

**Introduction:** This year's youth service trip found us travelling to Boardwalk Chapel to spruce up and paint this OPC evangelism outreach on the beach in Wildwood NJ. This week's Bible notes are meant to be a reminder *as to how the return of Christ to judge this world* drives all such missionary service. We long to see sinners called into the Kingdom of God before that day of judgement, as well as preparing for that judgment ourselves! May we especially appreciate that the way to be ready is *not* to obsess over end times prophecies or current events, nor to discern dates and possible scenarios about when Jesus will come back. Rather, holy living is the essential preparation for seeing Christ in the clouds! Sadly, there is much false teaching and doctrinal misunderstanding in each generation of the church, rendering the misled completely unprepared for Christ's coming. May the Lord make us vigilant against such sinful hypocrisy and bad doctrine and may we resolve to guard the next generation from its predations.

**Monday: read 1 Thessalonians 4:1-10 and Jude 3-4.** All through the New Testament the Apostles raise their voices to warn the church: "*Certain men whose condemnation was written about long ago will secretly slip in among you.*" The threat of false teaching – and of the most sordid kind – always rises up in every age to oppose true Gospel teaching. How sordid? Look at Jude 4's description of these false teachers: "*They are godless men, who change the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord.*"

How terrible to twist grace into a permission for immorality! This is the false argument of those who claim that more sin brings more grace, and therefore more glory to God (Rom. 6:1)! As the French philosopher Moliere quipped: "God will forgive – it's His job."

Meditate and Pray: Thank God for the Apostolic opposition to sin in the New Testament as men like Paul labor to help Christians understand that they have died to sin and live a new, holy life (Rom. 6:1-6):

*We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.*

*If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin ...*

**Tuesday: read 1 Thessalonians 4:8-10 and Romans 6:5.** Our being united to Christ both in death and resurrection arms us with teaching that transforms our identity in Christ. No matter what our past failings or moral compromises that make us ashamed - we now see that the authority of Christ (by which Paul pleads for our holiness in 1 Thessalonians 4:1-2) is the authority of One who *joins* Himself to us in our death to sin and in our new life. Now we can say "no" to the very sins which Jesus Himself rejected in our nature and say "yes" to the holy will of God the Father as Jesus also said "yes"! The very same joy which characterized His life can be ours as He by His Spirit teaches us more and more to say "no" to sin and "yes" to a life of faith and love!

Meditate and Pray: May these words from Dr. Sinclair Ferguson on our victory over sin through union with Christ greatly encourage our time of meditation today:

*The knowledge of our union with Christ provides us with great dignity. As I look to myself I see failure, sin, sometimes shame and disgrace. But that is neither the ultimate nor the whole truth about me as a Christian. No! I am united to Christ, a joint heir of His riches and a child of God. Knowing this to be the real truth about me lends grace and power to my life. (p. 113, The Christian Life, Banner of Truth)*

**Wednesday: read 1 Thessalonians 4:7-10 and Romans 5:5.** We see in 1 Thessalonians 4:7-8 that *the most effective way to maintain sexual purity is to be reminded of the reality of the indwelling Spirit ... and to realize that we carry the Spirit of God and of Christ in our bodies wherever we go.* But by this “indwelling” of the Spirit, we don’t mean a mere “hall monitor” who merely punishes outward sins. No parent can succeed in inculcating pure thoughts and desires into their child merely by the threat of the rod. No, the goal of all true nurture of children, as well as God’s goal in raising us up to holy living, is to “speak to the heart”! In other words, God can succeed in claiming our hearts for holiness because He is able to renew our wills and persuade our hearts to *want* to be holy. Only God can reach down so deeply into our hearts as to actually change what we *want*!

Meditate and Pray: Thank God that by His Spirit given to us in 1 Thessalonians 4:8, He is able to teach us not only to love each other, but also to love Him and His holiness. Oh, worship the Holy Spirit for pouring into your heart the very love of God (Rom. 5:5)! By such an outpouring, the Spirit is uniquely equipped to drive out impure affections and replace such lusts with true love for the beauty of God’s holiness. See Psalm 29:1-2, which invites us to worship and serve our Savior with cleansed hearts and new spiritual affections!

*Ascribe to the LORD, O mighty ones,  
ascribe to the LORD glory and strength.  
Ascribe to the LORD the glory due His name;  
worship the LORD in the splendor (or beauty) of His holiness.*

**Thursday: read 1 Thessalonians 4:8-10 and Galatians 4:6-7:** We are meditating on the love- gift of the Holy Spirit from 1 Thessalonians 4:8 and what this gift means for transforming the desires of the forgiven and born-again sinner. One phrase which the old preachers used to describe such heart-renewing power from God’s love is: *“the expulsive power of a new affection.”* Marvelous! God is able to dry up and shrivel the ungodly lusts of former days and replace them with healthy graces nourished in us by the Holy Spirit! What a “wet-nurse” the Holy Spirit proves to be in raising up a whole new family of graces to live within the (now) happy home of our hearts! Is it not a joy to add our voice “Abba Father” to the chorus of all these children of grace that now reside in our hearts? All the characters of Pilgrim’s Progress: “Faithful; Hopeful; Charity,” etc., – now living within us! What a wonderful clamor of holy voices and desires!

Meditate and Pray: Thank God for the great blessings of being adopted into such a family of grace!

**Fri/Sat/Sun: read 1 Thessalonians 1:6-8; 2:14 and 4:8-10.** The proof of how well the Thessalonians were “taught by God” is that the reputation of their faith and love spread throughout all the region of Achaia as well as Macedonia according to 1 Thessalonians 1:6-8 & 4:10. How is it possible for these newly converted pagans from Thessalonica to become the source of so much good news throughout the churches?

The answer lies in a key word used repeatedly in today’s texts which informs us that the Thessalonians were “imitators” or “mimics” of the Apostle Paul (1:6), the churches of Judea (2:14) and, most importantly, of the Lord Himself (1:6). The English word “mimic” is derived from this Greek noun and indicates how Christian character in the Thessalonians was intensely and accurately reproduced.

But who is it who is able to put the “stamp” of Christian character on every single true believer in Jesus Christ? Who is it who is able to reproduce within each of us the very imitative pattern of Jesus Christ Himself – so that we are truly one of the number of God’s children who are “taught by God,” 1 Thessalonians 4:9? The answer is that only the Holy Spirit whom Christ Jesus has sent can reproduce such character within us. He did it to the

Thessalonians, so that, as Paul declares in 1 Thessalonians 1:7, “They became *models* to all the believers...” He can do it to us!

Meditate and Pray: *Lord Jesus, send your Spirit anew to form your image in our lives. Seal us with the wax of your faith, hope and love so that every aspect of our lives begins more and more to take on the impress of your godly character. We have no such character of our own in which to boast. We need **your** humanity to be reproduced in us. Please replace the ugly scars of sin with the gracious lines of your personality, our harsh and unthinking words with the beautiful words of your voice and our folly with your wisdom. We pray this in the Name of Jesus the Son of Man whose humanity belongs to all His people as their inheritance. Amen.*