. And he looked this way and that way, and when he saw that there was no man, he slew the Egyptian, and hid him in the sand (Ex. 2:11-12).

Whether you are talking to a devoted Biblical scholar or a casual, occasional Sunday church attendee, chances are good they know at least the basics of the history of Moses and his relationship with God's people. They will know how he was born to a family of Hebrew slaves (Ex. 2:1) and saved from the cruel edict of the Pharaoh by being set afloat in a basket woven of bulrushes (2:3). Most will know that he was adopted by the Pharaoh's daughter and raised to adulthood as a prince of Egypt (2:9-10). Some will even be able to tell you the circumstances under which he fled the palace and lived the life of a simple shepherd (2:15-21). Most all will be aware of his Godly calling and how he triumphantly led his people out of the bondage of Egypt to the freedom of the Lord (3,4). These are the high points of Moses' life—a synopsis that introduces us to the man who would become known as a beloved friend of God (33:11).

We must take care, however, not to deify Moses. He was a mortal man born into a sin-ravaged world, not a ready-born, seasoned champion of God. God's Word allows us to see Moses in all seasons of his life; we can learn as much from his mistakes as we can from his triumphs.

Raised as a possible heir to the throne of the Pharaoh, young Moses was brash and overconfident. He trusted in his own power—so much so that, at times, he acted impulsively, erroneously believing himself to be untouchable. As Moses reached adulthood, he began to take an interest in the affairs of his biological people, the Hebrews. One day, while he was out among the people, he witnessed an Egyptian beating one of the Hebrew slaves. In a fit of temper, Moses killed the Egyptian and hid the body in the sand. Before killing him, though, Moses did the same thing that many of us do today before engaging in

unsanctioned behavior. ***He looked for witnesses. He looked this way and that way, and when he saw that there was no man, he slew the Egyptian, and hid him in the sand.***

For many of us, anonymity makes us braver. When we believe no one is watching, we sometimes give in to impulses that we would never consider if we had an audience. Minor theft, cheating, and intentional cruelty through anonymous messages are all sins that we are much more likely to commit if we believe that we will not be caught. As followers of Jesus, however, we should not have to be reminded that there is no such thing as true anonymity. ***For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O LORD, Thou knowest it altogether*** (Ps. 139:4). God knows every thought we have the second it enters our mind, and He knows every action we take before we have even completed the first step. The next time you look over your shoulder to see who might be watching, remember that God is standing right there, and His eyes are trained on you! Nothing in all creation is hidden from God.

Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in His sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do (Heb. 4:13).

Thought for the Day: *God is our strength in that we are never alone; He is the bane of the wicked, as they will never get away with their crimes.*

Christ Revealed: As the ***I AM THAT I AM*** who commissioned Moses (Ex. 3:13-14; compare Heb. 13:8). ***Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily*** (Truly, truly), ***I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am*** (John 8:58).

Word Studies: 2:3 **flags** = reeds; 2:18 **Reuel** = Jethro; 2:23 **bondage** = severe oppression; 2:25 **had respect unto** = was concerned about; 3:18 **hearken** = believe and obey; 3:22 **spoil** = take the best of their valuables; 4:10 **of a slow tongue** = not qualified; 4:16 **to thee instead of a mouth** = your spokesman.

Pray For Staff: Judy McCrary • **Government Officials:** Rep. Kay Granger (TX) • **Country:** Northern Mariana Islands (51,483) North Pacific Ocean • Major Language: Chamorro, English • Religious Freedom • Christian (Roman Catholic majority) • **Prayer Suggestion:** Pray when distressed and afflicted (Jon. 2:2).

Optional Reading: Matthew 18

Thou shalt speak all that I command thee: and Aaron thy brother shall speak unto Pharaoh, that he send the children of Israel out of his land. And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and multiply my signs and my wonders in the land of Egypt. But Pharaoh shall not hearken unto you, that I may lay My hand upon Egypt, and bring forth Mine armies, and My people the children of Israel, out of the land of Egypt by great judgments (Ex. 7:2-4).

These verses, when read alone and taken entirely out of context, have caused quite a bit of debate over the years. Non-believers love to toss them around, citing them as proof that the God of the Old Testament was egotistical and cruel. They use it in their campaign to prove that a loving God does not exist. They posit questions such as: Why would God choose to harden (make stubborn) Pharaoh's heart? Didn't that take away Pharaoh's free will? Did He do it just so He could inflict more punishment on the Egyptians, and if that was the reason, wasn't that cruel? Wouldn't it have been better for the Israelites to get out of Egypt sooner rather than later? Many of these questions hit their mark, bringing about confusion and misunderstanding in the new or struggling believer.

The first thing we must remember when dealing with passages we don't understand is that they don't exist in a vacuum. As we read the Scripture surrounding them, we are often able to more easily visualize the message that God intends for us. ***For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the LORD*** (Is. 55:8). As human beings, we are incapable of fully understanding the ways of God, but that does not mean He never reveals any of His motives to us. As the story of the Exodus unfolds, God clearly shows the reasons behind His actions.

The Israelites had lived in the land of Egypt for a very long time, and their relationship with God was tenuous and new. They were not yet strong enough in their faith to confidently follow Him. They needed proof of His power and existence, and God provided this proof to them in the form of the plagues. The Egyptians also needed to see and feel the full power of God. When God

hardened Pharaoh's heart, He did not take a loving, gentle man and turn him into a tyrant. He simply allowed the tyrant's true nature to show through. The Egyptians needed to see that their troubles did not come from an unfair God; rather, they resulted from their own actions and the actions of their leader.

It is only natural to want our troubles to be over quickly. When we are stuck in an unpleasant situation and pray for a way out, we expect God to act promptly on our behalf. What we may not realize at the time is the fact that God is already in action. He is standing with us, patiently supporting us while we gain the experience and knowledge necessary to continue our journey with Christ. When the time is right, when we are prepared to follow Him, then God will reveal the way forward.

My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing (James 1:2-4).

Thought for the Day: *Pride often causes us to lash out at God for providing an 'unacceptable' solution to a problem that we conveniently forget we created in the first place.*

Christ Revealed: As the Redeemer from the bondage of sin. ***I am the LORD, and I will bring you out . . . I will redeem you*** (Ex. 6:6). ***Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things . . . But with the precious blood of Christ*** (1 Pet. 1:18-19).

Word Studies: 5:4 **let** = distract; 5:8 **tale** = daily quota; 5:9 **vain words** = deceit-ful promises; 5:13 **hasted** = kept driving; 5:19 **in evil case** = in trouble; **minish** = reduce; 5:21 **savour** = good will; 5:22 **evil entreated** = afflicted; 6:3 **God Almighty** = All Sufficient

Pray For Bible Pathway Printer, Pollock Printing, Nashville TN • **Government Officials:** Gov.J.B.Pritzker(IL), Rep.Mikie Sherrill(NJ) • **Country:** Norway (5,147,792) Northern Europe • Major Language: Norwegian • Religious Freedom • 82.1% Evangelical Lutheran; 3.9% Other Christian; 2.3% Muslim; 1.8% Roman Catholic; 2.4% Other; 7.5% Unspecified • **Prayer Suggestion:** Seek the Lord when in despair; He is your Deliverer (Jon. 2:5-6).

Optional Reading: Matthew 19

And the LORD spake unto Moses, Go unto Pharaoh, and say unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Let My people go, that they may serve Me. And if thou refuse to let them go, behold, I will smite all thy borders with frogs: And the river shall bring forth frogs abundantly, which shall go up and come into thine house, and into thy bedchamber, and upon thy bed, and into the house of thy servants, and upon thy people, and into thine ovens, and into thy kneadingtroughs: And the frogs shall come up both on thee, and upon thy people, and upon all thy servants (Ex:8:1-4). But when Pharaoh saw that there was respite, he hardened his heart, and hearkened not unto them; as the LORD had said. And the LORD said unto Moses, Say unto Aaron, Stretch out thy rod, and smite the dust of the land, that it may become lice throughout all the land of Egypt (Ex. 8:15-16).

When God first sent Moses to Pharaoh to secure the release of His people, He opened with a miracle. ***And Moses and Aaron went in unto Pharaoh, and they did so as the LORD had commanded: and Aaron cast down his rod before Pharaoh, and before his servants, and it became a serpent*** (Ex. 7:10). Pharaoh was unimpressed, as his sorcerers and magicians were able to duplicate the transformation through their connection with the occult easily. Following that, The Lord provided a thorough demonstration of His power, turning the rivers, streams, ponds, and pools of Egypt into blood. When his magicians proved that they, too, could turn water into blood, Pharaoh once again turned away without comment. This plague lasted seven days, but while the Egyptian people struggled, Pharaoh seemed determined to ignore it.

The Lord used the second plague, the plague of frogs, to seize the attention of the recalcitrant ruler of Egypt. He told Pharaoh what He desired for him to do—***Let My people go, that they may serve Me***—and then He described in vivid detail exactly what the consequences would be for not doing so. When Pharaoh refused, God made good on His warning. This time, Pharaoh was inconvenienced enough that he temporarily acknowledged the power of God. ***Then Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron,***

and said, Intreat the LORD, that he may take away the frogs from me, and from my people; and I will let the people go, that they may do sacrifice unto the LORD (8:8). Yet after order was restored, he quickly recanted his concession.

Three times, God revealed Himself to Pharaoh. Twice, He was ignored; the third time, He was peripherally acknowledged and rebuffed. At this point, God knew that Pharaoh understood what was being asked of him and was doubling down on his refusal to comply. Thus, the third plague arrived in the form of judgment, with no advanced warning and no opportunity for respite.

We serve a gracious and merciful God. His patience with us is beyond human understanding, and His love for us is constant and unchanging. But grace and mercy are not equivalent to unconditional acceptance of rebellion and sin. For those who ignore His repeated overtures and persist in living with an unrepentant heart, judgment may come swiftly and without warning. One way or another, all will come to acknowledge the power of God.

For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God (Rom. 14:11-12).

Thought for the Day: *God's judgment is not a threat but a promise, one the faithful rejoice in and the closed-hearted ignore.*

Christ Revealed: As The Light of the world in contrast to ***a thick darkness in all the land of Egypt three days: they saw not one another, neither rose any from his place for three days: but all the children of Israel had light in their dwellings*** (Ex. 10:22-23).

Word Studies: 8:3 **knearingtroughs** = mixing vessels; 8:9 **Glory over me: when shall I intreat for thee** = The honor is yours to tell me when I am to pray for you; 8:19 **finger of God** = act of God; 8:22 **sever** = wonderfully separate.

Pray For Government Officials: Rep. Dean Phillips(MN) • **Country:** Oman (3,219,775) Mid East • Major Language: Arabic • Fewer restrictions on Christian activity than most of its neighbors • 75% Ibadhi Muslim; 25% Other (Other Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, Sikh, Bahai, Christian) • **Prayer Suggestion:** Trust in the Lord and wait on Him in your prayers, for He will hear you (Mic. 7:7).

Optional Reading: Matthew 20

For the LORD will pass through to smite the Egyptians; and when He seeth the blood upon the lintel, and on the two side posts, the LORD will pass over the door, and will not suffer the destroyer to come in unto your houses to smite you. And ye shall observe this thing for an ordinance to thee and to thy sons for ever (Ex. 12:23-24).

And Moses said, Thus saith the LORD, About midnight will I go out into the midst of Egypt: And all the firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die, from the firstborn of Pharaoh that sitteth upon his throne, even unto the firstborn of the maidservant that is behind the mill; and all the firstborn of beasts (Ex. 11:4-5). Death had come to the land of Egypt. In this last and greatest of all plagues, the Lord's wrath was being poured out upon a sinful nation. Everyone within the borders of Egypt, whether Egyptian, Israelite, or other foreign-born, had come under the judgment of God. ***For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God (Rom. 8:23).***

Once again, however, God's judgment was tempered with the tenderest of mercy. In fulfillment of His Covenant with Abraham, God created a path by which His chosen people could escape the judgment of death. Although sin must be paid by death (Rom. 6:23), He made an allowance for a replacement offering made in obedience to Him. ***Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year: ye shall take it out from the sheep, or from the goats (Ex. 12:5).*** The Lord gave detailed instructions for the sacrifice and preparation of the lamb, as well as for the application of blood upon the lintel. Only by following these instructions to the letter would they be saved from the wrath of God. ***For the LORD will pass through to smite the Egyptians; and when He seeth the blood upon the lintel, and on the two side posts, the LORD will pass over the door, and will not suffer the destroyer to come in unto your houses to smite you.***

We are privileged to live in a time in which Jesus, the perfect, sinless Lamb of God (John 1:29), has permanently fulfilled Passover by offering His sinless blood in our stead. Just as the blood of an innocent lamb was the only appointed means to

preserve God's chosen people from death, the precious blood of Jesus is the only thing that can cleanse us of our sins and allow us to obtain eternal life. As sinners, we are all deserving of death, yet God, in His boundless mercy, has offered us this one chance to wipe our slates clean. There is no other way that we can receive His grace. **Jesus saith unto him, I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me** (John 14:6). Jesus was crucified so that we might live. His blood, applied to our lives, allows the destroyer to pass us by. How do we receive this wondrous gift? We must open our hearts and ask.

But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation (Rom. 10:8-10).

Thought for the Day: *God has already delivered His gift to us; what He calls us to do now is wholeheartedly accept it.*

Christ Revealed: By the blood applied to the door posts. Jesus is not "a door," but **The Door** to heaven. There is no other way to heaven except through Him (Ex. 12:7,12-13,21-23; John 10:9;14:6; Acts 4:10-12).

Word Studies: 11:7 **move his tongue** = bark, growl; 12:9 **purtenance** = internal organs; 12:11 **with your loins girded** = dressed ready for travel; 12:22 **hyssop** = common plant of the mint family; **lintel** = crosspiece above the door; 12:36 **spoiled** = took all the valuables of; 13:2 **Sanctify** = Dedicate; 13:3 **leavened bread** = bread with yeast – symbolic of corruption and evil.

Pray For Staff: Jennifer Palafox, Bible Pathway Ministries President • **Government Officials:** Sen. Kevin Cramer(ND) • **Country:** Pakistan (196,174,380) Southern Asia • Major Languages: Punjabi, Sindhi, Pashto, Saraiki, Urdu, English • There is no freedom to convert Muslims to Christ. Pakistan is an Islamic republic • 96.4% Muslim; 3.6% Other (Christian, Hindu) • **Prayer Suggestion:** Rejoice over and pray for those who share the Good News (Nah. 1:15).

Optional Reading: Matthew 21

And they said unto Moses, Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt? Is not this the word that we did tell thee in Egypt, saying, Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians? For it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness (Ex. 14:11-12).

Yesterday, we read of the Israelites hurried but triumphant departure from Egypt. ***And the children of Israel did according to the word of Moses; and they borrowed of the Egyptians jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment: And the LORD gave the people favour in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they lent unto them such things as they required. And they spoiled the Egyptians. And the children of Israel journeyed from Rameses to Succoth, about six hundred thousand on foot that were men, beside children. And a mixed multitude went up also with them; and flocks, and herds, even very much cattle*** (Ex. 12:35-38). We rejoiced as they began their journey to the promised land as free men, bound only to their creator.

One would expect that, after having witnessed firsthand the awesome power of God, these people would have followed Him without doubt or hesitation, but they hadn't even been gone from Egypt for three days before they proved this expectation to be false. The Pharaoh had recovered from his initial shock and grief over the plague that had claimed all of Egypt's first-born. He had gathered his armies and ridden after the departing Israelites, intent on regaining his Hebrew slaves (14:5). When the children of Israel learned of the oncoming army, they panicked and lashed out at Moses, saying, ***wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt?... For it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness.*** Thus setting a precedent for the pattern in which they and their descendants would interact with the Lord for generations to come.

The Israelites are perfect examples of what we refer to today as 'fair-weather Christians.' As long as the way is smooth and

the blessings are plentiful, they are overflowing with words of praise and worship. Yet, at the first sign of trouble, they crumble. Instead of turning to God for support and direction, they become bitter and angry, demanding to know why He has 'let them down.' The primary identifying characteristic of this type of individual is their seemingly infinite store of self-love. If you listen closely, you will soon discover that even their praise of God during the good times has a decidedly selfish tone.

As imperfect human beings, we all have the capacity for shallow self-absorption, and we will all evidence this type of behavior on occasion. The trick is to remain conscious of this fact so that we can actively guard against it, allowing our faith in God to shine brighter than our fears and doubts. When facing worldly tribulations, we always have a choice. We can join our voices with the Israelites in complaint and despair, or we can stand as Moses stood and proclaim our faith in the leadership of God.

And Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which He will shew to you to day: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to day, ye shall see them again no more for ever. The LORD shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace (Ex. 14:13-14).

Thought for the Day: *With faith in God as our refuge, we can weather any storm. No matter how frightening the thunder is, it will pass.*

Christ Revealed: Through the **bread** (manna) **from heaven** (Ex. 16:4,15). Jesus said: ***I am the Living Bread which came down from heaven*** (John 6:51; 6:32- 50).

Word Studies: 14:8 **with an high hand** = triumphantly and without fear; 14:13 **salvation** = deliverance; 14:17 **get me honour upon** = triumph over; 15:25 **proved them** = tested their faith; 16:3 **flesh pots** = bowls; 16:15 **wist not** = did not know; 16:18 **mete** = measure; 16:20 **hearkened not** = would not listen

Pray For Staff: Ryan McCrary • **Government Official:** Rep. Rick Crawford(AR) • **Country:** Palau (21,186) North Pacific Ocean • **Major Languages:** Palauan, English • **Religious Freedom** • 41.6% Roman Catholic; 23.3% Protestant; 8.8% Modekngei; 5.3% Seventh-Day Adventist; 0.9% Jehovah Witness; 0.6% Mormon; 3.1% Other; 16.4% Unspecified/None • **Prayer Suggestion:** Praise God for godly men of old who were faithful to record His Word of Truth (Hab. 2:1-2).

Optional Reading: Matthew 22

So Joshua did as Moses had said to him, and fought with Amalek: and Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill. And it came to pass, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed: and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed. But Moses' hands were heavy; and they took a stone, and put it under him, and he sat thereon; and Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands, the one on the one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun. And Joshua discomfited Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword (Ex. 17:10-13).

The Israelites were now free of Egyptian oppression, but they were far from 'home free.' The land they traveled through was populated by all manners of people, from simple nomads and shepherds to organized armies. To many of the latter, the richly provisioned children of Israel presented a target too tempting to resist, leading to attacks and raids. In today's reading, God has recorded the details of one such skirmish. ***And the LORD said unto Moses, Write this for a memorial in a book, and rehearse it in the ears of Joshua: for I will utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven (Ex. 17:14).*** From this record, two very clear lessons emerge.

The first is humbling in its simplicity. As Joshua led the men in battle on the field below, Moses stood on the hill above them, entreating with God (17:9). His raised hands contained the ***rod of God*** and signified his constant, unwavering prayer. ***And it came to pass, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed:*** and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed. The conflict was not being decided on the battlefield. The deciding factor was not the size of Amalek's army nor the strength of the Israelites, but rather the earnestness of the prayer going up to God.

Whatever struggles we face in life, the principle remains the same. Our success hinges entirely on our connection to God. Through prayer, our strength is maintained, and our hope is renewed. Life's battle can be won, but we are fully dependent on God for victory. If we try to fight it on our own, we will lose.

Maintaining our connection to God in the midst of extreme

circumstances can be difficult, which leads us to the second lesson. God does not intend for us to have to go it alone. ***But Moses' hands were heavy; and they took a stone, and put it under him...and Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands.*** When Moses reached the point of exhaustion, his friends and family stepped in and helped him to go on. With joint effort, the prayers to God continued unabated. This provides us with a prime example of why it is so important for us to surround ourselves with others who share in our love of God. It is not possible for us to be strong and focused 100% of the time, but when we are lovingly supported by our brothers and sisters in Christ, we don't have to be. Our hands may grow tired, and our voice may grow weak, but when we are lifted up by those around us, our connection to God remains strong.

Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up (Eccl. 4:9-10).

Thought for the Day: *Worldly metrics are not tuned to measure spiritual success; the poorest man may have the richest soul.*

Christ Revealed: As the Rock and the Water that came forth from it (Ex. 17:6). They drank of that spiritual Rock that followed (accompanied) them: and that Rock was Christ (I Cor. 10:4; compare John 7:38).

Word Studies: 17:2 **did chide with** = angrily criticized; **tempt** = test; 17:12 **heavy** = too tired from holding up his hands; **stayed up** = supported; 17:13 **discomfited** = defeated; 17:15 **Jehovah-nissi** = the Lord is my banner

Pray For Staff: Kevin Jennings • **Government Officials:** Sen. Thomas Carper(DE), Rep. Lloyd Smucker(PA) • **Country:** Panama (3,608,431) Central America • Major Language: Spanish • Religious Freedom • 85% Roman Catholic; 15% Protestant • **Prayer Suggestion:** Examine yourself. Has prosperity dulled your willingness to sacrifice (Hag. 1:4)?

Optional Reading: Matthew 23

And God spake all these words, saying, I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before Me (Ex. 20:1-3).

Today's reading introduces us to the Ten Commandments—the ten basic laws upon which all of Israel's civil, criminal, and ceremonial laws would come to be based. As they gathered at the base of Mt. Sinai, the children of Israel heard the voice of God for the first time and trembled at the raw power it contained. ***And they said unto Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die*** (Ex. 20:19). In that moment, they understood that to willfully ignore these commandments would be the same as denying God. The undercurrent of the message was clear: God's laws must be obeyed, or the punishment incurred would be severe.

When you mention the Ten Commandments in a mixed group of Christians today, chances are you will be opening yourself up to an extended debate. While an overwhelming majority agree that these laws are morally sound, many believe that we, as Christians, are no longer under any spiritual obligation to observe them. Those who hold this belief are quick to quote Scripture that they believe clearly explains their position. ***For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace*** (Rom. 6:14). The Ten Commandments, they claim, no longer hold any power over us.

This belief is correct as far as it goes, but it is woefully incomplete. There is indeed no salvation to be found within the Commandments. Even if a person were to keep them perfectly, without a single slip, they would still perish, unredeemed, without the saving grace of Jesus (John 14:6). But just because they are not the source of grace does not mean they are irrelevant. ***What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid*** (6:15). Jesus Himself stated: ***If ye love Me, keep My commandments*** (John 14:15).

Where once the Israelites observed the law in fear and trembling, Jesus asks that we embrace it out of love and respect. Where once the Israelites struggled—and failed—to keep the

law based on their own strength, Jesus has imbued us with His strength, in the form of the Holy Spirit, so that we might live forever in Him (14:16-21). To the person wholly committed to Christ, the Ten Commandments are much more than morally sound historical laws; they are an integrated part of our living faith, an unerring moral compass given as a gift of righteousness from a merciful God. We follow them not in a vain attempt to save ourselves, but because doing so allows us to daily experience the joy and love of God.

Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets (Matt. 22:37-40).

Thought for the Day: *Observing His commandments does not open the gates of Heaven, but without them, we may find our hearts are too hard to truly accept Him.*

Christ Revealed: The perfection of Christ is revealed through the Ten Commandments, for He kept all of them (Ex. 20:1-17). He was perfect and without sin (Heb. 4:15).

Word Studies: 20:10 **Sabbath** = day of rest to honor God; 20:13 **kill** = murder; 21:8 **strange nation** = foreign people; 21:14 **presumptuously** = willfully, over- stepping due bounds; **with guile** = treacherously; 21:19 **be quit** = be acquitted, blameless; 21:22 **her fruit depart from her** = she suffered a miscarriage

Pray For Staff: Tiffany Parisi • **Government Officials:** Gov. Laura Kelly(KS), Rep. John Garamendi(CA), Rep. Mike Thompson(CA), Rep. Lou Correa(CA), Rep. Jake Ellzey(TX) • **Country:** Papua New Guinea (6,552,730) South-western Pacific • Major Languages: Tok Pisin, English • Religious Freedom • 69.4% Protestant; 27% Roman Catholic; 0.3% Bahai; 3.3% Indigenous Beliefs/Other • **Prayer Suggestion:** Glory in the Lord. He is Victor over Satan (Zech. 3:2).

Optional Reading: Matthew 24

And let them make Me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them. According to all that I shew thee, after the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all the instruments thereof, even so shall ye make it (Ex. 25:8-9).

In today's reading, the Lord continues to outline His expectations for His people. He also gives them further details concerning His magnificent promise that was first made to Abraham centuries before. ***And I will set thy bounds from the Red sea even unto the sea of the Philistines, and from the desert unto the river: for I will deliver the inhabitants of the land into your hand; and thou shalt drive them out before thee*** (Ex. 23:31). After this He makes an amazing proclamation. ***And let them make Me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them.*** For the first time since sin entered into the world, the Lord was choosing to ***dwell*** among His people. ***The tabernacle***, built and staffed according to God's heavenly specifications, would allow His people to live continuously in His presence.

The importance of ***the tabernacle*** to the Israelites (and, indeed, to us today) cannot be stressed enough. It is through ***the tabernacle*** that God laid the groundwork for His ultimate plan of salvation. God had never intended for mankind to live apart from Him; the separation was built of sin. The tabernacle, in all its glory, introduced God's chosen people to His viewpoint. It was to occupy the central spot in camp (Num. 2:1-34). It was to be placed first, and then the camp would be laid out around it. It was not of stationary construction, but rather, it was fashioned as a tent, made to travel with (lead!) the people throughout their lives. In all ways, the tabernacle typified Christ, whose later entrance into the world made perfect the Lord's design. ***And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth*** (John 1:14).

Once completed, ***the tabernacle*** would be fully equipped to meet the spiritual needs of the Israelites. It would be a holy place in which God could dwell apart from the sinful nature of His people. It would be a place of sacrifice (27:1-4), a place

from which the sins of the people could be atoned, and it would be a place of meeting (25:22). Through the dedicated service of the priests, it would be the place that the people were able to approach God.

Every function that **the tabernacle** provided for the Israelites has now been freely given to us through the compassionate work of our Savior and King. The complicated rituals of atonement are gone, replaced for all time by the One perfect Sacrifice (Heb. 10:10). Jesus has become the door (Ex. 26:36; John 10:7,9) through which we may enter into the presence of God, and once we enter, there is no longer any barrier in our way (Matt. 10:32). For this reason, God does not now require a freestanding dwelling place on this earth. Instead, He has sent the Holy Spirit to dwell directly in the heart of every believer. Just as He made holy **the tabernacle**, so does He seek to transform our lives.

Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are (1 Cor. 3:16-17).

Thought for the Day: *Modern humanity has access to God that Moses' people could not even fathom. How can we not spend every day rejoicing?*

Christ Revealed: As the Ark of the Covenant (Testimony). The wood demonstrated His humanity; the gold overlay represented His deity. Only through His blood sprinkled on the Ark could one receive forgiveness. God dwelt above the Mercy Seat (Ex. 25:10-22).

Word Studies: 23:2 **neither . . . decline after many to wrest judgement** = don't side with the majority to pervert justice; 23:5 **forbear to help him** = refuse to help him; 23:8 **gift** = bribe; 23:13 **be circumspect** = pay strict attention

Pray For Staff: Gilbert Palafox • **Government Officials:** Rep. Andy Harris(MD), Rep. Bill Pascrell, Jr.(NJ), Rep. Shelia Cherfilus-McCormick(FL), Rep. Aaron Bean(FL) • **Country:** Paraguay (6,703,860) South America • Major languages: Spanish, Guarani • Religious Freedom • 89.7% Roman Catholic; 6.2% Protestant; 1.1% Other Christian; 1.9% Other/ Unspecified; 1.1% None • **Prayer Suggestion:** Call upon the Lord, for He promises to answer you (Zech. 13:9).

Optional Reading: Matthew 25

And thou shalt make an altar of shittim wood, five cubits long, and five cubits broad; the altar shall be foursquare: and the height thereof shall be three cubits. And thou shalt make the horns of it upon the four corners thereof: his horns shall be of the same: and thou shalt overlay it with brass (Ex. 27:1-2).

After His initial instruction on the Law, the Lord gave Moses directions for constructing His holy Tabernacle. ***And let them make Me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them. According to all that I shew thee, after the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all the instruments thereof, even so shall ye make it*** (Ex. 25:8-9). God covered every detail, from what type of animal skin was needed for the outside protective tent covering (26:14) to what kind of wood to use when constructing the sacrificial altar that would be placed in the courtyard of the Tabernacle. Nothing was left to chance or to the whims of human nature. The design of the Tabernacle was intended to reinforce the separate holiness of God. ***In the tabernacle of the congregation without the vail, which is before the testimony, Aaron and his sons shall order it from evening to morning before the LORD: it shall be a statute for ever unto their generations on the behalf of the children of Israel*** (27:21).

The placement of the altar of sacrifice was pivotal to this understanding. ***And thou shalt set the altar of the burnt offering before the door of the tabernacle of the tent of the congregation*** (40:6). It was the first thing the Israelites saw when they entered the outer courtyard, and it stood directly between them and the Most Holy Place. The Most Holy Place housed the Ark of the Testimony, upon which was placed the mercy seat whereon abode the presence of God (26:33-34). ***And there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubims which are upon the ark of the testimony, of all things which I will give thee in commandment unto the children of Israel*** (25:22). The altar of sacrifice stood as a reminder to the Israelites of their fallen, sinful nature. They knew that the only way that the priests could approach God on their

behalf would be through the sacrifices of atonement that would be made there. There was no other way.

Although we no longer have the physical reminders the Tabernacle offered, the message applies equally to us today. ***For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God*** (Rom. 3:23). Our sinful human nature still causes us to be barred from the presence of God. ***But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you, that He will not hear*** (Is. 59:2). The only path open that will lead us into His presence is the path of sacrificial atonement. ***And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission*** (Heb. 9:22). Yet, unlike the Israelites, we are not subject to an endless progression of temporary sacrifices. Instead, we are privileged to live under the grace of Jesus Christ, ***by the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all*** (Heb. 10:10). Only by accepting His perfect sacrifice will we be granted access to God. There is no other way.

So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation (Heb. 9:28).

Thought for the Day: *We have loaded ourselves down with the almost unbearable weight of sin; God is the only one who can help us remove it.*

Christ Revealed: Through the Brasen Altar, upon which the Sin Offering was burned (Ex. 27:1-8; Lev. 4:1-35). Jesus' offering of Himself as the final sacrifice was the fulfillment of all Old Testament altars as well as all sacrificial offerings. ***In whom we have redemption through His (Jesus Christ) blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace*** (Eph. 1:5-7; John 1:29,36; Col. 1:14; Heb. 9:12).

Word Studies: 26:1 **cunning work** = skillful workmanship; 26:2 **have one measure** = be the same measurement; 28:2 **holy garments** = God-appointed clothing was required to participate in worship services; 28:8 **curious girdle** = skillfully made belt.

Pray For Staff: Ryan McCrary • **Government Officials:** Rep. Kevin McCarty(CA) • **Country:** Peru (30,147,935) Western South America • **Major Languages:** Spanish, Quechua, Aymara • **Restricted Religious Freedom** • 81.3% Roman Catholic; 12.5% Evangelical; 3.3% Other; 2.9% Unspecified/None • **Prayer Suggestion:** Can you say you are ready for the Lord's coming (Mal. 3:2)?

Optional Reading: Matthew 26

For Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and their feet thereat: When they go into the tabernacle of the congregation, they shall wash with water, that they die not; or when they come near to the altar to minister, to burn offering made by fire unto the LORD: So they shall wash their hands and their feet, that they die not: and it shall be a statute for ever to them, even to him and to his seed throughout their generations. (Ex. 30:19-21).

God's instructions regarding the composition and construction of the Tabernacle were clear and concise. The Tabernacle and all of its furnishings were required to be completed according to His exact specifications. Each consecrated item had to be placed and used in a specific manner to bring honor to God. But the most important aspect of obedience came from human worship. Then, as is now, there was only one acceptable way to enter God's presence. Any deviation from the prescribed route would have resulted in death. ***Jesus saith unto him, I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me*** (John 14:6).

After the priest washed his hands and feet at the laver, he proceeded toward the Tabernacle and entered through a heavy linen veil—the only door to the Holy Place. On the left was the seven-branched candlestick (lampstand) of solid beaten gold. It provided the only source of light in the Holy Place. ***And Aaron shall burn thereon sweet incense every morning: when he dresseth the lamps, he shall burn incense upon it*** (Ex. 30:7). This pure light represented the love and grace that we now have through Jesus Christ our Lord. God provided the light, but diligent priestly effort was needed to keep it trimmed and burning bright. Had the priests neglected their duties, they would have been plunged into darkness, just as if we were to turn our backs on the teachings of Christ, we would be overwhelmed by the darkness of sin. The light (Jesus) would still be in the world, but we would be blind to it. ***And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not*** (John 1:5). Only by keeping our minds and hearts open to Him can we take full advantage of His light.

The Holy Place also contained the table of shewbread with its twelve loaves of unleavened bread sprinkled with incense. This bread was required to be presented to the Lord weekly, on the Sabbath. It was to be eaten by the priests, but only in the Holy Place (Lev. 6:16-26; 24:5-9). None could be removed and eaten elsewhere. The Shewbread was required by God as more than just a means of bodily nourishment. Consumed only in the presence of the light, it was symbolic of the spiritual sustenance we receive from meditating over the Word of God with the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

As children of God under the Covenant of grace established through Jesus Christ our Lord, the shewbread is now ours. We have been given a place at His pure table to feed upon Christ, the Living Word, in the light of the Holy Spirit. As we continue to read His Word through the filter of the Holy Spirit, our lives will be transformed. The Holy Spirit enlightens and empowers the lives of those who prayerfully continue to digest the Word of God, the Bread of Life.

But He answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every Word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God (Matt. 4:4).

Thought for the Day: *God's Word is a sustenance that many have been starved of for so long that they no longer realize their need.*

Christ Revealed: Through the Laver, Christ is revealed as both the container and the dispenser of **Living Water** (Ex. 30:18; John 4:10). ***In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink. Now ye are clean through the Word which I have spoken unto you*** (John 7:37, 15:3; compare I Cor. 10:4).

Word Studies: 29:2 **unleavened bread** = bread without yeast, a symbol of Christ as the sinless offering; 29:17 **unto** = on top of; 29:18 **sweet savour** = pleasant fragrance, acceptance; 29:27 **heaved** = set aside

Pray For Staff: Tiffany Parisi • **Government Officials:** Chief Justice John Roberts • **Country:** Philippines (107,668,231) Southeast Asia • Major Languages: Filipino, English • Religious persecution in some areas • 82.9% Catholic; 5% Muslim; 2.8% Evangelical; 2.3% Iglesia ni Cristo; 4.5% Other Christian; 1.8% Other; 0.6% Unspecified; 0.1% None • **Prayer Suggestion:** Pray that God will move His people to give faithfully to His work (Mal. 3:8-10).

Optional Reading: Matthew 27

And the LORD said unto Moses, Depart, and go up hence, thou and the people which thou hast brought up out of the land of Egypt, unto the land which I swore unto Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, saying, Unto thy seed will I give it: And I will send an angel before thee; and I will drive out the Canaanite, the Amorite, and the Hittite, and the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite: Unto a land flowing with milk and honey: for I will not go up in the midst of thee; for thou art a stiffnecked people: lest I consume thee in the way (Ex. 33:1-3). And he said unto Him, If Thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence. For wherein shall it be known here that I and Thy people have found grace in Thy sight? is it not in that Thou goest with us? so shall we be separated, I and Thy people, from all the people that are upon the face of the earth (Ex. 33:15-16).

In response to the intercessory prayer of Moses, God had stayed His initial judgment against the Israelites. ***And the LORD said unto Moses, I have seen this people, and, behold, it is a stiffnecked people: Now therefore let Me alone, that My wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them: and I will make of thee a great nation. And Moses besought the LORD his God, and said, LORD, why doth Thy wrath wax hot against Thy people, which Thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt with great power, and with a mighty hand (Ex. 32:9-11)? And the LORD repented of the evil which He thought to do unto His people (32:14).*** The unrepentant amongst them had been slain—familial relationships and neighborly bonds broken under the weight of their terrible sin (32:26-28). For those who remained, an uncertain future lay before them. Stained by sin, trembling in fear and guilt, they silently awaited God's verdict.

True to His word to Moses, God reaffirmed the Israelites' inheritance of His promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He remained faithful, even in the face of their faithlessness (II Tim. 2:13). The land would be theirs, and He would continue to provide for their welfare and security. All their worldly needs would be met. BUT... He declined to restore the broken bonds

of fellowship. They had made it clear that they did not value His presence, so He was sending them on—without Him.

When Moses heard the Lord's proposal, He was horrified. ***And he said unto Him, If Thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence.*** It wouldn't have made a difference to Moses if God were offering him the keys to the Garden of Eden itself; no blessing was worth the price of losing fellowship with God. However long it took, and whatever it required of him, Moses was determined not to move forward without God personally at the helm. ***Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ*** (Phil. 3:8).

For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of Me and of My words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when He cometh in the glory of His Father with the holy angels (Mark 8:36-38).

Thought for the Day: *Only by following God's direction will we ever perceive the path.*

Christ Revealed: As the One who is ever-present. ***My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest*** (peace) (Ex. 33:14). ***He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee*** (Heb. 13:5; compare Matt. 11:28; John 14:27).

Word Studies: 32:7 **corrupted themselves** = behaved sinfully; 32:9 **stiffnecked** = willfully disobedient; 32:12 **mischief** = evil intent; **repent of** = renounce

Pray For Staff: Gilbert Palafox • **Government Officials:** Rep. Linda Sánchez(CA), Rep. Bennie Thompson(MS), Sen. Jeanne Shaheen(NH), Supreme Court Justice Amy Coney Barrett • **Country:** Pitcairn Islands (48) South Pacific Ocean • Major Languages: English, Pitkern • Religious Freedom • 100% Seventh-Day Adventist • **Prayer Suggestion:** Confess wrongs you have committed to the Lord and to those whom you have hurt; ask for forgiveness (Matt. 5:23-24).

Optional Reading: Matthew 28

Then wrought Bezaleel and Aholiab, and every wise hearted man, in whom the LORD put wisdom and understanding to know how to work all manner of work for the service of the sanctuary, according to all that the LORD had commanded. And Moses called Bezaleel and Aholiab, and every wise hearted man, in whose heart the LORD had put wisdom, even every one whose heart stirred him up to come unto the work to do it (Ex. 36:1-2).

God created mankind for a singular purpose. **And God said, Let us make man in Our image, after Our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth (Gen. 1:26). And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it (Gen. 2:15). This people have I formed for myself; they shall shew forth My praise (Is. 43:21).** We were created in His image to be His, to serve Him in His creation, and to worship, praise, and bring glory to His name. When we surrender ourselves fully to His will, placing all our trust and obedience in Him, we fulfill our purpose.

The concept that we belong to God and are His to do with as He pleases is difficult for many to accept. From a young age, society conditions us to value autonomy and personal freedom above all else. We are taught that our happiness is paramount and that living our best life means putting ourselves first. We are encouraged to reject boundaries of any kind—to believe that we can be, do, or experience anything we choose simply because we choose it. These beliefs are not limited to those who openly deny the existence of God. The message that God's unconditional love is equivalent to nonjudgmental, unconditional support can be heard on any given Sunday from pulpits the world over. "Decide what you want out of life, and then God will help you get it" has become the battle cry of a new generation.

Despite what society would have us believe, true success will never be found in blazing our own trail; it comes only from

following the path God has laid out for us. Those who look to Him with open hearts and prayerful attitudes will have no trouble recognizing the stirring in their hearts that signifies His guiding hand upon their lives. In each of us, God has ***put wisdom and understanding*** for the task He has set before us. As we embrace it and move forward in His will, our wisdom will increase and our understanding will deepen. The unquenchable thirst for success instilled in us by the world will fade away and be replaced by the peaceful assurance that we are precisely where we are supposed to be, doing exactly what we were created to do. ***Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee: because he trusteth in Thee*** (Is. 26:3).

That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him: The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, And what is the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power (Eph. 1:17-19).

Thought for the Day: *Our place in the world will always feel uncertain; only in the presence of God will we find true belonging.*

Christ Revealed: Through ***the Candlestick*** (Ex. 35:14). Christ is ***The Light of the world*** (John 1:6-9; 8:12; 9:5; compare Luke 1:78-79).

Word Studies: 35:10 **wise hearted** = craftsman with a heart for the Lord; 35:32 **curious** = skillful.

Pray For Staff: Judy McCrary • **Government Officials:** Rep. Jake Auchincloss (MA) • **Country:** Poland (38,346,279) Central Europe • Major Language: Polish • Religious Freedom • 89.8% Roman Catholic; 1.3% Eastern Orthodox; 0.3% Protestant; 0.3% Other; 8.3% Unspecified • **Prayer Suggestion:** Pray for those who have hurt you (Matt. 5:44).

Optional Reading: Mark 1

And he made the altar of burnt offering of shittim wood: five cubits was the length thereof, and five cubits the breadth thereof; it was foursquare; and three cubits the height thereof. And he made the horns thereof on the four corners of it; the horns thereof were of the same: and he overlaid it with brass. And he made all the vessels of the altar, the pots, and the shovels, and the basons, and the fleshhooks, and the firepans: all the vessels thereof made he of brass. And he made for the altar a brasen grate of network under the compass thereof beneath unto the midst of it. And he cast four rings for the four ends of the grate of brass, to be places for the staves. And he made the staves of shittim wood, and overlaid them with brass. And he put the staves into the rings on the sides of the altar, to bear it withal; he made the altar hollow with boards (Ex. 38:1-7).

The ***the altar of burnt offering*** was as meticulously planned and as painstakingly constructed as every other aspect of the Tabernacle of the Lord. It was a thing of symmetry and beauty, designed by God to serve as the initial contact point between sinful man and their righteous Lord. It was before this altar that a man would come to lay his hand upon the head of an innocent animal and symbolically transfer his sin. It was upon this altar that the innocent would be executed in place of the guilty, covering the cost of the specified sin and temporarily justifying the sinner before God. ***For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law; For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified*** (Rom. 2:12-13).

The grace supplied through this process was narrow in scope and conditional in nature. It applied to nothing more than the named sin(s); it did nothing to permanently justify or sanctify the sinner. ***For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect*** (Heb. 10:1). ***For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should***

take away sins (10:4). Nevertheless, it was all that existed at that time to bridge the gap of sin between man and God, and its strength and durability of construction attested to the anticipated longevity and frequency of use by the Israelite people.

The altar of burnt offering typifies the cross upon which Christ was crucified. Yet unlike the **altar**, little is known of the cross, save that it was so heavy and unwieldy to bear that the soldiers driving Christ to Golgotha at some point enlisted a bystander to take the cross from Christ and carry it to the crucifixion site (John 19:17; Matt. 27:32; Luke 23:26). Nothing is known of the cross because we have no need to know of it. Unlike **the altar of burnt offering**, which was an essential component of the ongoing ritual of substitutionary sacrifice, the cross was merely a tool Christ made use of as he fulfilled the law of sacrifice and definitively paid the cost of sin and justified man before God. Jesus willingly shed His innocent, human blood in our stead. Love, not carefully constructed ritual, is the source of our salvation.

By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all (Heb. 10:10).

Thought for the Day: *God devised ritual sacrifice to teach us of our need for Him; neither our need nor His lesson has changed, but Christ's fulfillment of the law has rendered visual aids obsolete.*

Christ Revealed: Through **the Golden Altar** and its **incense** – representing prayers going up to heaven (Ex. 39:38; also Rev. 5:8; 8:3-4). Christ prayed for us. **Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word** (John 17:20).

Word Studies: 39:2 **ephod** = high priest's outer garment, apron; 39:15 **wreathen work** = braided cords; 39:20 **curious** = intricately woven; 39:39 **laver** = large basin used for washing before entering the Tabernacle

Pray For Staff: Jennifer Palafox • **Government Official:** Rep. Kevin Kiley(CA), Rep. Mike Johnson(LA) • **Country:** Portugal (10,813,834) South-western Europe • **Major Languages:** Portuguese, Mirandese • **Religious Freedom** • 81% Roman Catholic; 3.3% Other Christian; 0.6% Other; 6.8% None; 8.3% Unspecified • **Prayer Suggestion:** Pray in secret before God, not seeking human praise (Matt. 6:6).

Optional Reading: Mark 2

And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, On the first day of the first month shalt thou set up the tabernacle of the tent of the congregation. And thou shalt put therein the ark of the testimony, and cover the ark with the vail. And thou shalt bring in the table, and set in order the things that are to be set in order upon it; and thou shalt bring in the candlestick, and light the lamps thereof. And thou shalt set the altar of gold for the incense before the ark of the testimony, and put the hanging of the door to the tabernacle. And thou shalt set the altar of the burnt offering before the door of the tabernacle of the tent of the congregation. And thou shalt set the laver between the tent of the congregation and the altar, and shalt put water therein. And thou shalt set up the court round about, and hang up the hanging at the court gate. And thou shalt take the anointing oil, and anoint the tabernacle, and all that is therein, and shalt hallow it, and all the vessels thereof: and it shall be holy (Ex. 40:1-9).

Step by step, God directed Moses to assemble the Tabernacle. Everything from the date (***the first day of the first month***, signifying a new beginning) to the specific order and manner in which it was to be put together was prescribed by God; nothing was left to interpretation or chance. All was to be ordered according to the divine will of God. Had Moses not listened and obeyed, had he chosen a 'more convenient' date or decided that he preferred a different arrangement of the rooms or furnishings, all the months of careful collection and construction of the component parts would have been for naught. God designed the Tabernacle to stand as a physical representation of His connection to His people, and only through humble, reverent obedience could that connection be realized. ***Thus did Moses: according to all that the LORD commanded him, so did he*** (Ex. 40:16). ***And he reared up the court round about the tabernacle and the altar, and set up the hanging of the court gate. So Moses finished the work. Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle*** (40:33-34).

Every individual in the world today has been designed by God to stand as a representative of His connection with mankind. Through His Holy Word, we have all been provided with the component parts necessary to order our lives according to His divine will. From the moment of our birth, we have the potential to receive the Spirit of God, but unless we humble ourselves before Him, acknowledge Jesus as our Lord and Savior, and accept the new life He has bought for us with His dearest blood, then that potential will never be realized. For those who do, those who, Like Moses, resolve to surrender control to God and follow Him without question or complaint, a wonderous experience awaits. Filled with the Spirit, we are transformed. Just as the Tabernacle came fully into being the moment it was filled with the glory of God, so too are we brought fully into life.

But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God (John 1:12-13). It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life (John 6:63).

Thought for the Day: *In order to serve God as He would have us do, we must answer His call when it comes, not wait until it's convenient for us to do so.*

Christ Portrayed: By Aaron as the high priest (Ex. 40:13). ***Christ being come an High Priest. . . to appear in the presence of God for us*** (Heb. 9:7-24).

Word Studies: 40:3 **the Testimony** = the Ten Commandments; **cover the Ark with the veil** = hang a curtain to separate the Most Holy Place; 40:7 **Laver** = large basin or bowl used for washing the hands and feet; 40:10 **sanctify** = consecrate to God; 40:11 **his foot** = its stand; 40:20 **staves** = poles with which to carry; 40:24 **over against** = opposite.

Pray For Staff: Tiffany Parisi • **Government Officials:** Rep. Dutch Ruppersberger (MD), Rep. Bill Huizenga(MI), Rep. Garrett Graves(LA), Rep. Russell Fry(SC), Rep. Melanie Stansbury(NM), Rep. Michael Waltz(FL) • **Country:** Puerto Rico (3,620,897) Caribbean • Major Languages: Spanish, English • Religious Freedom • 85% Roman Catholic; 15% Protestant • **Prayer Suggestion:** Don't try to impress others with your prayers; pray about whatever is on your heart (Matt. 6:7-8).

Optional Reading: Mark 3

Become part of the vision

Jesus fed the 5000 with just five loaves and two fishes. There are multitudes of people in this world still hungering for His Word. Thousands of souls die each day with no knowledge of the saving grace of our Father in Heaven. As Christians, God has commissioned us to tell of Him and witness to the unbelievers that they may know Him.

God is leading Bible Pathway Ministries to send out an additional 5000 Bibles and devotionals monthly, starting in January 2024. For this project to become a reality, I must ask in Jesus' precious name for your financial support in this endeavor. The estimated cost for this mission is \$250,000.00. We are stepping out in faith and preparing the first shipment, trusting that God will make it possible. And this is the confidence that we have in Him, that, if we ask any thing according to His will, He heareth us: and if we know that He hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him (1 John 5:14-15).