

ASTONISHING FELLOWSHIP WITH JESUS

PSALM 31:9-14 NLT // PHILIPPIANS 2:1-11 NLT

MONDAY 4/3/23

PSALM 31: 9-14 // Have mercy on me, Lord, for I am in distress. Tears blur my eyes. My body and soul are withering away.

PHILIPPIANS 2:1-11 // Is there any encouragement from belonging to Christ? Any comfort from his love? Any fellowship together in the Spirit? Are your hearts tender and compassionate?

REFLECTION Have you ever taken time to reflect on how your life might have been without being loved by God? The good news is we are taken into a fellowship with Christ by the work of the Holy Spirit. How does this happen? God's Spirit calls us when we hear or read God's Word. It draws our hearts and minds upward to respond to heavenly things. This good news gives us eternal security and comfort in our lives. As we encounter Christ in a spiritual way, it surpasses our human understanding. As we submit to God's love and authority we unnaturally (our nature is against God) confess with our hearts Christ is Lord. He is the only one who makes us one with God. This action restores our relationship with our God, resulting in loving our neighbor as we love ourselves, which is unnatural. As we engage other people in our daily lives we begin to see them as people created in God's image. When we humble ourselves before God, we naturally treat others as God has loved us. (Verse 1) That gives us a heart of tenderness and compassion.

PRAYER Lord Jesus have mercy on me, and open my eyes to the needs of those I live and work. May you give me comfort and courage when I am stressed by my neighbors behavior. Instead give me your peace so I may be compassionate toward them. In Jesus Name, Amen.

TUESDAY 3/7/23

PSALM 31: 9-14 // I am dying from grief; my years are shortened by sadness. Sin has drained my strength; I am wasting away from within.

PHILIPPIANS 2:1-11 // Then make me truly happy by agreeing wholeheartedly with each other, loving one another, and working together with one mind and purpose.

REFLECTION Do you want to have a healthy church that has the potential to grow the Kingdom? Then we must stop the complaining, stop the manipulation, stop the need for control. Most of all we need to stop doubting Christ - for the Church is His body. As we keep gathering in fellowship with Christ, we need to help each other and encourage one another. Make your church a safe loving place where people can hear the Good News. Think of it this way: We are offering something more than a pot of gold. We are offering eternal life. We do this by inviting our neighbors to experience the grace of God and His love. We offer them a safe place to worship Him and not be pressured or embarrassed to be with us. I am certain everyone has one person in their life who would be interested in hearing from God. Life is difficult and filled with traumatic experiences. There is a song I sang as a kid called, "Count your Blessings." *"When upon life's billows you are tempest tossed, When you are discouraged, thinking all is lost... Count your blessings, name them one by one; Count your many blessings, see what God hath done."* Remember, your neighbor might not have your peace. Take time to listen to their stories. Show them you care and have compassion.

PRAYER Heavenly Father there are days that I am discouraged about my life. Help me to be reminded of the countless blessings you have given me. Help me to stay focused on the blessing of your Son, my Lord. In Jesus Name, Amen.

WEDNESDAY 4/5/23

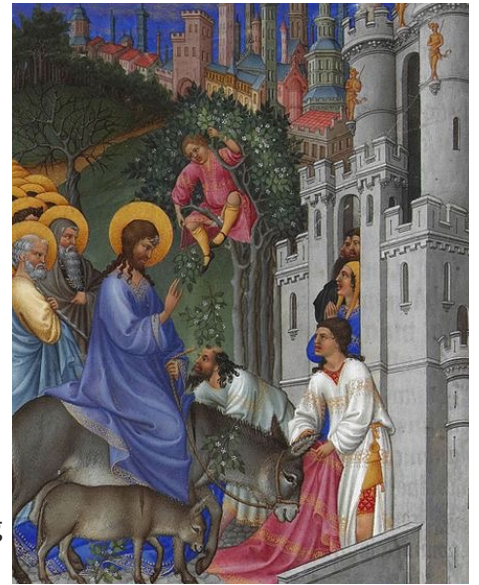
PSALM 31: 9-14 // I am scorned by all my enemies and despised by my neighbors — even my friends are afraid to come near me. When they see me on the street, they run the other way.

PHILIPPIANS 2:1-11 // Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves. 4 Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too.

REFLECTION If you want to cause strife in a church there are two things you should do. First, be selfish and then cause conflict by seeking control. People who do these things think they know more than Christ. A person who needs to control and to manipulate others is really a very insecure person. They have to be right all the time. This is of course the original sin: the sin of pride and ego. There is an old term called vain-glory. "Vainglory" is an ancient name for showing off our goodness. Vainglory names the temptation to display our

goodness in ways that undercut both it and the glory due to God. If we want a grace filled church then we need to be humble of mind and present before God. Humility is the mother of moderation. It yields our own right, by giving preference to others. True humility is when a person admires themselves less and as a result you give more to others. As I was listening to the radio yesterday, a famous sports announcer said this: Act like a king everywhere you go. Really? There is only one King and we are not it. Who has any right to boast and claim they are better than the next person. That is a good definition of racism. "I am better than that person". I pray Christians humble themselves and be the least racist people alive.

PRAYER I am reminded Lord Jesus people in this world scorned you. I, too, sometimes feel my neighbors despised me. Open my heart with mercy and compassion for them even through they are angry at me. In Jesus name, Amen.



THURSDAY 4/6/23

PSALM 31: 9-14 // I am ignored as if I were dead, as if I were a broken pot.

PHILIPPIANS 2:1-11 // You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had.6 Though he was God,[a]he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to.

REFLECTION When I became a confessing Christian I started to recognize that I was imposing my sin on others in my life. I caused conflict, which caused others to sin. I was a young man filled with vainglory. Fortunately, I took steps to become intimate with Jesus. I began to have the same attitude of Christ. Then my relationships offered grace instead of sin. This happened as I started to embrace the humility of Christ. As a result I began to be more self-differentiated. This is a process of not losing connection to self while holding a deep connection to others. That includes those you love whose views may differ from yours. As Christians, Christ is in us. He humiliated himself from the highest pinnacle of glory to the lowest shame. He allowed being tortured by evil and was hung naked on the cross to be shamed all for us. He gave up his right to be right. That man lives in us. Since the Son of God descended from so great a height, how unreasonable is it that we who are sinful should be lifted up with vainglory!

PRAYER Lord God of heaven and earth, forgive me of my vainglory and my conceit. For You are my sovereign God who I trust and depend. Help me to be more like your Son who lived a humble life filled with grace. In Jesus Name, Amen.

FRIDAY 4/7/23

PSALM 31: 9-14 // I have heard the many rumors about me, and I am surrounded by terror. My enemies conspire against me, plotting to take my life.

PHILIPPIANS 2:1-11 // Instead, he gave up his divine privileges he took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being. When he appeared in human form,8 he humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal's death on a cross.

FRIDAY 4/7/23 CONTINUED

REFLECTION Every Lenten season we study and listen to sermons on the necessity of Christ sacrifice on the Cross. Who was before the creation of the world. He was in the form of God, because from the beginning He had His glory with the Father. Then, he took on our flesh and took our sin and hung on a cross to forgive us. God required justice. Yet, we stubbornly resist His love and deny God His rights to sovereign our lives. Romans 1:20, "For since the creation of the world His (Jesus) invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse." Even still, Christ emptied himself. He humbled Himself, and was brought to nothing. Christ could not divest himself of the Godhead. Yet, He laid aside His glory in the view of humanity and exposed himself as though a wretched criminal. Yet, people still deny His love and laugh and joke about Him. Some wanted to push Him off the city cliff into a junk heap. The truth is, God still desires to give us the greatest gift of eternal life. This new life is a place where evil and darkness has no place. John 1:14, "So the Word became human and made his home among us. He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness. And we have seen his glory, the glory of the Father's one and only Son."

PRAYER Praise you Lord Jesus for suffering through the anger of people showed towards you. Praise you for standing for truth and sacrificing you life for mine. You name is about every name. In Jesus Name, Amen.

SATURDAY 4/8/23

Psalm 31: 9-14 // 14 But I am trusting you, O Lord, saying, "You are my God!"

PHILIPPIANS 2:1-11 // 9 Therefore, God elevated him to the place of highest honor and gave him the name above all other names, 10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and every tongue declare that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

REFLECTION When I hear the word's "every knee will bow down" I am reminded the Christian faith is about submitting to God and humbling ourselves by acknowledging our pride and ego. We were once the evil people, who were angry at God and unwilling to accept His love. Yet Christ came to cover us with God's love. He anointed us with His blood and washed the stain of sin away. Jesus shows us humility to which our human mind is so naturally opposed. As we learn to live under the cover of God's grace we are required to live as imitators of Christ. As we imitate Jesus we discover more joy in our lives. Nothing is more advantageous for us than to be conformed to Jesus image. Everyone who humbles themselves will in like manner be exalted. Who in their right mind would be reluctant to exercise humility? The work of the Holy Spirit shows us in the death of Christ, a taste, and feeling, that recognizes nothing but God's goodness. God sends His love through Christ toward us. Christ's death is assigned to redeem us and reconciles us back to God. We are now fully restored to righteousness. Cleansed, washed and covered from all the pollutions in our lives. The gate of life is now opened to us.

PRAYER The Lord's Prayer: Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us, and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. In Jesus Name, Amen



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