

MAY 2014

TODAY IN THE **Word**

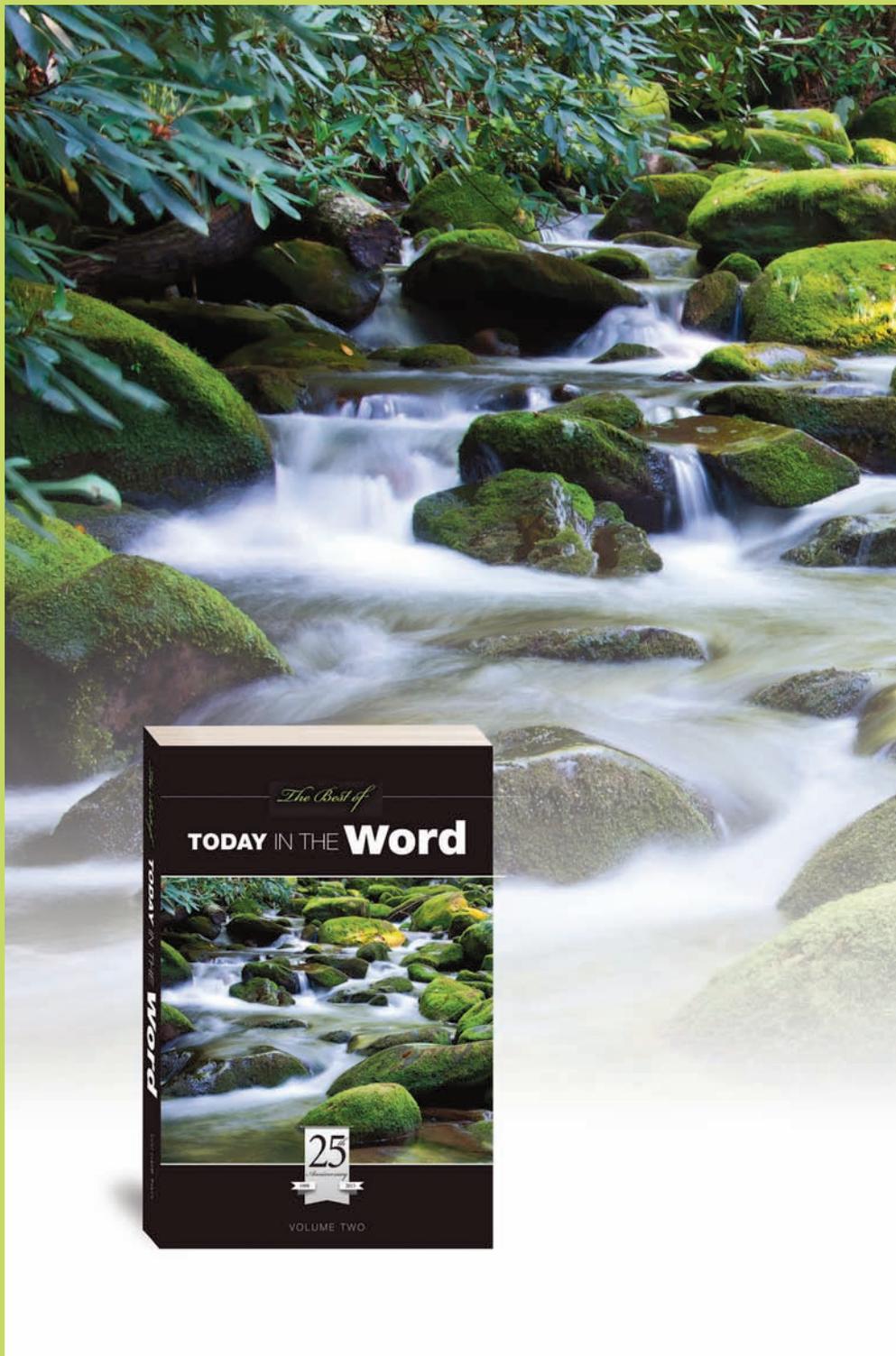
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I am making
everything new!

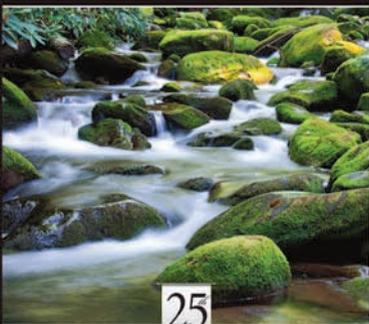
Revelation 21:5

Change: Its Problems, Potential,
and Power



The Best of

TODAY IN THE **Word**



25



VOLUME TWO

The Best of TODAY IN THE Word

VOLUME TWO • 25TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION

Enjoy *The Best of Today in the Word, Volume Two*, a selection of 12 of our readers' favorite monthly devotionals. With this useful resource, you will deepen your knowledge of God's Word as you delve into Old and New Testament, character, and topical studies. These *Today in the Word* favorites will encourage and challenge you on your life's journey.

Daniel: Commitment or Compromise?

Published June 2005

Day 1

Read Daniel 1:1-2, Jeremiah 29:1-2, and 1 Kings 21:1-10.

TODAY IN THE WORD

New Year's Eve, 1899, was a time of great excitement and celebration as the nation's most enthusiastic planning committees gathered to celebrate the centennial of the nation's birth. It was an occasion to get out and celebrate the third millennium was upon us. The year had 2000 had begun. In other words, the year 2000 would be the first millennium only if there had been a zero.

A look at the accounts in 2 Jeremiah 29 presents a side view. The Schacharitic to Jerusalem in the four chapters of the book (Jer 29:1-20). (Dan. 1:12) Some scholars believe the Babylonians didn't begin a king's reign until the king took the throne. The act would eventually be that of a king," while Hebrew writers referred to it as a year number reasonable explanations c

Characters of Faith and Wisdom

Published January 2009

Day 1

Read Hebrews 12:1-3

Let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance.

Hebrews 12:1

TODAY IN THE WORD

On the first Sunday of January 1757, Father Edwards Burr, daughter of Jonathan Edwards, wrote in her journal: "I long to begin this year with God—Oh for God's presence through this year! When I look back on the year past and take a view of the Numberless Mercies I have been the subject of, I stand amazed at God's goodness to such an ill-deserving, ill-deserving Creature! I am—Why am I then distinguished from the greater part of the World—What obligations am I under to spend the remainder of my time for God—I don't want to live unless I can live more in the glory of God and do more good."

Let her resolution be ours as well in 2009 as we kick off a year of Bible study centered around the theme of "God's Wisdom for Real Life." We begin this month with "Wise Characters of Faith,"

Today's passage refers to these and other Bible characters as a "great cloud of wit-

ness" who have run the race before us. Their lives show us the way. As "witnesses," they testify to the faithfulness, power, and love of God, by whose grace they lived and by whose grace we now can run an efficient race (cf. 1 Cor. 9:24-27; Phil. 3:12-16).

In this "race" of Christian life, we should get rid of all that hampers us spiritually, especially sin. We are also to run with perseverance, because the race may be long and difficult. Encouragingly, it has been marked out for us, reminding us that God is always in control.

Finally and most importantly, we must fix our eyes on Jesus. He founded the faith by which we run, and is perfecting our faith as we run. He is the ultimate example, since He, too, ran a grueling, sacrificial race marked out for Him by the Father. When we encounter opposition, shame, suffering, and even death, we should "imitate Him"—He has overcome all these obstacles, and we share

in His victory.

Let us run wisely.

To start this year right, why not compose a "New Year resolution" journal. Father Edwards Burr and focus your resolution on spiritual concerns and your relationship with the Lord. And since our purpose this month is "Wise Characters of Faith," let us be a resolution specifically

Request your copy today!

Use the reply card in this issue, or order a copy online at www.todayintheword.com.

Thank you for your ministry partnership!

TODAY WITH PAUL NYQUIST

President of Moody Bible Institute

The Risk of Change



People tend to be creatures of habit. We wear the same slippers until they are completely worn out. New ones never feel quite the same. When we go to our favorite restaurant, we order

the same dish. We are loyal to brands of toothpaste, soap, and certain makes of cars.

So it is not surprising that, for many of us, change can be an unwelcome threat. Change brings with it an element of risk. It requires a willingness to part with the old and embrace the new. For many of us, change can be bewildering, even frightening.

Yet, rejecting change brings negative consequences. We can get stuck in a rut. We can become immobilized by fear and tradition. God has designed us to grow. We are healthier when we reach out and gain new experiences. Is it any wonder, then, that God calls us to change?

When Jesus Christ called the disciples to follow Him, He asked them to embrace change in an all-encompassing way. He called Peter, Andrew, James, and John, hard-working fishermen, asking them to give up their chosen profession, lay down their nets, and follow Him instead. The men left behind everything they knew—their daily work, their families, even the comfort of their home and bed. Embracing radical change, they followed Jesus without question.

Perhaps the most dramatic change came in the person of Saul of Tarsus, who was “breathing out murderous threats against the Lord’s disciples” (Acts 9:1). Saul, who professed a hatred for Christians, faced change when he encountered Jesus and was struck blind. He was given a new identity. He now spoke for God, not against Him. He became Paul the Apostle. Those who observed Saul’s transformation were “astonished” (9:21).

Through encounters with Jesus Christ, we become a new creation. As Paul wrote in his second letter to the Corinthians, “Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come” (5:17).

This change goes far deeper than temporary shifts in behavior. One biblical word for *change* is *regeneration*. Regeneration refers to our gain of a godly point of view (5:16). We no longer view life like those controlled by the world. We have new values and a certain destiny. But spiritual regeneration goes even further. It indicates that this change has been completed for us by God. Through His grace, we are made an entirely “new creature.” While on our own we may struggle to maintain simple changes in everyday behavior, God’s grace has the ability to completely and utterly transform us from the inside out.

As we study this month with *Today in the Word*, I pray that God will open our hearts and minds to His regenerative power. May He truly transform us as we understand how, through God’s power, change can have lasting results and eternal reward.

THEOLOGY MATTERS

by John Koessler



Jesus and Change

According to Hebrews 13:8, “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.” If Jesus Christ is always the same, how can He understand the experience of change?

God is by nature unchangeable. He is God forever. He did not develop divine attributes or increase in knowledge until He became omniscient. He did not grow in power until He became omnipotent. As His divine name *I AM* implies, in His essence and in His attributes God is forever as He always has been (Ex. 3:14). This is also true of Jesus, who is God from all eternity (John 1:1). The Incarnation did not diminish any of His divine attributes. Jesus already existed as God before He was born in Bethlehem. He continued to be God during His earthly ministry and will be God forevermore (Rom. 9:5).

Yet Jesus does know what it is like to change. His divine nature was immutable, but His human nature was not. Jesus was conceived miraculously through the Holy Spirit (Matt. 1:18). His physical growth and development were natural. In His human nature Jesus experienced the aging process, developing from infancy to childhood and from childhood to adulthood. As He did so, Jesus “increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with

God and man” (Luke 2:52). Jesus has experienced the passage of time (Matt. 17:17; cf. John 11:6). In the crucifixion Jesus passed from life to death and then in the resurrection from death to life again (Rev. 1:18).

One of the greatest mysteries of Jesus’ unique nature is the permanence of His humanity. At the Incarnation Jesus added to Himself a human nature that He did not previously possess and became the God/Man. These two natures are eternally united in the one Person of Christ. This makes Jesus uniquely suited to serve as our High Priest (Heb. 4:15). Because He is truly God, He is holy, blameless, and pure. His divinity guaranteed His sinlessness. His human nature enabled Him to atone for our sins. Because He shared humanity with us, Jesus is able to empathize with our weakness (Heb. 4:15).

He does much more—He also provides a permanent remedy for our sin. His “once for all” sacrifice never needs to be repeated (Heb. 10:10). Since Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever, He will always be our compassionate advocate (Heb. 7:23–27). He always lives to intercede for us.

For Further Study

To learn more about the high priesthood of Jesus, read *Name Above All Names* by Alistair Begg and Sinclair Ferguson (Crossway).

FROM THE EDITORS

by Elena Maffer

Change in Ukraine: Its Problems, Potential, and Power



As I write this column (early March), military units and armored vehicles of a foreign aggressor roam the Crimean Peninsula in Ukraine. Russian troops, and troops pretending not to be Russian, seized control of Crimea. The two countries that share history, culture, and family ties—the people thought to be brothers—now became enemies. As Ukraine found the strength to oppose the corruption of the old regime, to oust the pro-Russian president, and to install a new government, the whole world saw the power of the people whose aspiration is the love of their country and its democratic future. But with change came problems.

As I have followed the news in Ukraine, the country where I was born and raised, I realized that changes in Ukraine changed me. When I emigrated from Ukraine, then part of the Soviet Union, I left the hated communist regime behind and planned never to look back. Ukraine was then at the end of the empire, the name itself deriving from the word that means “the margin” or “the outskirts.” That’s why the definite article always accompanied the country. If you lived in *the* Ukraine, you lived on the periphery.

Both of my parents are ethnic Russians, so I identified myself as Russian born in Ukraine. I was surprised why it was so hard for people in the United States to understand this. They would ask: “But if you were born in Ukraine, you are Ukrainian, right?” I didn’t know back then that, unlike Europe where notions of “blood” determine ethnicity, in the U.S. it

was citizenship that matters. I liked the American approach to citizenship, and when I became an American citizen, I identified myself as a (proud) American of Russian descent.

In 1991 Ukraine gained independence, and I saw a huge change before my eyes. Ukraine restored its language, its anthem, and its beautiful yellow-and-blue flag. And it dropped the “the” before its name. It was no longer the outskirts, it was right there in the center of Europe, equal among others. Something unexpected happened—I was proud of my country of origin. This pride grew during the Orange Revolution in Kiev in 2004 and even more during Maidan of 2014, where people were willing to die for the freedom of their country. What is my identity now? (Proud) American of Ukrainian origin.

This month’s study in *Today in the Word* is about change. Look at the headlines of the first few days: *Why Change Is Hard. When Sin Crouches at the Door. Change of Address. Change of Fortune. When Brothers Become Enemies. Change of Character. When Enemies Become Brothers. Be Careful What You Wish For.* It could be an outline for the latest events in Ukraine, or for the article about Ukraine—maybe even for this column. As you read this devotional, think about what inspires change in your life. We invite you to pray about the changes in your own life and also about God’s work in the changes around the world. Please pray for Ukraine. And when you do, remember: no “the” before its name.

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EXECUTIVE EDITOR
Paul B. Currie

MANAGING EDITOR
Heather Moffitt

ASSOCIATE EDITOR
Elena Malfer

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS
John Koessler
Jamie Janosz

WRITER
John Koessler

1-800-DL MOODY
(356-6639)
www.moodyministries.net



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TODAY IN THE **Word**

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Change: Its Problems, Potential, and Power

The famous “Serenity Prayer” articulates the challenge of change: “God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and wisdom to know the difference.” Changing ourselves or our circumstances can be extraordinarily difficult—and changing others is usually impossible! How do we know when change is required and when it’s foolish?

Thankfully Scripture provides us with a godly perspective on change. This month in *Today in the Word* we are going to study both positive and negative examples of change. We’ll explore what the Bible has to say about our need to change and why that can make us fearful. And we’ll rejoice over the promised change awaiting all of us who trust in Christ, our final transformation to share in His glory.

Our prayer at *Today in the Word* is that we will be wise about change. In our fast-paced world, new media platforms are appearing all the time, and we want to use them to share the good news of God’s Word. You can follow *Today in the Word* on Facebook, read the devotionals and columns online at www.todayintheword.com, and receive daily emails in your inbox.

But what will not change is our proclamation that Scripture is God’s Word, given to help us know and love our Savior Jesus Christ and become more like Him. We will continue to share this with as many people around the world as we are able, with your help and support. As always, we’re grateful for your partnership in this ministry!

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Change: Why Change Is Hard

Leo Tolstoy complained, “Everyone thinks of changing the world, but no one thinks of changing himself.” Yet anyone who has tried to change knows that it takes more than mere willpower and a plan. Something inside us often works against change, even when it is a change we would like to make.

Today’s passage explains why we are often our own worst enemy when it comes to needed change. When sin entered into the human race through Adam, it introduced a destructive dynamic into human nature that predisposes us toward defeat. This dynamic was exemplified by the response of Adam and Eve when they became aware of God’s presence in the Garden of Eden after their disobedience (Gen. 3:8). Instead of turning to God for help and forgiveness, they hid from Him. Sin not only changed their relationship to God and to one another, it fundamentally

changed their nature by introducing a new principle into their being. The apostle Paul characterizes this inner principle as a “law” that is so powerful it can actually compel us to do things that we hate (Rom. 7:15–20). The label he gives it is “sin.”

So I find this law
at work: Although
I want to do good,
evil is right there
with me.

Romans 7:21

Genesis 3 also contains God’s promise to rescue humanity from sin (Gen. 3:15). This promise was fulfilled through the person and work of Jesus Christ. He is both God’s Son and the “offspring” of the woman through Mary (see Luke 1:27–33).

When Christ died on the cross and rose from the grave, He crushed Satan’s power. Jesus opened the way for us to obtain forgiveness as a gift of grace and broke the power of sin in our lives, creating the potential for real change. His saving work does not mean that change will always be easy. But it does mean that change is possible.

Apply the Word

This month we will be exploring the topic of change. We will begin by analyzing the challenge of change and study some biblical portraits of people who changed. We will examine how Christ changed lives and note some of the spiritual dynamics that can enable us to change. You can begin by making a list of areas where you would like to see God help you to change.

Pray with Us

For the next two days we invite you to focus your prayers on the ministry of the Moody Publishers Operations department. Today, would you encourage in prayer Michael Davis, Ann Hackler, and Mattie Hill?

Change: When Sin Crouches at the Door

The pit bull has a mixed reputation among dog breeds. Many owners insist that they are gentle by nature and angered only when provoked. But many pit bulls are bred to be fighting dogs. In the first five months of 2013, pit bulls were responsible for 93 percent of all dog bite fatalities that occurred.

God uses the analogy of an animal crouched and ready to spring in order to make Cain aware of his dangerous position in Genesis 4:7. This warning was prompted by Cain's crestfallen reaction when he realized that God had rejected his offering but had accepted his brother

Abel's. The text does not say how God displayed His favor or why He preferred Abel's offering to Cain's. Some have speculated that it was because Abel's was an animal sacrifice and Cain's was a grain offering (v. 3). But the Hebrew term could describe both kinds of sacrifice, and both were later

considered acceptable under the Law of Moses.

The biblical text instead emphasizes God's displeasure with Cain's offering and ultimately links it to the problem of sin. God did not look with favor on Cain's offering because he had failed

to "do what is right" (v. 7). Instead of addressing his sin problem by turning to God in faith, Cain took out his anger on Abel and murdered him. God's rebuke may sound harsh to us but it was really an expression of grace. By pointing out the shortcoming in Cain's offering, the Lord also issued an

invitation to Cain to repent and find forgiveness. The first step to real change is always to admit our need and turn to God. You may not know how to make the changes that are needed in your life, but you will find that God is eager to help. His correction is proof of His love (Heb. 12:5–11).

Do not be like
Cain, who
belonged to the
evil one and
murdered
his brother.

1 John 3:12

Apply the Word

Change is hard because our sinful nature is opposed to change. Sin provokes pride, which in turn often leads to false comparison and self-justification. Have you been ignoring the sin that "crouches at your door"? Are you tempted to explain it away? Take the first step to recovery and agree with God about your sin. If you turn to Jesus Christ you will find "grace to help" (Heb. 4:16).

Pray with Us

Keeping in our prayers Moody Publishers Operations, please lift up the ministry of Elisabeth Ireland, Sandy Kleinhans, Duane Koening, and Gregory Miller who strive to honor God by providing excellent customer service at the workplace.

Change: Change of Address

Moving is one of the most stressful changes we can experience in life. Some have said that the stress of a planned move is equal to that of a divorce, getting a new job, or experiencing a death in the family. Changing one's location is extremely disorienting.

The Old Testament patriarch Abraham showed his faith when he obeyed God's command to relocate. Obedience to this call required Abram to leave his home, his friends and his extended family. In addition to the ordinary difficulties caused by such a move, Abraham faced the additional challenge of not knowing his destination (Heb. 11:8). Obedience meant that Abraham would live his entire life as an outsider (Heb. 11:13).

Although he would not have been able to point out his ultimate destination on a map when he first left his homeland, Abraham's faith was fortified by the

promises God had given prior to the journey. The Lord promised to guide Abraham, to bless him, and to make him a great nation (v. 2). Embedded in the promise that God would bless those who blessed Abraham and curse those who cursed him was the assurance of God's protection (v. 3). The Lord's concern was not limited to Abraham. The blessings that God would pour out on Abraham would also benefit the nations. Those who know Jesus Christ are beneficiaries of these promises (Gal. 3:8).

Like Abraham, we too have been called to live as outsiders as far as the world is concerned. Our true citizenship has been transferred from the dominion of darkness to the kingdom of Christ (Col. 1:13). We are to live as "foreigners and exiles" by denying our sinful desires and living such godly lives that our presence among those who do not believe will be like a visitation of God (1 Peter 2:11–12).

For he has
rescued us from
the dominion of
darkness and
brought us into the
kingdom of the Son
he loves.

Colossians 1:13

Apply the Word

A move is often accompanied by many other changes. It may mean a new job, new friends, and a new place to worship. Despite these changes, you can be sure one thing will remain the same. No matter where you go, Jesus Christ will always be there. He has promised to be with you always (Matt. 28:20). As long as Christ is with us, we can be at home no matter where we are.

Pray with Us

Please include in your prayers Greg Thornton, senior vice president of Media. Working together with him are dedicated teams at Moody Radio and Moody Publishers who increase the global reach of the gospel through radio, print, and digital media.

Change of Fortune

In a blog posted on *The Billfold*, Allison Cintins describes how she spent the \$66,000 inheritance she received from her grandfather on “basically nothing.” She started by making purchases cautiously but within two years she had spent the entire sum. “I had no self-control in my life when it came to spending, which I did frivolously and with abandon,” Cintins admits.

Yet even at her worst, it is unlikely that Cintins could match Esau, who spent his entire inheritance on a single meal consisting of a bowl of stew. To be more accurate, Esau sold his “birthright” to Jacob (vv. 31–32). This birthright gave Esau priority over Jacob when it came to the blessing and wealth of his father Isaac. It may even have entitled Esau to a two-thirds share in all that belonged to his father (Deut. 21:17)

Esau is an example of someone who lives solely in the moment, aware only of his immediate hunger. The thought-

lessness of Esau’s bargain is proved by the fact he did not really care what was in the pot. In the Hebrew text he calls the stew “that red.” This was not “the best stew ever,” so good that it was worth a fortune. It was merely “that red stuff”—the food that happened to be at hand and a quick fix for Esau’s passing appetite.

See that no one is sexually immoral, or is godless like Esau, who for a single meal sold his inheritance rights as the oldest son.

Hebrews 12:16

While contemporary readers may be inclined to criticize Jacob for driving such a hard bargain, the New Testament holds Esau completely responsible for this decision. Esau’s root problem was not contempt for his birthright but something far worse. Esau’s disregard for his birthright showed that he had little regard for the promises that God had made to his grandfather Abraham and his father Isaac. By showing contempt for his birthright, Esau proved that he had contempt for God. Esau’s greatest sin was not that he despised his birthright but that he rejected God (Heb. 12:16).

Apply the Word

Take a few minutes today to look beyond the blessings you enjoy in life and acknowledge the God who is behind them. Do you enjoy the benefit of a godly heritage, having been brought up in “the training and instruction of the Lord?” If so, you have an inheritance that is worth more than money. Do not treat it with contempt.

Pray with Us

The staff of Moody Radio Indiana—Ray Hashley, Kelli Thompson, and Darcey Christianson—will be grateful for your prayer support as they touch their listeners’ lives and change their hearts with the truth of God’s Word on the airwaves and online.

When Brothers Become Enemies

One humorist has observed, “Family is what puts the fun in dysfunctional.” *Dysfunctional* might be the term some would use to describe Jacob’s family. Rebekah helped Jacob to deceive his father into pronouncing the blessing that Isaac had originally intended for Esau. Isaac was also at fault in his determination to show preference for Esau even after he had rejected God’s blessing. Parental meddling, combined with Jacob’s tendency toward deceit and Esau’s profane outlook, produced a toxic family situation that could hardly be described as “fun.”

See to it that no one falls short of the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many.

Hebrews 12:15

other than favoritism. She was afraid that as a result of the bitter feud that had erupted between Jacob and Esau, she would end up losing both her sons (v. 45). In a way, Rebekah’s worst fear became a partial reality. Her actions preserved Jacob’s life, but she never saw her son alive again.

Self-centeredness, bitterness, and sin were the dominant features of Jacob’s family experience. But God was also at work. Although the biblical text does not indicate that Rebekah was acting on the basis of divine revelation, God used her plan to serve His purposes

Indeed, Esau’s hostility toward his brother grew so intense that Jacob eventually had to flee for his life (Gen. 27:41–45). Like the deception of Isaac, Jacob’s flight to Haran was instigated by Rebekah, who manipulated Isaac into agreeing with her plan (v. 46). However, Rebekah’s suggestion that Jacob go live with his uncle Laban seems to have been motivated by something

for Jacob’s life. It removed Jacob from his dysfunctional family environment and transferred him to a place where God could prepare him for the next stage of his spiritual journey. While staying with Laban, Jacob met his future wife and began to experience the grace that would eventually transform him from Jacob the deceiver to Israel the prince of God.

Apply the Word

The same tangled motives continue to drive family dysfunction today. What puts the dysfunction in the dysfunctional family? It is a mixture of misguided love, self-interest, and outright sin. The problems are easy to see and painful to experience. What we often cannot see is the strong hand of God’s love hidden in the shadows of our own messy family experience.

Pray with Us

Today, please add these staff members of Moody Radio Indiana to your prayer list: Tom Winn, Joel Wright, and Linda Yeager. Ask for God’s grace and blessing on their service at the station’s studios in Anderson, Indiana.

Change of Character

“The only man I know who behaves sensibly is my tailor; he takes my measurements anew each time he sees me,” George Bernard Shaw once observed. “The rest go on with their old measurements and expect me to fit them.” Most people change with time and experience. Sometimes the change is intentional. Often it is not.

In Jacob’s case, character change came as a result of trials. First there were the long years of labor to earn the right to wed the love of his life. After seven years of servitude Jacob the deceiver became the deceived when Laban tricked him into marrying Leah instead of Rachel. He had to work an additional seven years after marrying Rachel. Jacob the manipulator was then manipulated by his two wives, as they bargained with one another for the right to sleep with him in an effort to produce offspring. When Jacob decided it was time to go home, Laban persuaded him to stay longer promising to pay a fair wage.

He mocks proud mockers but shows favor to the humble and oppressed.

Proverbs 3:34

After working six additional years to build his own wealth, Jacob was forced to flee again under the cover of night, having been directed by God to return to his homeland.

With an angry uncle behind him and the prospect of facing the murderous intent of his unreconciled brother before him, Jacob set his face toward home and ran into angels (vv. 1–2). He took measures to protect his family in the event of an attack by Esau, but Jacob’s most important tactic was to pray. His prayer reveals

that Jacob had changed. He had become a person of faith, grateful for all that God had done and humbled by his experience (vv. 9–12). God answered Jacob’s prayer, not only by changing Esau’s disposition, but also by changing Jacob himself. In an encounter with a mysterious being that many scholars believe was Jesus Christ prior to the Incarnation, Jacob was permanently wounded in the hip (v. 25).

Apply the Word

God’s methods have not changed. When He permits trials to come into our lives, it is to shape our character. Some trials can be so great that they leave a permanent mark on us. These are not meant to disfigure us but teach us to walk with God in humble faith.

Pray with Us

Moody Radio Southeast in Chattanooga, TN, broadcasts biblical messages and inspiring music. Pray for its staff—Paul Martin, David Morais, Jason McKay, Kate Rhea, and Juanell Rice—whose dedicated service makes it all possible.

When Enemies Become Brothers

Sean Lennon, son of the famous member of the Beatles John Lennon, was startled after a concert in Prague when he saw a man sitting backstage who looked remarkably like his brother, Julian. “You look just like my brother!” he declared. The man hugged him and with tears replied, “That’s because I am your brother.” This surprise encounter ended a six-year feud between the two.

Likewise, Esau’s decades-old feud with his brother Jacob also ended with a hug. Jacob had prepared Esau for the meeting by sending droves of livestock ahead as gifts. At first this may seem like a reappearance of the old Jacob, little more than a shameless attempt at bribery. But when Esau asked for an explanation, Jacob graciously said that he only sought Esau’s favor (v. 8). Surprisingly, Esau initially declined the gifts saying, “I already have plenty, my brother. Keep what you have for yourself” (v. 9). Was Esau merely posturing? His words are as gracious as Jacob’s. The fact that Esau set out for this

meeting with four hundred men could indicate that his original intentions were hostile. Jacob urged Esau to accept his gifts anyway as proof that he viewed his brother with favor (v. 10).

Things had changed for both brothers in the intervening years. Esau had thrown away his birthright, yet God had richly blessed him anyway. Jacob was blessed with both wealth and a large family, all apart from the inheritance he had originally connived to obtain. But this one act of reconciliation did not magically eliminate the tension

that existed between the two brothers. Jacob’s unwillingness to travel with Esau to Seir suggests that he was not entirely convinced that their truce would last. This was certainly the case with Esau’s descendants. Known as the Edomites, they later refused to allow the people of Israel to travel through their territory after their escape from Egypt and opposed them for many generations.

Keep on loving one another as brothers and sisters.

Hebrews 13:1

Apply the Word

God was ultimately the one responsible for the reconciliation of Jacob and Esau. This was a miracle—but not a fairy tale. The tension between them did not suddenly evaporate with a hug and a kiss. In the same way, we will find that reconciliation requires both grace and effort. Romans 12:18 says, “If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.”

Pray with Us

Jim Elliott, vice president of Stewardship, appreciates your prayers for the conclusion of Share across Moody Radio stations. Thank you to those who support Moody Radio and other Moody ministries.

Be Careful What You Wish For

One of Aesop's fables is about an old man gathering branches in the forest. He grew so weary of the task that he said, "I cannot endure this any longer. I wish death would come and take me." At that moment death appeared to him and said, "What do you want, Mortal? I heard you call for me." Terrified, the old man said, "Please sir, would you help me load this bundle of branches on my shoulder?" Aesop's moral: "We would often be sorry if our wishes were granted."

Aesop's moral held true for the nation of Israel soon after their rescue from Egyptian bondage. Soon after Israel left Egypt, the Lord commanded Moses to change direction so that it would appear as if they were confused and wandering aimlessly in the wilderness. Pharaoh regretted his decision to release the Israelites and in a fury launched the full weight of Egypt's military might at them, marshaling all his chariots, officers, horsemen, and troops.

When our
ancestors were
in Egypt . . . they
rebelled by the
sea, the Red Sea.

Psalm 106:7

Pharaoh was not the only one to misread the situation. God's people grew terrified when they looked up and saw the Egyptian army in hot pursuit. The way forward was blocked by the sea, and the surrounding desert left them nowhere to hide. Those who had once prayed for God's deliverance now accused Moses of leading them into a trap. Because they were ignorant of God's plan, they misinterpreted their circumstance. They concluded that their old life of Egyptian bondage was preferable to their new life of freedom. We can make the same mistake as the Israelites when we forget the reality of bondage to sin. A

kind of false nostalgia can set in, blunting the sharp edges of our past experience and causing us to question whether we should remain committed to Christ.

Apply the Word

If you are being tempted to return to your old life, ask God to help you think realistically about life without Christ. Paul brings our sinful past in sharp focus with the question he poses in Romans 6:21: "What benefit did you reap at that time from the things you are now ashamed of? Those things result in death!"

Pray with Us

Planned Giving, headed by VP Jim Elliott, helps our donors establish estate plans, wills, and trusts. Would you pray for Eric Beckman, Crystal Davis-Landrum, Stephen Kott, Kimberly Pickett, and Genesis Watkins as they serve the Moody community?

Change of Mind

According to one apocryphal story, George Washington once told his father, “I cannot tell a lie.” The real truth is that God alone is unable to lie. According to Scripture, God does more than tell the truth, He *is* the truth (John 14:6). The Scriptures also say that God “does not change like shifting shadows” (James 1:17).

God’s unchanging nature has an important implication for our prayer life. The Lord responds to our prayers, but we cannot use prayer to manipulate Him. The Moabite king Balak learned this lesson the hard way, when he tried to curse Israel by hiring a pagan soothsayer named Balaam. Even though Balaam was not a follower of Jehovah, his prophetic experience in this instance was real. Jehovah initially warned Balaam not to go with the king’s messengers (Num. 22:7–14). The Lord later gave Balaam permission to go but told Balaam to “do only what I tell you” (Num. 22:20).

When you pray,
do not keep on
babbling like
pagans, for they
think they will be
heard because of
their many words.

Matthew 6:7

As a result, Balaam warned Balak that he would be unable to go beyond the command of God in what he said about Israel. Balaam could not curse those God had determined to bless. In the oracles that followed, Jehovah revealed that He was determined to bless Israel and that His blessing would remain on them for generations to come (Num. 24:14). The root of Balak’s problem is captured by Numbers 23:19: “God is not a human, that he should lie, not a human being, that he should change his mind. Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfill?”

This may have been bad news for Balak, but it is good news for us. We need not fear that God will suddenly change His disposition toward us. God does not lie or change His mind. He will fulfill all that He has promised.

Apply the Word

Jesus warned His disciples not to pray like pagans, who “think they will be heard because of their many words” (Matt. 6:7). We should not think that we can pile up our words and somehow change God’s will for our lives. Rather, through prayer we align ourselves with God’s will and trust Him to act on our behalf according to His good purpose.

Pray with Us

Our cafeteria, The Commons, is run by the capable hands of its staff—Louis Ballasch, Lillie Hill, Elouise Peace, and Frank Slomkowski, as well as many student helpers. We appreciate their work and ask you to uphold them in prayer today.

From Fear to Courage

In the magazine *Today's Christian Woman*, Kathy Martin wrote of the time her three-year-old cousin Mark spilled fruit punch on the floor. When he went to get the mop he realized that it was on the porch where it was dark. Mark was afraid of the dark. When Mark's mother reminded him that Jesus was present even in the dark, the little boy put his face to the door and said, "Jesus, if you're out there, will you hand me the mop?"

Gideon could understand Mark's request. He must have been thinking something similar when the Angel of the Lord appeared to him. At the time Gideon was threshing wheat in a winepress. Normally threshing was done on a hill, where the wind could separate the chaff from the wheat. But every year at that time raiders had come to steal Israel's grain (v. 3).

The Angel of the Lord's statement in verse 12 sounds like an answer to an

unspoken question: "Where is the Lord?" God had already given an answer when He sent a prophet to explain Israel's circumstances to them (v. 7). Gideon seems to have wondered whether Israel's predicament meant that God had abandoned His people. In reality the opposite was true.

Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go.

Joshua 1:9

But the Angel of the Lord was doing more than reminding Gideon of God's presence, he was also sending him on a mission. Gideon's awareness of his own inadequacy made him reluctant to accept this commission. God confirmed Gideon's call with a sign,

miraculously consuming the sacrifice he offered (vv. 20–21).

But it was not this miracle that gave Gideon the confidence to tear down the pagan altar his father had set up—it was the assurance that God would be with him (v. 16).

Apply the Word

As you evaluate your own strength and compare it with the challenges that you face today, do you find that you come up short? Are the demands placed on you greater than the resources you have at hand? God prefers to reveal Himself through our weakness rather than our strength because He wants to show us what He alone can do through us. Our competence comes from God (2 Cor. 3:4–6).

Pray with Us

Dr. Junias Venugopal, provost and dean of Education, requests your prayers for Moody Theological Seminary whose Commencement takes place today on the Plymouth, Michigan, campus. Pray for the new graduates and their future global ministry.

From Courage to Faith

Charles Spurgeon called faith “the hand that grasps.” The book of Hebrews describes it as assurance of what is unseen. But if you had asked Gideon to define faith, he probably would have said that faith is the confidence that God is greater than we are. Gideon wrestled with fear, but his greatest struggle was in the realm of faith.

Today’s passage describes Gideon’s truly greatest victory. When the Midianites, Amalekites, and eastern nations across the Jordan joined together in a military coalition and encamped in the valley of Jezreel, the Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon. He mustered the fighting men of his own tribe, along with those of the tribes of Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali. But the presence of the Spirit did not immunize Gideon from fear. Gideon devised a series of tests designed to provide proof of God’s intention to save Israel by his hand (Judges 6:36). Yet Gideon already had

all the proof he really needed. He had God’s word on it.

Perhaps this is why God decided to cut Gideon’s army to less than a bare minimum. The Lord began by ordering all those who were fearful to leave, reducing Gideon’s troop strength by two thirds (Judges 7:3). Next the Lord devised a test that would whittle away the rest, until only three hundred men remained. We live in an age that tends to equate blessing with expansion. We are tempted to think that if God is in an endeavor, it ought to get bigger, become stronger, and do so faster. But for Gideon the mark of God’s presence was just the opposite. For him the condition of blessing was not the presence of resources but their absence. This is an important corrective for us, because it reminds us that when it comes to serving Christ our confidence is not to be in our resources but in God.

Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.

Hebrews 11:1

Apply the Word

It is a mistake to assume that something is of God only if it is supernatural. Such thinking ignores the fact that God often works through normal processes. It is an equal mistake to assume that God would never go beyond those normal processes. Whether He works by ordinary means or those that are extraordinary, God is the source of our confidence.

Pray with Us

Today’s Mother’s Day reminds us of the role of mothers in our lives, of their loving care, and the love for God they instill in our hearts. Let’s use this holiday to pray for mothers and ask for God’s grace and protection to fill their lives.

From Sadness to Peace

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow wrote, “Every man has his secret sorrows which the world knows not; and of-ten times we call a man cold when he is only sad.” This was certainly true of Hannah, the wife of Elkanah. Only in her case the situation was worse. Instead of calling her cold, Eli the high priest accused her of being drunk.

Her inability to bear a child combined with the cruel words of her rival Peninnah reduced Hannah to tears, despite her husband’s clumsy attempts to make her feel better (vv. 7–8). When Hannah attempted to find comfort in prayer, Eli the high priest mis-interpreted her actions. Seeing her weep-ing and praying near the doorpost of the tabernacle, Eli concluded that Hannah must be drunk and rebuked her (v. 14).

Although Hannah felt bitterness of soul, she did not become embittered toward God. Instead she made a vow, asking

God to give her a son, and promising to dedicate the child to God in return (v. 11). Even Eli’s insensitive rebuke did not turn her against God. Instead, Hannah explained her actions and received the high priest’s blessing. After this she was “no longer downcast” (v. 18).

Hear my cry for
help, my King and
my God, for to you
I pray.

Psalms 5:2

The change that came over Hannah can only be explained as an answer to prayer. It was certainly not the result of any help she received from those who should have offered her comfort. Peninnah had no desire to help. Elkanah did not know

how, and Eli misjudged her. Even if they had offered Hannah comfort, they could not really have changed her situation. The only reason Hannah found peace was because she prayed. How should we deal with the bitterness of soul we feel when our most cherished desires remain unfulfilled? Hannah would say that we should take our case to God and leave it in His hands.

Apply the Word

You don’t have to put on airs when you pray. You don’t have to hide your disappointment. You don’t even have to try to change God’s mind. Simply express your deep desire and entrust the matter to Him. If you find it dif-ficult to put your deepest feelings into words, you may want to use the words of another when you pray. Try praying through the book of Psalms.

Pray with Us

Thank you for your prayer support for our Legal department headed by Janet Stiven, vice president and general counsel. Janet only recently joined Moody, and we’d like to pray for easy transition for her, as well as God’s wisdom and guidance in her service.

A Changed Man

In *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, Robert Louis Stevenson tells the story of Dr. Jekyll, who developed a formula that enabled him to transform temporarily into his terrifying alter ego Mr. Hyde. Eventually the Hyde personality took over completely. Today's passage describes a transformation that was just as radical but in the opposite direction. When the Holy Spirit came upon Saul, the man whom God had selected to be Israel's first king, he was "changed into a different person" (1 Sam. 10:6).

Saul had many natural abilities that outwardly made him seem like the ideal candidate for king. He was impressively tall and the son of one of the most important men in his tribe (1 Sam. 9:2). But Scripture gives hints that Saul was also someone who lacked initiative and was prone to taking shortcuts. He is portrayed as relatively passive, someone who must be

prodded to act. Later when Saul was presented to the people, he hid among the baggage (1 Sam. 10:22). Viewed in the best light, this reflected an admirable humility that Saul later abandoned. But it may also be evidence of an underlying lack of courage that made him reluctant to obey God's calling.

And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever.

John 14:16

What is clear is that the transformation Saul experienced did not stick. He did not always act in the power of the Spirit. Saul eventually made a series of choices that led to the departure of the Spirit (1 Sam. 16:14). Could Saul have been a better king? Yes, but only by

taking God at His word and relying on the Holy Spirit to empower him. Saul seems to have had a low view of himself. But the real tragedy of Saul's story is that he had a low view of God. As a result, Saul's transformation was tragically short-lived.

Apply the Word

Those who know Jesus Christ as Savior are in a better position than Saul. They have the Holy Spirit as a permanent presence (John 14:16). All those who belong to Christ have the Spirit dwelling within them (Rom. 8:9). But this does not mean that change is automatic. We too must cooperate with the powerful work of the Spirit by counting ourselves to be dead to sin and alive in Christ (Rom. 6:11–12).

Pray with Us

On this first day of the final exams, we invite you to pray for Moody's graduate and undergraduate students. Let us thank the Lord for His work in their lives and wish them a successful completion of the school year.

A Change of Power

The 1960 presidential debates between Richard Nixon and John F. Kennedy fundamentally changed the nature of American politics. Debate had long been part of the presidential process. But these debates were televised for the first time, increasing the focus on appearance. Suddenly a candidate's image was as important, if not more important, than what he had to say about the issues.

Image also played an important role in the shift in leadership from Saul to David. One lesson to be learned from the incident described in today's passage is that image is not a sound basis for deciding who will make a good ruler. At one time Saul's outward appearance made him seem like the perfect candidate for king. When Samuel was sent to anoint Saul's successor, he was tempted to make a choice based on the same criterion (v. 6).

Directed by God to go to the house of Jesse in Bethlehem, Samuel was told that Israel's next king would be found

among his sons. God's choice seemed obvious when Eliab came into the room. But the Lord immediately rejected him, telling the prophet: "The LORD does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart" (1 Sam. 16:7). Still, Samuel must have been puzzled when seven of Jesse's sons passed before him and each was rejected by God. The person most qualified for the position was not deemed important enough to invite to the meeting.

This event was not an interview. As far as we can tell from the biblical text, none of the potential candidates said a word during the selection process. Since the Lord already knew whom He had chosen to succeed Saul, it seems clear that this parade of candidates was intended primarily for Samuel's benefit. Far from being a beauty pageant, this exercise was meant to drive home the importance of the unseen dimension of the heart in God's assessment of His servants.

I have found David
my servant; with my
sacred oil I have
anointed him.

Psalms 89:20

Apply the Word

The temptation to lead by image is not limited to the realm of national politics. This mentality also afflicts the church. In an age of branding and image management, it is important to remember that outward appearance is deceptive. God evaluates the heart. Which do we value more in leaders and in ourselves—our external looks, or our internal values?

Pray with Us

Dr. Thomas Shaw, vice president of Student Services and Enrollment, and his teams make sure Moody is a great place for students to study God's Word and grow in faith and knowledge. Would you express appreciation in prayer for their service?

Question and Answer

By Mike Kellogg, Moody Radio Host



In a Bible Study last week, one of my friends said that Rahab, the woman

who helped Israel bring down the walls of Jericho with the scarlet thread, was not just an innkeeper but was also a harlot, a prostitute. Can that be true?



Yes, women who were innkeepers then were often prostitutes. This woman had heard already (possibly from her traveling clients) how the Lord had worked in the lives of Israel, freeing them from Egypt by parting the Red Sea and enabling them to utterly defeat the Amorite rulers Sihon and Og. The people of Jericho were terrified of how God had empowered Judah.

She hid the two Israelite spies with the understanding that when Jericho was destroyed, Israel would spare her family. The spies said her kindness to them would be rewarded. Not only was Rahab rewarded and her family spared, this prostitute was included in the gene pool of the messianic line (see Matt. 1:5). This is shocking for many—until they realize that David, the King of Israel and an adulterer and murderer, was also part of that heritage. The truth is that all of us are sinners, and so we all were the catalyst that made it necessary for Jesus to come and save us from our own particular sin by giving His life for us. Just like Rahab and David, we all were lost and separated from God. No matter what our sin was, we could know what it meant to have our sin washed whiter than snow.



First Samuel 16:13 says that Samuel anointed David, a young shepherd boy, to

ultimately become Israel's king while he was in the presence of his brothers, and that the Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward. But in the very next verse we read that the Spirit of God left Saul. I thought once the Spirit of God entered into us, He was always a part of us.



Actually in the Old Testament God's Spirit entered into people so that they could do some special task that they were given to accomplish. For example, when building the tabernacle and temple, God wanted the work to reflect His glory, and His Spirit entered the craftsmen.

Most believers agree that entrance of the Spirit of God into a believer's life after the resurrection is the divine seal of a born-again believer: "Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God?" (1 Cor. 16:19). The gift of the indwelling of the Spirit is the fulfillment of the promise of Jesus in John 14 to send a Comforter (see John 16:7–15).



I often hear the Scripture, "Do not touch my anointed ones; do my prophets no harm." What does this mean?

Continued on next page

No matter what our sin was, we could know what it meant to have our sin washed whiter than snow.

Continued from previous page

A

This admonition is found in 1 Chronicles 16:22 and in Psalm 105:15. In the Old Testament many of God's messengers and prophets were definitely at risk because of the words they spoke, both the foretelling and the forthtelling that God had given them to deliver to His people. Jeremiah, known as "the weeping prophet," sorrowed because he knew that in spite of his words of warning, the Lord's people were not going to listen to him and would be judged for their sinfulness.

Also, the warnings of the prophets could result in bodily harm when they preached the word of the Lord. Jeremiah was often brutalized: put in stocks for public ridicule, imprisoned in a well, and taken into Egypt against his will. Elijah had to flee into the desert to escape from the murderous wrath of Queen Jezebel. Prophets faced the possibility of death if they delivered a word from God that a king didn't want to hear. Samuel is just one of the prophets we read about in Hebrews 11:32-38: "Some faced jeers and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment."

Unfortunately, this verse is often used wrongly to refer to pastors today who deserve criticism for their messages and conduct within the church. This verse does not mean that every pastor is exempt from being held accountable for a ministry and lifestyle that do not honor God. What is sad is that often in the church congregations are being brutalized by harsh pastors who demand

authoritarian allegiance. This kind of pastor will try to twist this verse to shield himself from any call to humility and repentance.

Q

Why did Jesus say that He didn't come to preach to the righteous to repent? Did He know that there were some who actually didn't need to repent and so didn't need a Savior for their sins?

A

Absolutely not. Jesus was not referring at all to *actually* righteous people; He was referring only to those who *thought* that they were better than anyone else. Almost from the very beginning of His ministry Jesus was attacked by the religious hierarchy: the priests, the Pharisees, and the Sadducees. All of them thought they were above reproach. (Although, when Jesus challenged anyone who was without sin to cast the first stone against the woman caught in adultery, they were miraculously frozen until they crept silently away.) In this passage, by "righteous" Jesus meant those who were holy in their own sight. Christ was surrounded by sinful people who knew what they were, who knew how they lived, and who knew they needed a Savior. There is only one who is sinless, and His name is Jesus. He came to let the self-righteous know that their lack of honest humility left them open to condemnation as sinners.

A Change of Name

“I read in a book once that a rose by any other name would smell as sweet, but I’ve never been able to believe it,” L. M. Montgomery’s unforgettable Anne Shirley observes in *Anne of Green Gables*. “I don’t believe a rose would be as nice if it was called a thistle or a skunk cabbage.”

Names can be powerfully descriptive, especially when God is the one doing the naming. In today’s passage we learn that Simon’s name was changed to Peter by Christ. The change is mentioned as part of the Savior’s response to Peter’s confession that Jesus was the Christ. Simon had said, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God” (v. 16). In response, Jesus pronounced a blessing on Simon adding, “And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it” (v. 18). Peter (the Greek

form of Simon’s new name) or Cephas (the Aramaic form) meant “rock” (cf. John 1:42).

The verbal connection between Simon’s name and Jesus’ promise to build the church are obvious. The significance of the connection is less clear. Some

scholars believe that Jesus is emphasizing Peter’s central role in founding the church. But this does not seem to agree with the picture we have of Peter in the book of Acts. Although he often served as spokesman among the apostles, he does not

appear to have served as the church’s sole authoritative leader after the resurrection. James, the brother of Jesus, seems to have had at least as much influence as Peter (Acts 15:13–21; cf. Gal. 1:19). Others think the “rock” is Christ. We become a part of the church by confessing Christ as Lord and Savior, just as Peter did.

He calls his own
sheep by name and
leads them out.

John 10:3

Apply the Word

Although Peter may not have exercised more authority than any of the other Apostles, he clearly played a foundational role in the early days of the church. He was the one who explained the significance of the day of Pentecost and addressed the elders when the disciples’ ministry was challenged (Acts 2:14, 37; 4:8–20). Peter was the rock because his life was built on the firm foundation of Jesus Christ.

Pray with Us

Thank you for supporting in prayer the leadership role of our trustees as they come to Moody’s Chicago campus for their Board meetings today and tomorrow. Pray for the Holy Spirit’s guidance and encouragement in all their discussions and decisions.

Late Have I Loved You

In his autobiography Augustine tells how he lived apart from God for many years, pursuing fame and the desires of the flesh. Eventually he laments, “Late have I loved you, O Beauty ever ancient, ever new, late have I loved you!” Augustine attributed the change in his heart to God’s relentless pursuit: “You called, you shouted, and you broke through my deafness. You flashed, you shone, and you dispelled my blindness. You breathed your fragrance on me; I drew in breath and now I pant for you.”

In today’s passage Jesus tells a parable about two sons who are ordered by their father to work in the vineyard. The first refused but later changed his mind and went anyway. The other agreed to go but did not. When Jesus explained the significance of this parable, He noted that notorious sinners were entering the kingdom of God ahead of the religious leaders of His

day because they recognized their sinfulness and repented.

The point of the parable is simple. Those who to us might seem to be the most likely candidates for the kingdom are often the least likely to enter because they fail to see their need for God’s grace. The kingdom Christ offers is one where the qualification for entrance is a righteousness that can only be obtained as a gift from Christ. Those who refuse to recognize their need for the righteousness of Christ will never find their way in.

Let the wicked . . .
turn to the LORD,
and he will have
mercy on them,
and to our God,
for he will
freely pardon.

Isaiah 55:7

But there is also a corollary implication of Christ’s parable. It offers hope to any who have turned their back on God early on and are now afraid that it is too late to seek His forgiveness. It is not too late to return to God. Turn to Christ today and He will receive you.

Apply the Word

Have you been praying for someone who seems to be a “lost cause” where God is concerned? Use the words of Augustine to shape your requests for that person today, asking God to speak to that person in a way that breaks through deafness. Pray that God would dispel blindness and entice your loved one with the sweet aroma of grace through the gospel.

Pray with Us

Dr. James Spencer, vice president and dean of Moody Distance Learning, invites you to pray for the growing ministry of distance education at Moody that brings quality Bible training to students of all ages, no matter where they are.

Fear of Change

A woman who had asked the church to pray for her husband's salvation for several years grew strangely silent once he trusted in Christ. The change in her husband made her uncomfortable. She eventually confided to a friend, "I think I liked it better before he was saved!"

Even desired change often introduces new dynamics into a relationship that can leave us feeling disoriented. When an alcoholic gives up drink or a drug addict enters rehabilitation, family members often have mixed feelings about the new relationship that ensues. Old ways of relating to one another no longer seem to work. A new order introduces a kind of imbalance into the family.

Yet this hardly explains the strange reaction of those who saw the man who had once been possessed by a legion of demons sitting with Jesus but now "dressed and in his right mind" (v. 15). Attempts had been made to restrain

him, even to the point of binding him hand and foot with chains. But the presence of the demons gave him a kind of superhuman strength. He tore the chains and broke the irons that bound his feet. His day and nights were spent in a misery of self-torment, living among the tombs, crying out in anguish, and cutting himself with stones. One might have expected the townspeople to rejoice over the sudden change—if not because they were this man's friends and neighbors, then at least because a great public nuisance had finally been dealt with.

But it was not really the man who terrified the people from the town and surrounding countryside, but Jesus. The man's transformation combined with the strange tale of the destruction of the pigs spoke of an immense power that moved them to fear. Like the disciples themselves when Jesus calmed the wind and the waves on the stormy sea, they wondered what kind of man could possess such power.

They were terrified and asked each other, "Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!"

Mark 4:41

Apply the Word

The portrait of this man in his nakedness, scarred by his own hand and living like an animal, betrays Satan's agenda for our lives. His appeal may be sweet, but his true intent is our misery. Satan does not love us. He does not even like us. He loathes us and seeks our destruction. But Jesus has the power to restore us.

Pray with Us

Today is Commencement at Moody's Chicago campus! Please pray for Moody's president, Dr. Paul Nyquist, as he hands out diplomas to our students who completed their course of studies and now are ready to serve the Lord around the world.

The Gospel of Change

LinkedIn is a social networking site that many people use for professional connections. It allows members to post information and connect with others who endorse them for their skills. If Jesus were to come seeking disciples today, however, it seems doubtful that He would rely on this kind of information to choose His followers. Such sites are primarily designed to highlight strengths rather than weaknesses.

Rough fishermen like Simon Peter or politically compromised henchmen like Levi (elsewhere called Matthew) were hardly the sort of people the rabbis hoped to gather to themselves as students. Levi was an unlikely candidate because of his profession. Tax collectors were considered traitors because of their collusion with Roman authorities. They were also regarded as thieves who robbed their fellow countrymen. Stranger still, it was not Levi who sought Jesus out but Jesus who came to Levi and called him away

from this lucrative but despised profession to a new life of discipleship.

Luke's description of the paralyzed man who was let down through the roof appropriately paves the way for the account of Levi's conversion. It emphasizes the powerlessness of those who are helped by Christ as much as it underscores the power of Christ to help them. Those Jesus calls to be His followers were just as helpless as the paralyzed man. The Savior who has the power to heal also has the authority to forgive. Even better, He actively seeks sinners and calls them to be His disciples.

For God did not
send his Son
into the world to
condemn the world,
but to save the
world through him.

John 3:17

We should not wait to embrace the gospel until after we have turned over a new leaf and attempted to lead a better life. We should come to Jesus now, "warts and all." Jesus has not come to call the righteous but sinners. Where sin is concerned, we could not fix ourselves even if we tried.

Apply the Word

Do you feel like you need to fix up your life on your own before you turn to Jesus? Come to Him now, just as you are. The warning of the old hymn is true today: *If you tarry till you're better, / You will never come at all: / Not the righteous, not the righteous, / Sinners Jesus came to call.*

Pray with Us

James Hickman, Kyle Sparrow, and Johnny Wu in Campus Network in Chicago make sure Moody's computer systems are up to date, secure, and cost-effective. Join us in thanking God for their computer expertise, good teamwork, and unity.

Rejoicing over Change

Serial killer Jeffrey Dahmer provoked controversy when he claimed to be an evangelical Christian. Some questioned whether his conversion was sincere. Others wondered whether God could forgive someone who was responsible for the brutal murder of seventeen people. Ultimately God knows if his conversion was true.

Those who heard today's parable were asking similar questions about Jesus' disciples. When the religious leaders saw the kind of people who followed Jesus they grumbled, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them" (Luke 15:2). Their complaint prompted the Savior to tell a series of parables that focused on the joy heaven experiences when a sinner repents.

Although his parable is commonly called the Parable of the Prodigal Son, it might just as well be called the Parable of the Older Brother. In addition to showing how God welcomes sinners, it reveals why some of us have trouble

accepting those who have been forgiven. The older brother's complaint in verse 29 reveals the root of the problem. His relationship with his father was based on effort instead of love. He felt more like a slave than a son. But the older brother had not obtained his inheritance by working in his father's fields. It had come to him as a gift from his father.

There is rejoicing
in the presence of
the angels of God
over one sinner
who repents.

Luke 15:10

Jesus' point is clear. Our relationship with our Heavenly Father is based on God's loving acceptance, not on our own goodness or religious ef-

fort. If we want to have a relationship with God, we cannot rely on our own good works. We bring nothing to the table as far as God is concerned. We cannot earn His favor. We can only accept His love as a gift of grace. Whether you are a prodigal living in shame in the "far country" or someone who is hard at work trying to be good, He freely offers His fatherly love to you. Come to Him today. He will not turn you away.

Apply the Word

Like the prodigal, do you find it hard to believe that God can accept someone like you? Or are you like the older brother, angry because God has not given you what you think you deserved? Either way your Heavenly Father's invitation is the same. Do not linger on the threshold. Accept His invitation and enter into a relationship with Him.

Pray with Us

As Pastors' Conference starts today on our Chicago campus, Steven Mogck, executive VP and chief operating officer, asks the Moody family to pray for the employees who work behind the scenes at the conference. They help make Pastors' Conference a success!

Change and Restitution

Festo Kivenger, who was the Anglican archbishop of Kigezi, Uganda, told a story about his uncle. An African chief, who was holding court one day when a man came to him with eight cows. The man had stolen four cows from him and had come to make restitution. "Who arrested you?" the chief asked. "Jesus arrested me, sir, and here are your cows."

Jesus arrested Zacchaeus too. Before coming to Jesus, he had served as chief tax collector. This meant that he supervised a group of tax collectors who gathered the customs due on all goods passing through the region. Tax collectors were not regulated by the government, and they were widely known to be dishonest, demanding what they had agreed to collect for the Roman government along with an additional amount that they kept for themselves. Luke's description of Zacchaeus as a "wealthy" man implies that he had grown rich this

way. Ironically, his name came from a Hebrew word that meant "righteous."

Zacchaeus was intensely interested in Jesus. Perhaps he had already heard about Jesus from some of the other tax collectors who followed Him. But when he came to the place where Jesus was, Zacchaeus found his way blocked by the crowd. Although wealth would have given Zacchaeus some status, it is likely that the crowd's low view of tax collectors made them unwilling to make way for him. Determined to see Jesus anyway, Zacchaeus

decided to take extreme measures. He ran ahead of the crowd traveling along with Jesus and climbed a sycamore fig tree. Not only was Jesus aware that Zacchaeus was watching, He called Zacchaeus by name and told him that He must stay at his house. In response Zacchaeus pledged to make restitution for what he had stolen, and Jesus affirmed that salvation had come to his house.

Produce fruit in
keeping with
repentance.

Luke 3:8

Apply the Word

Restitution was not a precondition of salvation for Zacchaeus, but it was evidence that it had come to him through Jesus Christ. Not all sins have monetary value. We cannot always repay those we have wronged. But we can admit what we have done and ask for their forgiveness. This is one of the ways we show that salvation has come to our house as well.

Pray with Us

John Addison, Thomas Addison, Edgardo Bartolome, Troy Billow, and Carl Bjerga in the Facilities Maintenance department apply their skills and hard work to keep our campus in Chicago in good order. Thank God for these men in prayer today.

A Change of Relationship

If we belong to Jesus Christ, we are more than mere creatures to God. We are His servants, but we are more than servants. The word that Jesus used to characterize the relationship we enjoy is “friend” (v. 15). The relationship between friends is not the same as the relationship between family members.

Family relationships are obligatory. Friendship is voluntary. Most of us do not get to choose who will be in our family. We do have the liberty of selecting our friends.

When we choose our friends, we usually do so on the basis of common interest or mutual benefit. We pick our friends because they like the same things that we do, or we choose them because they share the same goals. But friendship with God is different. He is all-powerful and has no real need for any helpers. He exists in a perfect unity of three persons and therefore is never

lonely. If God does not need our help or our company, why would He make us His friends? C. S. Lewis observed, “In God there is no hunger that needs to be filled, only plenteousness that desires to give.” God makes us His friends for our benefit, not for His.

Anyone who
chooses to be a
friend of the world
becomes an enemy
of God.

James 4:4

Our status as friends of God changes the nature of our obedience. Obedience in Christ should not be dull compliance or mere servitude. Jesus offers three much more appealing motives for obedience in today’s passage. First, we obey

because we are in intimate relationship to Christ (vv. 1–8). We are deeply connected to Christ and dependent upon Him for our life. Second, we obey because Christ loves us (vv. 9–13). Third, we obey because Christ has befriended us (vv. 14–17). We know what is important to Him and what His desire is for us.

Apply the Word

By calling us friends rather than servants, Christ makes His interests ours (v. 15). If we belong to Christ, then we also belong to all those who are in Christ. His friends are our friends. Consequently, one of the marks of our love for Christ is the love we show to those who belong to Christ. If we love Jesus, we will obey His command and His command is that we love one another.

Pray with Us

Again, please include Facilities Maintenance in your prayer time today, adding Vincent Camera, Justin Fisk, Paul Heggeland, Matthew Morris, and Jacob Shumaker to your prayer list. Pray that they would always work in agreement and unity.

A Change of Helpers

One of the biggest changes Jesus' disciples experienced was the challenge of facing life without Him. They were deeply troubled when Jesus told them that He was going away (John 14:1–5). They could not imagine life without having Him there in person. Yet Jesus assured them that it would be better for them if He departed. Jesus' resurrection and ascension into Heaven prepared the way for the ministry of the Holy Spirit (16:7).

The Holy Spirit guides believers into the truth (16:13). Jesus called Him "the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father" (John 15:26). The Holy Spirit carries on Jesus' teaching ministry to His followers, and He inspired the writers of the Bible to record the words of Holy Scripture. They were "carried along" by the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:21). His ministry guaranteed that they would write only what God wanted them to record. The Holy Spirit also enables

us to understand what has been written. He is the "anointing" who teaches about all things (1 John 2:27).

The Holy Spirit assures us that we are children of God (Rom. 5:5; 8:16). He is the special possession of those belonging to Jesus Christ. Those who have not trusted in Christ cannot accept the Spirit (John 14:17). It is because of the ministry of the Holy Spirit that believers are able to know God intimately. He dwells within us. By Him we are able to address God as Father (Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:6).

In the same way,
the Spirit helps us in
our weakness.

Romans 8:26

But the Spirit does more than reassure us. We serve God with gifts that the Spirit supplies (1 Cor. 12:7, 11). We also worship God through the Spirit (Phil. 3:3). As a result of the Spirit's ministry, all those who belong to Jesus Christ are being knit together into a dwelling place for God (Eph. 2:22).

Apply the Word

Have you ever wondered what it was like to walk with Jesus in the flesh? It is hard not to envy the disciples as we read through the Gospels. Yet Jesus assures us that we are better off because of the ministry of the Holy Spirit! He mediates the word of Christ to us and enables us to experience His presence within us. We are closer to Christ because He departed and sent the Spirit.

Pray with Us

Dr. John Jelinek, vice president and dean of Moody Theological Seminary, invites you to join him in thanking God for the productive school year, for the 2014 graduating class, and for future MTS students.

Change and Remorse

Have you ever wondered what it would be like to meet yourself? Charles Spurgeon once observed, “If you are renewed by grace, and were to meet your old self, I am sure you would be very anxious to get out of his company.” One of the most important changes we experience in Christ is the change of mind about ourselves that the Bible calls repentance.

In the New Testament the biblical word for repentance literally means a “change of mind.” But repentance is also a kind of agreement. When we repent, we agree with God about our condition and our actions. Repentance also has a dimension of sorrow, but it is a sorrow that leads us to hope in God’s forgiveness.

This is where the sorrow that Judas experienced after he betrayed Christ fell short. After Jesus was condemned, Judas felt “remorse” (v. 3). Although the word Matthew uses in this verse

can also be translated as “repent,” it is clear from his actions that what Judas experienced was one-dimensional, not true repentance. Judas felt regret. He experienced a sense of guilt for what he had done. But he did not turn to God for forgiveness. Instead, Judas “went away and hanged himself” (v. 5).

Godly sorrow
brings repentance
that leads to
salvation . . . but
worldly sorrow
brings death.

2 Corinthians 7:10

Not all the grief we feel over sin is helpful. Judas experienced the kind of sorrow over sin that the apostle Paul characterized in our key verse today as “worldly.” This is an unremitting sense of remorse that brings no hope of forgiveness. The sorrow that comes from

God is one that prompts us to look to God for salvation (2 Cor. 7:10). Godly sorrow and worldly sorrow are both painful. But the sorrow that comes as a result of the conviction of the Holy Spirit prompts us to seek forgiveness and motivates us to change. It leads to grace, not regret.

Apply the Word

How should we respond when we feel regret for our past actions? How can we be sure that what we are experiencing is true repentance? The answer depends on how we respond to that regret. The regret that comes from true repentance will drive us to the throne of grace, where we will “receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need” (Heb. 4:16). False repentance will drive us to despair.

Pray with Us

Please pray for Moody’s campus in Spokane. Pray for Daniel Churchwell, Nathanael Schey, Jack Lewis, Wendy Liddell, and Jaclyn Parrott serving in administration and support, that they would guide MBI-Spokane students with wisdom and servant hearts.

Changed by Jesus

Before-and-after photographs are common tools in advertising. The “before” shot usually pictures someone who is overweight, balding, or wrinkled. In the “after” shot the subject is slimmer, has more hair, or the wrinkles have been smoothed out.

Today’s passage provides an “after” portrait that shows how much Peter changed as a result of Pentecost. Peter and John were arrested for preaching the gospel in the temple courts, something that seems to have been their daily practice (Acts 2:46). During this visit a miracle drew the attention of those officials who were responsible for maintaining order within the temple precincts (v. 1).

The officials were particularly disturbed by the nature of the Apostles’ message with its emphasis on Christ’s resurrection. Some were Sadducees, an influential group who rejected the idea of bodily resurrection. They were part of the governing body known as

the Sanhedrin, the same group that had handed Jesus over to the Romans for crucifixion.

In view of this, Peter’s boldness was remarkable. On the night of Christ’s betrayal Peter had been too terrified to identify publically with Jesus. He denied the Savior three times. Now he openly identified himself as a follower of Jesus, declaring that He was the source of the healing of the lame man in the temple courts. Despite threats Peter also gave notice that he would continue to preach in Jesus’ name (vv. 18–19).

He appointed twelve that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach.

Mark 3:14

How do we explain the change in Peter’s behavior? The temple leaders who were astonished by both Peter and John “took note that these men had been with Jesus” (v. 13). Yet the same could have been said of Peter on the night Jesus was betrayed. Since then a new factor had been introduced into Peter’s life. He experienced the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

Apply the Word

Peter is a good reminder that knowing Jesus is only the beginning for the believer. By His death and resurrection Jesus made it possible for us to be transformed by the Holy Spirit. Do you need more courage to tell others about Jesus? Ask God for an opportunity to share and for the courage to speak up.

Pray with Us

Today is Spring Commencement on the Spokane campus! Pray for the Spokane faculty—Jonathan Armstrong, Craig Ferderer, Joshua Malone, and John McMath—as they celebrate the fruit of their work together with graduating students.

Changed on the Damascus Road

Many churches have a sign out front with a catch phrase. For example, one church sign declares, "If God is your co-pilot, change seats." Another says, "This church is prayer conditioned." Many describe themselves as "the friendly church."

Friendly is probably not the word Paul the apostle (called by his Jewish name Saul in today's passage) would have used to characterize his initial reception by the church at Jerusalem. When he tried to join the church, they were too afraid to associate with him. It was only after Barnabas intervened on Paul's behalf and introduced him to the other Apostles that the church finally welcomed him (Acts 9:26–27).

Although Paul may have been disappointed by their reaction, it is likely that he was not surprised by it. Few people would have expected Paul to become a follower of Christ. The church at Jerusalem had good reason to be nervous about Paul. Prior to his conversion his

main mission was to destroy the church. Armed with authority of the high priest and the Sanhedrin, he had many believers dragged from their homes and arrested (Acts 8:3). Paul's vehemence as a persecutor of the church may explain the extraordinary nature of his conversion experience. Paul saw a bright light and heard the voice of Christ. Those who were with him heard a sound but did not see anyone or hear a voice (Acts 9:7; 22:9; 26:14).

Paul was not reasoned into faith by an argument. The only force strong enough to stop Paul's persecution was a direct encounter with the living Christ. Paul's violent opposition to Christians, however, suggests that he already knew something about the content of their faith. The Lord commanded a disciple in Damascus named Ananias to follow up with Paul. Like the believers in Jerusalem, he was initially unwilling but the Lord persuaded him of the genuineness of Paul's conversion (Acts 9:15).

Here is a
trustworthy saying
. . . Christ Jesus
came into the
world to save
sinners—of whom I
am the worst.

1 Timothy 1:15

Apply the Word

Only Christ has the power to save. Yet He has chosen to work through the church. That person you consider least likely to trust in Christ may be someone God intends to use in a remarkable way. Ask God to help you to overcome your fear so that you can tell them about Jesus today.

Pray with Us

Please include in your prayers MBI-Spokane professors—Jennifer Mills, Michael Orr, Christopher Rappazini, Floyd Schneider, and Gerald Vreeland. Lift up to God their service that shapes the culture of MBI-Spokane in strategic ways.

The Great Exchange

Religion and moral standards can be good for culture. But they aren't much help when it comes to righteousness. It is possible to be a highly religious person with high moral standards and still be a sinner. This was Paul's case prior to his conversion to Christ. When describing his spiritual past, he called himself both "faultless" as far as the "righteousness based on the law" was concerned, as well as "chief" among sinners (v. 6; cf. 1 Tim. 1:15).

This was no contradiction. Paul's righteousness as a Pharisee tried to gain a right standing with God based on effort. He was sincere in his desire and rigorous in his discipline. He had a good reputation among his peers. But once he came to understand the good news about Jesus Christ, he realized that there was a better righteousness available.

Instead of putting confidence in himself, Paul exchanged his own righteousness for the righteousness of Christ. This

was righteousness that came from God and was obtained by faith (v. 9). It was righteousness that came with power—the same power that raised Christ from the dead (v. 10). It was righteousness that comes through Christ and enabled Paul to know Christ and share in His experience.

They . . . can testify that I conformed to the strictest sect of our religion, living as a Pharisee.

Acts 26:5

Paul's hope that he would "attain" to the resurrection of the dead had implications for both the present and the future. Christ's resurrection was the basis for Paul's assurance of his own resurrection to life eternal (1 Cor. 15:20; 1 Thess. 4:14). But Paul also understood

that it was a source of power for living the Christian life now. In this "great exchange" the Apostle traded his old life for new life in Christ. When he compared what he had lost with what was to be gained, all the advantages of his former life could be considered "garbage." This strong word referred to what was rotten or decayed.

Apply the Word

You cannot hang on to your own righteousness if you want the righteousness of Christ. You must let it go. Compared to the righteousness that can only come to us as a gift through faith, our best efforts seem rotten and decaying. Why would you want to cling to them instead of Christ?

Pray with Us

We are grateful for the prayers of God's people about Moody's financial needs. Ken Heullitt, Chief Financial Officer, thanks the Lord for His faithfulness and invites you to pray for God's provision and our good stewardship in the next fiscal year.

The Cross and Change

For many the cross is merely an accessory, a piece of jewelry whose primary function is to accentuate whatever else they are wearing. For others the cross is a religious symbol. It signifies their allegiance to the Christian faith. But for citizens of the Roman Empire the cross was an instrument of death. It had the same purpose as lethal injection or the electric chair. The only function of a cross was to put someone to death.

This understanding informed Paul's theology of the cross and ultimately gave the cross its value. Paul saw the cross of Christ as an instrument of death for the sinful nature. If we have been united with Christ in His death by faith, we can count ourselves dead to sin (v. 11). This involves a conscious recognition that what was true of Christ is also true of us. We are to consider ourselves dead to sin. But if we have been

truly united with Christ then we must also see ourselves as alive, to God.

Considering ourselves to be dead to sin and alive to God begins as an exercise of faith. We take God at His word and believe that we have been freed from slavery to sin (v. 7). It is completed by action. If we consider ourselves to be dead to sin, then we will refuse to let sin function as the ruling principle in our lives (v. 12). Instead we will offer ourselves to God as His servants and allow Him to use the members of our body as tools of righteousness (v. 13).

For the message
of the cross is
foolishness to those
who are perishing,
but to us who are
being saved it is the
power of God.

1 Corinthians 1:18

It is important to recognize that this is not automatic. Even though we have been freed from the dominion of sin, we will still struggle with the power of sin in our lives. When we allow the sinful nature to control our actions, we act as its slaves even though we are free.

Apply the Word

Considering ourselves to be dead to sin and alive to Christ involves memory, motivation, and choice. We remember what Christ did for us and what sin did to us. This recollection motivates us to make a different choice. Sharing our testimony of how Jesus changed our lives can both help our own memory as well as encourage others.

Pray with Us

The work of our Payroll department staff, George Palmiter, Julie Vinlasaca, and Carol Walters, requires organizational skills and attention to detail. We thank God for their faithful service and ask that you remember them in your prayers.

The Flesh and Change

On September 10, 1813, Commodore Perry captured six vessels of the British Royal Navy and sent the message: "We have seen the enemy and they are ours, two ships, two brigs, one schooner and one sloop." In 1970 cartoonist Walt Kelly parodied this famous message saying: "We have met the enemy and he is us."

Paul says something similar about the sinful nature in today's passage. Paul describes the sinful nature as an inner "law" that wages war against our desire to please God. The Greek word that Paul uses to refer to this sin principle is "flesh." This does not refer to the skin that covers our bodies but to "sin living in me" (v. 20). The sin principle is at work deep "within" us. Or as the Greek text literally says in verse 23, it is at work "in my parts."

For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature.

Galatians 5:17

The result is a war between determination and desire. The mind may delight in God's law, but the sinful nature desires the opposite. When the law comes into contact with the sinful nature it generates desire for the very thing that the law forbids (v. 10). This is why it is impossible to be saved through the law.

The sinful nature is incapable of complying with God's command.

As long as we are relying on our natural ability, we will always fall short of God's commands. Even when we have every intention of obeying, the power of the sinful nature is too strong to allow us

to comply. Unless another "law" is introduced to break this cycle of defeat, we will always be slaves of God's law in mind only. The sinful nature knows no master other than sin.

Apply the Word

The sinful nature is one of the greatest obstacles we face when it comes to change. Good intentions and a good plan are not enough to guarantee transformation. We need a different kind of "law" at work within us. God must implant a new principle within that is strong enough to counter the toxic effect of the sinful nature. Only the Holy Spirit can say no to the flesh. We will learn more about His ministry tomorrow.

Pray with Us

Education Technology Services in Chicago contribute to the effectiveness of education process at Moody. Would you cover in prayer the ministry of its staff? Today, pray for Rebekah Campbell, Timothy Canfield, Benjamin Dallmann, and Deborah Ellis.

The Spirit and Change

Veni Creator Spiritus is a ninth-century hymn often sung to celebrate the day of Pentecost. An invocation of the Spirit, one version declares: "Come, Holy Ghost, Creator blest, and in our hearts take up Thy rest; come with Thy grace and heav'nly aid, To fill the hearts which Thou hast made."

The important role of the Holy Spirit is the theme of today's passage. Also called the "Spirit who gives life" in verse 2, only the Holy Spirit is powerful enough to free us from the grip of the sinful nature. In verse 3 Paul links the ministry of the Holy Spirit to that of Christ. By His death on the cross Jesus Christ condemned sin. By dying as a sacrifice for sin and by rising for our justification, Jesus met all the righteous requirements of the law. Jesus paid our debt and broke the power of the sinful nature.

By His resurrection, Jesus not only proved that we were justified but in-

troduced a new dynamic into the life of the believer. This new "law" is activated within us by the Holy Spirit. The Spirit enables us to restrain the desires of the sinful nature and to live in a way that pleases God. Although we once lived as slaves to sin, now that we are in Christ our "obligation" is to obey God through the Spirit (v. 12).

So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature.

Galatians 5:16

Paul mentions two other important ministries of the Holy Spirit in this chapter. One is a ministry of assurance. It is the Holy Spirit who "testifies with our spirit that we are God's children" (v. 16). The Spirit also carries on a ministry of intercessory prayer on our behalf. When we are uncertain about how to pray, we can take comfort knowing that the Holy Spirit intercedes on our behalf with "wordless groans" (v. 26). Because the Spirit is God and is in perfect communion with the Father, the Holy Spirit's requests are always "in accordance with the will of God" (v. 27).

Apply the Word

The Holy Spirit is the key to real change in the Christian life. Follow the example of the hymn *Veni Creator Spiritus* today by asking God to empower you by the Holy Spirit today. He can transform your life. Spend some time in prayer and praise to the Lord today for His gracious presence and work in your life.

Pray with Us

Timothy Gauger, Josue Reyes, Robert Rutherford, and Michael Schulte from Education Technology Services introduce the latest developments in technology and media to Moody education. Thank you for praying for them!

Worship and Change

Most Christians use the term *worship* to describe what happens when the church gathers together on Sunday morning. It's what takes place during the worship service. For many the idea of worship is even more narrowly defined, referring only to the musical portion of the service. We worship when we sing.

Romans 12:1–2 provides a more expansive definition of worship. In these verses the apostle Paul urges believers to offer their bodies as a living sacrifice. According to Paul true worship is not a half hour of music once a week. Rather, it is a quality of life: a life directed by the Word of God and empowered by the Spirit of God. Instead of letting the values of this present age shape our thinking, our thinking is to be molded by the will of God. A lifestyle of worship requires a renewed mind (Eph. 4:23).

This kind of worship also demands biblically informed self-awareness. We

need a realistic view of the way God has equipped us to serve Him. It is possible to think too highly of ourselves and aspire to that which God has not called us to do. It is equally possible to think too lowly of ourselves and fall short of God's design. A "sober judgment" avoids both extremes (v. 3).

We who serve
God by his Spirit,
who boast in
Christ Jesus, . . .
put no confidence
in the flesh.

Philippians 3:3

When we look at ourselves realistically, we will see that a life of true worship must be offered within the context of the larger congregation. God has arranged the body of Christ for mutual concern and mutual benefit. Each of us has something to contribute

to others in the church, and they have something we need.

No member should conclude that he or she has so little to contribute, somehow unnecessary to the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:16). Likewise, no one can say to another member, "I have no need of you" (1 Cor. 12:21).

Apply the Word

Think of those areas in your life that have changed as a result of Christ's work in your life. Have you considered that these changes are also an expression of worship? Today express thanksgiving to God in the way that you live. This is "true worship."

Pray with Us

Education Technology Services make sure Moody classrooms are outfitted for excellence. As we conclude our prayers for this department, mention Frederick Schultz, Gregory Skorik, Andrew Thisse, Jason Floyd, and Michael Janchenko during your prayer time today.

We Shall Be Changed

The chorus of a popular worship song by Chris Tomlin begins: “And I will rise when He calls my name / No more sorrow, no more pain.” The song looks forward to the day when there will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain. It will be a day when the old order of things will pass away and God will wipe away every tear from our eyes (Rev. 21:4).

Our last study for the month focuses on one of the most important features of this new order: the resurrection of the believer. Resurrection is the capstone of the believer’s redemption experience. The bodily resurrection of all believers signals Christ’s complete and final victory over sin. Death is the last enemy to be defeated (1 Cor. 15:26).

The Corinthians had difficulty grasping the idea of bodily resurrection. Some Greek philosophers taught that the material and the spiritual realms were fundamentally incompatible.

Consequently, the Corinthians wanted to know how such a resurrection could take place and what kind of body it would produce. Paul explained that the believer’s resurrected body will be both like and unlike the bodies we have today.

By his power God
raised the Lord
from the dead, and
he will raise us also.

1 Corinthians 6:14

Using analogies drawn from the natural world, he showed that the body believers will receive in the resurrection will be suited to their new eternal state. It will be an imperishable and glorious body that is raised in power (v. 43). It will be a

body like Christ’s (vv. 46–49).

This change is necessary because flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God (v. 50). But this does not mean that the resurrected body is one that is merely spiritual. If we will be like Christ in the resurrection, then we will have a physical body. Christ’s resurrected body was physical, consisting of flesh and bones (Luke 24:39).

Apply the Word

The hope of a future resurrection is a powerful motivation to serve Christ today. The certainty of resurrection guarantees that our labor for Christ “is not in vain” (v. 58). Although our efforts to serve God in the present are imperfect, we know that a day is coming when all imperfections will be removed. We will be changed, perfected to live with God eternally.

Pray with Us

We hope you had a fruitful time in God’s Word this month. Let’s pray that God would give us discernment to recognize change in and around us. And that His Spirit would give us the strength, courage, and passion to embrace it and learn from it.

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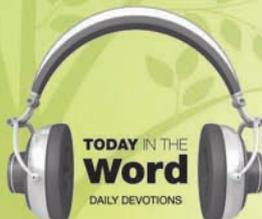
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