

Bible Challenge 2017

Week 37: September 10-16

Prayers: Psalm 105-106

Compared to the psalms that we have been reading lately, the last two psalms in Book 4 of the Psalms are rather lengthy. Yet, notice what both of these psalms are doing...they are recounting God's deliverances of his people. One of the themes we find repeatedly in the Scriptures is that of the importance of Remembrance...remembering God's name, remembering God's character, and remembering God's saving works. The principle is simple — when God's people remember God's faithfulness, they remain faithful. When God's people forget the faithful hand of God, they wander astray. Thus, the psalms especially, but elsewhere too, we find many recaps of the work that God has done and the insistence that we pass along the knowledge of those works to our children after us.

Gospel: Luke 11-12

Chapter 11 begins with the second of the instances of Jesus teaching the Apostles what we know as "The Lord's Prayer." It was a common thing in ancient times for a Rabbi to teach his disciples a prayer that was distinctive to their order. Here we see the Apostles asking for the same kind of thing — one of the disciples basically saying, John (the Baptist) taught his disciples a prayer, won't you do the same with us?

While there is much that we could say about this prayer, what follows is really more significant. Jesus gives his disciples the prayer, much as we saw in the Sermon on the Mount, but then he tells a parable and offers an analogy. The heart of the parable has to do with persistence in prayer and the analogy is a reminder that God desires to give his children good things, so we ought to lift up our requests in prayer. So, seek God in prayer. He answers...he does not always answer the way we might wish he would answer, but he always offers an answer. In that spirit, just as a father does what is best for his children (even if the children do not understand it at the time), so too our heavenly Father will do what is best for us (even when it is hard to see what God is doing through the trials and blessings he brings into our lives).

While these chapters contain a lot of rich teaching by Jesus, there are two passages that I want to draw your attention to. The first has to do with the "Sign of Jonah" being the only sign that "this generation" will receive. Of course, we know the account of Jonah, but what is the sign of Jonah? Jonah spent three days in the belly of the great fish (a symbol for the grave) and then arose from the fish alive — Jonah's account foreshadows Jesus' own death and resurrection. And that was the sign given to Jesus generation...a sign that largely was dismissed. Yet, just as there was a greater Solomon in the person of Jesus (a fulfillment not only of divine wisdom, but a claim to be the fulfillment of 2 Samuel 7:12-16), but there was a greater Jonah.

The second item that I want to draw your attention to is the language of not being anxious. It is familiar enough language, but it is my experience that Christians suffer from a great deal of anxiety when it comes to things out of our control...or more appropriately, we worry. The bottom line is, don't worry, it is in God's hand. In fact, Jesus states that only the pagans really have a right to worry because the things they worship are the works of their own hands and cannot answer their prayers.

Wisdom: Proverbs 20-21

"The righteous, who walks in his integrity — blessed are his children after him!" When I was growing up, I was always told that a good name is something that you inherit from your parents but that you can spoil in a moment...perhaps that is the reverse of this tidbit of wisdom from Solomon, who certainly gave his children every worldly advantage, though who did not walk in the integrity to which God called him. Sadly, this shows within the life of his sons.

Verses 22 and 23 of chapter 20 make an interesting combination. The first condemns vengeance and the second condemns unequal scales. We might be tempted to treat these verses independently of one another until we realize that when we seek our own vengeance, we invariably do so with uneven scales. Our human nature is not to allow the punishment to suit the crime, but to make the person who harmed us suffer more than we have suffered. Such is an example of uneven scales.

History: 1 Chronicles 23-29; 2 Chronicles 1

Though David was not permitted to build the Temple, God did permit him to accumulate items and plans for the Temple. We have already read of some of his preparations, but we begin our reading here with the organization of the Levitical Priests. Here, certain families of priests were given charge over different parts of worship, over different sections of the Temple, and even over the music that would be sung. Everything that would be required for the organization of Temple worship to operate was laid out by David, not just one of the great warriors of Israel, but who was also one of the great Administrators of the Bible.

The book closes out with David's instructions to the people and to Solomon and then with the anointing of Solomon as King and the death of David. All the negative things that transpired in the reign of David set to the side and David remembered as one of the great kings of Israel.

What follows in the book of Second Chronicles is the rise of Solomon to power as king...a rise that begins with worship and seeking God's blessing of wisdom or discernment...which is followed by wealth and influence.

Prophets: Hosea 11-14

"Ephraim feeds on the wind and pursues the east wind all day long..." As we wrap up the book of Hosea, we find a summary of God's frustration with the people...one that echoes Solomon's frustration with his own life as contained in Ecclesiastes — one cannot have much success trying to pursue the wind, shepherd the wind, or to find any substance in the wind. Ephraim (an analogy for God's people) is seeking after its own vanity rather than the humbleness of worship, and just as the wind is insubstantial, vanity is empty and hollow...nothing more.

Hosea 11 begins with words that are well known. "Out of Egypt I called my Son." Here, these words are used to reflect on God's deliverance of Israel from their bondage in Egypt. It would be cited by the Apostle Matthew to speak of God's calling Jesus out of Egypt...a reminder that Jesus' life taps into the corporate life of ancient Israel...he walked in the steps of God's people...literally.

As dark as this prophet's language is, he closes with a promise of hope — return and I will heal you (verses 1,4 respectively). How true it is that God holds out this promise to a disobedient people even today. Repent and follow me, he says.

Epistles: Titus 1-3; Philemon

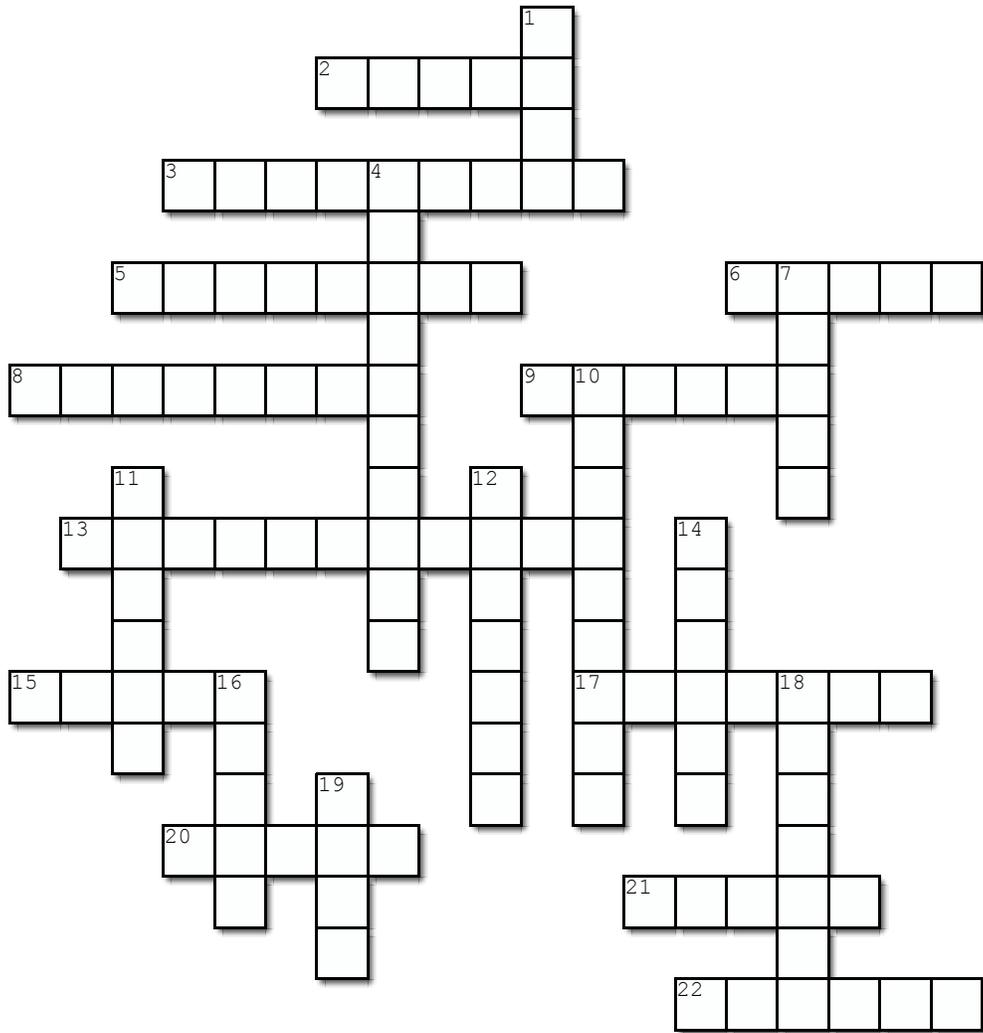
The letter of the Apostle Paul to Titus contains many of the same themes as does Paul's two letters to Timothy. In a nutshell, raise up Elders and here are the guidelines for those who will serve. Teach sound doctrine and live it out in life. And finally, be honorable because Christ has called you out of your sin to be his people. It is a great, succinct little book that contains a world of richness in its depth.

The final letter of the Apostle Paul that we have is the letter to Philemon on behalf of Onesimus. Onesimus was a slave that ran away to serve Paul. His master, Philemon, was a Christian, yet Onesimus is still in the wrong for failing to be faithful. So, Paul encourages Onesimus to return to Philemon, yet with a note pleading for his release, even if it were to cost Paul money.

Many have used this little letter to argue that slavery should be a tolerated institution in America today. Others have used this letter to try and discredit the Bible as the writings of men because a good God could never condone slavery in any context.

So, how do we respond to both of these errors? First of all, one must define terms. What does slavery mean? Yes, it does mean that one human owns another and has the right to compel them into service. Yet, slavery in Paul's day was a very different institution than slavery in the American experience. In Paul's day, one often was only a slave for a contracted number of years, he used it as a stepping stone, making business or political contacts by enslaving himself to an influential person. It was also not one ethnic group seeking to enslave another ethnic group. American slavery was none of these things, so we must be careful to differentiate.

WEEK 37



Created with TheTeachersCorner.net [Crossword Puzzle Generator](http://CrosswordPuzzleGenerator.com)

Across

2. One of the sons of Aaron who died because he brought 'strange fire.'
3. This group (whose ancient father rebelled against God) functioned as the gatekeepers to the Temple.
5. God said that he gave these through the prophets...he also gives this through his Son.
6. The way of man is right in his own eyes, but the Lord weighs the heart.
8. The man who was a slave to Philemon.
9. David assigned Levites areas of work to do once they turned this old.
13. This is one of the great themes found especially in the psalms.
15. What island was Paul sent to?
17. He seeks to chase the wind.
20. Titus was to send this lawyer to assist Paul.
21. This priest anointed Solomon.
22. 'No _____, no understanding, no counsel can avail against the Lord.'

Down

1. One of the men with Paul when he wrote to Philemon.
4. 'washing of regeneration and the renewal of the _____' (2 words).
7. God called his son out of this place.
10. When an unclean spirit passes from a person it passes through this kind of place.
11. Jesus warns of this from the Pharisees.
12. This kind of weight is an abomination to the Lord.
14. In the division of labor for the temple and kingdom, he is identified as 'David's Friend'.
16. What office does Paul give Titus qualifications for?
18. 'Do not be _____.'
19. Who offers to purchase Philemon's slave's freedom?