

## **Sunday Morning Starters:**

### **Sunday: The Beginning of Redemption**

“Now after the Sabbath, toward the dawn of the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb.

And behold, there was a great earthquake, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow.

And for fear of him the guards trembled and became like dead men.

But the angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here, for he has risen."

(Matthew 28:1-6)

## **Knee Mail**

We live in a communication age. Cellular phones, pagers, and wireless E-mail have made their way into our lives – in the car, in the restaurant, the elevator (even the worship service!) Communication is the bedrock of any relationship; it’s how we stay connected. Businesses collapse, marriage crumble, friendships die without it.

Why is it that we see its importance in every relationship but the one with God? We ought to strive for the same connection that Moses had with Him. “Thus the Lord used to speak to Moses face to face, just as a man speaks to his friend” (vs. 11).

Just consider what He has already communicated to you. A message 1,500 years in the making, preserved through every generation. Do you think it is enough to utter a few trite phrases in response? You’ve stayed up all night on the phone, when was the last time you stayed up all night on your knees? He has given everything. How can we get by giving nothing?

Aristotle is known to have said that a friend is “one soul in two bodies.” Perhaps he borrowed that idea from the great friendship passage: “the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David” (2 Sam. 18:1). How can we expect to have such a relationship with God when we don’t stay in touch with Him, when we don’t share ourselves with Him, when we don’t pour out our hearts to Him?

There’s no communion with God without communication.

- Bubba Garner

## A Plea For Purity

It is too easy to be bad in our day. There is no shame in ungodliness. Impurity is flaunted, applauded, and praised as normal – as American. There is no stigma attached to sexual perversion. Tolerance is the supreme virtue in our times. There are few social consequences to be suffered from indulging your appetites. We live in an age when it is more socially acceptable to live together than to smoke a cigarette. What are we to do?

**Keep our innocence.** “Be followers of God as dear children.” If it’s not fit for the children’s eyes, ears, and tongue, it’s not fit for your own.

**Watch our motive.** “Walk in love.” Love has an evil twin called Lust. They sometimes look the same and feel the same. True love is moral and intellectual at its base. It performs not what feels right but what is right.

**Ask, “What price?”** The Devil sells his wares at seemingly bargain prices. Men don’t consider that they cheapen Christ’s blood by their indulgence. “Christ also has loved us and given Himself.”

**Let then not be named.** Fornication, uncleanness, and covetousness are dirty words. They describe dirty deeds. We have heard them too often for too long. They are not fitting for saints.

In an age of easy sin, we need to build fences for ourselves – high fences, broad fences – that keep us from wandering into dangerous territory.

- Jason Moore

## Private Property

There are some things that are not to be shared. The sexual relationship of man and wife is one. It is for them alone. The wise man pictures it euphemistically as a private well or cistern.

Most wells in ancient cities were public domain. There were too rare to be owned privately. So the wise man’s image suggests what a privilege and rich blessing the union of man and wife is. The marriage bed is their wonderful oasis and one that unlike the public cistern is peculiarly their own private drink.

To open the cistern to strangers is to spoil the fountain, to pollute its waters, and to spill its streams into the streets. It renders the giver a betrayer of secrets and the taker a thief for having stolen a drink from that which belonged to another. There is no pretty picture of adultery. It is the worst kind of trespassing. There is no way to soften the sin of unfaithfulness. It is the most heinous kind of lie, the most contemptible violation of trust.

But how charming is the picture of the secret well that is enjoyed by the man and woman joined by God. How romantic is the rural image of the stone well and wooden bucket from which only two lips dare to drink. Be sure and post by yours a sign with large letters, easy to read, “Let your fountain be blessed, and rejoice with the wife of your youth.”

- Jason Moore

## Real Faith

What is faith? Is it trusting in God? Precisely. But it's trusting in God not just when the barn is full but especially when the barn is empty.

What's faith? Is it believing God answers your prayers? Yes sir. But it's still believing when His answer is, “No,” or “Not yet,” or when His answer is not forthcoming.

Explain faith. Is it obeying God? Certainly. But especially is it obeying God when there are consequences to suffer, enemies to face, storms to weather, and when you walk the pathway of duty alone.

Faith? Is it attending the services? Surely. But also attending the services when another venture competes for your attention and perhaps when brethren pay you no mind.

Faith. How do you measure it? By the dollars you place in the collection plate? Perhaps. More so when you like the widow give from your poverty.

What is *real* faith? The prophet said that the test of real faith is that it's still there when spring never comes, when the harvest fails, when the land is barren, when the stalls are empty and the well is dry. When life is void of all comfortable reasons to believe, and faith persists, you know you've got it. That's hard. That's real hard. That's faith. Real faith. It's the real thing.

- Jason Moore

## **A Golden Deed**

In the final chapter of this great epistle, Paul sent some greetings to the members of the church in Rome. They are not the people who would make up the All-star Team; for most of them, it's the first and last time they're ever mentioned. But they are mentioned nonetheless. In some way, small only in their own eyes, they contributed to the cause of Christ.

The kingdom of God cannot thrive without those who enter the stage, play their part, and then quietly exit. They go about their work without much fanfare, seeking only the approval of God. They don't feel like they've done much, but they have captured the attention of heaven and will have their names mentioned in the Lamb's book of life.

Phoebe, “a helper of many.” Paul asks the Christians in Rome to receive her, as she was probably delivering the letter to the church. She had long come to the assistance of her brethren, a servant in the truest sense of the word.

Priscilla and Aquila, who “risked their own necks.” The image is that they put their heads on the chopping block, ready to sacrifice their lives for life eternal.

Tryphaena and Tryphosa, “workers in the Lord.” You just have to think that these two tried really hard. And what about Persis, “who has worked hard in the Lord,” and Rufus, a “choice man in the Lord.” Can you think of a better commendation?

They're all heroes in my book. May God increase their tribe.

- Bubba Garner

## Courage For The Disciple

It is the disciple's aim to imitate the Master's life. But following His cue means inheriting His reproach. If men possessed the gall to persecute the Master, they will not leave His servants unattended. But take courage. There is assurance for the disciple who suffers reproach.

**The sufferings of the saints will not go unnoticed.** It's a promise. “There is nothing covered that will not be revealed, and hidden that will not be known.” The Lord keeps an eye out for His own.

**The worst of all fates is the least of all worries.** It's a promise. Even if the life of a disciple is snuffed out because of his testimony of the gospel, he has merely hastened his reward. “And do not fear those who kill the body...but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.”

**The least of disciples is of more value than the least creature.** Yet even the most common of *them* is not forgotten. Not even one sparrow among a thousand “falls to the ground apart from the Father's will.” If the sparrow's fall gains His notice how much more the passing of the faithful?

**To know the Savior is to be known of Him.** “It's a promise.” “Whoever confessed Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father.”

I have one difficulty with these assurances – how easy is our cross. Makes me nervous about our service when we encounter so little resistance.

- Jason Moore

## Sunday Morning Starters:

### Practical Pointers From Proverbs

“The backslider in heart will be filled with the fruit of his ways, and a good man will be filled with the fruit of his ways. The simple believes everything, but the prudent gives thought to his steps. One who is wise is cautious and turns away from evil, but a fool is reckless and careless.”

(Proverbs 14:14-16)

Three good rules to apply to your listening:

1. **Keep working.** The backslider’s bucket is filled too early, but a good man is not content until he’s digested what he’s heard.
2. **Watch your step.** Don’t leave your bible study to the preacher. The simple believe every word – check it for yourself.
3. **Check your pulse.** Don’t hasten to put the worst construction on what is said. You have no right to disagree until you’ve first understood what is said.

Get Wisdom. She’ll help your hearing.

- Jason Moore

## How Submission Honors God

Although this section of Scripture is meant to teach lessons about the church (vs. 32), it has one overriding sentiment, submission.

“Submitting yourselves to one another in the fear of God,” it says. In the rest of chapter five and into chapter six, he cites the areas of this submission.

**Wives are to submit to their husbands.** God’s law of order was set forth at the beginning (See I Cor. 11:2). The husband is to be the spiritual head of the house. The wife is to be his “help meet.” In connection with her salvation she has no higher calling.

**The husband is to submit to the role God has assigned.** He is to see that the family is what it ought to be; this begins by loving his wife as he ought, in the same way that Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it.

**Husbands are to submit to their role as fathers.** It’s the responsibility of fathers to nourish their children, bring them up in the admonition of the Lord. To fail to do so is to fail to submit to God’s law.

**Children are to submit to their parents.** Loving father and mother is the beginning of that submission. Children are to respect and honor them, as they would God. They do so “that it may be well with thee.”

Let each submit himself to his role and things will go well.

- Dee Bowman

## Salt of the Earth

Jesus referred to this account with a simple statement, “Remember Lot’s wife” (Luke 17:32). Notice that He didn’t have to say, “Remember Lot’s wife, the one who became a pillar of salt.” They knew her story. They may not have known her name, but they knew her lot in life. Still, they continued to turn back from God. In reflecting on this story, Jesus wanted them to remember that:

**God does not ask the impossible.** There was nothing too difficult about what He commanded Lot’s family. “Escape for your life! Do not look behind you” (vs. 17). That was simple and straightforward, without room for misunderstanding. He didn’t require them to do something they were incapable of doing. His commandments do not create burdens, they lift them.

**God does not give partial credit.** Lot’s wife almost got it right. She escaped for her life, she left the city, but she looked back and became a pillar of salt. With God, there is no such thing as partial obedience; to obey in part is to disobey. You can’t pick and choose parts of His law and discard the rest. Do it all or you have done nothing at all.

**God does assess punishment on those who disobey.** She became a *pillar* of salt. This woman became a testimony to all generations of what happens when you disobey the commandments of the Lord. “It is our business to see that we do right. God will see that we come out right” (Donald Barnhouse). In due season.

- Bubba Garner

## **Pondering A Proverb**

Proverbs teach us general truths about life. They are stated in memorable ways; sometimes they are subtle, sometimes brutally frank. The section we have just read is right to the point and deserves our careful attention.

Ideally, fathers and mothers give instructions intended for the good of the children, so those instructions are to be regarded highly. He charges that they are to be bound to the heart of the child and tied about his neck, an obvious reference to making sure the instructions are near when they're needed. When Jesus was tempted, He answered each of Satan's temptations by saying, "it is written." He had the word available when the situation called for it.

Solomon says that if that word is near, it will keep you, no matter the circumstances. He further states that "it will talk with thee," indicating that His word is proper fodder for contemplation. Right thinking produces right actions, for "as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he."

He then cites the effectivity of the word in three figures, each beautiful in its own right: He says it is a lamp, to light our way. It is a light, furnishing the illumination need to work and worship. It is a reproof, giving the proper discipline so that we stay straight.

It is a proper proverb to ponder, don't you think?

- Dee Bowman

## Star Search

Some have speculated that Psalm 8 was used in nightly temple worship. The congregation may have looked into the heavens and sung, “when I consider...the moon and the stars, which Thou hast ordained” (vs. 3). The starry sky is still a source of contemplation and instruction.

**God is.** Have you ever looked at a sunset and heard someone say, “I don’t know how anyone can see that and not believe in God?” That’s because the heavens are telling the handiwork of their Maker. There can be no design without a Designer, no order without an Orderer, no creation without a Creator. These things are “clearly seen” (Rom. 1:20).

**Man seems rather small in comparison.** When you consider the arrangement of the universe it’s easy to think you’re insignificant in the grand scheme of things. “What is man” (vs. 4) that God has show favor to Him? That Hebrew word for *man* means “frail man,” describing his weakness in his own eyes.

**But man is greater than matter.** He is the climax of creation. He has been made a little lower than the angels, crowned with glory and majesty, made to rule over the very moon and stars that first caused him to contemplate his role. The mountains, the seas, the animals are all majestic in their own way, but they are not made in the image of God.

What response should this evoke in him? Not pride, not ambition, not arrogance. Humility. “O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is THY name in all the earth” (Vs. 9). The glory goes back to God.

- Bubba Garner

## **Lesson From A Donkey**

We don't often think about God's grace being expressed in discipline. We usually think of God's blessings in a positive fashion when we think of grace. But sometimes God shows favor to man when He disciplines. He did in the case of Balaam.

Balaam was behaving stubbornly – so stubbornly that God used his donkey to rebuke him. The alternative to the donkey's reproof of Balaam was for the angel to slay the disobedient prophet. Yet God in His grace spared his life and used the occasion to teach Balaam a needed lesson.

The Apostle Paul learned this same lesson when he prayed three times for the Lord to remove his “thorn in the flesh.” The response came back from the Lord, “My grace is sufficient for you.” This thorn in the flesh which was a curse to Paul was actually a gift of God's grace to keep Paul “from exalting himself,” from losing his humility.

You may run into some walls today or come across some bumps in the road or some blockade to your path. Don't be overly sensitive to such hindrances to your progress. We have no revelation from donkeys or from men to guarantee that our trouble is divinely sent. But there are certainly some difficulties we will encounter that are the product of our Father's gracious discipline. Don't despise such lessons. They'll keep you in the right path.

- Jason Moore

## Jesus: Provision Of God For Man

The story of Jesus is the most pensive and poignant story of all time. It is filled with joy and pathos, joy and sadness, defeat and victory. In it is the joy of our salvation, the assurance of our victory, the hope of our souls.

The story here is sad, because Judas comes and betrays the Lord by, of all things, a kiss. Jesus is led away as if He were a common criminal. Peter strikes the servant of the high priest, cutting off his ear. Jesus rebukes the action, stating it interfered with the plan of God for man's redemption in accordance with the scriptures.

Perhaps the saddest thing of all is that “all the disciples forsook him, and fled.”

Jesus' purpose for coming is predicted in Isaiah 53. “Yet it pleased the Lord to crush Him; He hath put Him to grief: when Thou shalt make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed...He shall see of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied: by His knowledge shall My righteous servant justify many for He shall bear their iniquities” (vss. 10-11).

God's goodness is indescribable, His mercy unfathomable, His grace incomprehensible. He have His Son and His Son gave His life. “But all this was done that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled” (Matt. 26:56).

Think some today about the noble sacrifice Jesus made on your behalf. It will do you good.

- Dee Bowman

## Sunday Morning Starters:

### Practical Pointers From Proverbs

“A man of quick temper acts foolishly, and a man of evil devices is hated. The simple inherit folly, but the prudent are crowned with knowledge. The evil bow down before the good, the wicked at the gates of the righteous. The poor is disliked even by his neighbor, but the rich has many friends. Whoever despises his neighbor is a sinner, but blessed is he who is generous to the poor.”

(Proverbs 14:17-21)

Work on these and you'll be wise today:

- **Be peaceable.** Those soon angry are foolish. Peacemakers are most like the Son. “They shall be called *sons of God*,” Jesus said.
- **Be inquisitive.** Hungering and thirsting for righteousness is an acquired appetite. Work at it, because “the simple inherit folly.”
- **Be good.** It may not seem so from the headlines, but the evil will some day “bow before the good.” In fact, “every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess” before the good God.
- **Be merciful.** Know someone who needs a friend? Don't ignore them – he that despises his neighbor sins.

Get Wisdom. And character will follow.

- Jason Moore

## Being Graceful

Amazing Grace is probably the most well known hymn of our time. It was written by John Newton, whose life story is summarized on his tombstone. “John Newton, once an infidel, a servant of slavers in Africa, was by the rich mercy of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, preserved, restored, pardoned, and appointed to preach the faith he had long labored to destroy.”

What is it that makes grace so amazing?

**The source.** It is the “grace of God.” It was *God* who so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son (John 3:16). It was *God* who made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf (2 Cor. 5:21). It was *God* who found us dead in our sin and made us alive together with Christ (Eph. 2:5). Faith, repentance, confession, and baptism are all eternally important. But they mean nothing without grace, the gift of God.

**The accomplishment.** “The grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation.” Grace is truly amazing, because of what it delivers – forgiveness of sins, redemption, pardon, justification. All who are searching for life’s eraser or rewind button need look no further.

**The scope.** “Bringing salvation to all men.” It becomes more and more amazing when you consider that grace can save even “a wretch like me.” No matter who you are or what you’ve done, there is no sin so great that it cannot be covered by the grace of God.

You know the song; do you know the Savior?

- Bubba Garner

## Jesus Calls

Jesus’ calling of the apostles is interesting. He called all kinds of men, unlikely men. He called fishermen, a tax collector, even an insurrectionist. With these few simple men he “turned the world upside down,” with the message of the Lord.

Today’s reading tells how He called Philip and Nathanael. It’s an interesting story because of what you can read between the lines.

**Philip followed without question.** There was no excuse, no turning back to get something left behind, no waiting until it was more convenient to do so. He was called and he went.

**“Philip found Nathanael.”** His first thought was to find one whom he loved and share with him the good news. He “found” Nathanael indicates there was some inconvenience in doing so; but he was willing to do whatever was necessary to find him and tell him what he had found.

**Philip shared the good news.** He said, “we’ve found the one who was promised by Moses and the prophets, we’ve found the Messiah.” He was not ashamed of what he had found, but excited about it. Nathanael was somewhat dubious it seems. “Come and see!” Philip said.

We need to be like Philip. We need to follow no matter what; we need to find those whom we love and introduce them to the Savior; and we need to share the good news whenever and wherever we have the opportunity.

Will you do it today?

- Dee Bowman

## Overcoming Revelation

“What is the book of Revelation about? The Lord and the devil get into a fight. The Lord wins” (Joe Wiltshire). I don’t mean to oversimplify one of the more difficult books of the Bible, but if we can just remember that simple summary, we can better grasp its meaning and its message to every Christian.

Revelation is a New Testament book about Jesus Christ just like Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. It contains letters to the New Testament churches just like Romans, Corinthians, Galatians and Ephesians. The difference is that it is written in a style of literature called *apocalyptic*. This type of writing tells the future using signs, symbols and visions.

We *can* understand the book of Revelation. It is a message from God written in a special code to His people who were suffering persecution. His purpose was not to cover up the truth but to unveil and reveal it, as the name of the book suggests. The early Christians would have been very familiar with all of the imagery and symbolism, but the enemy, were it intercepted, would not be able to comprehend it.

As with every inspired book, we must be careful not to take it out of context and apply it apart from its original audience. But we can take comfort in knowing that the same message of victory in Jesus to the 1<sup>st</sup> Century Christian is available in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and beyond.

Let us read, hear and heed the things written in this book (1:3).

- Bubba Garner

## Idols Of Our Age

It is a marvel that men even served idols. It is even more a marvel to read of the distinguished believers who fell prey to the folly of idolatry. Even Solomon, the wisest man of his age, succumbed to the practice. Men of lesser wisdom should take warning and observe the idols of our day.

**Myhobby.** He is the god of leisure. The god of simple pleasures gone to seed. The vestigages of his worship are the deer lease, the fishing boat, the woodshop, the golf course, the latest computer upgrade. There is nothing wrong with leisure, but we live in a time when folks are fat with leisure while their religion is anorexic.

**Morestuff.** He is the god of things. Bigger barns. Better cars. Louder speakers. Clearer pictures. Faster hard drives. The evidence of his duping of mankind is excessive credit. Men are slaves to indebtedness. They work not to share but to meet their minimum monthly payment. They have not the time or the means to invest in heavenly treasure because men cannot serve two masters.

**Imbusy.** He is the god of the jet set, a people who are preoccupied with their own schedules. There is no nobility in being so busy that there is not time for God, for worship, for family. Good intentions won't do. That's the reason men worship idols. They expect less of you. They'll settle for excuses. Jehovah expects the best of your time and your person, not the leftovers, not lame sacrifices.

- Jason Moore

## You Can Slay A Giant

It is sad indeed that this great story has been relegated to the little people’s classes. It has such important information for people of all ages – certainly for the little people, but for the big people, too.

Let me give you three quick things to learn from David’s battle with the Gathian Giant, Goliath:

**David went and did what he could with what he had.** He quickly saw that he could not use a king’s armaments, but he knew for a certainty how to use a shepherd’s sling. The moral? Take what you have and put it to work in the kingdom. You, too, can slay a giant.

**David put his trust in God, not men’s equipment.** “This day the Lord will deliver thee into my hands,” he told the giant. The sooner we see that we are incapable of doing what we need the sooner we will put our trust in God. We should not turn to Him as a last resort, but, like David, as a first one.

**David decided what he needed to do and then did it enthusiastically.** The scripture says, “David hastened, and ran to meet the Philistine.” There was no hesitancy, no waiting around. When he decided what God wanted him to do, he want and did it.

Trust God. He will overcome. Spend no time on man’s methods or man’s plans; they don’t work well. But God’s never fail.

Slay a giant today. You can do it.

- Dee Bowman

## A Wee Little Man

The meeting of Zaccheus and Jesus is one of my favorite in all the Bible. The lessons abound.

**Jesus sees the little people.** Zaccheus was a wee little man. He was small in the eyes of the multitude who saw his occupation and knew of his wealth and so despised him. But he was not too small for Jesus to see and for Jesus to visit.

**Jesus knows our names.** Zaccheus knew who Jesus was. Everybody did. How surprised he must have been to have Jesus address *him*! How surprised we might be to know how often we're on God's mind. In fact we've been on His mind since before time began.

**Jesus watches for those who are looking for Him.** The multitudes came to see Jesus, but Zaccheus went farther. Perhaps we should take warning when we're only willing to go as far as the majority to see Jesus. Zaccheus went farther and Jesus found him.

**Jesus walks with those who suffer for Him.** The crowd spoke disparagingly of Zaccheus, but also of Jesus. “He's gonna eat with a sinner,” they said. Their criticism became Zaccheus' cue to unashamedly confess his resolve to fit himself for the Master's company. Deserved or not he took the rap and suffered loss for the sake of Jesus' reputation. Jesus is not ashamed to call such sinners His own.

- Jason Moore

## **Sunday Morning Starters:**

### **Sunday: The Beginning of Proclamation**

“When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place.

Peter, taking his stand with the eleven, raised his voice and declared to them, ‘Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, this Man, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death.

But God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power. Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured forth this which you both see and hear.

Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ – this Jesus whom you crucified.”

(Acts 1:1, 14, 22-24, 33, 36)

- Bubba Garner

## Wonders Never Cease

“How long, O Lord?” was the wondering of the persecuted saints. Wasn’t God aware of what was happening to His people? They were being arrested, convicted, and banished from the synagogues and cities. There were beaten, shot through with arrows, and tortured. Some were enclosed in sacks full of scorpions and poisonous snakes. Others were covered with fresh animal skins and thrown to wild dogs. Still others were nailed to a cross. Nero was known to have burned them at the stake to provide light during his nightly garden parties.

They must have thought, “God is no where.” Revelation was written to assure the, “God is now here.” He has not lost control but still reigns from His mighty throne. Even when the opposition possesses some authority, they are never more powerful than He who spoke them into existence.

There will be times when you ponder, “where is God?” When the wicked prosper and righteous suffer, when a baby dies or a teen is taken in the prime of life, when it seems the scales of justice are weighed against us. In all that appears unfair about life, remember that the Lord is still on His throne. He has not abandoned His children but is patiently working a plan whereby everything will be made beautiful in *His* time. He is now here.

We haven’t heard the last of these souls under the altar. At the end of the book, they come to life and reign with Christ (20:4). Such is the hope for all who put their trust in Him.

- Bubba Garner

## Somebody Is Watching

This reading comes in the context which was begun in 5:21, “submitting yourselves to one another in the fear of the Lord” (see August 10). It has to do with people submitting themselves to their various roles. In this section Paul encourages servants and masters about their roles. In essence, he says:

**Serve even if nobody’s looking.** We don’t perform our service just to be seen, but because we have agreed to it. Our agreement is with God. We agreed to serve Him, so we best do it. And not “just to be seen of men,” either. Remember, God has an *all-seeing eye*.

**Proper service to men is tantamount to serving God.** Verse six, again, please. We don’t do it with mere eye-service, but “*doing the will of God from the heart.*” That means when we serve, we are doing His will, not just the will of our employer. And we do it *from the heart*, with good conscience.

**Such service is necessary for the boss, too.** “Do the same things to them,” he says. Right is right, if you are the boss or the lowest man on the payroll. True is as true for the boss as for the employee. After all, they have a Master to whom they must give an account; and it isn’t the board of directors, it’s God almighty.

Man is responsible to God for his actions, no matter his situation in life. Even when nobody’s looking.

- Dee Bowman

## Practical Advice For Today

Wisdom demands adherence to truth; and truth runs through all areas of life. It takes truth to have a truly happy life, to maintain a sweet spirit, to entertain the highest hope. Wisdom and truth are connected so that what is true may be wisely used.

“The desire of the righteous is only good” is saying that righteous people seek only good. “The expectation of the wicked is wrath” speaks to the destiny of one devoted to evil. Notice that both “desire” and “expectation” are cited. Together, they form hope. The righteous person has the hope of good to come, the wicked may expect only wrath.

Solomon says the person who distributes to those who have needs will be made full himself, while those who withhold from the needy will be cursed by the people on account of his stinginess.

Those who put confidence in riches are apt to fall into a snare, for “riches make themselves wings” (Prov. 23:5). On the other hand, the person who trusts in righteousness will be paid a dividend far above this world’s riches.

Finally, the wise man states who is really wise, wise above the wisest. Says he, “he that winneth souls is wise.” It is a superior thing to win those to the Lord who might not have come otherwise. A wise man will not withhold from them that choicest of all blessings.

Think about these things today: wisdom, riches, souls.

- Dee Bowman

## The Promise Fulfilled

This passage is special because it was the theme taken by Peter on the day of Pentecost when the first gospel sermon was preached. It was a prediction that was to come true on this special day, a day when the kingdom of God came with power. It is a microcosm of God's plan of salvation.

**First**, it predicts God's outpouring of the Spirit through the apostles. This outpouring is certainly seen in the miracles at Pentecost (cf. Acts 1:2-4). The apostles spoke in tongues they had not learned. When the people were astonished at that, Peter assured them saying, "this is that..." and he quotes Joel 2:28.

**Second**, it was not just the signs that bore testimony to the outpouring of the Spirit. The apostles "began to speak as the Spirit gave them utterance" (Acts 2:4) so that all present heard "in our own languages the wonderful works of God" (Acts 2:11).

**Third**, the *fulfillment* of the promise in Joel 2 is wonderful beyond our dreams. "I will pour out of my spirit on all flesh," it stated. Peter said, "for the promise is unto you and your children, and to those who are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." Those whom He calls are those who "call upon the name of the Lord" (Joel 2:32, Acts 2:39, Acts 22:16), be they Jew or Gentile.

This is a wonderful promise, its assurance a hope to cherish today.

- Dee Bowman

## **Not So Little Lamb**

The Lord goes to great lengths to describe the enemies of the Lamb. A sea beast who has ten horns, seven heads, the body of a leopard, the feet of a bear, the mouth of a lion (13:1-10). A land beast who speaks as a dragon and makes fire come down out of heaven (13:11-18). A great dragon who, with one swipe of his tail, swept away a third of the stars of heaven (12:3-4). And a woman on a scarlet beast, holding a golden cup full of her immoralities and abominations. Reminds me of some wise advice; “never get in a fight with ugly people, they have nothing to lose.”

Of course, these descriptions are figurative, but imagine what they figure! Power, authority, influence, experience. Who are we going to send to fight them, who will be able to withstand them, who will deliver us from their grasp? “These will wage war against the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, because He is Lord of Lords and King of Kings” (vs. 14).

You have your own battles to fight. Your own beasts, monsters, and giants. Some addiction, some anxiety, some temptation. All of us wage war against the devil and his devices. But he seems pretty small next to the Lamb of God. For He has already crushed the head of our enemy and sounded the victory with His blood. I want to be on His side.

“Those who are with Him are the called and chosen and faithful.” Are you with the Lamb? Or are you with the dragon?

- Bubba Garner

## He Is Risen!

We revere those "three little words:" *I love you*. Some say these are the most beautiful in any language. Not so. The three most beautiful words ever to fall from the lips of any being were stated by the angel on Christ's resurrection morning: "**He is risen!**"

The significance of that statement is astounding and powerful. It speaks to our needs, states our hope; it powerfully expresses our expectations.

If "He is risen" is so, then who He was is so. If "He is risen" is so, then what He said is so. If "He is risen" is so, then there is a heaven and a hell, a God and a devil, a good and a bad.

If "He is risen" is so, our salvation is more than a mere dream, but a very possible reality. That means we can entertain the thought of the resurrection of the body with great anticipation and inexpressible joy.

If "He is risen" is so, it behooves us to listen carefully to the words of that resurrected One when He said, "Not everyone that calleth Me Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of My Father..." (Matt. 7:21). That's serious, folks.

He indeed is risen. We can trust what He said, put our total confidence in His promises. Take those three little words with you today and let them ring in your heart several times as you go along.

- Dee Bowman

## **Sunday Morning Starters:**

### **Practical Pointers From Proverbs**

“A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches, and favor is better than silver or gold. The rich and the poor meet together; the LORD is the maker of them all. The prudent sees danger and hides himself, but the simple go on and suffer for it.”

(Proverbs 22:1-3)

Three points to determine your bearings today.

“**A good name is better than riches.**” So what if the world doesn’t know you. The Lord does.

“**The rich and poor meet together.**” The only thing of real value that any man possesses is his soul. Your soul is the only thing in this life you have to lose, and the only thing you can be assured of keeping.

“**A prudent man foreseeeth the evil.**” Wisdom is the ability to see the end of a thing from the beginning. The fool can’t see that trouble is around the corner. He never considers the consequences before he acts.

Get Wisdom. She’ll keep you on track.

- Jason Moore

## **Clash Of Cultures**

The questions that Paul posed to the Corinthians concerning their response to their culture still need answering in our time.

In view of the promised alliance with the just God – “I will dwell in them” – what partnership do we want with lawlessness?

In consideration of the promise of divine company – “I will walk among them” – who would dim the brightness of His light by fellowship with darkness?

In the face of a God who came to adopt us as children – “I will be their God” – who would prefer to Belials and false gods who make promises which they cannot keep?

In view of divine election – “they will be My people” – who would elect to be in the company of unbelievers who question and even mock God’s initiatives in redeeming man?

The questions are easily posed and easily answered. In spite of their ease, they are seldom considered and often ignored. Ask them today. Answer them in the choices you make as you interact with our culture. Remember who you are. “Having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.”

- Jason Moore

## **The Day of the Lord**

There was a misunderstanding among the early disciples about Christ’s Final Coming. I guess there still is. Some thought that Jesus would return immediately after His ascension. When that didn’t happen, they began to wonder whether He would return at all. Peter said that mockers would come saying, “where is the promise of His return? All continues just as it was from the beginning of creation” (2 Pet. 3:4).

Perhaps the Christians were afraid God had forgotten His promise to judge the world, to punish the wicked and rescue the righteous. This revelation assured them otherwise. Since God is still reigning, judgment is still certain.

There has been a lot of talk the last few months about the United States “bring the terrorists to justice.” I hope that we do. But even if they continue to escape our military, I have more confidence in another day of reckoning. “The great and small” will be brought out of the rocks and hills and other hiding places and will be judged “according to their deeds.”

I have heard that in the margin of his bible, next to this passage, Martin Luther wrote, “Born once, die twice. Born twice, die once.” The lake of fire, the second death, awaits those who have not obeyed the Gospel of Christ. But for those who have been born again, resurrected to walk in newness of life, they need not fear death at all.

- Bubba Garner

## A Wise Man's Portfolio

You can try to say something well, or conjure a precept to live by, and always find it said better in the Proverbs. It is a shame that this reservoir of wisdom is drawn from so infrequently and that men stop only for a sip but not to drink deeply for strength to continue on their journey. Quench your thirst on the words of the wise man today.

**Make an investment in home improvement.** Some houses collapse for neglect. Some are left in shambles by abusive tenants. But the occupants of both houses inherit the same fate. The wise man said, “He who troubles his own house will inherit wind.” They’re both rendered homeless. Make an investment today, not in your house, but in your household, in your home and family. It will pay off big.

**Invest in a lost soul today.** Time spent in teaching the gospel is the sole investment in this life where a man suffers no loss of capital. Even if the gospel is rejected you win because you’ve reminded a man of his accountability to God. That glorifies God. “He who is wise wins souls.”

**Remember that every man receives a return for his investment in this life.** Men don’t stop to consider that the nature of God demands His response to sin. God could not be good and do nothing about sin. The righteous will be rewarded. It is a certainty. And if their fate is certain then “how much more the wicked and the sinner!”

- Jason Moore

## Looking Through

Jesus said that part of following Him involves a willingness to take up your cross (Matt. 16:24). Suffering and persecution are not a possibility; they are a certainty. But what makes them bearable is that they “are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed to us” (Rom. 8:18).

To those who are faithful until death, God has promised these reward.

**“I will give you the crown of life.”** Athletes compete for a prize that rust and moth destroy. But our great Champion, who has run the race before us, is waiting to award us with an imperishable one. Let there be no doubt about it: your cross is well worth your crown.

**“God Himself will be among them.”** After a lifetime of seeing Him through the eye of faith, we will finally be able to see Him face to face. We long for reunion with those who have gone before us. But just one glimpse of *Him* in glory will the toils of life repay.

**“They will reign forever and ever.”** We don’t fit in here. We’re at odds with the world. That’s why we’re persecuted. But the good news is that we’re just passing through. We are headed to a place where no one is different, where everyone fits in. Those who serve God through suffering in this world will reign with Him in glory in the next one.

Let us hear, read and head the things that are written in this book. For the time is nearer than when we first believed (Rev. 1:1-3).

- Bubba Garner

## **In That Great Getting’ Up Morning**

*“Dem bones, dem bones, gonna walk around,”  
“Dem bones, dem bones, gonna walk around,”  
“Dem bones, dem bones, gonna walk around,”  
“Now hear de word of de Lord.”*

So says the old Negro spiritual which made this passage the most famous in the book of Ezekiel. This wonderful story gave hope to Israel, now divided into two kingdoms, led away into captivity scarcely even recognizable as a nation. Enter God.

The bleached bones had laid so long in the valley they were dried up. God said, I will raise them up, put sinews to connect them (“de foot bone connected to the ankle bone,”), shroud them with flesh and skin. Further, He said, I will give them life. “Dem bones gonna walk around,” He says.

He then told Ezekiel to prophesy again, this time concerning life, giving the four winds of the earth as a metaphor of His life-giving spirit. The bones began to come together, bone to bone, sinew to sinew, flesh to flesh, life to life.

What that says to us is as significant as what it said to the children of Israel. “I will deliver you!” “I will raise up that which seemingly no longer has any life.” In that great resurrection morning, “all that are in the graves shall hear His voice and come forth...those that have done good unto the resurrection of life.” (Jno 5:28-29).

*Yes sir! Dem bones gonna walk around!*

- Dee Bowman

## The Great Commission

God’s plan for saving the lost world is a simple one. In the great commission it is simply stated by God Himself in the person of His own Son.

**“All authority has been given to Me.”** Both the disciple and prospective disciple must recognize Jesus’ right to command. When His rule in religion is not acknowledged men fashion idols and idle religion. Disciples who don’t submit to His lordship don’t go. And prospects who don’t see His authority don’t follow.

**“Go.”** Recognizing Jesus’ authority gives reason to go. He has authority in heaven and on earth, over the natural and the supernatural, over life and even over death. That should fuel our efforts because the one who said, “Go,” is able to equip us for success.

**“Make disciples.”** Being an effective disciple maker does not actually require good leadership qualities. Instead it requires good following skills. Good disciples make good disciples because they show others how to follow the Leader.

**“Baptizing them.”** Jesus has all authority. He alone has the right to declare the terms of man’s pardon. He has been pleased to do so.

**“Teaching them.”** Being an effective teacher of disciples does not require great communicative genius, but just the patience and humility to show other disciples how to observe all that the Teacher has already communicated.

- Jason Moore