

DAY 1

Genesis 1:1-2:25

1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

² Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness covered the surface of the watery depths, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the surface of the waters. ³ Then God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. ⁴ God saw that the light was good, and God separated the light from the darkness. ⁵ God called the light "day," and the darkness he called "night." There was an evening, and there was a morning: one day.

⁶ Then God said, "Let there be an expanse between the waters, separating water from water." ⁷ So God made the expanse and separated the water under the expanse from the water above the expanse. And it was so. ⁸ God called the expanse "sky." Evening came and then morning: the second day.

⁹ Then God said, "Let the water under the sky be gathered into one place, and let the dry land appear." And it was so. ¹⁰ God called the dry land "earth," and the gathering of the water he called "seas." And God saw that it was good. ¹¹ Then God said, "Let the earth produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and fruit trees on the earth bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds." And it was so. ¹² The earth produced vegetation: seed-bearing plants according to their kinds and trees bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good. ¹³ Evening came and then morning: the third day.

¹⁴ Then God said, "Let there be lights in the expanse of the sky to separate the day from the night. They will serve as signs for seasons and for days and years. ¹⁵ They will be lights in the expanse of the sky to provide light on the earth." And it was so. ¹⁶ God made the two great lights — the greater light to rule over the day and the lesser light to rule over the night — as well as the stars. ¹⁷ God placed them in the expanse of the sky to provide light on the earth, ¹⁸ to rule the day and the night, and to separate light from darkness. And God saw that it was good. ¹⁹ Evening came and then morning: the fourth day.

²⁰ Then God said, "Let the water swarm with living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the expanse of the sky." ²¹ So God created

the large sea-creatures and every living creature that moves and swarms in the water, according to their kinds. He also created every winged creature according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. ²² God blessed them: "Be fruitful, multiply, and fill the waters of the seas, and let the birds multiply on the earth." ²³ Evening came and then morning: the fifth day.

²⁴ Then God said, "Let the earth produce living creatures according to their kinds: livestock, creatures that crawl, and the wildlife of the earth according to their kinds." And it was so. ²⁵ So God made the wildlife of the earth according to their kinds, the livestock according to their kinds, and all the creatures that crawl on the ground according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good.

²⁶ Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness. They will rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, the livestock, the whole earth, and the creatures that crawl on the earth."

²⁷ So God created man in his own image; he created him in the image of God; he created them male and female.

²⁸ God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, and subdue it. Rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, and every creature that crawls on the earth." ²⁹ God also said, "Look, I have given you every seed-bearing plant on the surface of the entire earth and every tree whose fruit contains seed. This will be food for you, ³⁰ for all the wildlife of the earth, for every bird of the sky, and for every creature that crawls on the earth — everything having the breath of life in it — I have given every green plant for food." And it was so. ³¹ God saw all that he had made, and it was very good indeed. Evening came and then morning: the sixth day.

2 So the heavens and the earth and everything in them were completed. ² On the seventh day God had completed his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. ³ God blessed the seventh day and declared it holy, for on it he rested from all his work of creation.

⁴ These are the records of the heavens and the earth, concerning their creation. At the time that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens, ⁵ no shrub of the field had yet grown on the land,

and no plant of the field had yet sprouted, for the LORD God had not made it rain on the land, and there was no man to work the ground. ⁶ But mist would come up from the earth and water all the ground. ⁷ Then the LORD God formed the man out of the dust from the ground and breathed the breath of life into his nostrils, and the man became a living being.

⁸ The LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there he placed the man he had formed. ⁹ The LORD God caused to grow out of the ground every tree pleasing in appearance and good for food, including the tree of life in the middle of the garden, as well as the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

¹⁰ A river went out from Eden to water the garden. From there it divided and became the source of four rivers. ¹¹ The name of the first is Pishon, which flows through the entire land of Havilah, where there is gold. ¹² Gold from that land is pure; bdellium and onyx are also there. ¹³ The name of the second river is Gihon, which flows through the entire land of Cush. ¹⁴ The name of the third river is Tigris, which runs east of Assyria. And the fourth river is the Euphrates.

¹⁵ The LORD God took the man and placed him in the garden of Eden to work it and watch over it. ¹⁶ And the LORD God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree of the garden, ¹⁷ but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for on the day you eat from it, you will certainly die." ¹⁸ Then the LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper corresponding to him." ¹⁹ The LORD God formed out of the ground every wild animal and every bird of the sky, and brought each to the man to see what he would call it. And whatever the man called a living creature, that was its name. ²⁰ The man gave names to all the livestock, to the birds of the sky, and to every wild animal; but for the man no helper was found corresponding to him. ²¹ So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to come over the man, and he slept. God took one of his ribs and closed the flesh at that place. ²² Then the LORD God made the rib he had taken from the man into a woman and brought her to the man. ²³ And the man said:

This one, at last, is bone of my bone
and flesh of my flesh;
this one will be called "woman,"
for she was taken from man.

²⁴ This is why a man leaves his father and mother and bonds with his wife, and they become one flesh. ²⁵ Both the man and his wife were naked, yet felt no shame.

Psalm 1:1-6

- 1** How happy is the one who does not walk in the advice of the wicked or stand in the pathway with sinners or sit in the company of mockers!
- ² Instead, his delight is in the LORD's instruction, and he meditates on it day and night.
- ³ He is like a tree planted beside flowing streams that bears its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers.
- ⁴ The wicked are not like this; instead, they are like chaff that the wind blows away.
- ⁵ Therefore the wicked will not stand up in the judgment, nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.
- ⁶ For the LORD watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked leads to ruin.

Proverbs 1:1-4

- 1** The proverbs of Solomon son of David, king of Israel:
- ² For learning wisdom and discipline; for understanding insightful sayings;
- ³ for receiving prudent instruction in righteousness, justice, and integrity;
- ⁴ for teaching shrewdness to the inexperienced, knowledge and discretion to a young man —

Matthew 1:1-25

- 1** An account of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham:
- ² Abraham fathered Isaac, Isaac fathered Jacob,

- Jacob fathered Judah and his brothers,
³ Judah fathered Perez and Zerah
 by Tamar,
 Perez fathered Hezron,
 Hezron fathered Aram,
⁴ Aram fathered Amminadab,
 Amminadab fathered Nahshon,
 Nahshon fathered Salmon,
⁵ Salmon fathered Boaz by Rahab,
 Boaz fathered Obed by Ruth,
 Obed fathered Jesse,
⁶ and Jesse fathered King David.

- David fathered Solomon
 by Uriah's wife,
⁷ Solomon fathered Rehoboam,
 Rehoboam fathered Abijah,
 Abijah fathered Asa,
⁸ Asa fathered Jehoshaphat,
 Jehoshaphat fathered Joram,
 Joram fathered Uzziah,
⁹ Uzziah fathered Jotham,
 Jotham fathered Ahaz,
 Ahaz fathered Hezekiah,
¹⁰ Hezekiah fathered Manasseh,
 Manasseh fathered Amon,
 Amon fathered Josiah,
¹¹ and Josiah fathered Jeconiah
 and his brothers
 at the time of the exile
 to Babylon.
¹² After the exile to Babylon
 Jeconiah fathered Shealtiel,
 Shealtiel fathered Zerubbabel,
¹³ Zerubbabel fathered Abiud,
 Abiud fathered Eliakim,
 Eliakim fathered Azor,
¹⁴ Azor fathered Zadok,
 Zadok fathered Achim,

- Achim fathered Eliud,
¹⁵ Eliud fathered Eleazar,
 Eleazar fathered Matthan,
 Matthan fathered Jacob,
¹⁶ and Jacob fathered Joseph the husband
 of Mary,
 who gave birth to Jesus who is called
 the Messiah.

¹⁷ So all the generations from Abraham to David were fourteen generations; and from David until the exile to Babylon, fourteen generations; and from the exile to Babylon until the Messiah, fourteen generations.

¹⁸ The birth of Jesus Christ came about this way: After his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, it was discovered before they came together that she was pregnant from the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹ So her husband, Joseph, being a righteous man, and not wanting to disgrace her publicly, decided to divorce her secretly.

²⁰ But after he had considered these things, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, don't be afraid to take Mary as your wife, because what has been conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹ She will give birth to a son, and you are to name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."

²² Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

²³ **See, the virgin will become pregnant and give birth to a son, and they will name him Immanuel,** which is translated "God is with us."

²⁴ When Joseph woke up, he did as the Lord's angel had commanded him. He married her ²⁵ but did not have sexual relations with her until she gave birth to a son. And he named him Jesus.

THE PRIMARY FOCUS

In the beginning God.—Genesis 1:1

We focus on what is without doubt the most noble and loftiest of themes: the nature and character of God. I have noticed that Christians, generally speaking, seem to be preoccupied with knowing more about themselves rather than knowing more about God. Ask any Christian bookshop manager: "What are the best-selling books?" Not those that unfold for us the nature of God, but those that direct us toward such things as how to get a better

self-image, how to manage money, how to find inner healing, how to get more excitement out of life, and so on. Not that these subjects are unimportant, but they are explored in a self-absorbed way that gives the idea that the most important thing in life is knowing ourselves better. It isn't. The most important thing in life is knowing God better.

John Lancaster, a minister in Cardiff, South Wales, in an article entitled "Where on Earth Is God?" asks the question: "Given a choice between attending a seminar, say, on the 'Glory of God in Isaiah' and one on 'The Christian and Sex,' to which would you go?" He makes the point also that although the church often answers the questions that people are asking, the real problem may be that people are not asking the right questions. In today's church we are far too man-centered and not God-centered.

It is not by accident, I believe, that the Bible opens with the thunderous acclaim: "In the beginning God." I tell you with all the conviction of which I am capable: if God is not our primary focus, then everything else will soon get out of focus.

PRAYER

O God, help me to be like Jesus, to pass on to others not just the things that come into my head, but the things that flow out of my heart. Bring my heart in closer contact with your heart, dear Father. In Jesus's name I pray. Amen.

FURTHER STUDY

Jn 1:1-5; Col 1:15-20; Heb 12:2; Rv 1:8

What did the Lord declare to John the revelator?

What did the apostle John declare?

Day 1 | Genesis 1:1-2:25 | Psalm 1:1-6 | Proverbs 1:1-4 | Matthew 1:1-25

DAY 2

Genesis 3:1-4:26

3 Now the serpent was the most cunning of all the wild animals that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You can't eat from any tree in the garden?'"

² The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat the fruit from the trees in the garden. ³ But about the fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden, God said, 'You must not eat it or touch it, or you will die.'"

⁴ "No! You will certainly not die," the serpent said to the woman. ⁵ "In fact, God knows that when you eat it your eyes will be opened and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." ⁶ The woman saw that the tree was good

for food and delightful to look at, and that it was desirable for obtaining wisdom. So she took some of its fruit and ate it; she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. ⁷ Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

⁸ Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden at the time of the evening breeze, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. ⁹ So the LORD God called out to the man and said to him, "Where are you?"

¹⁰ And he said, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked, so I hid."

¹¹ Then he asked, "Who told you that you were naked? Did you eat from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?"

¹² The man replied, "The woman you gave to be with me — she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate."

¹³ So the LORD God asked the woman, "What have you done?"

And the woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

¹⁴ So the LORD God said to the serpent:

Because you have done this,
you are cursed more than
any livestock
and more than any wild animal.
You will move on your belly
and eat dust all the days of your life.

¹⁵ I will put hostility between you
and the woman,
and between your offspring
and her offspring.
He will strike your head,
and you will strike his heel.

¹⁶ He said to the woman:

I will intensify your labor pains;
you will bear children
with painful effort.
Your desire will be for your husband,
yet he will rule over you.

¹⁷ And he said to the man, "Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, 'Do not eat from it':

The ground is cursed because of you.
You will eat from it by means of
painful labor
all the days of your life.

¹⁸ It will produce thorns and thistles
for you,
and you will eat the plants
of the field.

¹⁹ You will eat bread by the sweat
of your brow
until you return to the ground,
since you were taken from it.
For you are dust,
and you will return to dust."

²⁰ The man named his wife Eve because she was the mother of all the living. ²¹ The LORD God made clothing from skins for the man and his wife, and he clothed them.

²² The LORD God said, "Since the man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil, he must not reach out, take from the tree of life, eat, and live forever." ²³ So the LORD God sent him away from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken. ²⁴ He drove the man out and stationed the cherubim and the flaming, whirling sword east of the garden of Eden to guard the way to the tree of life.

4 The man was intimate with his wife Eve, and she conceived and gave birth to Cain. She said, "I have had a male child with the LORD's help." ² She also gave birth to his brother Abel. Now Abel became a shepherd of flocks, but Cain worked the ground. ³ In the course of time Cain presented some of the land's produce as an offering to the LORD. ⁴ And Abel also presented an offering — some of the firstborn of his flock and their fat portions. The LORD had regard for Abel and his offering, ⁵ but he did not have regard for Cain and his offering. Cain was furious, and he looked despondent.

⁶ Then the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you furious? And why do you look despondent?" ⁷ If you do what is right, won't you be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is for you, but you must rule over it."

⁸ Cain said to his brother Abel, "Let's go out to the field." And while they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him.

⁹ Then the LORD said to Cain, "Where is your brother Abel?"

"I don't know," he replied. "Am I my brother's guardian?"

¹⁰ Then he said, "What have you done? Your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground!" ¹¹ So now you are cursed, alienated from the ground that opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood you have shed. ¹² If you work the ground, it will never again give you its yield. You will be a restless wanderer on the earth."

¹³ But Cain answered the LORD, "My punishment is too great to bear! ¹⁴ Since you are banishing me today from the face of the earth, and I must hide from your presence and become a restless wanderer on the earth, whoever finds me will kill me."

¹⁵ Then the LORD replied to him, "In that case, whoever kills Cain will suffer vengeance seven times over." And he placed a mark on Cain so that whoever found him would not kill him. ¹⁶ Then Cain went out from the LORD's presence and lived in the land of Nod, east of Eden.

¹⁷ Cain was intimate with his wife, and she conceived and gave birth to Enoch. Then Cain became the builder of a city, and he named the city Enoch after his son. ¹⁸ Irad was born to Enoch, Irad fathered Mehujael, Mehujael fathered Methushael, and Methushael fathered Lamech. ¹⁹ Lamech took two wives for himself, one named Adah and the other named Zillah. ²⁰ Adah bore Jabal; he was the first of the nomadic herdsmen. ²¹ His brother was named Jubal; he was the first of all who play the lyre and the flute. ²² Zillah bore Tubal-cain, who made all kinds of bronze and iron tools. Tubal-cain's sister was Naamah.

²³ Lamech said to his wives:

Adah and Zillah, hear my voice;
wives of Lamech, pay attention
to my words.

For I killed a man for wounding me,
a young man for striking me.

²⁴ If Cain is to be avenged
seven times over,
then for Lamech it will be
seventy-seven times!

²⁵ Adam was intimate with his wife again, and she gave birth to a son and named him Seth, for she said, "God has given me another offspring in place of Abel, since Cain killed him." ²⁶ A son was born to Seth also, and he named him Enosh. At that time people began to call on the name of the LORD.

Psalms 2:1-6

2 Why do the nations rage
and the peoples plot in vain?

² The kings of the earth take
their stand,
and the rulers conspire
together
against the LORD
and his Anointed One:

³ "Let's tear off their chains
and throw their ropes
off of us."

⁴ The one enthroned in heaven laughs;
the Lord ridicules them.

⁵ Then he speaks to them in his anger
and terrifies them in his wrath:

⁶ "I have installed my king
on Zion, my holy mountain."

Proverbs 1:5-6

⁵ let a wise person listen
and increase learning,
and let a discerning person
obtain guidance —

⁶ for understanding a proverb
or a parable,
the words of the wise,
and their riddles.

Matthew 2:1-23

2 After Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of King Herod, wise men from the east arrived in Jerusalem, ² saying, "Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star at its rising and have come to worship him."

³ When King Herod heard this, he was deeply disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. ⁴ So he assembled all the chief priests and scribes of the people and asked them where the Messiah would be born.

⁵ "In Bethlehem of Judea," they told him, "because this is what was written by the prophet:

⁶ **And you, Bethlehem, in the land
of Judah,
are by no means least among the rulers
of Judah:
Because out of you will come
a ruler
who will shepherd my people
Israel.**"

⁷ Then Herod secretly summoned the wise men and asked them the exact time the star appeared. ⁸ He sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search carefully for the child. When you find him, report back to me so that I too can go and worship him."

⁹ After hearing the king, they went on their way. And there it was — the star they had seen at its rising. It led them until it came and stopped above the place where the child was. ¹⁰ When they saw the star, they were overwhelmed with joy. ¹¹ Entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and falling to their knees, they worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts: gold, frankincense, and myrrh. ¹² And being warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their own country by another route.

¹³ After they were gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, “Get up! Take the child and his mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I tell you. For Herod is about to search for the child to kill him.” ¹⁴ So he got up, took the child and his mother during the night, and escaped to Egypt. ¹⁵ He stayed there until Herod’s death, so that what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet might be fulfilled: **Out of Egypt I called my Son.**

¹⁶ Then Herod, when he realized that he had been outwitted by the wise men, flew into a rage. He gave orders to massacre all the boys in and around Bethlehem who were two years old and under, in keeping with the time he had learned from the wise men. ¹⁷ Then what was spoken through Jeremiah the prophet was fulfilled:

¹⁸ **A voice was heard in Ramah,
weeping, and great mourning,**

**Rachel weeping for her children;
and she refused
to be consoled,
because they are no more.**

¹⁹ After Herod died, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, ²⁰ saying, “Get up, take the child and his mother, and go to the land of Israel, because those who intended to kill the child are dead.” ²¹ So he got up, took the child and his mother, and entered the land of Israel. ²² But when he heard that Archelaus was ruling over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. And being warned in a dream, he withdrew to the region of Galilee. ²³ Then he went and settled in a town called Nazareth to fulfill what was spoken through the prophets, that he would be called a Nazarene.

GOD’S GREAT INTOLERANCE

*Then he speaks to them in his anger
and terrifies them in his wrath.—Psalm 2:5*

Wrath is not a defect in the divine character; rather, it would be a defect if wrath were absent from him. Those who see God’s wrath as petulance or retaliation, inflicting punishment just for the sake of it or in return for some injury received, do not really understand it. Divine wrath is not vindictiveness; it is divine perfection, issuing forth from God because it is right.

Human beings tend to make God in our own image. He made us in his image, but we want to return the compliment, and it is there that so often we go wrong. Instead of reasoning from the divine down to the human, recognizing that sin has marred the divine image within us, we reason from our fallen condition and project our own feelings and ideas onto God.

Thus, when thinking of the wrath of God, we tend to look at what happens in our own hearts when we get angry, and we imagine God to be the same. But divine anger must never be confused with human anger. Most of what goes on in our hearts whenever we are angry is a mixture of unpredictable petulance, retaliation, hostility, and self-concern. God’s anger is always predictable, always steadfast, and always set against sin. We must never forget that God’s nature is uncompromisingly set against sin. We may tolerate it; he never does.

Sin has been defined as “God’s one great intolerance,” and for that we ought to be eternally grateful. As his children we ought to rejoice that he will not tolerate anything that is harmful to us.

PRAYER

O Father, what a change comes over me when I realize that your wrath is not so much directed at persons as at the sin that demeans and destroys them. You are not against me for my sin, but for me against my sin. I am deeply, deeply grateful. Amen.

FURTHER STUDY

Pss 5:1-6; 11:5; Hab 1:12-13; Zch 8:16-17

How did the psalmist express God's great intolerance?

What does the Lord hate?

Day 2 | Genesis 3:1-4:26 | Psalm 2:1-6 | Proverbs 1:5-6 | Matthew 2:1-23

DAY 3

Genesis 5:1-6:22

5 This is the document containing the family records of Adam. On the day that God created man, he made him in the likeness of God;² he created them male and female. When they were created, he blessed them and called them mankind.

³ Adam was 130 years old when he fathered a son in his likeness, according to his image, and named him Seth. ⁴ Adam lived 800 years after he fathered Seth, and he fathered other sons and daughters. ⁵ So Adam's life lasted 930 years; then he died.

⁶ Seth was 105 years old when he fathered Enosh. ⁷ Seth lived 807 years after he fathered Enosh, and he fathered other sons and daughters. ⁸ So Seth's life lasted 912 years; then he died.

⁹ Enosh was 90 years old when he fathered Kenan. ¹⁰ Enosh lived 815 years after he fathered Kenan, and he fathered other sons and daughters. ¹¹ So Enosh's life lasted 905 years; then he died.

¹² Kenan was 70 years old when he fathered Mahalalel. ¹³ Kenan lived 840 years after he fathered Mahalalel, and he fathered other sons and daughters. ¹⁴ So Kenan's life lasted 910 years; then he died.

¹⁵ Mahalalel was 65 years old when he fathered Jared. ¹⁶ Mahalalel lived 830 years after he fathered Jared, and he fathered other sons and daughters. ¹⁷ So Mahalalel's life lasted 895 years; then he died.

¹⁸ Jared was 162 years old when he fathered Enoch. ¹⁹ Jared lived 800 years after he fathered

Enoch, and he fathered other sons and daughters. ²⁰ So Jared's life lasted 962 years; then he died.

²¹ Enoch was 65 years old when he fathered Methuselah. ²² And after he fathered Methuselah, Enoch walked with God 300 years and fathered other sons and daughters. ²³ So Enoch's life lasted 365 years. ²⁴ Enoch walked with God; then he was not there because God took him.

²⁵ Methuselah was 187 years old when he fathered Lamech. ²⁶ Methuselah lived 782 years after he fathered Lamech, and he fathered other sons and daughters. ²⁷ So Methuselah's life lasted 969 years; then he died.

²⁸ Lamech was 182 years old when he fathered a son. ²⁹ And he named him Noah, saying, "This one will bring us relief from the agonizing labor of our hands, caused by the ground the LORD has cursed." ³⁰ Lamech lived 595 years after he fathered Noah, and he fathered other sons and daughters. ³¹ So Lamech's life lasted 777 years; then he died.

³² Noah was 500 years old, and he fathered Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

6 When mankind began to multiply on the earth and daughters were born to them, ² the sons of God saw that the daughters of mankind were beautiful, and they took any they chose as wives for themselves. ³ And the LORD said, "My Spirit will not remain with mankind forever, because they are corrupt. Their days will be 120 years." ⁴ The Nephilim were on the earth both in those days and afterward, when the sons of God came to the daughters of mankind, who bore children to them. They were the powerful men of old, the famous men.

⁵ When the LORD saw that human wickedness was widespread on the earth and that every inclination of the human mind was nothing but evil all the time, ⁶ the LORD regretted that he had made man on the earth, and he was deeply grieved. ⁷ Then the LORD said, "I will wipe mankind, whom I created, off the face of the earth, together with the animals, creatures that crawl, and birds of the sky — for I regret that I made them."

⁸ Noah, however, found favor with the LORD.

⁹ These are the family records of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless among his contemporaries; Noah walked with God. ¹⁰ And Noah fathered three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

¹¹ Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight, and the earth was filled with wickedness. ¹² God saw how corrupt the earth was, for every creature had corrupted its way on the earth. ¹³ Then God said to Noah, "I have decided to put an end to every creature, for the earth is filled with wickedness because of them; therefore I am going to destroy them along with the earth.

¹⁴ "Make yourself an ark of gopher wood. Make rooms in the ark, and cover it with pitch inside and outside. ¹⁵ This is how you are to make it: The ark will be 450 feet long, 75 feet wide, and 45 feet high. ¹⁶ You are to make a roof, finishing the sides of the ark to within eighteen inches of the roof. You are to put a door in the side of the ark. Make it with lower, middle, and upper decks.

¹⁷ "Understand that I am bringing a flood — floodwaters on the earth to destroy every creature under heaven with the breath of life in it. Everything on earth will perish. ¹⁸ But I will establish my covenant with you, and you will enter the ark with your sons, your wife, and your sons' wives. ¹⁹ You are also to bring into the ark two of all the living creatures, male and female, to keep them alive with you. ²⁰ Two of everything — from the birds according to their kinds, from the livestock according to their kinds, and from the animals that crawl on the ground according to their kinds — will come to you so that you can keep them alive. ²¹ Take with you every kind of food that is eaten; gather it as food for you and for them." ²² And Noah did this. He did everything that God had commanded him.

Psalm 2:7-12

⁷ I will declare the LORD's decree.
He said to me, "You are my Son;
today I have become your Father.

⁸ Ask of me,
and I will make the nations
your inheritance
and the ends of the earth
your possession.
⁹ You will break them
with an iron scepter;
you will shatter them like pottery."

¹⁰ So now, kings, be wise;
receive instruction, you judges
of the earth.

¹¹ Serve the LORD
with reverential awe
and rejoice with trembling.
¹² Pay homage to the Son or he
will be angry
and you will perish in your rebellion,
for his anger may ignite
at any moment.
All who take refuge in him are happy.

Proverbs 1:7

⁷ The fear of the LORD
is the beginning of knowledge;
fools despise wisdom and discipline.

Matthew 3:1-17

3 In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea ² and saying, "Repent, because the kingdom of heaven has come near!" ³ For he is the one spoken of through the prophet Isaiah, who said:

**A voice of one crying out
in the wilderness:
Prepare the way for the Lord;
make his paths straight!**

⁴ Now John had a camel-hair garment with a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey. ⁵ Then people from Jerusalem, all Judea, and all the vicinity of the Jordan were going out to him, ⁶ and they were baptized by him in the Jordan River, confessing their sins.

⁷ When he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, "Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath?" ⁸ Therefore produce fruit consistent with repentance. ⁹ And don't presume to say to yourselves, "We have Abraham as our

father.' For I tell you that God is able to raise up children for Abraham from these stones.¹⁰ The ax is already at the root of the trees. Therefore, every tree that doesn't produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.

¹¹ "I baptize you with water for repentance, but the one who is coming after me is more powerful than I. I am not worthy to remove his sandals. He himself will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.¹² His winnowing shovel is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into the barn. But the chaff he will burn with fire that never goes out."

¹³ Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan, to be baptized by him.¹⁴ But John tried to stop him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and yet you come to me?"

¹⁵ Jesus answered him, "Allow it for now, because this is the way for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then John allowed him to be baptized.

¹⁶ When Jesus was baptized, he went up immediately from the water. The heavens suddenly opened for him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming down on him.¹⁷ And a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased."

ON THIS TRUTH WE STAND

Jesus . . . saw the Spirit of God descending. . . . And a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son." —Matthew 3:16-17

Those who accept Scripture's teaching concerning God must be prepared to say that he is not only personal, but that he is a plurality of persons—a Trinity. The doctrine of the Trinity, that God is one yet three separate persons, is not easy to understand, but it is clear in Scripture. The term "Trinity" appears nowhere in the Bible (it was first used by Tertullian around AD 210), but its roots are deeply embedded in the Word of God. It is mainly a revelation of the New Testament, but there are glimpses of the truth to be seen in the Old Testament also.

"Let us make man in our image" (Gn 1:26). To whom was God speaking? Some say the angels, but nowhere in Scripture are angels seen as being involved in the act of creation or as being on the same level as God. Read Colossians 1:16 and it will become clear to whom God was speaking.

Other examples of the Trinity being mentioned in the Old Testament include these: "Man has become like one of us" (Gn 3:22); and in Isaiah 6:8 God says: "Who will I send? Who will go for us?"

"Go to the Jordan," wrote Augustine, "and you find the Trinity. There at the baptism of Jesus, the three Persons in the Godhead are simultaneously in evidence. The Father is heard speaking directly from heaven, the Son is seen being immersed in the river, and John the Baptist beholds the Spirit descending upon the Christ." Three in One and One in Three. On this truth we must stand, though we may not fully understand it.

PRAYER

Blessed Trinity, Three in One and One in Three, my spirit joins with your Spirit this day to worship you in spirit and in truth. Though sometimes darkness to my intellect, your truth is nevertheless sunshine to my heart. Amen.

FURTHER STUDY

Mt 28:16-20; Jn 14:26-27; 15:26-27

How were the disciples to baptize new converts?

How did Jesus confirm the truth of the Trinity?

DAY 4

Genesis 7:1-9:7

7 Then the LORD said to Noah, “Enter the ark, you and all your household, for I have seen that you alone are righteous before me in this generation. ²You are to take with you seven pairs, a male and its female, of all the clean animals, and two of the animals that are not clean, a male and its female, ³and seven pairs, male and female, of the birds of the sky — in order to keep offspring alive throughout the earth. ⁴Seven days from now I will make it rain on the earth forty days and forty nights, and every living thing I have made I will wipe off the face of the earth.” ⁵And Noah did everything that the LORD commanded him.

⁶Noah was six hundred years old when the flood came and water covered the earth. ⁷So Noah, his sons, his wife, and his sons’ wives entered the ark because of the floodwaters. ⁸From the animals that are clean, and from the animals that are not clean, and from the birds and every creature that crawls on the ground, ⁹two of each, male and female, came to Noah and entered the ark, just as God had commanded him. ¹⁰Seven days later the floodwaters came on the earth.

¹¹In the six hundredth year of Noah’s life, in the second month, on the seventeenth day of the month, on that day all the sources of the vast watery depths burst open, the floodgates of the sky were opened, ¹²and the rain fell on the earth forty days and forty nights. ¹³On that same day Noah and his three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth, entered the ark, along with Noah’s wife and his three sons’ wives. ¹⁴They entered it with all the wildlife according to their kinds, all livestock according to their kinds, all the creatures that crawl on the earth according to their kinds, every flying creature — all the birds and every winged creature — according to their kinds. ¹⁵Two of every creature that has the breath of life in it came to Noah and entered the ark. ¹⁶Those that entered, male and female of every creature, entered just as God had commanded him. Then the LORD shut him in.

¹⁷The flood continued for forty days on the earth; the water increased and lifted up the ark so that it rose above the earth. ¹⁸The water surged and increased greatly on the earth, and the ark floated on the surface of the water. ¹⁹Then the

water surged even higher on the earth, and all the high mountains under the whole sky were covered. ²⁰The mountains were covered as the water surged above them more than twenty feet. ²¹Every creature perished — those that crawl on the earth, birds, livestock, wildlife, and those that swarm on the earth, as well as all mankind. ²²Everything with the breath of the spirit of life in its nostrils — everything on dry land died. ²³He wiped out every living thing that was on the face of the earth, from mankind to livestock, to creatures that crawl, to the birds of the sky, and they were wiped off the earth. Only Noah was left, and those that were with him in the ark. ²⁴And the water surged on the earth 150 days.

8 God remembered Noah, as well as all the wildlife and all the livestock that were with him in the ark. God caused a wind to pass over the earth, and the water began to subside. ²The sources of the watery depths and the floodgates of the sky were closed, and the rain from the sky stopped. ³The water steadily receded from the earth, and by the end of 150 days the water had decreased significantly. ⁴The ark came to rest in the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, on the mountains of Ararat.

⁵The water continued to recede until the tenth month; in the tenth month, on the first day of the month, the tops of the mountains were visible. ⁶After forty days Noah opened the window of the ark that he had made, ⁷and he sent out a raven. It went back and forth until the water had dried up from the earth. ⁸Then he sent out a dove to see whether the water on the earth’s surface had gone down, ⁹but the dove found no resting place for its foot. It returned to him in the ark because water covered the surface of the whole earth. He reached out and brought it into the ark to himself. ¹⁰So Noah waited seven more days and sent out the dove from the ark again. ¹¹When the dove came to him at evening, there was a plucked olive leaf in its beak. So Noah knew that the water on the earth’s surface had gone down. ¹²After he had waited another seven days, he sent out the dove, but it did not return to him again. ¹³In the six hundred first year, in the first month, on the first day of the month, the water that had covered the earth was dried up. Then Noah removed the ark’s cover and saw that the surface

of the ground was drying.¹⁴ By the twenty-seventh day of the second month, the earth was dry.

¹⁵ Then God spoke to Noah,¹⁶ “Come out of the ark, you, your wife, your sons, and your sons’ wives with you.¹⁷ Bring out all the living creatures that are with you — birds, livestock, those that crawl on the earth — and they will spread over the earth and be fruitful and multiply on the earth.”¹⁸ So Noah, along with his sons, his wife, and his sons’ wives, came out.¹⁹ All the animals, all the creatures that crawl, and all the flying creatures — everything that moves on the earth — came out of the ark by their families.

²⁰ Then Noah built an altar to the LORD. He took some of every kind of clean animal and every kind of clean bird and offered burnt offerings on the altar.²¹ When the LORD smelled the pleasing aroma, he said to himself, “I will never again curse the ground because of human beings, even though the inclination of the human heart is evil from youth onward. And I will never again strike down every living thing as I have done.

²² As long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, and day and night will not cease.”

9 God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth.² The fear and terror of you will be in every living creature on the earth, every bird of the sky, every creature that crawls on the ground, and all the fish of the sea. They are placed under your authority.³ Every creature that lives and moves will be food for you; as I gave the green plants, I have given you everything.⁴ However, you must not eat meat with its lifeblood in it.⁵ And I will require a penalty for your lifeblood; I will require it from any animal and from any human; if someone murders a fellow human, I will require that person’s life.

⁶ Whoever sheds human blood, by humans his blood will be shed, for God made humans in his image.

⁷ But you, be fruitful and multiply; spread out over the earth and multiply on it.”

Psalm 3:1-8

3 *A psalm of David when he fled from his son Absalom.*

¹ LORD, how my foes increase!
There are many who attack me.

² Many say about me,
“There is no help for him in God.” *Selah*

³ But you, LORD, are a shield around me,
my glory, and the one who lifts up
my head.

⁴ I cry aloud to the LORD,
and he answers me
from his holy mountain. *Selah*

⁵ I lie down and sleep;
I wake again because the LORD
sustains me.

⁶ I will not be afraid of thousands of people
who have taken their stand against me
on every side.

⁷ Rise up, LORD!
Save me, my God!
You strike all my enemies on the cheek;
you break the teeth of the wicked.

⁸ Salvation belongs to the LORD;
may your blessing be on your people. *Selah*

Proverbs 1:8-9

⁸ Listen, my son,
to your father’s instruction,
and don’t reject your mother’s teaching,
⁹ for they will be a garland of favor
on your head
and pendants around your neck.

Matthew 4:1-20

4 Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.² After he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was hungry.³ Then the tempter approached him and said, “If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread.”

⁴ He answered, “It is written: **Man must not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.**”

⁵ Then the devil took him to the holy city, had him stand on the pinnacle of the temple,⁶ and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down. For it is written:

**He will give his angels orders
concerning you,
and they will support you
with their hands**

so that you will not strike
your foot against a stone.”

⁷ Jesus told him, “It is also written: **Do not test the Lord your God.**”

⁸ Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. ⁹ And he said to him, “I will give you all these things if you will fall down and worship me.”

¹⁰ Then Jesus told him, “Go away, Satan! For it is written: **Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.**”

¹¹ Then the devil left him, and angels came and began to serve him.

¹² When he heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew into Galilee. ¹³ He left Nazareth and went to live in Capernaum by the sea, in the region of Zebulun and Naphtali. ¹⁴ This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah:

¹⁵ **Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali,
along the road by the sea,
beyond the Jordan,
Galilee of the Gentiles.**

¹⁶ **The people who live
in darkness
have seen a great light,
and for those living in the land
of the shadow of death,
a light has dawned.**

¹⁷ From then on Jesus began to preach, “Repent, because the kingdom of heaven has come near.”

¹⁸ As he was walking along the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon (who is called Peter), and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the sea — for they were fishermen. ¹⁹ “Follow me,” he told them, “and I will make you fish for people.” ²⁰ Immediately they left their nets and followed him.

INFLUENCE OR INTELLIGENCE?

Jesus told him, “Go away, Satan! For it is written . . .” —Matthew 4:10

Some of the names given to the devil in Scripture show him to be a real personality. In the passage that is before us today, Jesus is seen in direct confrontation with the devil, even engaging in conversation with him. Some liberal theologians explain this in these terms: Christ was having a conversation with the dark thoughts that arose within his nature, so any “devil” that was present was subjective, not objective.

If we allow the notion that Christ had dark thoughts within his nature, then the whole scheme of redemption tumbles like a pack of cards, for a Savior who is not perfect could never fully atone for our sins. As Dr. Handley Moule puts it: “A Savior who is not perfect is like a bridge broken at one end and is not a reliable passage of access.” Once we try to get around Scripture, we create endless difficulties for ourselves and end up looking foolish. Far better to accept the Bible as it stands and believe its testimony on everything.

It is actually to Satan’s advantage to get us to believe that he is not a personal being, for if there is no personal devil, there can be no personal resistance. Don’t allow yourself to be deceived into thinking that the term devil is a synonym for the evil influence that is in the world. The devil is more than an evil influence; he is an evil intelligence. Only when we recognize this fact will we be motivated to take effective steps to resist him.

PRAYER

Father, help me see that the first step in spiritual warfare is to “know the enemy.” For until I know and understand my enemy, I will not be able to defeat him. Deepen my knowledge of these important truths, I pray. In Jesus’s name. Amen.

FURTHER STUDY

1Jn 3:1-8; Heb 2:14; Jn 12:30-31
 Why was Jesus made manifest?
 What did he declare?

Day 4 | Genesis 7:1-9:7 | Psalm 3:1-8 | Proverbs 1:8-9 | Matthew 4:1-20

DAY 5

Genesis 9:8-10:32

⁸ Then God said to Noah and his sons with him, ⁹ “Understand that I am establishing my covenant with you and your descendants after you, ¹⁰ and with every living creature that is with you — birds, livestock, and all wildlife of the earth that are with you — all the animals of the earth that came out of the ark. ¹¹ I establish my covenant with you that never again will every creature be wiped out by floodwaters; there will never again be a flood to destroy the earth.”

¹² And God said, “This is the sign of the covenant I am making between me and you and every living creature with you, a covenant for all future generations: ¹³ I have placed my bow in the clouds, and it will be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. ¹⁴ Whenever I form clouds over the earth and the bow appears in the clouds, ¹⁵ I will remember my covenant between me and you and all the living creatures: water will never again become a flood to destroy every creature. ¹⁶ The bow will be in the clouds, and I will look at it and remember the permanent covenant between God and all the living creatures on earth.” ¹⁷ God said to Noah, “This is the sign of the covenant that I have established between me and every creature on earth.”

¹⁸ Noah’s sons who came out of the ark were Shem, Ham, and Japheth. Ham was the father of Canaan. ¹⁹ These three were Noah’s sons, and from them the whole earth was populated.

²⁰ Noah, as a man of the soil, began by planting a vineyard. ²¹ He drank some of the wine, became drunk, and uncovered himself inside his tent.

²² Ham, the father of Canaan, saw his father naked and told his two brothers outside. ²³ Then Shem and Japheth took a cloak and placed it over both their shoulders, and walking backward, they covered their father’s nakedness. Their faces were turned away, and they did not see their father naked.

²⁴ When Noah awoke from his drinking and learned what his youngest son had done to him, ²⁵ he said:

Canaan is cursed.
 He will be the lowest of slaves
 to his brothers.

²⁶ He also said:

Blessed be the LORD, the God of Shem;
 Let Canaan be Shem’s slave.

²⁷ Let God extend Japheth;
 let Japheth dwell in the tents
 of Shem;
 let Canaan be Shem’s slave.

²⁸ Now Noah lived 350 years after the flood. ²⁹ So Noah’s life lasted 950 years; then he died.

10 These are the family records of Noah’s sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth. They also had sons after the flood.

² Japheth’s sons: Gomer, Magog, Madai, Javan, Tubal, Meshech, and Tiras. ³ Gomer’s sons: Ashkenaz, Riphath, and Togarmah. ⁴ And Javan’s sons: Elishah, Tarshish, Kittim, and Dodanim. ⁵ From these descendants, the peoples of the coasts and islands spread out into their lands according to their clans in their nations, each with its own language.

⁶ Ham's sons: Cush, Mizraim, Put, and Canaan.
⁷ Cush's sons: Seba, Havilah, Sabtah, Raamah, and Sabteca. And Raamah's sons: Sheba and Dedan.

⁸ Cush fathered Nimrod, who began to be powerful in the land. ⁹ He was a powerful hunter in the sight of the LORD. That is why it is said, "Like Nimrod, a powerful hunter in the sight of the LORD."
¹⁰ His kingdom started with Babylon, Erech, Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar. ¹¹ From that land he went to Assyria and built Nineveh, Rehoboth-ir, Calah, ¹² and Resen, between Nineveh and the great city Calah.

¹³ Mizraim fathered the people of Lud, Anam, Lehab, Naphtuh, ¹⁴ Pathrus, Casluh (the Philistines came from them), and Caphtor.

¹⁵ Canaan fathered Sidon his firstborn and Heth, ¹⁶ as well as the Jebusites, the Amorites, the Girgashites, ¹⁷ the Hivites, the Arkites, the Sinites, ¹⁸ the Arvadites, the Zemarites, and the Hamathites. Afterward the Canaanite clans scattered. ¹⁹ The Canaanite border went from Sidon going toward Gerar as far as Gaza, and going toward Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboiim as far as Lasha.

²⁰ These are Ham's sons by their clans, according to their languages, in their lands and their nations.

²¹ And Shem, Japheth's older brother, also had sons. Shem was the father of all the sons of Eber. ²² Shem's sons were Elam, Asshur, Arpachshad, Lud, and Aram.

²³ Aram's sons: Uz, Hul, Gether, and Mash.

²⁴ Arpachshad fathered Shelah, and Shelah fathered Eber. ²⁵ Eber had two sons. One was named Peleg, for during his days the earth was divided; his brother was named Joktan. ²⁶ And Joktan fathered Almodad, Sheleph, Hazarmaveth, Jerah, ²⁷ Hadoram, Uzal, Diklah, ²⁸ Obal, Abimael, Sheba, ²⁹ Ophir, Havilah, and Jobab. All these were Joktan's sons. ³⁰ Their settlements extended from Mesha to Sephar, the eastern hill country.

³¹ These are Shem's sons by their clans, according to their languages, in their lands and their nations.

³² These are the clans of Noah's sons, according to their family records, in their nations. The nations on earth spread out from these after the flood.

Psalm 4:1-8

4 For the choir director: with stringed instruments.
 A psalm of David.

1 Answer me when I call,
 God, who vindicates me.

You freed me from affliction;
 be gracious to me and hear my prayer.

- ² How long, exalted ones, will my honor
 be insulted?
 How long will you love
 what is worthless
 and pursue a lie? *Selah*
- ³ Know that the LORD has set apart
 the faithful for himself;
 the LORD will hear when I call to him.
- ⁴ Be angry and do not sin;
 reflect in your heart while on your bed
 and be silent. *Selah*
- ⁵ Offer sacrifices in righteousness
 and trust in the LORD.
- ⁶ Many are asking, "Who can show us
 anything good?"
 Let the light of your face shine on us, LORD.
- ⁷ You have put more joy in my heart
 than they have when their grain
 and new wine abound.
- ⁸ I will both lie down and sleep in peace,
 for you alone, LORD, make me live
 in safety.

Proverbs 1:10-14

- ¹⁰ My son, if sinners entice you,
 don't be persuaded.
- ¹¹ If they say — "Come with us!
 Let's set an ambush
 and kill someone.
 Let's attack some innocent person
 just for fun!"
- ¹² Let's swallow them alive, like Sheol,
 whole, like those who go down
 to the Pit.
- ¹³ We'll find all kinds of valuable property
 and fill our houses with plunder.
- ¹⁴ Throw in your lot with us,
 and we'll all share the loot" —

Matthew 4:21-5:12

²¹ Going on from there, he saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee, and his brother John. They were in a boat with Zebedee their father, preparing their nets, and he called them. ²² Immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.

²³ Now Jesus began to go all over Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people. ²⁴ Then the news about him spread throughout Syria. So they brought to him all those who were afflicted, those suffering from various diseases and intense pains, the demon-possessed, the epileptics, and the paralytics. And he healed them. ²⁵ Large crowds followed him from Galilee, the Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea, and beyond the Jordan.

5 When he saw the crowds, he went up on the mountain, and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. ² Then he began to teach them, saying:

³ “Blessed are the poor in spirit,
for the kingdom of heaven is theirs.

⁴ Blessed are those who mourn,
for they will be comforted.

⁵ Blessed are the humble,

for they will inherit the earth.

⁶ Blessed are those who hunger and thirst
for righteousness,
for they will be filled.

⁷ Blessed are the merciful,
for they will be shown mercy.

⁸ Blessed are the pure in heart,
for they will see God.

⁹ Blessed are the peacemakers,
for they will be called sons of God.

¹⁰ Blessed are those who are persecuted
because of righteousness,
for the kingdom of heaven is theirs.

¹¹ “You are blessed when they insult you and persecute you and falsely say every kind of evil against you because of me. ¹² Be glad and rejoice, because your reward is great in heaven. For that is how they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

FALSE ACCUSATION

*You are blessed when they . . . falsely say every kind of evil
against you because of me. —Matthew 5:11*

Today we examine a hurt that often arises within the human heart—false accusation. Has someone accused you of a wrong for which you were not responsible, and though you try to explain or defend yourself, no one seems to believe you? It hurts, doesn't it? I have known many Christians who, when faced with the hurt of false accusation, turned away from the Christian life altogether. How sad! I have a friend who was falsely accused by fellow Christians in a church, and although I and many others knew the accusation was not true and passionately defended him, he broke down and was placed in a mental institution.

People (even Christians) have their own ways of trying to cope with the feelings that arise when they are falsely accused. Some turn to liquor. They want to dull the pain inside them, and so they take what seems to them to be an easy way to that end. But it doesn't work, for there is always the morning after.

Some turn to books. That was the advice Edmund Gosse gave to his friend Robert Ross when he became involved in the Oscar Wilde scandal at the end of the nineteenth century. “Turn for consolation to books,” he said. But it didn't work. Others might turn to nature, to art, or to music.

There is, however, a better way. If you are a Christian, and your heart is heavy because of a false accusation, then I assure you that the blessed Comforter is alongside you even now. Offer the hurt to him. He delights to heal.

PRAYER

Blessed Lord Jesus, you who knew the hurt of being falsely accused, draw near in the power of your Spirit and heal me now. I take—and you undertake. Thank you, Savior. Amen.

FURTHER STUDY

Jms 3; 1Pt 2:1; 3:16; Lk 6:7

What is the hardest thing to tame?

For what should we use our tongues?

Day 5 | Genesis 9:8–10:32 | Psalm 4:1–8 | Proverbs 1:10–14 | Matthew 4:21–5:12

DAY 6

Genesis 11:1–12:20

11 The whole earth had the same language and vocabulary.² As people migrated from the east, they found a valley in the land of Shinar and settled there.³ They said to each other, “Come, let’s make oven-fired bricks.” (They used brick for stone and asphalt for mortar.)⁴ And they said, “Come, let’s build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the sky. Let’s make a name for ourselves; otherwise, we will be scattered throughout the earth.”

⁵ Then the LORD came down to look over the city and the tower that the humans were building.⁶ The LORD said, “If they have begun to do this as one people all having the same language, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them.⁷ Come, let’s go down there and confuse their language so that they will not understand one another’s speech.”⁸ So from there the LORD scattered them throughout the earth, and they stopped building the city.⁹ Therefore it is called Babylon, for there the LORD confused the language of the whole earth, and from there the LORD scattered them throughout the earth.

¹⁰ These are the family records of Shem. Shem lived 100 years and fathered Arpachshad two years after the flood.¹¹ After he fathered Arpachshad, Shem lived 500 years and fathered other sons and daughters.¹² Arpachshad lived 35 years and fathered Shelah.¹³ After he fathered Shelah, Arpachshad lived 403 years and fathered other sons and daughters.¹⁴ Shelah lived 30 years and fathered Eber.¹⁵ After he fathered Eber, Shelah lived 403 years and fathered other sons and

daughters.¹⁶ Eber lived 34 years and fathered Peleg.¹⁷ After he fathered Peleg, Eber lived 430 years and fathered other sons and daughters.¹⁸ Peleg lived 30 years and fathered Reu.¹⁹ After he fathered Reu, Peleg lived 209 years and fathered other sons and daughters.²⁰ Reu lived 32 years and fathered Serug.²¹ After he fathered Serug, Reu lived 207 years and fathered other sons and daughters.²² Serug lived 30 years and fathered Nahor.²³ After he fathered Nahor, Serug lived 200 years and fathered other sons and daughters.²⁴ Nahor lived 29 years and fathered Terah.²⁵ After he fathered Terah, Nahor lived 119 years and fathered other sons and daughters.²⁶ Terah lived 70 years and fathered Abram, Nahor, and Haran.

²⁷ These are the family records of Terah. Terah fathered Abram, Nahor, and Haran, and Haran fathered Lot.²⁸ Haran died in his native land, in Ur of the Chaldeans, during his father Terah’s lifetime.²⁹ Abram and Nahor took wives: Abram’s wife was named Sarai, and Nahor’s wife was named Milcah. She was the daughter of Haran, the father of both Milcah and Iscah.³⁰ Sarai was unable to conceive; she did not have a child.

³¹ Terah took his son Abram, his grandson Lot (Haran’s son), and his daughter-in-law Sarai, his son Abram’s wife, and they set out together from Ur of the Chaldeans to go to the land of Canaan. But when they came to Haran, they settled there.³² Terah lived 205 years and died in Haran.

12 The LORD said to Abram:
Go from your land,
your relatives,
and your father’s house
to the land that I will show you.

- ² I will make you into a great nation,
I will bless you,
I will make your name great,
and you will be a blessing.
- ³ I will bless those
who bless you,
I will curse anyone who treats you
with contempt,
and all the peoples on earth
will be blessed through you.

⁴ So Abram went, as the LORD had told him, and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he left Haran. ⁵ He took his wife, Sarai, his nephew Lot, all the possessions they had accumulated, and the people they had acquired in Haran, and they set out for the land of Canaan. When they came to the land of Canaan, ⁶ Abram passed through the land to the site of Shechem, at the oak of Moreh. (At that time the Canaanites were in the land.) ⁷ The LORD appeared to Abram and said, "To your offspring I will give this land." So he built an altar there to the LORD who had appeared to him. ⁸ From there he moved on to the hill country east of Bethel and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east. He built an altar to the LORD there, and he called on the name of the LORD. ⁹ Then Abram journeyed by stages to the Negev.

¹⁰ There was a famine in the land, so Abram went down to Egypt to stay there for a while because the famine in the land was severe. ¹¹ When he was about to enter Egypt, he said to his wife, Sarai, "Look, I know what a beautiful woman you are. ¹² When the Egyptians see you, they will say, 'This is his wife.' They will kill me but let you live. ¹³ Please say you're my sister so it will go well for me because of you, and my life will be spared on your account." ¹⁴ When Abram entered Egypt, the Egyptians saw that the woman was very beautiful. ¹⁵ Pharaoh's officials saw her and praised her to Pharaoh, so the woman was taken to Pharaoh's household. ¹⁶ He treated Abram well because of her, and Abram acquired flocks and herds, male and female donkeys, male and female slaves, and camels.

¹⁷ But the LORD struck Pharaoh and his household with severe plagues because of Abram's wife, Sarai. ¹⁸ So Pharaoh sent for Abram and said, "What have you done to me? Why didn't you tell me she was your wife?" ¹⁹ Why did you say, 'She's my sister,' so that I took her as my wife? Now, here is your wife. Take her and go!" ²⁰ Then Pharaoh

gave his men orders about him, and they sent him away with his wife and all he had.

Psalm 5:1-6

5 *For the choir director: with the flutes.
A psalm of David.*

- ¹ Listen to my words, LORD;
consider my sighing.
- ² Pay attention to the sound of my cry,
my King and my God,
for I pray to you.
- ³ In the morning, LORD, you hear my voice;
in the morning I plead my case
to you and watch expectantly.
- ⁴ For you are not a God who delights
in wickedness;
evil cannot dwell with you.
- ⁵ The boastful cannot stand in your sight;
you hate all evildoers.
- ⁶ You destroy those
who tell lies;
the LORD abhors violent and treacherous
people.

Proverbs 1:15-16

- ¹⁵ my son, don't travel that road with them
or set foot on their path,
¹⁶ because their feet run toward evil
and they hurry to shed blood.

Matthew 5:13-32

¹³ "You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt should lose its taste, how can it be made salty? It's no longer good for anything but to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet.

¹⁴ "You are the light of the world. A city situated on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵ No one lights a lamp and puts it under a basket, but rather on a lampstand, and it gives light for all who are in the house. ¹⁶ In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.

¹⁷ "Don't think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to abolish but to fulfill. ¹⁸ For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or one stroke of a letter will pass away from the law until all things are accomplished. ¹⁹ Therefore, whoever

breaks one of the least of these commands and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven. But whoever does and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.²⁰ For I tell you, unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never get into the kingdom of heaven.

²¹“You have heard that it was said to our ancestors, **Do not murder**, and whoever murders will be subject to judgment.²² But I tell you, everyone who is angry with his brother or sister will be subject to judgment. Whoever insults his brother or sister will be subject to the court. Whoever says, ‘You fool!’ will be subject to hellfire.²³ So if you are offering your gift on the altar, and there you remember that your brother or sister has something against you,²⁴ leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled with your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift.²⁵ Reach a settlement quickly with your adversary while you’re on the way with him to

the court, or your adversary will hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the officer, and you will be thrown into prison.²⁶ Truly I tell you, you will never get out of there until you have paid the last penny.

²⁷“You have heard that it was said, **Do not commit adultery**.²⁸ But I tell you, everyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.²⁹ If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of the parts of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell.³⁰ And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of the parts of your body than for your whole body to go into hell.

³¹“It was also said, **Whoever divorces his wife must give her a written notice of divorce**.³² But I tell you, everyone who divorces his wife, except in a case of sexual immorality, causes her to commit adultery. And whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

THE UNYIELDING JUDGE

Reach a settlement quickly with your adversary . . . or your adversary will hand you over to the judge. —Matthew 5:25

“God’s wrath,” said George MacDonald, “is always judicial. It is always the wrath of the Judge administering justice. Cruelty is always immoral, but true justice—never.” Those who experience the fullness of God’s wrath get precisely what they deserve. This may sound hard, but it is true.

There is great wisdom in the words of our Lord in the passage before us today. Settle matters with an adversary, he says, before he drags you to court. Do at once what you must one day do anyway. There may be no escape from payment, but why not escape at least from the prison sentence that will enforce it?

The point our Lord is making is that we ought not to drive justice to extremities. God requires righteousness of us, does he not? It is utterly useless to think, then, that we can escape the eternal law. So yield yourself rather than be compelled.

To those whose hearts are true, the idea of judgment is right; to those whose hearts are untrue, the idea of judgment is wrong. Many people live under the illusion that perhaps it might be possible to find a way of escaping all that is required of us in this world. But there is no escape. A way to avoid the demands of righteousness, apart from the righteousness which God accounts to us at the cross, would not be moral. When a man or woman accepts the payment God has made for them in Christ, the whole wealth of heaven is theirs; their debt is cleared. Those who deny that debt or who, acknowledging it, do nothing to avail themselves of the payment made for them on Calvary, face an unyielding Judge and an everlasting prison.

PRAYER

O Father, how serious and solemn is all this, but yet how true. Sin must ultimately be punished. I am so grateful that in Christ my debt has been paid, and availing myself of your offer I am eternally free. Blessed be your name forever. Amen.

FURTHER STUDY

Zph 3:1-5; Ps 103:6; Jn 5:30; Rm 2:2

What does God do morning by morning?

What is God's judgment based on?

Day 6 | Genesis 11:1-12:20 | Psalm 5:1-6 | Proverbs 1:15-16 | Matthew 5:13-32

DAY 7

Genesis 13:1-15:6

13 Abram went up from Egypt to the Negev — he, his wife, and all he had, and Lot with him.² Abram was very rich in livestock, silver, and gold.³ He went by stages from the Negev to Bethel, to the place between Bethel and Ai where his tent had formerly been,⁴ to the site where he had built the altar. And Abram called on the name of the LORD there.

⁵ Now Lot, who was traveling with Abram, also had flocks, herds, and tents.⁶ But the land was unable to support them as long as they stayed together, for they had so many possessions that they could not stay together,⁷ and there was quarreling between the herdsmen of Abram's livestock and the herdsmen of Lot's livestock. (At that time the Canaanites and the Perizzites were living in the land.)

⁸ So Abram said to Lot, "Please, let's not have quarreling between you and me, or between your herdsmen and my herdsmen, since we are relatives.⁹ Isn't the whole land before you? Separate from me: if you go to the left, I will go to the right; if you go to the right, I will go to the left."

¹⁰ Lot looked out and saw that the entire plain of the Jordan as far as Zoar was well watered everywhere like the LORD's garden and the land of Egypt. (This was before the LORD destroyed

Sodom and Gomorrah.)¹¹ So Lot chose the entire plain of the Jordan for himself. Then Lot journeyed eastward, and they separated from each other.¹² Abram lived in the land of Canaan, but Lot lived in the cities on the plain and set up his tent near Sodom.¹³ (Now the men of Sodom were evil, sinning immensely against the LORD.)

¹⁴ After Lot had separated from him, the LORD said to Abram, "Look from the place where you are. Look north and south, east and west,¹⁵ for I will give you and your offspring forever all the land that you see.¹⁶ I will make your offspring like the dust of the earth, so that if anyone could count the dust of the earth, then your offspring could be counted.¹⁷ Get up and walk around the land, through its length and width, for I will give it to you."

¹⁸ So Abram moved his tent and went to live near the oaks of Mamre at Hebron, where he built an altar to the LORD.

14 In those days King Amraphel of Shinar, King Arioch of Ellasar, King Chedorlaomer of Elam, and King Tidal of Goiim² waged war against King Bera of Sodom, King Birsha of Gomorrah, King Shinab of Admah, and King Shemeber of Zebaiim, as well as the king of Bela (that is, Zoar).³ All of these came as allies to the Siddim Valley (that is, the Dead Sea).⁴ They were subject to Chedorlaomer for twelve years, but in the thirteenth year

they rebelled.⁵ In the fourteenth year Chedorlaomer and the kings who were with him came and defeated the Rephaim in Ashteroth-karnaim, the Zuzim in Ham, the Emim in Shaveh-kiriathaim,⁶ and the Horites in the mountains of Seir, as far as El-paran by the wilderness.⁷ Then they came back to invade En-mishpat (that is, Kadesh), and they defeated the whole territory of the Amalekites, as well as the Amorites who lived in Hazazon-tamar.

⁸ Then the king of Sodom, the king of Gomorrah, the king of Admah, the king of Zeboiim, and the king of Bela (that is, Zoar) went out and lined up for battle in the Siddim Valley⁹ against King Chedorlaomer of Elam, King Tidal of Goiim, King Amraphel of Shinar, and King Arioch of Ellasar — four kings against five.¹⁰ Now the Siddim Valley contained many asphalt pits, and as the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled, some fell into them, but the rest fled to the mountains.¹¹ The four kings took all the goods of Sodom and Gomorrah and all their food and went on.¹² They also took Abram's nephew Lot and his possessions, for he was living in Sodom, and they went on.

¹³ One of the survivors came and told Abram the Hebrew, who lived near the oaks belonging to Mamre the Amorite, the brother of Eshcol and the brother of Aner. They were bound by a treaty with Abram.¹⁴ When Abram heard that his relative had been taken prisoner, he assembled his 318 trained men, born in his household, and they went in pursuit as far as Dan.¹⁵ And he and his servants deployed against them by night, defeated them, and pursued them as far as Hobah to the north of Damascus.¹⁶ He brought back all the goods and also his relative Lot and his goods, as well as the women and the other people.

¹⁷ After Abram returned from defeating Chedorlaomer and the kings who were with him, the king of Sodom went out to meet him in the Shaveh Valley (that is, the King's Valley).¹⁸ Melchizedek, king of Salem, brought out bread and wine; he was a priest to God Most High.¹⁹ He blessed him and said:

Abram is blessed by God Most High,
Creator of heaven and earth,

²⁰ and blessed be God Most High
who has handed over your enemies to you.
And Abram gave him a tenth of everything.

²¹ Then the king of Sodom said to Abram, "Give me the people, but take the possessions for yourself."

²² But Abram said to the king of Sodom, "I have raised my hand in an oath to the LORD, God Most

High, Creator of heaven and earth,²³ that I will not take a thread or sandal strap or anything that belongs to you, so you can never say, 'I made Abram rich.'²⁴ I will take nothing except what the servants have eaten. But as for the share of the men who came with me — Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre — they can take their share."

15 After these events, the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision:
Do not be afraid, Abram.
I am your shield;
your reward will be very great.

² But Abram said, "Lord GOD, what can you give me, since I am childless and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?"³ Abram continued, "Look, you have given me no offspring, so a slave born in my house will be my heir."

⁴ Now the word of the LORD came to him: "This one will not be your heir; instead, one who comes from your own body will be your heir."⁵ He took him outside and said, "Look at the sky and count the stars, if you are able to count them." Then he said to him, "Your offspring will be that numerous."

⁶ Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness.

Psalm 5:7–12

⁷ But I enter your house
by the abundance of your faithful love;
I bow down toward your holy temple
in reverential awe of you.

⁸ LORD, lead me in your righteousness
because of my adversaries;
make your way straight before me.

⁹ For there is nothing reliable in what
they say;
destruction is within them;
their throat is an open grave;
they flatter with their tongues.

¹⁰ Punish them, God;
let them fall by their own schemes.
Drive them out because of
their many crimes,
for they rebel against you.

¹¹ But let all who take refuge
in you rejoice;
let them shout for joy forever.
May you shelter them,

and may those who love your name boast about you.

¹² For you, LORD, bless the righteous one; you surround him with favor like a shield.

Proverbs 1:17–19

¹⁷ It is useless to spread a net where any bird can see it,

¹⁸ but they set an ambush to kill themselves;

they attack their own lives.

¹⁹ Such are the paths of all who make profit dishonestly; it takes the lives of those who receive it.

Matthew 5:33–6:4

³³ “Again, you have heard that it was said to our ancestors, **You must not break your oath, but you must keep your oaths to the Lord.** ³⁴ But I tell you, don’t take an oath at all: either by heaven, because it is God’s throne; ³⁵ or by the earth, because it is his footstool; or by Jerusalem, because it is the city of the great King. ³⁶ Do not swear by your head, because you cannot make a single hair white or black. ³⁷ But let your ‘yes’ mean ‘yes,’ and your ‘no’ mean ‘no.’ Anything more than this is from the evil one.

³⁸ “You have heard that it was said, **An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.** ³⁹ But I tell you, don’t resist an evildoer. On the contrary, if anyone

slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. ⁴⁰ As for the one who wants to sue you and take away your shirt, let him have your coat as well. ⁴¹ And if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two. ⁴² Give to the one who asks you, and don’t turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.

⁴³ “You have heard that it was said, **Love your neighbor** and hate your enemy. ⁴⁴ But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, ⁴⁵ so that you may be children of your Father in heaven. For he causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. ⁴⁶ For if you love those who love you, what reward will you have? Don’t even the tax collectors do the same? ⁴⁷ And if you greet only your brothers and sisters, what are you doing out of the ordinary? Don’t even the Gentiles do the same? ⁴⁸ Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

6 “Be careful not to practice your righteousness in front of others to be seen by them. Otherwise, you have no reward with your Father in heaven. ² So whenever you give to the poor, don’t sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be applauded by people. Truly I tell you, they have their reward. ³ But when you give to the poor, don’t let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, ⁴ so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

“I AM YOUR SHIELD”

Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness. —Genesis 15:6

It is no good saying you believe God is stronger than the devil if you do not act on that belief. Faith not only believes this but acts on it by quickly standing up to the devil and saying something similar to what David said when he stood before Goliath: “You come against me with a sword, spear, and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the LORD of Armies” (1Sm 17:45). You must never forget that God is much more powerful than the devil. Hold on to that, and quickly raise your shield whenever you experience an attack of Satan’s “fiery darts.”

The passage that introduces this devotion focuses on an incident in Abraham’s life that took place when he was exhausted after making a great stand. Doubtless, Satan would have attacked him with thoughts like: “What is the point of all this action of God on your behalf and all these promises when you do not have an heir to carry on your line? God doesn’t seem to have as much power as it would appear.”

Abraham was fearful at this point until the Lord came to him and gave him these glorious words: “Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield; your reward will be very great” (Gn 15:1).

“I am your shield.” Hold on to that great truth, my friend, and when under attack, quickly lift it up and remind the devil that you belong to One whose power is endless and eternal. His promises are ever sure. That is what it means to hold up the shield of faith.

PRAYER

O God, how grateful I am for the sureness and certainty of your Word. Once again I feel it entering into the core of my being. Help me to put these truths into practice the very moment I come under satanic attack. In Jesus's name I pray. Amen.

FURTHER STUDY

Pr 30:1-5; Dt 33:29; Pss 33:20; 59:11; 84:9

Why was Israel blessed?

What was the psalmist's continual testimony?

Day 7 | Genesis 13:1-15:6 | Psalm 5:7-12 | Proverbs 1:17-19 | Matthew 5:33-6:4

DAY 8

Genesis 15:7-17:27

⁷He also said to him, “I am the LORD who brought you from Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to possess.”

⁸But he said, “Lord GOD, how can I know that I will possess it?”

⁹He said to him, “Bring me a three-year-old cow, a three-year-old female goat, a three-year-old ram, a turtledove, and a young pigeon.”

¹⁰So he brought all these to him, cut them in half, and laid the pieces opposite each other, but he did not cut the birds in half. ¹¹Birds of prey came down on the carcasses, but Abram drove them away. ¹²As the sun was setting, a deep sleep came over Abram, and suddenly great terror and darkness descended on him.

¹³Then the LORD said to Abram, “Know this for certain: Your offspring will be resident aliens for four hundred years in a land that does not belong to them and will be enslaved and oppressed.

¹⁴However, I will judge the nation they serve, and

afterward they will go out with many possessions. ¹⁵But you will go to your ancestors in peace and be buried at a good old age. ¹⁶In the fourth generation they will return here, for the iniquity of the Amorites has not yet reached its full measure.”

¹⁷When the sun had set and it was dark, a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch appeared and passed between the divided animals. ¹⁸On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, “I give this land to your offspring, from the Brook of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates River: ¹⁹the land of the Kenites, Kenizzites, Kadmonites, ²⁰Hethites, Perizzites, Rephaim, ²¹Amorites, Canaanites, Girgashites, and Jebusites.”

16 Abram's wife, Sarai, had not borne any children for him, but she owned an Egyptian slave named Hagar. ²Sarai said to Abram, “Since the LORD has prevented me from bearing children, go to my slave; perhaps through her I can build a family.” And Abram agreed to what Sarai said. ³So Abram's wife, Sarai, took Hagar,