

## “Savoring the Scriptures”

“I find my delight in your commandments, which I love.” —Psalm 119:47

I was reading again in Psalm 119 this morning, and I found myself again focusing in on the statements where the author declared that he delighted in and loved the word of God (119:14-16, 24, 34-35, 46-48, 70, 77, 97, 113, 127, 143, 163-167, 174).

2022 is going to be a year of “Hearing the Word.” We will take a Stroll through the Scroll on Sunday mornings, and we will walk through the Bible in a book-by-book summary in our Wednesday morning Men’s study, and we will all participate during the week in a chronological Bible reading plan with the support of a devotional I have put together.

I want to encourage all of us to set aside 15 minutes each day to read through the Bible this coming year. The short devotional will help keep us on track, as it lists the chronological reading passage for the day, and includes a devotional that will correlate with your day’s reading, and each week will have a theme and thought to make it more practical and personal.

I am including the first week’s devotionals a bit ahead of schedule, and I will then follow up with the second week’s before Christmas. I will email them, but if you or a friend don’t use email often, then make sure to let Illis know you need a hard copy, or you could make your own three-ring binder full of devotionals for the year.

“between Sundays”

Pastor Mike Fast

Week 1 – January 1<sup>st</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup> (or whenever you choose to start)

This week you will read Genesis 1-24, along with a little bit of the genealogies from 1 Chronicles. Each day we are going to look at the issue/theme of faith in more detail. We will talk about our need for faith in God, and we will look at examples of faith in the lives of Abel, Noah and Abraham. My prayer is that, by the end of this week, your faith would be strengthened and maybe even challenged a little bit.

Day 1 – January 1<sup>st</sup>

Read Genesis 1-3. “Paradise Lost”

God’s creation was perfect in every way, shape, and form, “God looked over all He had made, and He saw that it was excellent in every way...” (Gen. 1:31)

I have often pondered what life would be like if Adam and Eve had chosen obedience that day in the garden. I would imagine that Satan would have shown up the next day to tempt them again. After all, he is the deceiver and father of lies; he is in the business of tempting mankind.

However, no matter how many times I ponder this thought, the story never changes. On that fateful day, sin and death entered into the entire human race (Rom. 5:12). But, by the grace of God that is not the whole story. In fact, you need not read past today’s reading to find hope for mankind. In God’s judgment upon the serpent is a foreshadowing of Jesus’ triumph over sin and death at the cross. The offspring or seed of the woman that will crush the serpent is the first mention of God’s redemptive plan for mankind. So, reader, take hope. There is more to the story, oh, and please keep reading.

Day 2 – January 2<sup>nd</sup>

Genesis 4-6; 1 Chronicles 1:1-4. “Without faith it is Impossible to please God” – Hebrews 11:6

So why exactly was Abel's offering accepted by God and not Cain's offering? Some have argued that it is because Abel sacrificed an animal while Cain only brought produce of the ground. However, both grains and animals are used in the sacrificial system of the old covenant.

To find out why God accepted one and not the other, we have to go to the New Testament book of Hebrews. In Hebrews 11:4 we see that it was a matter of faith that made Abel's offering stand out. This issue of faith is one that comes up time and again in the scriptures. God is more concerned with our faith than with the externals of religion and public service. Certainly, Cain brought an offering for the same reason as Abel. However, for Abel, it was an expression of faith, but for Cain it was religious duty.

How do you approach the worship of God? Do you worship God from your heart because you have faith in His promises? Or do you worship out of duty or obligation or because someone is watching? May your worship be like that of Abel.

Day 3 – January 3<sup>rd</sup>

Genesis 7-10; 1 Chronicles 1:5-23. "Faith is believing without seeing"

Years ago, our family watched the animated movie *Chicken Little*. In that movie the lead character, Chicken Little, warns everyone in town that the sky is falling. Of course, he is ridiculed for taking a stand on this issue. I think Noah may have felt somewhat like Chicken Little. 2 Peter 2:5 says that, "Noah warned the world of God's righteous judgment." Can you imagine the response Noah would have received from these wicked people?

Noah had faith in God. He was unfazed by the critics. He was undaunted by the challenge of building such a large boat (without the help of Home Depot!). Noah was the only one who heeded God's warning. Noah acted in faith. He didn't need God to prove anything. He believed in God's Word and acted accordingly.

Are you willing to listen to God's Word and act accordingly? Or are you still waiting for God to prove himself? Exercising faith means to take God at His Word and act appropriately. May you be doers of the Word and not merely hearers of it.

Day 4 – January 4<sup>th</sup>

Genesis 11-14; 1 Chronicles 1:24-27. "If you say go, we will go"

In church, we sing a song with that line it; "If you say go, we will go." As I think about what God asked Abram to do, I thought about that song. Like many of you, I am prone to sometimes sing worship music without allowing the meaning of the words to sink in. Abram, as he was known at this point, embodied what this song is all about. God gave Abram a directive to go to a foreign land. He didn't ask Abram to go or if he even wanted to go. God commanded Abram to go.

Amazingly enough, Abram responded in faith and obeyed God's command. Genesis 12:1 reveals some of the magnitude of this move, "leave your country, your relatives, and your father's house..." Basically, God told Abram to abandon all that he knew – every source of security and comfort and to stake his whole life on God.

It is hard to imagine a greater example of faith. If God were to tell you to go, would you go? Are you willing to step out in faith and stake your life on God and his promises? May you have faith like Abram to do just that.

Day 5 – January 5<sup>th</sup>

Genesis 15-17. "A crisis of faith"

Have you ever found yourself really struggling in your faith?

If so, you have something in common with Abram. In spite of God's powerful promises and constant provision for his needs, Abram was struggling to believe that God's promises would materialize. God had already promised that Abram would "become the father of a great nation" (Gen. 12:2). However, after ten years (16:3), Abram was growing impatient (15:2-3).

Even though the Lord reassured Abram of his promises, Abram decided to take matters into his own hands. This led to Abram fathering a child with Hagar. Clearly, in the chapters we have read today, Abram was struggling with the Lord's timing.

Are you struggling like Abram? Trust in the Lord's timing. Exercise patience and remember what the Lord spoke through the prophet Isaiah, "For just as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts higher than your thoughts" (Isaiah 55:9).

Day 6 – January 6<sup>th</sup>

Genesis 18:1-21:7. "The Lord knows how to rescue godly people from their trials" – 2 Peter 2:9

You wouldn't know by today's reading that Lot "was a righteous man who was distressed by the wickedness he saw and heard day after day" (2 Peter 2:8). Peter gives us that insight to Lot's heart. Have you ever felt like Lot? Are you worn down and beyond frustration with the world around you? Well, if you are, then fear not. As the verse that serves as our title for today says, the Lord knows how to rescue people. All hope is not lost because God will have the final say.

God provided a way of escape for Lot from the wickedness of Sodom and Gomorrah. God has also provided a way of escape for you from the wickedness of this world. Through faith in Jesus Christ, we have the confidence in knowing that we will be with the Father when we die, or even better, when Jesus returns. So, reader, do not despair, if you have trusted in Christ, your day of escape is coming. You will only have to endure the wickedness of this world for a short season before you can enjoy eternity with God.

Day 7 – January 7<sup>th</sup>

Genesis 21-24. "Extreme Faith"

"I couldn't do it, I just couldn't do it," Abraham said to Sarah. "Whatever do you mean, Abraham?" she asked. "Well, God asked me to offer up Isaac as a burnt offering and I just couldn't do it," he said.

Aren't you glad your Bible doesn't read that way? I have often wondered if it were my faith being tested, how the story would have turned out. Abraham had an extreme faith in God. It wasn't that Abraham was calling God's bluff or knew it was only a test. No, he was ready to do exactly what God asked of Him. Hebrews 11:19 says, "Abraham assumed that if Isaac died, God was able to bring him back to life again..."

Abraham had to trust God with Isaac's life. Are you willing to do the same? Now, God isn't asking you to physically sacrifice your life or the life of a loved one, but he is asking you to die to yourself and trust Him with your life.