

APRIL 2016

TODAY IN THE WORD™



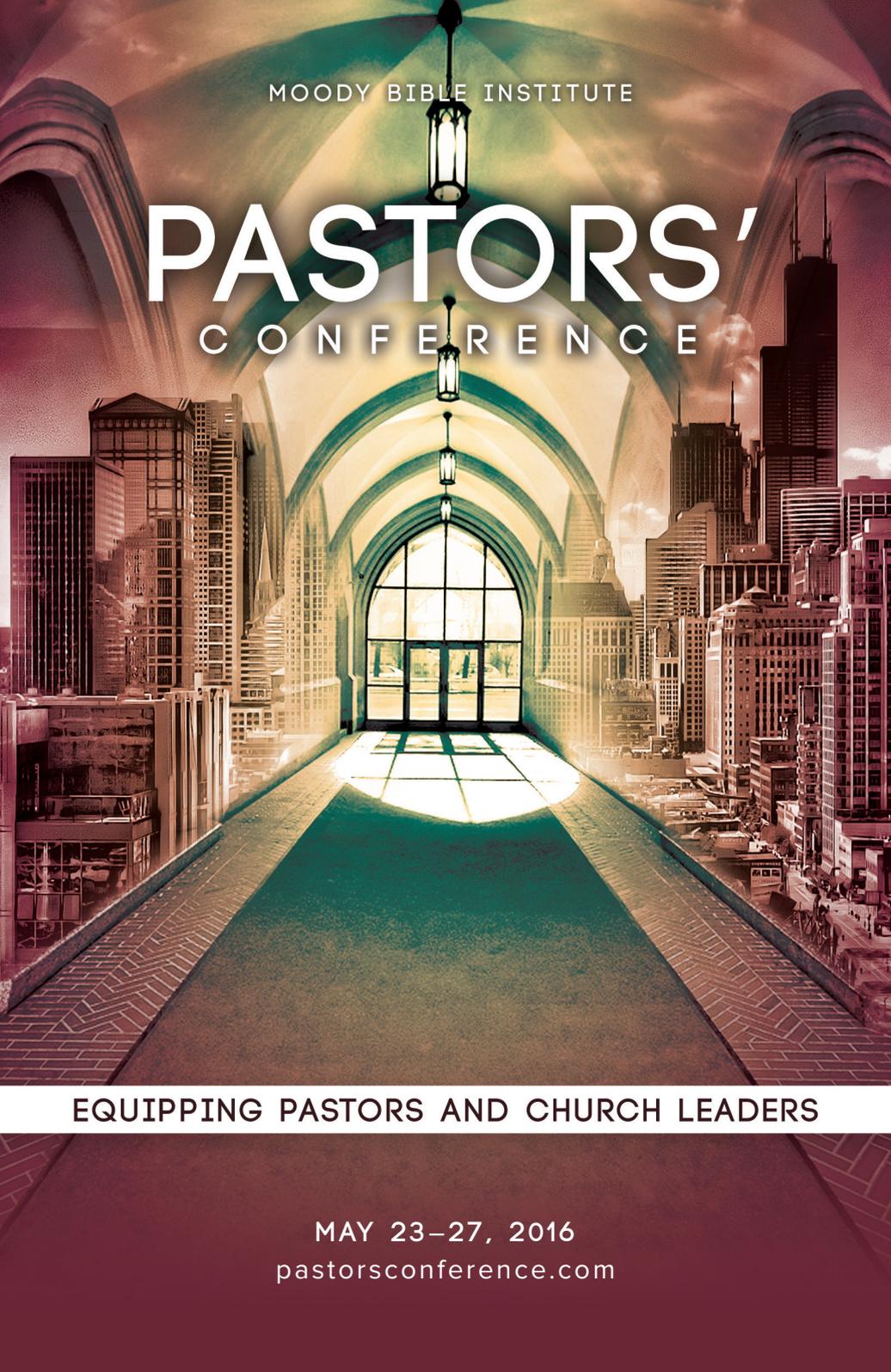
*If anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come:
The old has gone, the new is here!*
2 Corinthians 5:17

OUR IDENTITY IN CHRIST

A devotional from



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A long, arched hallway with a red carpet and a cityscape visible through the arches. The hallway is illuminated by a series of hanging lanterns. The cityscape is a dense urban area with many skyscrapers, including the Willis Tower. The overall color palette is warm, with reds, oranges, and yellows.

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TODAY WITH DR. PAUL NYQUIST

President of Moody Global Ministries

Child of the King



My older sister has traced our family's genealogy all the way back into the 1600s. The name *Nyquist* means "new branch" or "new twig"

in Swedish (it would be written *Nykvist* today in Sweden). My great-grandparents emigrated from Sweden in the 1880s, around the same time D. L. Moody began his Bible school in Chicago, and started farming in a Swedish area of Burt County, Nebraska. My dad is a full-blooded Swede—and looks just like it! My Mom is half Swedish and half French.

Not every family is able to trace their history back this far. While we may be fascinated to learn bits and pieces of our earthly ancestry, if we know Christ we can be certain of our heavenly heritage. Through the redemption found in Christ Jesus, we have become the sons and daughters of the King.

Through the salvation found in Christ, we exchanged the limitations of our earthly identity for an eternal one: "See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and such we are" (1 John 3:1). God loved us and redeemed us.

In 2 Corinthians 5, Paul contrasts our earthly existence with the spiritual

regeneration and eternal hope that comes from being born again. He compares our physical existence to a temporary tent. "For we know that if the earthly tent which is our house is torn down, we have a building from God" (v. 1).

In Christ, we exchange the old for the new, the imperfect and incomplete for that which is incorruptible. In Christ, Paul explains, we become a new creation: "The old things passed away; behold, new things have come" (v. 17).

We can be thankful that God's regenerative work in us has nothing to do with our earthly heritage or our personal accomplishments. No matter whether your ancestors were royalty or peasants, no matter what continent your family of origin claimed, we all need God's salvation through Jesus in order to be part of His family. In Him, we are made new.

It can be interesting to seek our roots, to discover more about the places and people from which we came. But we must never forget who we are in Christ. In Him and through Him, old things have become new. We are no longer slaves to sin, but we have an eternal future secure in Christ. We are a new creature, perfected in Christ, a child of the King. In Him, we are complete. ■

THEOLOGY MATTERS

by Dr. John Koessler

The Dimensions of Salvation

Salvation is both an act of God and a personal experience. As an act of God, the term *salvation* describes what God has done for us through Jesus Christ. As an experience, it refers to the application of this salvation to us through the Holy Spirit. Both have their origin in God's mercy and are not the result of our good works.

The saving act of God was the death and resurrection of Jesus, who lived a sinless life and suffered on the cross. Christ was punished for our sin in His death. His resurrection was the proof God had accepted that suffering on our behalf. Since our salvation is the result of this historical event, we describe it in the past tense (Eph. 2:8; 2 Tim. 1:9). Those who have put their faith in Christ are *already saved*.

But salvation is also a present experience. It is being applied to us "through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit" (Titus 3:5). When we place our faith in Jesus Christ, something about us changes. The Holy Spirit begins to free us from the effects of sin. We are given a new capacity to say no to sin and an ability to resist

temptation. This dimension of salvation is progressive. Through the working of the Holy Spirit in our lives, we grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18). Consequently, we can say that those who are in Christ are in the process of *being saved*.

In eternity when this work of transformation is finally complete, we will be as holy in practice as we are in position. The righteousness we have received as a gift of grace through Christ will be evident in our character and our behavior. Because Christ paid the full penalty for our sins, we will also escape the punishment that otherwise would have been ours. This means that we may also think of salvation as a future hope. We will be saved from God's wrath through Jesus Christ (Rom. 5:9). As far as Christ's work is concerned, salvation is a finished work. When it comes to our experience, salvation is a process. But our hope for the future is certain. We *will be saved*. ■

FOR FURTHER STUDY

To learn more, read *So Great Salvation* by Charles Ryrie (Moody Publishers).

FROM THE EDITORS

by Elena Mafer

The Blood of the Lamb

Starting with sunset on April 22 this year, until the end of the month, Jewish people will greet each other, “Chag Pesach Sameach!” or simply, “Chag Sameach!”—*Happy Holiday*. Pesach, or Passover, one of the most important holidays in the Jewish calendar, symbolizes the escape from physical and spiritual slavery. The Passover Seder, a feast in the community or family, involves the retelling of the story of Israel’s exodus from ancient Egypt. This ritual meal also reminds the Jewish people that they were saved by the blood of the lamb, put on the doorposts of their houses. The angel of death passed over the dwellings of God’s people.

Passover has deep significance for Christians as well. Just as the Jewish people relied on the blood of the sacrificial lamb, Christians also rely on the blood of the Lamb—God’s Son—for salvation. As we learn about our identity in Christ this month in *Today in the Word*, let’s remember the price that Christ paid with His precious blood for our exodus from the slavery of sin and our freedom as His people. Passover is still valid for God’s people, both Jewish and Gentile, and it’s an opportunity for Christians to appreciate the Jewish roots of Christianity.

On December 2, 2015, the Moody community on our Chicago campus honored God’s Word and the Jewish people who helped preserve it. At a special dedication ceremony, attended by students, staff, Moody’s leadership, and many guests including the Consul General of Israel to the Midwest, Moody received a rare original of an eighteenth-century Tunisian Torah scroll.

Dr. Scott Carroll, the curator of the scroll and expert on ancient/medieval manuscripts, explained that the term *Torah* has a wide range of meanings, one of which is “the embodiment of the teaching of the Law, from Genesis to Deuteronomy, which encapsulates the soul of Judaism.” Due to several factors, perhaps corrections and defects, this particular Torah scroll can no longer be used for Jewish liturgical purposes. But it will be widely used by Moody’s faculty and students of Hebrew to read the story of Exodus so faithfully preserved and retold by the Jewish people through millennia. ■

To learn more about the donation of the Torah scroll to Moody and the dedication ceremony, please visit our website: moodyglobal.org/news.

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Elena Mafter

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Jamie Janosz

John Koessler

WRITERS

Devotionals: Heather Moffitt

Q&A: Rosalie de Rosset

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TODAY IN THE WORD™

Our Identity in Christ

Since the ancient Greek philosophers pronounced the maxim “Know thyself,” humanity’s quest has essentially remained the same throughout the centuries to the present day—searching for truth and identity. This maxim formed the foundation of modern philosophy and permeated popular culture, from the “Me Generation” to the proliferation of personal blogs, from self-centered advertising slogans to selfies.

This month in *Today in the Word*, we’ll learn what the Bible says about our identity as Christians. We’ll see that in order to find our true identity we need to take our eyes off ourselves and look at Jesus. Scripture passages from the New Testament will show us that we are saved and justified in Christ alone, we are called to be holy and mature in Christ, and we are a new creation in Him. We’ll praise God for His love, for making all things new, and for the freedom we have in Him. We will also rejoice in our eternal destiny promised by Christ to His followers. While the things of this world—its philosophies, ideas, and struggles—will pass away, we will reign with Him for eternity.

We pray this study will encourage you and help you grow in the truth of who you really are as God’s child. Thank you for studying with us! ■

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FRIDAY
APRIL

1

Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name . . . by which we must be saved.

Acts 4:12

Salvation through Jesus Alone

In 2004 the BBC launched a new television show that would become a global phenomenon with nearly twenty different versions produced around the world. Each episode of *Who Do You Think You Are?* features the family history of a famous person, exploring everything from disappeared relatives to distant royal connections to ancestors' migrations. Participants often say, "I hope this experience will help me understand myself and my family."

This month in *Today in the Word* we are going to explore similar questions: Who are we? What is our true identity? What do we know about our family? Our goal is not just to know ourselves better but also to understand what it means to locate our identity in Christ. And in order to find the answers, we have to know where to begin.

In our text today, Peter and John had just healed a crippled beggar, which

presented an opportunity for them to preach the message about healing and salvation found only in Jesus (see Acts 3:16). Their proclamation of the good news of the resurrection of Jesus caused many to come to faith in Christ, but it infuriated the religious leaders in the temple. Just when they thought they were rid of Jesus, here were His followers declaring that He was alive—and they were performing miracles of healing in His name!

Peter leaves no doubt what is at stake in this encounter. The religious leaders wanted to preserve their power; Peter and John preached the power of Jesus to save (vv. 7, 10). The religious leaders thought they were protecting temple worship; Peter declared that Jesus was actually the cornerstone (v. 11; Ps. 118:22). The religious leaders tried to please God by going above and beyond the Law; Peter preached that salvation is found only in the name of Jesus (v. 12).

APPLY THE WORD

To know who we are, we must begin with Jesus. Some reject Him, and define their identity apart from Christ. Those who accept His salvation are in Christ, and their lives are transformed. On which side are you? If you've never trusted Jesus to forgive your sins and make you right with God, today receive His salvation and new life in Christ.

PRAY WITH US

Our Distance Learning helps bring Moody education to the global community. Ask for God's blessing on the work of Andrew Beaty, Ashish Varma, Janet Randerson, and Kerwin Rodriguez as they serve in the dean's office.

He was delivered over for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.

Romans 4:25

SATURDAY
APRIL

2

Faith in Jesus Christ

Like many people in the 1990s, Chris Robinson loved Beanie Babies. He thought the small plush toys would increase in value, and he began devoting all his spare time—and money—to amassing a collection. He figured eventually he could sell them to pay college tuition. But after spending over \$100,000 on some 15,000 Beanie Babies, the market for the toys plummeted, leaving Robinson with a whole lot of stuffed animals and debt.

Trying to invest money can be a wise decision, but the investment must be trustworthy. The object of our trust is important: faith in a worthless cure or risky business or unreliable person will do us no good. This is even more true in our spiritual lives. Merely having faith will not save us. Our faith must be placed in Jesus Christ.

As our text today makes clear, the object of faith was always supposed

to be God, the Giver of the Law, not the Law itself. Only God can keep His promises. Only God could fulfill His word to Abraham to make him a father of many nations (v. 18).

The nature of faith is believing that God will do what He has said He will do (v. 21). This is no risky investment—God has proved Himself faithful over and over again. He promised Abraham a son, and the problem of old age could not keep God from keeping His word. He gives life to the dead, and even though Christ died for our sins, God “raised Jesus our Lord from the dead” (v. 24)!

The result of faith is being made righteous in God’s sight. We could never be good enough, never keep the Law perfectly, and never please God with our own efforts. We are able to enjoy salvation and a relationship with God only by faith in His Son.

APPLY THE WORD

Jesus is the only basis for our faith and our only hope of salvation. Sing or listen to a recording of the modern hymn “In Christ Alone” to encourage your faith today: “In Christ alone my hope is found / He is my light, my strength, my song / This Cornerstone, this solid ground / Firm through the fiercest drought and storm.”

PRAY WITH US

Vice president and dean of the Undergraduate School, Dr. Larry Davidhizar, welcomes your prayers for training Christian leaders at Moody. Pray also that all his day-to-day decisions in leading the school would be made according to God’s will.

SUNDAY
APRIL

3

I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me.

Galatians 2:20

Justified in Christ

What does *justification* mean? In academic research, justification explains a theory or thesis in order to support the conclusion. In ethics, justification is the category of theories that tries to answer questions like “Why should I be moral?” In popular usage, if we say a decision or action is justified we mean it was an acceptable choice. But what does it mean to say we are justified in Christ?

Our passage today provides us with a clear answer. Being justified is a central part of our identity in Christ, and it is part of our understanding salvation in Jesus.

First, justification means we are declared righteous before God (v. 21). As we saw yesterday, we can never justify ourselves. We can never be right with God on our own terms. “We know that a person is not justified by the works of the law, but by faith in Jesus

Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ” (v. 16).

Second, justification means we now live by faith in Christ (v. 20). Being justified in Christ not only changes the status of our relationship with God but also transforms the way we live. We have the Spirit of God living within us to guide our lives. We can embrace grace rather than legalistic ideas of how to please God.

Justification also matters for our relationships with others. If we grasp that our identity of being justified in Christ is entirely based on what He has done for us—not our own goodness—then we can extend that grace to others. We don’t have to impose additional restrictions or expectations on others when we know that Jesus does the work of justification for all who believe in Him (vv. 4, 21).

APPLY THE WORD

Peter and Paul clashed over associating with Gentiles. Disagreement between Christians is not new and need not mean breaking fellowship. In disagreements, the gospel takes priority over our preferences. Paul confronted Peter for choosing Law over grace; Peter later became a persuasive advocate for Gentile believers (vv. 11–14; Acts 15).

PRAY WITH US

Today, would you lift up in prayer our undergraduate faculty in the Pastoral Studies department? Pray that the Lord would guide Kirk Baker, Michael Boyle, and John Koessler as they train their students to serve Him as faithful, godly pastors.

*He will also keep you firm to the end,
so that you will be blameless.*

1 Corinthians 1:8

MONDAY
APRIL

4

Called to Be Holy

Steeplechase runner Tangquy Pepiot learned the hard way about finishing a race well. In a competition in 2015 he was well ahead of the other runners entering the final home stretch. About thirty meters from the finish he began waving his arms for the crowd to cheer his impending victory. But as he slowed to soak in the adulation, another runner, Meron Simon, caught up and passed Pepiot at the finish line. Pepiot lost by .10 seconds.

We've seen the importance of basing our identity on being saved in Christ. But being justified isn't the end of our story; it is not the finish line of our spiritual race. For the rest of the week we'll examine what it means to know that we are also sanctified in Christ.

The opening verses of our reading today provide us with the simplest understanding of sanctification. It is

the work of God to make us holy (v. 2). Being justified in Christ allows us to be in a relationship with God, and being sanctified in Christ transforms our lives to look more like Jesus.

We cannot save or justify ourselves, and we also cannot sanctify ourselves. Sanctification is not about our own striving to impress God. Rather, it is the work of God's grace in our lives (v. 4). This grace includes blessing us with spiritual gifts that we are to use to serve others and glorify God. This marvelous, divine process of God giving us gifts that we in turn use for Him will produce holiness in our lives (vv. 5–7).

Ultimately all the credit for our sanctification belongs to God. He is faithful. He calls us into fellowship. And He keeps us strong to finish our race well. Jesus secures the victory of our holiness (v. 8).

APPLY THE WORD

Are you feeling weary in your spiritual race? Does the call to holiness feel like a burden? Your sanctification is rooted in God's grace to you. Take time to thank the Lord for His gifts, and then ask how you can use those gifts to serve Him. Our holiness results not from our effort but from our response to what Jesus is already doing in our lives.

PRAY WITH US

Keeping our Pastoral Studies professors in prayer, please add Pamela MacRae, Winfred Neely, Laurie Norris, and William Torgesen to your list. May God strengthen and encourage them in their fruitful ministry on Moody's Chicago campus.

TUESDAY
APRIL

5

This is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight.

Philippians 1:9

Fruit of Righteousness

Jesus changes lives. After an encounter with Him, Zacchaeus committed to repaying everyone he had cheated and gave half his possessions to the poor. Peter was transformed from a reckless fisherman who denied Christ to a bold preacher of the gospel who led thousands to faith in Jesus. And Paul changed from leading a zealous persecution of the church to becoming a missionary who planted churches and took the gospel to Europe.

Our identity in Christ will produce what the apostle Paul calls “the fruit of righteousness” (v. 11). Salvation through Jesus made us righteous, and sanctification in Christ is the process of seeing the fruit or evidence.

Paul gives several examples of this fruit in the opening verses of his letter to the church in Philippi. First, they were partners with him in the work of sharing the gospel (v. 4). Despite the

struggles and persecution that Paul describes later in the letter, this church was committed to the good news of salvation through Jesus.

Second, the church supported Paul (v. 7). They shared financial resources with him and answered the call to send gifts to the persecuted church in Jerusalem. The Philippians also embraced missionaries like Timothy and Epaphroditus, which allowed the ministry of spreading the gospel and strengthening the churches to flourish.

Finally, the church was growing in both love and spiritual discernment (v. 10). They weren’t perfect—Paul addresses doctrinal and relational concerns later—but this growth was evidence that Jesus was working in them and they were using the gifts they had for the “glory and praise of God” (v. 11). Because their identity was rooted in Christ, they had confidence that He would sustain them.

APPLY THE WORD

Are you supporting missionaries in the ministry of spreading the gospel? Financial support is important, and a commitment to pray for a missionary is invaluable. Missionaries love receiving regular emails or letters, and remembering their birthdays and holidays with special cards or care packages can be tremendously encouraging.

PRAY WITH US

Bruce Everhart, VP of Donor Development and Channel Strategy, works hard to keep Moody connected with our friends around the world. Ask God to give Bruce and his teams insight and inspiration in the various avenues they reach the Moody family.

*Just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord,
continue to live your lives in him.*

Colossians 2:6

WEDNESDAY
APRIL

6

Mature in Christ

Bob Hope quipped, “Middle age is when your age starts to show around your middle.” Our culture tends to value youth and novelty over maturity and experience. When it comes to our spiritual lives, though, maturity is something to be prized. An element of our sanctification and identity should be our maturity in Christ.

In Colossians 1:28 the apostle Paul describes part of his ministry as strengthening these believers “so that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ.” The word *mature* is sometimes translated as “perfect.” Its closest meaning, however, is not our current notion of perfection, which implies a sense of being completely flawless. Rather, this word means a sense of fullness or completion, a theme that occurs again in Colossians 2:2.

Our sanctification and maturity in Christ affects our doctrine. Mature

believers should resist “fine-sounding arguments” and “hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition” (2:4, 8). Anything that puts the emphasis on human effort or tries to accommodate cultural preferences over the truth of the gospel is to be rejected. Only in Christ will we find treasures of wisdom and knowledge (2:3).

And as we’ve seen before, every part of our spiritual maturity happens because of Christ. Review verses 6 through 12 and make a note of how often the phrase “in him” occurs. We are rooted in Him, we live our lives in Him, we are baptized in Him, our sin nature is removed in Him, we are raised in Him to new life. Jesus is the source, the strength, and the purpose for our lives.

No wonder we are to be “overflowing with thankfulness” (2:7). God calls us to maturity and enables us to grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ.

APPLY THE WORD

Thankfulness is evidence of our spiritual maturity as well as a way to grow more mature. Today is a good opportunity to overflow with thankfulness. How have you seen God work in your life? Has He answered your prayers? Has He met your needs? Thank Him! Use the words of Psalm 100 or compose your own poem of gratitude.

PRAY WITH US

Thank you for praying for Natoshia Portis today, as she oversees catering and coordinates special events on Moody’s Chicago campus. We praise God for the gift of hospitality that our Catering team displays to Moody employees and guests.

THURSDAY
APRIL

7

Everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.

2 Timothy 3:12

Godliness and Persecution

British teacher Olive Jones offered to pray for an ill student, but the student declined and Jones did not pray aloud. That seemed to be the end of it—until Jones discovered that the student’s mother filed a complaint that Jones had bullied her daughter, and she was fired. A director of the Christian Legal Centre said, “Olive Jones had compassion for her pupil and finds herself without a job because she expressed the hope that comes with faith.”

Frequently, the culture around us opposes Christian values—and this has been true since the birth of the church. Paul wrote the second letter to Timothy while he was incarcerated in Rome. When he described opposition and persecution, he wasn’t being theoretical or abstract—he had experienced tremendous suffering (vv. 10–11).

When we think about our identity in Christ, we can easily focus only on

aspects such as life and freedom and blessing. But our reading today reminds us that the gospel and followers of Christ face real opposition from those who want to pursue their own desires and agenda (v. 8). The first verses in this chapter describe our day: “People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy . . .” and the list goes on (v. 2).

In contrast, those in Christ should be known, like the apostle Paul, for their way of life, purpose, faith, patience, love, and endurance (v. 10). But never think that this inoculates us against persecution. We do not pursue godliness in order to have an easy life. Our identity of being in Christ threatens the power structures and status quo of the world, and we should not be surprised when standing firm for the Lord means we pay a price.

APPLY THE WORD

Sometimes being known for our faith and love will cost us popularity or career advancement. Millions of Christians face social exclusion, torture, and death for identifying with Jesus. Pray for our persecuted brothers and sisters in Sudan, North Korea, and Iran. Pray for God to strengthen them, and pray that your courage in Christ would grow.

PRAY WITH US

Steven Mogck, executive VP and chief operating officer, leads several departments who ensure that everything on campus runs smoothly. Would you pray for good teamwork, discernment, and unity in everything they do?

*Count yourselves as dead to sin
but alive to God in Christ.*

Romans 6:11

FRIDAY
APRIL

8

Dead to Sin, Alive to Christ

If you want to stop a bad habit, experts agree that you should replace it with a good one. Simply deciding to stop eating unhealthy foods or to stop procrastinating online is rarely enough; you need a plan to start eating healthier food or a process to motivate you to be more productive at work.

A similar spiritual principle is at work in our identity in Christ. For the next week we're going to examine an essential element of who we are as followers of Jesus: alive! We'll study what it means to be alive in Christ and the implications of this life. Our passage today describes how we have moved from death to life.

The apostle Paul includes some of his most emphatic declarations in this chapter. It seems some in the church in Rome had argued that since God responded to sin by offering grace, Christians should persist in sin in order

to receive more grace. This argument completely misses the point of our identity in Christ, however. Just as Jesus died and was resurrected to a glorious life, so too we have died to sin and been baptized into a new life that is able to please God (vv. 2–7).

Jesus defeated the power of sin and death through His death and resurrection. Therefore, if we are in Christ, we are free from the power of sin and death. Our life in Christ is completely incommensurate with a life characterized by sin. Sin is no longer our master; we have the power of God to resist sinful desires, choosing to live in a way that brings glory to God.

This move from death to life doesn't happen as a result of our own willpower. It is God's work in us. We respond by offering our lives to the Lord.

APPLY THE WORD

We are not freed from the power of sin and left to flail about alone. God's Spirit indwells and empowers us to replace habits and desires of sin with the habits and desires of life in Christ. Ponder how you can make an intentional decision to use "your mortal body" as an "instrument of righteousness" that pleases God (vv. 12–13).

PRAY WITH US

They work behind the scenes, but their service is always noticed and appreciated. Today and tomorrow, Moody's Facilities Maintenance team is in our prayers. We start by upholding in prayer Carl Berga, John Addison, and Matthew Morris.

SATURDAY
APRIL

9

The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 6:23

Eternal Life in Christ

Lines from the short poem “Invictus,” by William Ernest Henley, describe the perspective held by many: “I thank whatever gods may be / For my unconquerable soul. . . . I am the master of my fate: / I am the captain of my soul.” It may be tempting to think that we are in control of our own lives, but Scripture tells us that in fact each of us is serving a master. We are either slaves to sin, which leads to death, or we are slaves to Christ, which leads to life (v. 16).

Our text today continues the argument from the first part of Romans 6. We have moved from death to life as a result of our identity in Christ! The apostle Paul uses the technique of compare/contrast to highlight the great gulf between the status and consequences of serving sin or serving Jesus. Our obedience reveals whom we are serving. If that master is sin, our lives

will be characterized by “impurity and ever-increasing wickedness.” If that master is Christ, our obedience will look like “righteousness leading to holiness” (v. 19).

Our obedience to sin results in terrible consequences of increased shame and even death, not only physical death of the body but also spiritual death and separation from God. In contrast, our obedience to our Lord Jesus results in freedom and eternal life with God.

The best news of all is that we do not have to exercise some kind of heroic effort to change masters. We cannot move ourselves from the path of death to life. God does this for us! God sets us free from sin, and God gives us our new identity as slaves of Christ. God gives us the gift of eternal life (vv. 22–23).

APPLY THE WORD

How can you use your freedom of righteousness to express your gratitude to God for this gift of eternal life? Share your testimony of God’s grace with someone, or look for an opportunity to serve someone who needs a helping hand. Let your acts of praise and worship be intentional ways that you thank God for making you alive in Christ.

PRAY WITH US

Include these additional Facilities Maintenance staff in your prayers today: Paul Heggeland, Peter Lawrence, Thomas Addison, and Vincent Camera. May the Lord bless their service at Moody and grant them strength and endurance to do their work well.

*But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory
through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

1 Corinthians 15:57

Victory of Life in Christ

For nearly forty years, the *Wide World of Sports* program on ABC featured sporting events such as hurling, curling, jai-alai, rodeo, Mexican cliff diving, and badminton, among others. As announcer Jim McKay intoned over the opening credits, sports provided “the thrill of victory and the agony of defeat.”

Our passage today describes the most thrilling victory ever accomplished in all of history: Jesus’ triumph over the power of death. Because of our identity in Christ, we also share in this victory.

The opening verses of this chapter are likely part of an ancient hymn or creed of belief about Jesus: “Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures” (vv. 3–4). The apostle Paul reminds the church in Corinth of the fundamentals of their faith in order to address a theological error: some

taught that believers in Christ would not actually be resurrected from the dead. Paul argues that we can have confidence in the resurrection of believers because we know Jesus was resurrected, and believers in Him share in this blessing of eternal life.

Jesus’ death and then resurrection in triumph over death are the foundation of our hope (vv. 12–19). If He is not alive now, then we have based our faith on a dead god who is powerless to save us. But we know He is alive—He was seen by hundreds of witnesses (vv. 6–8) and He continues to transform the lives of those who trust Him.

Death will never have the last word over believers in Jesus. We share in His victory (vv. 50–57). Our bodies will be transformed and we will be able to dwell with God forever. We should join in thanks to God who gives us this victory in Christ!

APPLY THE WORD

While we await our final victory over death, we still grieve the loss of our loved ones who have died. Take time this week to thank God for the blessing of Christian saints He has placed in your life, and reflect on the testimony of their lives. Also thank Him that one day you will be reunited with all believers around the throne of God, praising Him together.

PRAY WITH US

Today we have the privilege of praying for Christine Gorz, vice president of Marketing Communications at Moody in Chicago. We ask for wisdom for Christine and the teams she leads, as they promote Moody and serve education, radio, and publishing.

MONDAY
APRIL

11

*If anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come:
The old has gone, the new is here!*

2 Corinthians 5:17

New Creation in Christ

Many second or third daughters in India are named Nakusha, which means “unwanted.” One local government in the state of Maharashtra decided to hold a ceremony for many of these girls to give them new names. One girl chose the name Sakshi, meaning “witness.” “I was going to be a witness to a historic event, and become a part of it too,” she said. “I know I have to be patient, because people are used to calling me Nakusha. . . . But now I have a name and I feel good. I feel like a new person. It will change my life forever.”

Believers in Jesus have a new name and a new destiny. Indeed, because of our identity in Christ we are now a new creation.

As we’ve seen throughout our study, Scripture doesn’t tell us about our identity in Christ so that we can sit back, take it easy, and feel good about

ourselves. Knowing that we are a new creation—freed from old habits and old perspectives—should be tremendously encouraging. It should also compel us to share this news with others.

The apostle Paul describes God’s work of making us a new creation in Christ as a ministry of reconciliation. We used to be in opposition to Christ, but now we are filled with His love and righteousness (vv. 14–16). And we are to participate in this ministry of reconciliation by telling others about the life available in Jesus. Note how many times in this passage Paul repeats this call to action: “we try to persuade others” (v. 11); “you can answer those” (v. 12); “Christ’s love compels us” (v. 14); and “gave us the ministry of reconciliation” (v. 18). We are the ambassadors, the messengers of the good news of new life in Christ (v. 20).

APPLY THE WORD

Sakshi chose the name “witness” as a testimony to how her life changed with her new name. Christians are called to bear witness to how our lives have changed in Christ. Have you shared the good news of the gospel? A number of evangelism tools are available, including a course in personal evangelism offered by Moody Distance Learning.

PRAY WITH US

Patrick Friedline in Career Development helps our students and alumni to find work opportunities and to follow God’s plan for their lives, using the gifts He gave them. Would you pray for this ministry today?

God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive in Christ.

Ephesians 2:4–5

TUESDAY
APRIL

12

Made Alive in Christ

Many pregnant women crave unusual food combinations such as pickles and ice cream. But many also suffer from pica, the desire to eat nonfood substances like ice, chalk, clay, or laundry powder. One Russian woman ate a box of chalk from the local elementary school every day; some 50 percent of Kenyan women eat clay; and many pregnant American women report overwhelming cravings for ice. Experts think pica likely stems from nutrient or mineral deficiencies like anemia.

Just as pica during pregnancy can reveal underlying health problems, so too our spiritual cravings reveal whether we are healthy spiritually. Are we “gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts” (v. 3)? Or are we living in a way that reflects the life we have in Christ?

Notice the description of people before conversion: dead, enslaved to the ways

of the world, disobedient to God, and deserving of God’s wrath (vv. 1–3). And then notice how it is possible that we move from death to life: “Because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions” (vv. 4–5). God’s love, mercy, grace, and kindness have done this for us!

We could not make ourselves alive. It is the gift of God (v. 8). This life in Christ changes our cravings from worldly desires to “good works” that bring glory to God (v. 10). Instead of desiring sin, we desire sanctification. Instead of pursuing disobedience, we pursue holiness. Instead of embracing death, we celebrate eternal life. Instead of pleasing ourselves, we want to extend God’s love, mercy, and kindness to others. God has made us alive in Christ, and that life permeates all the way down to the desires of our hearts.

APPLY THE WORD

Following God is not joylessly obeying a set of rules. Our desire for holiness follows from the work He has already done in our hearts, and He gives us new life because He is loving, kind, gracious, and merciful. If your joy for Jesus has waned, ask Him to “restore the joy of your salvation” (Ps. 51:12) and renew your focus on His goodness in your life.

PRAY WITH US

Dr. Junias Venugopal, provost and dean of Education, oversees Moody’s schools on all our three campuses. Today, he requests your prayers for the success of Moody Theological Seminary’s open house, Next Day, on Moody’s Chicago campus.

WEDNESDAY
APRIL

13

Clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.

Colossians 3:12

Raised with Christ

Toddlers and preschoolers love to play dress-up as part of their expanding imaginations. “I’m an alligator! I need my alligator suit!” said one boy, demanding his plush costume. “I’m a princess—that’s why I have a crown!” said a little girl. Whether playing superheroes, princesses, or animals, young children love to dress the part.

The apostle Paul uses the metaphor of dressing up or clothing ourselves in several of his letters (see also Eph. 6:10–18). Our text today provides us with a detailed list of exactly what we should take off and put on as evidence of our true identity.

First, Paul describes the thoughts, motives, and actions that we need to abandon. It’s important to notice the exhortation here: “Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature . . . rid yourselves of all such things” (vv. 5, 7). Though we now

have life in Christ, we still struggle with temptations of lust and greed and anger. We have been saved but not fully perfected; we continue to battle sin. The key distinction between our status as dead to Christ and now as alive to Christ is that we no longer want to persist in sexual immorality or rage. We are continually taking off these filthy old garments.

In their place, Paul encourages us to put on the perspectives and practices that reflect Jesus. Kindness, compassion, humility, gentleness, patience, forgiveness, and above all love should be the clothing we are choosing to wear (vv. 12–14; see 1 Cor. 13:13; Gal. 5:22–23). Life in Christ means pursuing peace and unity with each other. We demonstrate our new life through telling others about Him and singing His praises. Every aspect of life will become draped in service to Christ and gratitude to God (vv. 15–17).

APPLY THE WORD

The metaphor of changing our clothes to reflect our identity can help us avoid the twin pitfalls of feeling complacent about our sin and feeling defeated by our sin. Are you too comfortable in the dirty rags of greed or selfishness? Focus on the glorious garments of humility and gratitude. Thank God that now you can put on love.

PRAY WITH US

Frank Leber, vice president of Information Technology Services, invites you to pray for further development of computer and Internet resources at Moody. May we always honor God and serve His kingdom with the advantages of modern technology.

He has saved us and called us to a holy life.

2 Timothy 1:9

THURSDAY
APRIL

14

Called to a Holy Life

For the past week we've been examining what it means to know that we are alive in Christ. Our passage today brings together many of the themes we've seen in our study so far: first, being moved from death to life is a work that only God can do—we cannot do it for ourselves. Second, life in Christ transforms us completely, from our internal perspectives to our external actions. Third, our life in Christ is accompanied by purpose—being alive in Christ allows us to serve others and glorify God.

Paul wrote this letter that we're reading today to his spiritual son Timothy while imprisoned in Rome. This is the last letter from Paul that we have recorded in Scripture and likely one of the last he wrote before his execution. Though the Bible does not tell us about Paul's death, historians and church tradition have concluded that shortly after he wrote this letter, Paul was killed by

the emperor Nero as part of his wide-ranging persecution of Christians.

The apostle seems to know that he is coming to the end of his life (see his heartfelt words in 2 Tim. 4:6–9), and this letter includes the most important things he wants to tell Timothy. God, for His own purpose and out of His own grace, has saved us (v. 9). Though we may suffer in this world, we have faith that Jesus has defeated death and given us eternal life (v. 10). The promise of eternal life should compel us to live a holy life now while we have an opportunity to share the gospel (vv. 8, 12). The Spirit of God empowers us through His spiritual gifts to be filled with love and His power (v. 7).

Our life in Christ includes our promise of eternal life with Him and the call to a holy life now, empowered by His Spirit. What marvelous gifts of God!

APPLY THE WORD

You may not be facing imminent death, but Paul's example in this letter can be helpful for each of us. What would you say are the most important things in life? What would you want your loved ones to know mattered most to you? Consider writing a version of this spiritual "last will and testament" in your journal as a way of reflecting on your priorities.

PRAY WITH US

James Anderson, Richard McNeill, Steven Takushi, Tim Gauger, and Tim Canfield in Information Technology Services provide computer support to all departments on our Chicago campus. We thank the Lord for leading these qualified specialists to Moody.

QUESTION AND ANSWER

by Dr. Rosalie de Rosset, Professor of English, Literature, and Homiletics

Q Did God create others at the time He created Adam and Eve? The reason for the question arises from **Genesis 4:14**: “Today you are driving me from the land, and I will be a restless wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me.” Cain seems to be afraid of being murdered, and God puts a mark on him so that anyone finding him will not kill him. If Adam and Eve were the first created and Cain and Abel were the first offspring, who are these others Cain feels threatened by?

A Adam and Eve clearly were the first and only created beings in Genesis 1. And Genesis 2 states, “The LORD God made the earth . . . and there was no man to work the ground” (vv. 4–5).

By the time Cain was banished, however, several decades would have gone by. We know that Cain and Abel were adults, possibly in their 30s or 40s or even older, working in different areas of farming. Furthermore, it is almost certain that Adam and Eve gave birth to a number of children after Cain and Abel, fulfilling the command to “be fruitful and increase in number” (Gen. 1:28). All of these children, in turn, would have given birth to their own offspring. Cain, then, could have been under threat by his siblings and nieces and nephews.

Q I am wondering if God (as distinct from Christ) has emotions? I have heard some pastors and theologians claim that God has no emotions. It is very hard for me to think about or feel close to a kind of robot God.

A Some time ago, a number of theologians did articulate a doctrine known as the “impassability of God” in which they contended that God was without what they called “passions.” One could suggest that this stems from a fear that God would be seen as unstable because He had emotions. I myself have heard this teaching in classrooms. Such an image of God as what philosophers call an “unmoved mover” with little connection to us as human beings is more a product of Greek philosophy’s emphasis on the dualism between flesh and spirit than on biblical teaching. Such a God becomes remote, the proverbial white-bearded “man in the sky” looking at us indifferently from the heavenly balcony.

I recently heard a fine sermon by Erwin Lutzer, pastor of The Moody Church, on this subject and was heartened again to hear that the answer was yes, God does have emotions; the evidence for this is in Scripture. First of all, it is important to note that God’s emotions are not identical to ours; God is not

God does have emotions; the evidence for this is in Scripture.

subject to the dark side of emotions or to instability. As John Calvin said, God “lisps” to us in language we can understand. So the Bible tells us that He loves (John 3:16); He is grieved (Gen. 6:6); He becomes angry (Deut. 1:37); He is filled with pity (Judg. 2:18); He has compassion (Ps. 103:13); and He rejoices over us (Isa. 62:5), to name only a few. In the words of the old hymn, “The love of God is greater far / than tongue or pen can ever tell; It goes beyond the highest star / and reaches to the lowest hell. . . . It shall forevermore endure / The saints’ and angels’ song.”

Q **How far should a Christian go with political involvement? Some people say that this world is not our home and that we should just trust the Lord, looking ahead to what God has promised us eternally. Others seem to feel there is a place for Christians to protest against practices that contradict what the Bible clearly teaches, such as abortion.**

A As Christians we must search our hearts to know what each one of us is called to do and in what way. We were placed in this world to be witnesses for Christ in word and action. The idea of looking ahead to eternity does not avoid the difficulties of cultural life on earth. Living unaware, insular lives is never an option. We

cannot keep our service and outreach within comfortable venues. Any action, however, must be solidly based on scriptural truth and done for love of that truth. For example, the genocide of the unborn taking place on a regular basis in this country grieves God and should grieve us. Psalm 127:3 says, “Children are a heritage from the LORD, offspring a reward from him.” And Proverbs 6:16–17 notes, “The LORD hates . . . hands that shed innocent blood.” To deliberately end the life of an unborn baby is murder. Trying to persuade those who are contemplating abortion to choose otherwise and taking steps to show the horror of abortive practices—these are courageous acts when done with humility. Our desire should be both to protest against a societal evil and to protect life.

Protecting life could also include supporting organizations like Crisis Pregnancy Centers, which work not only to educate but also to care emotionally and practically for women who may think they have no other option to abortion. In these times, we have to take a good look at the courage that being a Christian demands, the kind of courage that is willing to pay a price.

FRIDAY
APRIL

15

There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

Romans 8:1

Free from Condemnation

Paul Geidel Jr. holds the record for the longest incarceration in the United States that ended with release from prison. Given a sentence of twenty years to life for second-degree murder in 1911 when he was 17 years old, Geidel was finally offered parole in 1974—and he declined. Having spent his entire adult life in prison, he wasn’t sure what to do or even where to go. At the age of 86, he finally accepted parole and is thought to have moved into a nursing home until his death.

For the next few days we’ll examine another feature of our identity as believers in Christ: we are free! Yet like Geidel, it’s tempting to remain imprisoned to our sinful habits and desires simply because they are comfortable and familiar. That’s why it’s so important for us to grasp what it means to be free in Christ.

Our reading today follows Paul’s extended explanation of the tension we experience as followers of Jesus who still wrestle with the temptation of sin (see Romans 7). If we are still struggling with our sinful nature, how can we possibly be free? The answer is that we’re now under a different legal system. We were under the “law of sin and death,” (v. 2), which condemned us to oppose God and pursue our own sinful desires (v. 7). But after salvation in Christ, we are under the “law of the Spirit,” which gives us new desires and sets us free to obey God.

The law of sin condemned us to death. But now we are free from that condemnation! Jesus died for our sins and defeated sin and death (v. 3). We are free to “live in accordance with the Spirit” (v. 5), and free to experience life and peace.

APPLY THE WORD

Geidel chose to stay in prison because he couldn’t imagine life outside the walls, and some of us feel the same way spiritually. We’ve grown comfortable with the chains of sinful habits, like refusing to forgive others or choosing to lash out in anger. Christ offers us peace, life, and freedom from that bondage. Ask the Spirit to sharpen your desire for spiritual freedom.

PRAY WITH US

As we continue in prayer for Information Technology Services, would you add to your prayer list William Eyerdom in the ITS Support Center on the Chicago campus? Please also pray for Jason Floyd in the Support Center on our Spokane, WA, campus.

Neither death nor life . . . will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus.

Romans 8:38–39

SATURDAY
APRIL

16

No Barriers to God's Love

Love—it has inspired music and poetry and countless fairy tales. Love is depicted as our greatest aspiration and most powerful force. As poet Maya Angelou said, “Love recognizes no barriers. It jumps hurdles, leaps fences, penetrates walls to arrive at its destination full of hope.”

Romantic love, parental love, friendship love—these all are indeed powerful feelings and motivations. Greater than any dimension of human love, however, is the love of God. And because of our identity in Christ, we are free to experience His love without hindrance or barrier.

Our text today describes the nature and action of God's love for us. God gave His own Son to die for our sins and raised Him from the dead (vv. 32, 34). God has chosen, called, and justified us through Jesus (vv. 29–30). God continues to work in our lives to

bring about good that blesses us and glorifies Him, and Jesus continues to serve as our advocate in heaven (vv. 28, 34). God's love is not simply passive feelings. His love is action that saved us and continues to bless us.

Nothing can separate us from this love. Whatever happens to us during our lives on this earth, it has no power over God's love. Opposition, persecution, suffering—none of these can extinguish God's love for us. And no spiritual powers will be victorious over God's love, either. Neither death nor demons can cause the love of God to cease (vv. 35–39).

Verse 31 sums up our response: “What, then, shall we say in response to these things?” God has made it possible for us to be free to accept and enjoy His love in Christ. How can we refuse this powerful, unbreakable, saving love, and how can we resist sharing the news of this love with everyone?

APPLY THE WORD

The truth is we don't always *feel* loving or beloved. Thank God that His love doesn't depend on our feelings! If you are experiencing life's difficulties, take time to thank God that no trial or challenge can stop His love for you. Thank Him for His continuing work for good in your life. Write verses 38 and 39 on a card to carry with you as a reminder of His love.

PRAY WITH US

Ken Heulitt, chief financial officer, would like to thank all Moody's friends for supporting Moody Global Ministries. He also invites you to pray that this year, as it has always been in the Institute's history, the Lord will be faithful in His provision.

SUNDAY
APRIL

17

The Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.

2 Corinthians 3:17

Freedom of the New Covenant

A country's constitution is the document that describes how the government will work and details the rights and protections enjoyed by citizens. After a two-year process, in 2014 Tunisia adopted a new constitution that protects freedom of religion, banning apostasy campaigns that previously permitted a death sentence for any Muslim charged with apostasy. The constitution also protects the rights of women under the law.

Believers in Jesus have been given the new covenant, which brings life and freedom through the Spirit. We are no longer bound by an old regime of sin and death. In the same way that a change in the Tunisian constitution enacted more freedoms for its citizens, the new covenant guarantees spiritual freedoms for believers in Christ.

The apostle Paul uses a rhetorical device in this passage that we might

call “from good to great” or “good compared to best.” The old covenant, established by God with His people through the Mosaic Law, was good. It was given by God (see Exodus 19). In receiving the Law, Moses also received part of the glory of God and had to veil his face in order for others to be able to look at him (vv. 7, 13). If the old covenant was good, then, we have confidence that the new covenant is even better.

The Law highlighted human sinfulness and how far we fall from God's glory, but the Spirit of God saves us from sin and allows us to be in a relationship with God (v. 6). The Law was always an external set of rules to govern behavior; the new covenant transforms our hearts, desires, and habits to change us into being more like Jesus (vv. 3, 18).

The new covenant means we now are free to know God.

APPLY THE WORD

Our cultural notion of freedom often means doing whatever we want. Biblical freedom, however, is so much better: It's the freedom to know God and have the desire to do what *He* wants. Thank the Lord today for the freedom to worship Him, read His Word, communicate with Him in prayer, and share His love with others.

PRAY WITH US

Please remember in prayer Moody Radio's engineers today: Joel Wright, Mark Williams, and Rodney Simon. They make sure all our broadcast equipment is up to date and well maintained, and we are thankful for their faithful service.

Through the Spirit we eagerly await by faith the righteousness for which we hope.

Galatians 5:5

MONDAY
APRIL

18

Jesus, the Vine

The 1995 film *Braveheart* portrayed a fictionalized version of William Wallace, a leader in the thirteenth-century Wars of Scottish Independence. Wallace rallies clans and armies in Scotland for the cause of freedom to repel the invasion of King Edward of England. At his execution in London, Wallace was given the opportunity to beg for mercy, but instead he roars the word most important to him: “Freedom!”

In our passage today, the apostle Paul is nearly roaring to the church in Galatia about the importance of freedom. If they don’t understand that they are free in Christ, they risk being “burdened again by a yoke of slavery” (v. 1).

Some in this church were claiming that adherence to the Mosaic Law—particularly circumcision—was required for Gentile Christians. Paul stresses that the core issue isn’t circumcision,

however; what is at stake is nothing less than grasping the reality of their identity in Christ. Salvation comes through belief in Him and His work, not through additional works that we do. This belief that our works, whether circumcision or good deeds or even church attendance, are necessary for our salvation is a lie that traps us in bondage.

Christ has freed us from the deception and drudgery of trying to do all the right things so God will love us. We are freed from the burden of insisting that others follow our rules in order to be right with God. That is bondage and death. Instead, we are free to have “faith expressing itself in love” (v. 6). We are free to love and serve others (v. 13). We are free to hope that God is making us righteous through faith in Jesus. Let us keep our focus on what Christ has done, and celebrate the freedom He has given us.

APPLY THE WORD

Notice the close relationship between freedom and love. Only because we are free are we able to love God and others. How can you express this love? Perhaps you could offer a special gift of your time or financial resources to express your love. Or a neighbor might need an encouraging phone call or help with household chores.

PRAY WITH US

We are proud of our students! It’s a privilege to pray for them today as they “study to show [themselves] approved unto God” (2 Tim. 2:15). Ask God to guide them by His Spirit to fulfill His calling for their lives.

TUESDAY
APRIL

19

In Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.

Romans 12:5

Different Gifts, One Body

The process of *whakapapa* is fundamental to the identity of Maori people in New Zealand. More detailed than a typical Western genealogy, *whakapapa* includes not only generations of ancestors but also references to the land and geography, as well as both historical and mythological stories. *Whakapapa* also refers to the oral recitation of these genealogies, which can stretch back fifty generations or more.

Western notions of the individual tend to inform the way that we view ourselves. We like the myth of the self-made man, the Lone Ranger, the soloist. We rarely think like the Maori, as part of an interconnected family that extends further than any of our memories. For the next few days we'll examine what Scripture has to say about this part of our identity. Are we spiritual Lone Rangers? Or are we an integral part of a spiritual family?

Our passage today uses the metaphor of a body to answer that question. Just as a physical body is comprised of individual parts—finger, toes, lungs, nerves, etc.—so too is the spiritual body of Christ composed of individual believers who are part of a whole. The apostle Paul pushes the metaphor further: different parts of the body serve different functions, and different members of the body of Christ have different gifts that are intended to serve and bless others (vv. 5–6).

Understanding our identity as part of the body of Christ protects us from two errors. One is thinking more highly of ourselves than we ought (v. 3). We are but a finger or toe, not the whole body. The other error is thinking too little of ourselves. We are a finger or toe that is vital to the health of the rest of the body. Our gifts matter to the Lord! (vv. 6–8).

APPLY THE WORD

One way to increase your awareness of being part of the body of Christ is by recognizing the ways in which the gifts of others have blessed your life. Celebrate them this week—send a note or email to thank those who have blessed you through preaching, hospitality, encouragement, leadership, or generosity. Thank God that you are not alone but are part of a body!

PRAY WITH US

We all appreciate the hard work of our Human Resources staff under the leadership of vice president Debbie Zelinski. We rely on them for many aspects of our work at Moody. Thank you for your prayers on their behalf!

*Give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord,
because . . . your labor in the Lord is not in vain.*

1 Corinthians 15:58

WEDNESDAY
APRIL

20

Coworkers in Christ

Recent research has found that relationships with coworkers are the most significant predictor of job satisfaction. A study from Tel Aviv University found the level of support from coworkers affected employees' health more than any other factor in the workplace.

When we are in Christ, part of our identity is “coworker.” We don’t have to be in full-time vocational ministry to be coworkers in Christ; we are spiritual colleagues with other believers based on our shared commitment to Jesus and His gospel. Our passage today provides a snapshot on the importance of being spiritual coworkers.

Paul asked the Christians in Rome to extend his greetings to dozens of his fellow laborers. Some names are familiar: many of us know Priscilla and Aquila, who worked with Paul and tutored Apollos (v. 3; see Acts 18), and

Timothy was one of Paul’s most faithful companions (v. 21). But most of the rest of these names appear only here. Why would Scripture devote so many verses to naming obscure people?

First, all of these people were important to Paul and were colleagues in Christ, even if they weren’t high-profile leaders. Fame doesn’t reflect value. Second, these verses highlight the importance of different people serving with their gifts. Deacons and apostles and church leaders are mentioned (vv. 1–7). Those with the gifts of hospitality and friendship are included (vv. 8–9, 23). People who worked hard behind the scenes are recognized, along with the ministry of Tertius, who supported Paul by writing this letter (vv. 12, 22).

Finally, this passage reminds us that even Paul needed the support of his spiritual coworkers. As our key verse says, this labor for the Lord is not in vain.

APPLY THE WORD

In a survey about the hardest part of being a missionary, half the respondents replied, “Getting along with other missionaries!” Christians are not exempt from tensions with colleagues in ministry. Pray for the leadership of your church, for cohesion and appreciation, and seek to recognize and appreciate the ministry of your coworkers in Christ.

PRAY WITH US

Today we continue to commit to prayer Moody’s Human Resources staff and ask that you pray for Alexander Wilson, Candra Garrett, Marcy Torres, and Mia Gale. Thank the Lord for their dedication to excellence in the workplace.

THURSDAY
APRIL

21

*You are the body of Christ,
and each one of you is a part of it.*

1 Corinthians 12:27

One Body Without Division

Basketball coach Mike Krzyzewski has won five national championships in three different decades. He describes his approach to building a cohesive team with the analogy of a fist: on their own, the five individual players on the court can't accomplish much. But when they come together and think of themselves as part of one whole, they can be powerful and effective.

We've already seen the apostle Paul use the analogy of the body in his letter to the Romans, and he includes it in his letter to the church in Corinth as well. Clearly this is a message that many Christians need to hear!

Notice several consequences that should result from our recognition of being a part of the larger body of Christ. First, our individual gifts matter and are needed by others. A body needs eyes to see and ears to hear; each part is

valuable (vv. 15–20). Second, we must understand that none of us can function properly apart from the rest of the body. What good is an ear lying on a table? How helpful is a severed foot? We must be joined to the body for our spiritual health as well as theirs (vv. 21–24).

Third, because we are part of the body of Christ, we should give and receive love and concern (vv. 25–26). We share in one another's joys and sorrows. We are part of each other's triumphs and sufferings.

Finally, this body functions only because the Spirit of God has created it (v. 13). We can take no credit for our particular gifts; all the glory belongs to God. Our responsibility is to use our gifts without pride or jealousy in order to serve the Lord and bless others. Then the body will be powerful and effective.

APPLY THE WORD

We usually express our gifts and serve others through smaller gatherings—in local churches. Are you part of a local church where you can share in the joys and sorrows of others? Are you using your gifts to strengthen that local fellowship? If not, look in your area for a church that preaches God's Word and puts love into practice.

PRAY WITH US

Moody's Human Resources employees, Peter Miller and Serene Hudson, are in our prayers today, as well as Lud Anderson who coordinates training and development on Moody's Chicago campus. Ask for God's blessing on their work at Moody.

*In Christ Jesus you are all children
of God through faith.*

Galatians 3:26

FRIDAY
APRIL

22

United as Heirs of God

Inheritance fraud is one of the most common scams perpetrated today. You receive notification that someone with your same last name (perhaps a distant relative?) has died without heirs. The so-called lawyers who sent the letter say that for a small fee to process some paperwork, the vast inheritance can be yours! But they keep requesting fees and bank transfer details and no inheritance ever arrives.

Thankfully, our identity as heirs of God is secure! We are heirs not because of how impressive our accomplishments are or because we have the right genetic profile—we are heirs because we belong to Christ (3:29).

Our passage today is filled with some of the most beautiful and profound statements about our identity. Through faith in Jesus, we are children of God (3:26). This familial relationship is more than just emotional connections of love

and care. It also has legal implications; as God's children, we stand to gain His inheritance (4:7). We have the Spirit of God within our hearts as confirmation of our status as heirs (4:8). Unlike the inheritance fraudsters who just want to take your money, God gives us the Spirit as a down payment on our inheritance. We have the Spirit dwelling within us now, and one day we will dwell with God fully, worshipping in His presence.

We often focus on ethnicity and gender and social status as the starting point for our identity. But notice how Scripture describes us. We are children of God, one in Christ Jesus, heirs (3:26–29). We are free, redeemed, and adopted as God's children (4:3–5). The categories we've used to judge others as the wrong race or wrong class must be thrown out. We are free from the burden and bondage of trying to make ourselves worthy. Jesus has redeemed us and God has adopted us (4:4).

APPLY THE WORD

Our inheritance of eternal life in God's presence awaits us. For now, while we wait, we have the Holy Spirit within our hearts. How does it change what you do and how you think of yourself if you focus on your identity as an heir of God? What becomes most important? If you are going to inherit eternity with God, what will you do in this life now to prepare?

PRAY WITH US

Join us in prayer for Moody's president, Dr. Paul Nyquist, whose ministry at Moody reaches people across the globe, cultures, and generations. We ask the Lord to guide him by the Holy Spirit and encourage his heart and mind.

SATURDAY
APRIL

23

In [Christ] and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence.

Ephesians 3:12

Eternal Purpose in Christ

In 1943 psychologist Abraham Maslow published a paper describing his “Theory of Human Motivation.” It became known as the hierarchy of needs, with basic human needs such as food, shelter, and safety forming the base of the pyramid, while self-actualization—the desire to be all you can be—was the pinnacle. In 1969 Maslow revised his theory to add another step beyond self-actualization: self-transcendence. He thought that the self could truly be actualized only when it was focused on a higher goal outside itself, whether that be spiritual or philanthropic.

Maslow seems to have realized that the human search for purpose can never be fulfilled by looking within ourselves. Thankfully, in Christ we are part of God’s eternal purpose. We are part of something beyond ourselves, and this eternal purpose transforms our lives even now.

Notice some themes that we’ve seen in other Scripture readings: in Christ, we are part of one body and heirs of God (v. 6). And then we are given a glimpse of the wonderful purpose of God, of which we are blessed to be a part. Through the church—that is, believers in Christ—God is making His wisdom and ways known to the spiritual powers (vv. 10–11). Amazingly, God the Creator of the universe and the King of kings and the Savior of the world uses our lives and faith in Jesus as a testimony in the heavenly realm!

Not only are we part of God’s glorious purpose, we also receive blessings now. We can approach God in freedom and confidence (v. 12). We are strengthened by the power of the Holy Spirit (v. 16). We are able to know and grow in the boundless love of Jesus (vv. 17–19). How wondrous to be part of God’s body, the church, and have eternal purpose and His love “that surpasses knowledge.”

APPLY THE WORD

Never think for a moment that your life is insignificant. You are part of God’s purpose, not just on earth but also in heaven before the spiritual powers! As a reminder, ask your friends, Sunday school class, or small group to commit to praying for each other using Paul’s words in verses 14 through 21. May we be strengthened in love for the glory of God!

PRAY WITH US

Mention during your prayer time Eugenia Jones, Frank Slomkowski, Heather Shalley, Timothy Krug, and Zerrekka Lloyd from the Financial Aid Office. Pray for clarity and grace in interacting with students and counseling them on their financial options.

*Those who are led by the Spirit of God
are the children of God.*

Romans 8:14

SUNDAY
APRIL

24

Spirit Living Within

The character Superman can fly faster than a speeding bullet and leap tall buildings in a single bound. But Superman uses the alter ego of mild-mannered reporter Clark Kent to veil his true identity. Clark Kent is unobtrusive, wearing inconspicuous clothes—until Superman needs to save the day. Then he hurriedly pulls off his dress shirt to reveal the large “S” emblazoned on Superman’s uniform.

For the rest of our study this month we’ll focus on the ways that we are blessed in Christ. An essential part of our identity is the blessing of the Holy Spirit, who indwells our hearts. Though we might look like everyone else around us, in reality we have the power of God’s Spirit in our lives, shaping our true identity to look more like Jesus. Unlike Superman and Clark Kent, however, we don’t have to keep our true identity a secret.

Our passage today connects themes that we’ve seen throughout our study: life, freedom, the family of God, and the Spirit. When we trust in Christ for the forgiveness of our sins, we are moved from death to life and from slavery to freedom (vv. 10–15). The Holy Spirit guarantees we will have eternal life, raised with new resurrection bodies just as Jesus was, and also gives us spiritual life now so that we are free to choose holiness instead of sin.

The Holy Spirit also confirms our identity as the children of God (vv. 15–17, 23). We know our adoption is certain, even while we wait for the day when we will dwell with God eternally in our resurrected bodies, because of the ministry of the Spirit in our lives. Even when we don’t know how to pray or what to pray for, the Holy Spirit is interceding on our behalf (vv. 26–27)!

APPLY THE WORD

Our true identity as believers indwelt by the Holy Spirit doesn’t mean that we are perfect. It does mean “the Spirit helps us in our weakness” (v. 26). Thank the Lord for His leading in your life, His intercession on your behalf, and His promise for your future. As you go about your day, reflect on the reality of having the Holy Spirit, freeing you to choose holiness.

PRAY WITH US

Collin Lambert, vice president of Moody Radio, requests your prayers for Moody Radio’s listeners across the globe. May the Lord continue to provide for the life-changing ministry of Moody Radio through the generosity of His people.

MONDAY
APRIL

25

*No matter how many promises God has made,
they are “Yes” in Christ.*

2 Corinthians 1:20

Answered Promises

Sophia Kichou was a homeless teenager who turned to Centrepont, a London organization that supports young people with housing and health care. Prince William is a patron of Centrepont; when she was 18 years old Sophia met him and shared her dream of becoming a journalist. The prince said he would give her an interview when she reached her goals. Last December, he fulfilled that six-year-old promise, inviting Sophia to Kensington Palace and giving her an exclusive interview.

Promises reveal our character. Do we make them quickly and forget to follow through? Or do we refuse to promise anything, unwilling to be bound by any commitments? As our text today tells us, God has made us many incredibly wonderful promises—and He fulfills them all in Christ.

The apostle Paul was facing charges from some in the church in Corinth

that he was fickle, untrustworthy, and unreliable. Part of their accusation seems to be that Paul had intended to visit the church on a trip to Macedonia, but he was unable to see them as he had planned (vv. 15–17). Paul appeals to the perfect plan of God as part of his defense. Even when our human plans are derailed, God’s plan and promise for us remain secure.

In Christ, God has redeemed us, sanctified us, and given us His Spirit (vv. 21–22). Because of these gifts, we can have confidence in His faithfulness. His plans are never thwarted. We can proclaim the good news of new life available in Jesus with full assurance that God will not change His mind or retract the offer.

We can stand firm in the gospel and live to glorify Him, knowing that all God’s promises are “Yes” in Christ (v. 20).

APPLY THE WORD

Have you been disappointed by someone in your life? Do broken promises litter your past, causing you sorrow and doubt? No one can perfectly keep every promise and meet every need—but God. Take your pain and heartache to Him, trusting His promise to one day wipe every tear and heal every wound (see Isa. 25:8; Rev. 21:4).

PRAY WITH US

Would you focus your prayers on Moody Radio’s KMBI station, broadcasting in the Northwest area? Its staff—Joe Gonzales, Chris Wright, Dee Marie, Gordon Canaday, Debbie Carollo, and Scott LaVell are grateful for God’s work in their listeners’ hearts.

Praise be to God . . . who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

Ephesians 1:3

TUESDAY
APRIL

26

Spiritual Blessings

For many years, the most-watched episode in every season of *The Oprah Winfrey Show* was “Oprah’s Favorite Things.” Usually airing around Thanksgiving, the episodes featured Oprah describing her favorite sweater or coffee maker or watch—and then giving the item away to every member of the studio audience. The total value of the “Favorite Things” gifts was estimated to be over \$23 million.

The gifts that we have from God are more extensive and more expensive than anything *The Oprah Winfrey Show* could ever give away. We have these blessings in Christ, who paid the penalty for our sin with His own life. He was raised by God and now serves as our Advocate in heaven (see Heb. 4:14–15; 1 John 2:1). And just look in our passage today at the list of ways God is blessing us!

God chose us and made us His children through our faith in Christ. He has lavished His grace in our lives and forgiven our sins. He allows us to be part of His great eternal purpose for all of creation. He gives us wisdom, understanding, and hope. We have the message of truth, and we have the Holy Spirit to confirm that all these gifts are truly ours. We have been given “every spiritual blessing in Christ” (v. 3).

Notice how many times the word *praise* occurs in this text. There is no better response to these amazing gifts than to offer our praise to God. Our words and songs of praise are fitting and appropriate for the Lord who has freely given us “his glorious grace” (v. 6). And our lives should also be a tribute of praise that brings glory to God (v. 12). Truly, in Christ we are a people who are blessed.

APPLY THE WORD

Consider how you can praise God for all His blessings. Perhaps you have a praise session in which you sing or listen to songs that glorify Him. Or you might choose to offer your gifts of volunteer labor or financial gifts to a ministry that serves underprivileged people. You could also share the message of truth with a loved one.

PRAY WITH US

Today and tomorrow, we invite you to pray for the ministry of WRMB, Moody Radio South Florida, and its staff—Audrey Altman, Brigitte Sylvestre, and Dolores St. George. WRMB is a trusted voice and friend in the lives of its listeners.

WEDNESDAY
APRIL

27

Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

Ephesians 4:32

Forgiven in Christ

In 2014, photographer Pieter Hugo traveled to Rwanda for a remarkable project: photographing perpetrators and victims of the 1994 genocide—together. Each photo includes a Hutu who has been forgiven by a Tutsi survivor. One survivor, Viviane Nyiramana, said: “He killed my father and three brothers. He did these killings with other people but he came alone to me and asked for pardon. He . . . helped me build a house with a covered roof. I was afraid of him—now I have granted him pardon, things have become normal, and in my mind I feel clear.”

We struggle to imagine the immense courage and strength it takes to forgive the murderer of your family—and yet our sins against God were even greater. Our entire beings were oriented toward rebellion against Him. And still, in Christ, the Lord has offered us His forgiveness. Our text today explores what it means for us to locate our identity as forgiven

people in Christ. First, we see a description of what our lives used to look like: sensuality, greed, bitterness, anger, and selfishness. Our hearts were opposed to God and our minds were ignorant of Him.

Because we are forgiven, our lives should be different now. Now that we know Christ and are in Him, we should replace lies and slander with truth and encouragement; instead of stealing we should be productive; instead of expressing rage and holding grudges we should offer kindness and compassion.

Finally, we are instructed to forgive others—not because it feels good or makes a nice story but because God has forgiven us. Our sin was great, but His love was greater. We have been “made new in the attitude of your minds” and we are to follow God’s righteousness and holiness (vv. 23–24). We have no excuse to withhold forgiveness.

APPLY THE WORD

As Pieter Hugo says, “Forgiveness is not born out of some airy-fairy sense of benevolence.” It is both free to give and costly to offer. If you struggle to forgive someone in your life, consider reading *Choosing Forgiveness: Your Journey to Freedom* by Nancy Leigh DeMoss (Moody Publishers), available online and in local Christian bookstores.

PRAY WITH US

Please add to your prayer list Eric Johnson, Jon Garrison, and Becky Borgstrom of Moody Radio station serving South Florida. We praise God for the powerful ministry of WRMB and for the dedicated service of the team.

God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 4:19

THURSDAY
APRIL

28

Needs Met in Christ

In 2013, the animated film *Frozen* was released—and within days, millions of parents heard the same refrain from their daughters: “I *need* an Elsa doll! I *need* an Elsa dress!” Stores quickly sold out their stock of *Frozen* merchandise, from dolls to costumes to lunch boxes. Two years later, Elsa dolls were still among the top five best sellers from online retailer Amazon.

Many of us think of praying for our needs in the same way: “God, I *need* a job! God, I *need* a car! God, I *need* healing from this disease!” Often our requests are reasonable; human existence does require food, shelter, health, and provision for our physical needs. And God welcomes our requests and cares about what happens to us. But notice that throughout our study of God’s blessings, we have not seen any of these items mentioned. Perhaps God’s perspective on our needs differs from our human viewpoint.

That helps us understand our reading today, which describes another dimension of our identity: our needs are met in Christ. If we understand our needs as merely what is required for our physical existence, then verse 19 might seem like a hollow promise. Millions of believers in Jesus have not had their physical needs met. They were not spared from the lions in the Roman Coliseum; they died in plagues; they lost jobs and health and children.

The clues to this promise can be found in the rest of this passage. The apostle Paul describes the contentment that results in trusting in God’s strength and the blessing of being cared for by his fellow believers (vv. 12–18). He notes the joy and peace that overflow in our lives when we are reminded of our identity in Christ (vv. 4–7). These are our deepest needs, and they are all met in Christ.

APPLY THE WORD

This text does not mean it is wrong to bring our requests to God for material needs or physical health. But it should shape our perspective for what God thinks are our deepest needs, and we should prioritize those requests. In your prayer time today, ask the Lord to meet your deepest needs for joy, contentment, and peace.

PRAY WITH US

Your prayers will be an encouragement to Greg Thornton who oversees Moody Radio and Moody Publishers as senior vice president of Media. Ask the Father to bless Greg’s leadership of these vital ministries.

FRIDAY
APRIL

29

Continue in your faith, established and firm, and do not move from the hope held out in the gospel.

Colossians 1:23

Rescued and Reconciled

Roman emperor Caesar Augustus understood the value of political propaganda. In addition to his military victories that ended a civil war and his extensive public works campaigns, he also commissioned poets to sing his praises. Virgil, who wrote the *Aeneid* in honor of Augustus, also penned these lines: “He shall have the gift of divine life, shall see heroes mingled with gods, and shall himself be seen by them, and shall rule the world to which his father’s prowess brought peace.”

Despite the lofty attributes ascribed to him by poets, Augustus did not in fact have divine life. But as we see in our passage today, there is One who is truly worthy of such lavish praise. The apostle Paul wrote a magnificent hymn of praise to Jesus, every word of which is true. This text also describes how our identity as blessed in Christ flows from His unique being and nature.

We’ll focus on two parts of our identity mentioned in this passage. First, we have been rescued and redeemed from the power of sin (vv. 13–14). We had no claim based on our own merit or qualifications to enter the kingdom of God, but we have been given this privilege based on the work of salvation that Jesus accomplished for us (v. 12).

Second, we are reconciled to God. We are often tempted to minimize the effects of sin and the curse, going all the way back to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden (see Genesis 3). Sin has driven a wedge between God and His creation, including humanity. But through Jesus’ shed blood on the cross, which paid the penalty of death for sin, we are able to be reconciled to God, reversing the curse (vv. 18–22). Truly, we are blessed, and He is a Savior worthy of praise.

APPLY THE WORD

This marvelous text merits deeper study. When you have time, read through this chapter again and make a list of every statement about Jesus, especially in verses 15 through 23. Then review the passage and highlight each time the phrase “in Him” occurs. What does this tell us about the person and work of Jesus? How does this make a difference in your life?

PRAY WITH US

Today, would you join us as we pray for the Moody Publishers editorial team—Elizabeth Newenhuyse and James Vincent? We thank the Lord for the team’s expertise and skills in acquiring and editing content.

*I am the Alpha and the Omega,
the Beginning and the End.*

Revelation 21:5

SATURDAY
APRIL

30

Eternity with Christ

King Louis XIV became king of France at the age of 4 and ruled for over 72 years, the longest tenure of any European monarch. During his reign, he consolidated power within the monarchy, in part by reducing the authority of some French lords over outlying territory. He would invite (or compel) the nobility to live instead at the Palace of Versailles, which seemed like a great honor but in fact was calculated to remove them from direct involvement with their lands and place them under his supervision.

Louis XIV, also called the “Sun King,” operated very differently from Jesus, the Son of God and King of kings. Jesus does have all power and deserves all worship—and yet He graciously invites people to share in the blessings of God’s family. As we see in our reading today, in eternity we will also be blessed to dwell with Him before His throne.

These chapters in the book of Revelation give us a glimpse of the end times, when Jesus will triumph over Satan forever and God will welcome us into the new heaven and new earth. The descriptions are almost too beautiful to imagine—not only the glorious gates of pearl and the dazzling gemstones but also the light and joy that result from sin’s final defeat. And remarkably, we will inherit all this because we have put our faith in Jesus as God’s Son and our Savior from sin (21:7).

This vision of the end times refers several times to the throne of God and the Lamb (see chaps. 4–5), and now at last everything will be oriented around God’s throne (22:1–3). We will be invited to dwell there, at the banks of the river of life and blessed by the light of God, worshiping the Son who reigns forever (22:4–5).

APPLY THE WORD

What are you most looking forward to in eternity?
Seeing loved ones who have gone on to heaven?
Healing from pain and suffering? A world free from the presence of sin and death? Worshiping God in person and dwelling in perfect relationship with Him forever?
All this will be ours—in Christ. Ask the Lord to shape your perspective today with this vision of your future.

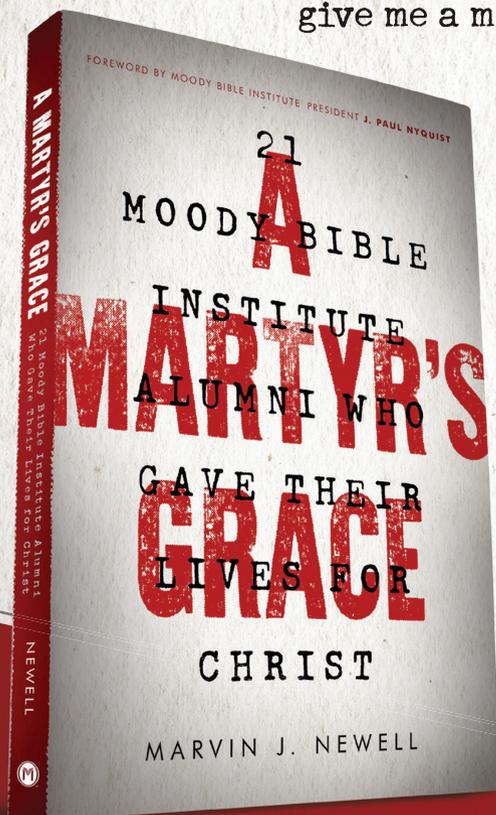
PRAY WITH US

As we come to the end of our study this month, let’s praise God for His love for each one of us and for transforming us every day into the image of His Son. As a new creation in Christ, let us rejoice in His victory over sin and death.

D. L. Moody was once asked,

“Have you grace
to be a martyr?”

“No,” he replied, “I have not. But if
God wanted me to be one, he would
give me a martyr’s grace.”



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