

# RAMAH MONTHLY



*a monthly devotional  
for Ramah Baptist Church*

February 2025

## INTRODUCTION

Saints,

Press on in your study of God's Word. You'll never regret one moment spent knowing Christ through the Scriptures. This month's reading plan finishes our time in Genesis and also covers the Book of Exodus. Christ, our Passover Lamb, shines throughout the readings. May they be an encouragement to you.

For the weekend there is a short article provided on a variety of topics. This month includes an excerpt from our next Book Club title, as well as more encouragement on the Christian life, prayer, and worship.

The Scripture text for Sunday's sermon is also included each weekend so that you can read and pray over the text in advance. You'll be amazed at how much more you get from the Lord's Day service when you prepare your heart in advance.

At the end of the booklet is this month's hymn we will be learning together including an introduction from Pastor Laramie and a recording link to listen to the hymn Again, you'll be amazed at how much more you'll grow in singing God's praise with just a short amount of preparation.

We pray this resource better equips you in knowing, loving, and serving our great God.



**RAMAH**  
BAPTIST CHURCH

502 Ramah Dr. | Palmetto, GA  
(770) 463-3516  
[www.ramahfbc.com](http://www.ramahfbc.com)

*Pastors*  
Charles Huckaby  
Laramie Minga

FOR GOD    FOR THE CHURCH    FOR THE WORLD

# Table of Contents

Day 1 (February 3rd) .....	4
Day 2 (February 4th) .....	5
Day 3 (February 5th) .....	6
Day 4 (February 6th) .....	7
Day 5 (February 7th) .....	8
Weekend: Hearing the Voice of the Lord / G. Gilley .....	9–11
Day 6 (February 10th) .....	12
Day 7 (February 11th) .....	13
Day 8 (February 12th) .....	14
Day 9 (February 13th) .....	15
Day 10 (February 14th) .....	16
Weekend: A Call to Prayer / J.C. Ryle .....	17–19
Day 11 (February 17th) .....	20
Day 12 (February 18th) .....	21
Day 13 (February 19th) .....	22
Day 14 (February 20th) .....	23
Day 15 (February 21st) .....	24
Weekend: What Happens When We Worship / J. Cruse .....	25–28
Day 16 (February 22nd) .....	29
Day 17 (February 23rd) .....	30
Day 18 (February 24th) .....	31
Day 19 (February 25th) .....	32
Day 20 (February 26th) .....	33
Day 21 (February 27th) .....	34
Weekend: The Gospel for Real Life / J. Bridges .....	35–36
Hymn of the Month .....	37–38
Monthly Calendar .....	39

## Monday, February 3

Read: Genesis 32–33

Jacob has successfully departed in peace from his father-in-law, and he is headed home after twenty years! There's one more difficult family meeting Jacob must face: his brother Esau. Remember that the last time we saw Jacob and Esau together, Esau was threatening to kill Jacob for his deceit. Time heals many wounds, but Jacob wonders if his brother will still be intent on revenge.

After sending a peace offering ahead of his caravan, Jacob is terrified to hear that Esau is coming to meet him with 400 men. That can only mean one thing: revenge! Remember how grandfather Abraham rescued Lot with an army of 318 men. Esau's forces spell disaster. Jacob splits his camp into two separate parties for better safety, but ultimately Jacob prays. He thanks Yahweh for prospering him and for his lovingkindness. Jacob claims the promises of God by praying them back to God. Again, Jacob sends multiple peace offerings hoping to soften his brother's heart towards him.

The night before the meeting with Esau, 97 year old Jacob has a unique one-of-a-kind experience with the living God. God in a pre-incarnate appearance wrestles with Jacob all night. Jacob has come to realize that a blessing from God is far more important than the blessing of his earthly father that he stole from his brother with the help of his mother. The blessing of God is far more important than the blessing of his father-in-law or even the two camps the Lord has blessed him with these last twenty years. In spite of all of Jacob's flaws, and they are many, and in spite of all of the strivings Jacob has endured these years, he has learned that the true source of blessing is God alone. God blesses him and gives him a new name. Jacob the deceiver is now Israel, the one who strives with God.

The time for facing Esau has come. Jacob organizes his wives and children while saving his favorites for the last. What kind of reunion will this be? Hear how John MacArthur summarized the scene: *Fearfully and deferentially, Jacob approached his brother as an inferior would a highly honored patron, while gladly and eagerly, Esau ran to greet his brother without restraint of emotion. "They wept" because, after 21 years of troubling separation, old memories were wiped away and murderous threats belonged to the distant past; hearts had been changed, brothers reconciled!*<sup>1</sup>

We will never have the experience of Jacob, but do we have the same attitude as Jacob? Would we rather have the blessing of God more than anything the world offers? Are we willing to pay the price of reconciliation and forgiveness? By God's grace, may it be so.

---

<sup>1</sup> John MacArthur Jr., ed., *The MacArthur Study Bible*, electronic ed. (Nashville, TN: Word Pub., 1997), 64.

Today's reading sees many transitions and the focus of the Bible's narrative shifts to a new generation. First we see Jacob return to Bethel where God had first revealed himself to Jacob. He builds an altar at Bethel and worships the Lord. God reaffirms that the blessings given to Abraham and Isaac will pass to Jacob. His name change to Israel is permanent. God Almighty is faithful. His promises are sure.

Even as God graciously reaffirms these promises, Jacob experiences much sorrow in this season. Jacob's mother Rebekah is presumably already dead and now her nurse Deborah dies. Rachel gives birth to one more son, but tragically dies during childbirth. Jacob's dearly beloved wife is now dead, and his oldest son Reuben is challenging him as leader of the family. After a summary statement of Jacob's family, we are simply told of the death of his father Isaac.

*Time, like an ever-rolling stream bears all its sons away;  
they fly forgotten, as a dream dies at the op'ning day.*

Chapter 37 solidifies the narrative shift from Jacob to his favorite son Joseph. What was hinted at in 33:2 is now on full display: Jacob loves Joseph more than the rest of his sons. Of all people, Jacob should understand what happens when parents play favorites. After all, much of the last few decades of his life are a result of his mother pitting him against his brother Esau. In spite of what Jacob should have realized, his favoritism is evident to all. The brothers all hate Joseph. First it was the coat of many colors. This was proof positive of Jacob's feelings, but then comes the dreams! Oh, how they hated this dream of them all bowing down to little brother Joseph. At the right opportunity, Joseph's brothers plot to kill him. The schemers betray the dreamer! The reading ends with Joseph far from home in Egypt as a slave of the king's body-guard. How much injustice this young man has already suffered, but his story is only beginning.

As we begin the Joseph story, we would do well to keep the ending in mind. God has not forgotten Joseph or the family of Abraham. He has not forsaken them. God is busy keeping his promises. Joseph recognizes this near the end of his life when he says to his brothers:

*As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to do what has happened on this day, to keep many people alive.*

*Genesis 50:20*

## *Wednesday, February 5*

Read: Genesis 39–41

In spite of all the injustice towards Joseph by his brothers and those who bought him, Joseph is successful in Egypt. The recipe for his success is simple: God was with him. The Lord has not abandoned Joseph in Egypt. It is so clear that Yahweh is with Joseph that even Potiphar recognizes this to be true. As Joseph is entrusted with more and more responsibilities, the blessings upon this son of Abraham begin to bless the nations, picture in this case by the blessings upon the house of the Egyptian Potiphar. God's providential work may be unusual, but it cannot be denied.

Joseph proves to be a man of integrity and purity, and all that gets him is jail. Perhaps this means that now God has finally abandoned him? Perhaps now the blessings have run out for Joseph? Not hardly. Yahweh is with Joseph even in jail! God's lovingkindness still extends to Joseph, and the Lord gives Joseph favor in the sight of the chief jailer. God is at work in the life of Joseph. The narrator tips the reader off in 40:3 that something providential is about to happen because here come two new prisoners from Pharaoh in the same prison as Joseph. Joseph's ability to interpret the dreams of the baker and the cupbearer set the stage for Joseph to also be able to interpret the dreams of Pharaoh. Chapter 40 ends leaving the reader wondering once again, has God finally forgotten Joseph? The chief cupbearer certainly did.

Two years down the road, perhaps Joseph is wondering the same thing. But in God's perfect timing, Joseph is brought from the pit to the palace. God reveals the meaning of Pharaoh's dreams to Joseph, and Joseph's explanation of the matter makes quite the impression on Pharaoh. This prisoner who has no reason to desire the survival of the kingdom that has captured him actually lays out a fantastic plan to preserve Egypt. Pharaoh recognizes the hand of God upon Joseph's life and appoints him as second in command of all of the land. God is still blessing Joseph even this far from home and his family. Joseph receives a wife and two sons, with their names indicating the work of God in Joseph's heart. Like us, it would be tempting for Joseph to try and interpret God by his circumstances. Instead, let us trust the providence of God that is vividly pictured in the life of Joseph.

*Judge not the Lord by feeble sense, but trust Him for His grace;  
behind a frowning providence He hides a smiling face.  
Blind unbelief is sure to err, and scan His work in vain;  
God is His own interpreter, and He will make it plain.<sup>1</sup>*

---

<sup>1</sup> "God Moves in A Mysterious Way," William Cowper, 1774.

Eve believed the promises of God. She knew God had promised that one of her offspring would crush the head of the serpent and all the evil that resulted from sin. Eve naturally assumed her first child Cain would be the promised seed, so she praised God at his birth in verse 1. The family multiplies and it quickly becomes apparent that the struggle between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman will battle within Eve's own family. We may wonder at first about the difference between Cain's offering and Abel's offering. We might think the difference is in the content of the offering, but the biggest difference seems to be in the character of the one making the offering. Cain is marked by anger and pride. <sup>1</sup> John 3:12 makes plain that Cain is evil. However, Abel's more acceptable sacrifice results from his righteousness in faith (Heb. 11:4).

Cain certainly deserves death for his sin, yet God is exceedingly patient. He is patient in questioning and he is patient in judgment. Even the unclear "mark of Cain" is a sign of God's mercy in sovereignly protecting Cain's life while he deserves death. God is graciously patient with us. He graciously gives us the story of Cain and Abel to serve as a warning to us. Cain's sin quickly multiplied. Quickly progressing from an angry heart to murder, Cain pictures for us Jesus's teaching that out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks. In Cain's case, from the abundance of his heart, his hands murdered. The sins we think we are hiding in our hearts so that no one sees or knows about them are actually crouching at the door like Cain's sins. Our sins will soon multiply and devour us. May the story of Cain remind us to cry out to God for mercy in leading us not into temptation and delivering us from the evil one.

Our journey through the big story of the Bible this year also takes us through a complete reading of Psalms and Proverbs. These two books were particularly given to us in the Bible to shape and mature us. The Proverbs were given to nurture wisdom in us, to take Biblical knowledge and apply it to our daily lives. Proverbs are not personalized contracts guaranteeing the desired result, but they are general principles for godly living.

Verse 7 of Proverbs 1 gives us the starting point of knowledge: fear the Lord. Someone has simply explained fearing God as treating God as if he really were God. If we say we believe biblical truth about God, we should live our lives as if we actually believe these things are true. Comparing our two readings today, we notice that while Cain knew about God and spoke to God, he did not truly know God because he did not fear him. He did not live as if God's word is true. May that never be said of us.

## *Friday, February 7*

Read: Genesis 44–46

All of the problems you will face in this new year will find their origins back in Genesis 3. Sometimes we can recognize present problems have an origin in the choices and actions of our parents or grandparents. Ultimately all the problems the human family faces goes back to our father and mother Adam and Eve.

Verse 25 of chapter two gives us the last family snapshot of innocence and holiness before God. Things quickly change with the introduction of Satan, the serpent of old. We're not told where Satan came from, but the first action we see from Satan is to question the Word of God. Thousands of years later and that hasn't changed. The Devil's standard mode of operation is to cast doubt and questions upon the Word of God. He deliberately misquotes and twists God's Word to Eve, and he will often do that to you. Are you prepared? Do you know God's Word well enough to recognize misrepresentations, distortions, and almost-right interpretations of the Bible?

Watch the progress in the temptation of our mother Eve: she saw, she desired, she took, and she ate. We see this progress of sin in our own lives so often. And like Eve passed the fruit to her husband Adam (who was failing to lead his home in that moment), we so often pass our sinful actions around to those nearest and dearest to us.

God had promised Adam and Eve that disobedience deserves death, and their spiritual death certainly began that day. But God graciously postponed physical death while still describing the consequences of their sin. Marriage will be marred from the design of the Creator. Husbands will too often dominate their wives rather than lovingly lead them. Wives will be tempted to rule over and dominate their husbands rather than lovingly submitting to them. Childbearing, the expression of the one-flesh union between a husband and a wife, will now be increasingly painful. Work, which was given as a good gift, will now be difficult and painful. What was a very good beginning in chapters one and two is now horribly corrupted in chapter three. Is there any hope?

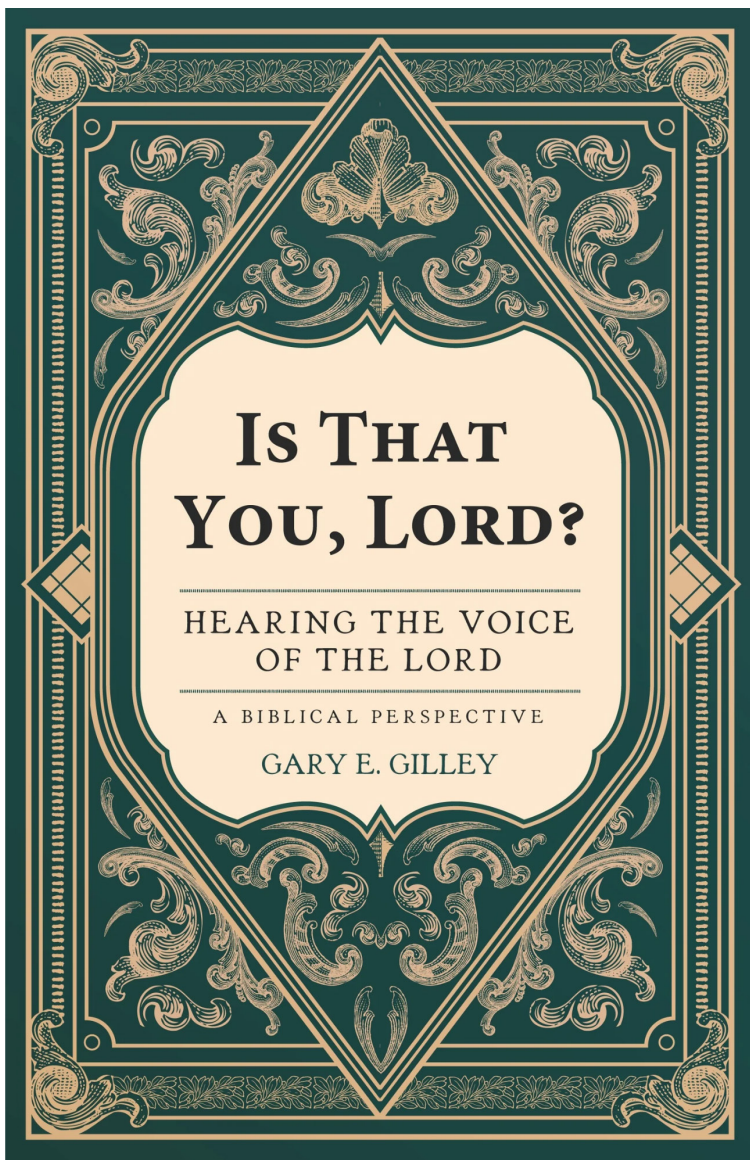
In verse 15 of chapter three comes a shining promise of hope. Speaking to the serpent, God promises there will be an ongoing war between the offspring of the serpent and the offspring of the woman. That war will climax with what seems like a death blow by the serpent against the seed of the woman. But the Promised Seed Jesus Christ will crush the head of the serpent. He will defeat sin, death, and Satan, and we get a preview in verse 21. God takes an innocent animal and it dies in the place of Adam and Eve. The robes of this animal become the robes of humanity, just as Jesus's sacrifice on the cross will cover our shame and nakedness from sin and clothe us in the righteousness of Christ. The good news is first proclaimed from the garden.



Our next book club title is available: *Is That You, Lord?: Hearing the Voice of the Lord* by Gary E. Gilley.

The following is an excerpt from this work.

Purchase your copy from one of the pastors for \$10 and join us at our next Book Club meeting!



## *Weekend Devotion: Is That You, Lord? (excerpt)*

Communication, in this modern age of communication, can be frustrating on many levels. Consider the common cell phone. Many nimbly leap from phone call to text message to taking a picture of a friend, all with the efficiency of a technological Jedi. Others, mortally fearful of missing a call, trot around with a “Bluetooth” attached to their ear (my regular jest to such people, that they have “a little something in their ear” has so far failed to elicit a chuckle). Such people have mastered the art of modern communication, at least of this variety.

Then there are the technologically challenged. Our one-year-old grandson has a better chance of activating the television through use of the remote than many a middle-aged adult has. When it comes to the cell phone it gets worse. Everyone seems to have a cell phone these days but legions are totally perplexed as to how to go about retrieving messages. How frustrated they are to see the little screen indicating they have a message but have no concept of how to retrieve it.

Perhaps this is how many of us feel about messages from God. It wasn't so bad when we were using the old communication technique—you know, the Bible. Back when we were taught that prayer was us speaking to God and Scripture was God speaking to us. We understood at that time how such communication from the Lord worked. We read and studied the Word to understand God and His instructions for living. This was not always easy, but with careful effort and proper technique we had a handle on God's instructions. Then along came new and “improved” methods. We were told that God had a specific will for each of our lives and, more importantly, we had to find it. We were now on a celestial treasure hunt to “discover the will of God.” Complicating matters further was that the Bible provided no instructions to aid in this search. Instead, we were told that the Lord was providing a sort of new and fresh revelation completely apart from biblical revelation. It was personalized revelation directed specifically at each individual. It was the voice of God but not audibly heard. This voice was an inner voice most likely detected through hunches, feelings, promptings and circumstances. And adding to the gravity of the situation was the warning that to miss this voice, or even misinterpret it, would doom us to living outside the will of God—perhaps for life.

An array of books, seminars and sermons was developed to instruct and train concerned Christians on how to “retrieve” these messages from God. However, the instruction manuals, having not been written by God, tended toward conjecture and guesswork, were often contradictory and left the weary believer apprehensive at best.

How do I know, they often asked, if I am really hearing the voice of God? Could it be my own imagination or desires? Could it be the suggestions of others or even the devil at play? Could it be that pepperoni pizza I ate at midnight?

Like many frantically searching through a series of instructions hoping to unlock the secret to the latest message from a friend, the child of God fished through the plethora of man-made instructions to discover God's messages. But here the stakes are higher. My wife may have missed my message to bring home ice cream, but the believer fears that he may have missed God's message concerning a spouse, a career change, what church to attend or automobile to purchase.

It is for such frustrated and perplexed people that I have written this book. It is my hope that these thoughts will help unravel some of the confusion. In this book I would like to press home the great need of the hour: the need for confidence in the Word, the only authoritative voice of God for all ages. Ruth Tucker frames my quest well in *God Talk*:

No one would deny that the Bible provides examples of God speaking. That is not the issue. Rather, the debate centers on when and how and why God spoke, and whether that kind of speaking continues on after the completion of the biblical canon. An important issue is whether God spoke to ordinary folks in biblical times on a routine basis.<sup>1</sup>

The answers to these questions, as I understand them, are found in the pages that follow.

*This Sunday's*  
*Sermon text:*  
**Matthew 26:1–16**



Gary  
Gilley

---

<sup>1</sup> Ruth A. Tucker, *God Talk* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2005), p. 70.

## *Monday, February 10*

Read: Proverbs 4–5

Proverbs 4–5 continue the appeal from a father to a son to seek wisdom. What were you taught to value when you were growing up? Perhaps you looked forward to a good job making a lot of money one day. Maybe you were looking forward to having a big family with a joy-filled home. Were you ever taught to value and seek after wisdom? The Proverbs prioritize seeking wisdom above all else.

4:1–9 form an appeal from the father to his sons.. This quest for wisdom didn't begin in dad's day. His father passed down what had been handed down to him. The pursuit of wisdom is a family tradition. Wisdom is worth the work. The pursuit of wisdom will bring the prize; it will crown the head of every son who seeks her.

The appeal of 4:10–19 presents the choice so common in Psalms and Proverbs: there are only two ways to live. The blessed one of Psalm 1 does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand in the way of sinners, nor sit in the seat of scoffers. We remember how the blessed path is different from the wicked path. So it is in Proverbs. The way of wisdom is not the way of wickedness. The path of the righteous is bright and growing brighter as the sun shines from sunrise till its brightest at high noon. The way of the wicked is dark and growing darker.

The chapter's final appeal in 4:20–27 makes clear that wisdom is not mere head knowledge, but a pursuit of the heart. The father's words are to be stored in the heart. The heart is to be protected above all else, for from it flows the springs of life. The wisdom stored in the heart impacts the words we say, the things we look at, and the ways we act (24–27). If the heart is that important, are you guarding yours today? What changes do you need to make in your life in order to protect your heart and fill it with wisdom?

Proverbs 5 presents a pointed appeal from father to son. Wisdom is exalted once again, but then it is applied in one specific area. Perhaps the warning from the father shocks you. He speaks so plainly of the dangers of the forbidden woman. He pleads with his son to stay away from her. The father straightforwardly explains sexual pleasure as God designed it, but the Creator confines this pleasure to marriage. The son would do well to listen to the father and experience the blessings of the Creator. May we, too, gain this wisdom and guard our hearts.

We begin the second book in the Pentateuch (the first five books of the Bible with each being humanly penned by Moses); we call it Exodus. The story continues right where we left off in Genesis: God's people are in Egypt. The family of Jacob is safe and fruitful. Even as Joseph and his generation have died, the sons of Israel are increasing and flourishing. However a problem arises in verse 8. There's a new king on the throne of Egypt, and he doesn't care about who Joseph was or who Joseph's God is. This new king looks at the family of Israel and only sees a threat. He oppresses and even murders the people of God, yet God is faithful. He continues to bless and multiply, just as he promised Abraham.

*This passage encourages us through the providence of God.* This new king of Egypt sought to destroy the sons of Israel. This is yet another episode in the ongoing series of Satan's attacks against the seed of the woman (remember Genesis 3). Pharaoh thinks he is safe from the daughters of Israel, but it was two daughters of Israel—the honored midwives Shiphrah and Puah—that God providentially used to preserve the sons of Israel. It was Pharaoh's own daughter that God providentially used to preserve one particular son, the baby Moses. God is faithful to provide for himself a deliverer, in this case the child Moses. As we watch this child grow, we will see many episodes that will point us to the greater deliverer, the greater Moses—Jesus, the baby also providentially and miraculously preserved from a wicked king's hand. And as we watch this man Moses, we will be reminded quite often of how much more we need the better Moses, the one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus (1 Tim 2:5).

*This passage also reminds us to fear God rather than man.* The Hebrew midwives had every reason to fear man. The king of Egypt had enslaved their people. His oppression was only growing more fierce and bitter by the day. If this wicked king commanded the death of innocent baby boys, what would he do to the women who failed to obey his commands? Yet, the Bible tells us these women feared God rather than man. The same Bible tells in a variety of places that human government is ordained by God and ought to be obeyed under many circumstances. But there are times when even the government oversteps its authority and seeks to play the role of God. When those times come, we ought always to obey God rather than man.

## *Wednesday, February 12*

Read: Exodus 2:11–25; Psalm 90

In yesterday's reading we saw God protecting Moses as an infant; today we see God's protection of Moses as a young man. In Acts 7:23 Stephen speaks of Moses as being 40 years old at the time of this incident. Raised in the privilege of the Egyptian palace, Moses still identifies with his Hebrew family all these years later. Seeing the violence against his own kinsmen, Moses wrongly commits violence. He soon finds himself on the run as a fugitive because of his impulsive response to sin. The soon-to-be deliverer finds himself rightly using force to protect the daughters of the priest of Midian. Through all of this, God is still preserving and protecting the deliverer of his people from bondage in Egypt.

Remembering the providence of God in the life of Moses helps us to understand a potentially difficult phrase in verse 24: "God remembered." The sons of Jacob are still in slavery and they cry out to the God of Jacob for deliverance. Their cry for help rises to the (figurative) ears of God. In four crisp verbs, we are strongly encouraged by the faithfulness of God. God heard. God remembered. God saw. God knew. We understand God hearing the prayers of his people. We understand God seeing and knowing all things. But God remembering? It sounds like it's possible for him to forget us! Perhaps the children of Israel even felt forgotten in Egypt, but we've already seen in the text that God hasn't forgotten his people. *God has been faithfully preserving the life of the deliverer for his people.* Several times in Scripture we see the phrase "God remembered" and it never means that God has forgotten. Speaking to us in language we can understand, the writer is tipping us off that even if it's been a long wait, God is about to act on behalf of his people. He hears. He remembers. He sees. He knows.

Psalm 90 is given to us as a prayer of Moses. We're not told the exact circumstances when it was written, but some have suggested that it could have been written during his wilderness years in Midian. Moses begins in verses 1–2 with a reminder of God's eternal nature. From everlasting to everlasting, there is only one God. Contrasted with God's permanence, humanity is temporary. Verses 3–6 offers multiple illustrations of how fleeting our lives are. At the end of our quickly fading lives will most certainly come judgment. Verses 7–12 reflect on our sinfulness and our hopelessness apart from God's grace. We must live our lives with eternity in mind. Moses concludes by looking to Yahweh and trusting in his lovingkindness and favor. Let this be our prayer.

We've seen how God has faithfully preserved the life of Moses to this point, but now we see God clearly call Moses. As Moses is shepherding the flock of his father-in-law near Mount Horeb (later called Mount Sinai), the angel of Yahweh appears. As we have noticed before, this is no ordinary angel but an appearance of God himself. Moses is first drawn by the marvelous sight of the burning bush that is not consumed, but he quickly is confronted by the holiness of God. God declares his identity as the same God of Israel. He sees. He hears. He knows. He has come to deliver his people, and he has come to send Moses to do it.

Moses rightly recognizes his insignificance in verse 11, but God declares that he will be with Moses just as God was with the patriarchs. Moses's commissioning to deliver God's people from slavery would be impossible without the empowering presence of the Lord. Did you notice that freedom from oppression is not the end goal for God's people? Yahweh promises that they will be saved to serve him. The day will come when God's people, fresh from the bondage of Pharaoh, will worship the Lord at Mount Sinai. In 3:18 the idea is reinforced: the purpose of the Exodus is to worship the one, true, and living God. Before we go any further in this momentous scene from the life of Moses, may we be reminded that the same is true for all believers today: *we are saved to worship and serve Yahweh.*

God declares his personal name to Moses in 3:14: "I AM WHO I AM." God uses a simple Hebrew verb that means "to be." He has no beginning or end. He simply is. To aid you in your Bible reading, let us note that many English Bible translations take the Hebrew name given in this verse and render it as "the LORD" in all caps. Anytime you see "the LORD" written that way instead of "the Lord," you can know this is a translation of God's personal name revealed here in Exodus 3:14.

Moses continues to ask questions, but it's not entirely clear when the questions shift from sincerity to stalling. By 4:14 Moses' slow obedience is clearly no obedience, and God answers firmly and finally. Moses offers no more questions or objections. God's call upon Moses' life is clear and convincing. Despite his weakness and possible limitations, Yahweh will use Moses to deliver his people. He will validate Moses by mighty signs. God will provide for his people, even by the hands of the Egyptians. And God will protect his people, even from a hard-hearted king.



## *Friday, February 14*

Read: Exodus 4:19–31; Psalm 77

Our Exodus reading is short but packed with difficult questions. Yahweh had already told Moses at the burning bush that Pharaoh would not let the people of Israel leave Egypt. Now that Moses is on mission, God plainly says in verse 21, “I will harden his heart with strength so that he will not let the people go.” Something within us recoils at the idea of God hardening anyone’s heart, yet not once, not twice, but ten times throughout the next several chapters will we see God involved in hardening Pharaoh’s heart. However, we will also see Pharaoh hardening his own heart. Not once. Not twice. Ten times will Pharaoh harden his heart. How can we reconcile this tension between God’s sovereignty and man’s responsibility? We would do well to affirm the biblical teaching on both. Pharaoh is clearly guilty; he has hardened his heart against God time and time again. But God is clearly sovereign over all things, even the human heart. The Lord be praised.

If we can handle the difficulty of verse 21, what do we do with the shocking statement of verse 24?! “. . . Yahweh encountered [Moses] and sought to put him to death.” God has called and commissioned Moses only to kill him? What is his chief sin? Moses’ wife Zipporah somehow understands that the problem is the sign of the covenant—circumcision. God has remembered his covenant with his people, but his people have not remembered the sign. At least Moses hasn’t. He’s neglected his responsibility towards his son, but his wife quickly resolves the situation, even as she seems revulsed by the whole thing. Remember that God’s covenant with Abraham and his offspring was to be marked by the act of circumcision, and failure to comply could result in death. Exodus 12:15 uses the language of being “cut off” from the people of God. Moses’ failure to remember the sign of the covenant could have led to his death. This isn’t the first time that Moses’s life has been saved by another. Previously it was the daughter of Pharaoh. This time it is by the daughter of Jethro, his own wife Zipporah.

Psalm 77, while written by Asaph, is clearly connected to the Exodus story and the ministry of Moses and Aaron (see verse 20). The psalmist laments his condition, but it’s not merely his situation alone that matters. His condition is bound up with the situation of the people of God. As he remembers and meditates on the work of God in the past, he is confident in the present and ready to face the future.



## *Weekend Devotion: A Call to Prayer (an excerpt)*

I ask again whether you pray, because a habit of prayer is one of the surest marks of a true Christian.

All the children of God on earth are alike in this respect. From the moment there is any life and reality about their religion, they pray. Just as the first sign of life in an infant when born into the world is the act of breathing, so the first act of men and women when they are born again is praying.

This is one of the common marks of all the elect of God, “They cry unto him day and night” (Luk 18:1). The Holy Spirit, Who makes them new creatures, works in them the feeling of adoption, and makes them cry, “Abba, Father” (Rom 8:15). The Lord Jesus, when He quickens them, gives them a voice and a tongue, and says to them, “Be dumb no more.” God has no dumb children. It is as much a part of their new nature to pray as it is of a child to cry. They see their need of mercy and grace. They feel their emptiness and weakness. They cannot do otherwise than they do. They must pray.

I have looked carefully over the lives of God’s saints in the Bible. I cannot find one of whose history much is told us, from Genesis to Revelation, who was not a man of prayer. I find it mentioned, as a characteristic of the godly, that “they call on the Father” (1Pet 1:17), or “the name of the Lord Jesus Christ” (1Co 1:2). Recorded as a characteristic of the wicked is the fact that “they call not upon the Lord” (Psa 14:4).

I have read the lives of many eminent Christians who have been on earth since the Bible days. Some of them, I see, were rich, and some poor. Some were learned, and some unlearned. Some of them were Episcopalians and some Christians of other names. Some were Calvinists and some were Arminians. Some have loved to use a liturgy, and some to use none. But one thing I see [that] they all had in common: They have all been men of prayer.

I study the reports of missionary societies in our own times. I see with joy that heathen men and women are receiving the gospel in various parts of the globe. There are conversions in Africa, in New Zealand, in Hindustan, in China. The people converted are naturally unlike one another in every respect. But one striking thing I observe at all the missionary stations: the converted people always pray.

I do not deny that a man may pray without heart and without sincerity. I do not for a moment pretend to say that the mere fact of a person's praying proves everything about his soul. As in every other part of religion, so also in this: there may be deception and hypocrisy.

But this I do say: that not praying is a clear proof that a man is not yet a true Christian. He cannot really feel his sins. He cannot love God. He cannot feel himself a debtor to Christ. He cannot long after holiness. He cannot desire heaven. He has yet to be born again. He has yet to be made a new creature. He may boast confidently of election, grace, faith, hope, and knowledge—and deceive ignorant people. But you may rest assured it is all vain talk *if he does not pray*.

And I say, furthermore, that of all the evidences of the real work of the Spirit, a habit of hearty private prayer is one of the most satisfactory that can be named. A man may preach from false motives. A man may write books, make fine speeches, and seem diligent in good works—and yet be a Judas Iscariot. But a man seldom goes into his closet and pours out his soul before God in secret, unless he is in earnest. The Lord Himself has set His stamp on *prayer* as the best proof of a true conversion. When He sent Ananias to Saul in Damascus, He gave him no other evidence of his change of heart than this, "*Behold, he prayeth*" (Act 9:11).

I know that much may go on in a man's mind before he is brought to pray. He may have many convictions, desires, wishes, feelings, intentions, resolutions, hopes, and fears. But all these things are very uncertain evidences. They are to be found in ungodly people, and often come to nothing. In many a case they are not more lasting than the morning cloud and the dew that passeth away. A real, hearty prayer, coming from a broken and contrite spirit, is worth all these things put together.

I know that the Holy Spirit, Who calls sinners from their evil ways, does in many instances lead them by very slow degrees to acquaintance with Christ. But the eye of man can only judge by what it sees. I cannot call any one justified until he believes. I dare not say that any one believes until he prays. I cannot understand a dumb faith. The first act of faith will be to speak to God. Faith is to the soul what life is to the body; prayer is to faith what breath is to life. How a man can live and not breathe is past my comprehension, and how a man can believe and not pray is past my comprehension too.

Never be surprised if you hear ministers of the gospel dwelling much on the importance of prayer. This is the point we want to bring you to: we want to know that you pray. Your views of doctrine may be correct. Your love of Protestantism may be warm and unmistakable. But still this may be nothing more than head knowledge and party spirit. We want to know whether you are actually acquainted with the throne of grace, and whether you can speak to God as well as speak *about* God.

Do you wish to find out whether you are a true Christian? Then rest assured that my question is of the very first importance: *Do you pray?*

*This Sunday's  
Sermon text:  
Matthew 26:17–30*



J.C.  
Ryle

## *Monday, February 17*

Read: Exodus 5:1–6:13

Perhaps you've heard it said that the safest place for a Christian is the center of God's will. Understood correctly, that is true. We sometimes have a tendency to interpret that saying as if safe means healthy and prosperous without any difficulty or suffering. Today's reading corrects that misunderstanding.

Just as God instructed, Moses and Aaron go to Pharaoh declaring the word of the Lord. The king of Egypt is royally unimpressed. "Who is this Yahweh? I do not know him, and I do not want to know him." Moses and Aaron persist, so Pharaoh makes the conditions of slavery even worse. He instructs the taskmasters to not provide straw, a key ingredient in making bricks during that day. Pharaoh seeks to punish the people of Israel with increased difficulty in their labor, and he hopes they won't have any more time to hear from this Yahweh and make plans to worship him. Worshipping God is the clearly revealed will of the Lord, yet seeking to obey Yahweh isn't bringing Israel peace and prosperity.

First, the foremen of the sons of Israel go to Pharaoh to plead their case. After their cries are only met by Pharaoh's accusation of laziness, the leaders turn on Moses. This will not be the last time the people of Israel complain and grumble against Moses. Moses has nowhere to go but to the Lord, praying, "Why? Why? You haven't delivered your people yet." It's at this moment that God replies, "I've got you where I want you." God says in 6:1, "Now you shall see what I will do to Pharaoh." God reminds Moses of who he is and what he has done. Yahweh has revealed himself to Moses in a way unlike he revealed himself even to the patriarchs. God has remembered his covenant and he is about to act. Moses is directly in the center of God's will.

Moses relays the message to the sons of Israel, but they refuse to listen. Notice how the text specifies that they fail to listen because they are weak or anguished in spirit and they are undergoing hard slavery. The Bible doesn't say (at this point) that they are hard-hearted, rather they are living in hard times. Because his own people refused to listen to him, Moses can't imagine that Pharaoh will listen this time either. Yet, God commands Moses and Aaron to continue to be his spokesmen. Moses, the deliverer chosen by God, faces the rejection of Pharaoh and the complaints of the people. Yet, he is exactly in the center of God's will. Let us not judge our circumstances by our comfort level, but rather by the words of God.

Throughout Genesis and the beginning of Exodus, we saw God often working providentially in the background. Now Yahweh will work mightily front and center in the story. God has graciously given Aaron to serve his brother Moses as spokesman. He's given them instructions about what to do and what to expect on their next visit to the palace. Yahweh promises that when he is through, the Egyptians will know who he is, even if Pharaoh does not.

Moses and Aaron are armed with confidence in the Lord who confirms their mission by signs and wonders. Pharaoh is armed with a false sense of security from his royal magicians, sorcerers, and wise men who have their own staffs that turn into serpents. Just as God promised, Pharaoh's heart is hardened. Now the Lord begins ten mighty signs that prove who is God and who is not.

The ten plagues can be organized into three rounds of three plagues each, with a final climatic tenth plague that breaks down Pharaoh's resistance. Notice that three times Moses meets Pharaoh early in the morning (7:15, 8:20, 9:13) to demand the release of Israel ("let my people go") or face the punishment of Yahweh. Round one brings the plagues of water turned to blood, frogs, and gnats. Because the magicians can also turn water to blood, Pharaoh's heart was hardened. Because the frogs did not last forever, he hardened his heart with firmness. Even as the magicians fail to mimic the plague of gnats and credit the God of Aaron and Moses with this sign, Pharaoh's heart is hardened and he will not listen.

In the second round of plagues, Yahweh distinguishes between his people and the people of Egypt. The flies swarm and ruin Egypt but aren't found in Goshen among God's people. Pharaoh attempts to negotiate, but he continues to harden his heart and not let the people go. The fifth plague again distinguishes between Israel and Egypt, but this time the consequences are not merely disruption or destruction but now death. The livestock of Egypt dies but the livestock of Israel lives. The health of the Egyptians is targeted in the sixth plague, with the powerful magicians unable to even stand before Moses because of the boils.

As the third round of plagues begin, the seventh plague stands out. It is longer in description, but don't miss Yahweh explaining the power and purpose of the plagues to Pharaoh in 9:14–17. God even tells Pharaoh how to avoid the impact of this plague of hail. After a momentary emotional response, Pharaoh continues to harden his heart. What about you? Do you know and fear Yahweh God?

## *Wednesday, February 19*

Read: Exodus 10–12

Our reading today begins with a reminder of the hardened condition of Pharaoh's heart. We also see again God's commitment to preserving a people who will know him, worship him, and tell future generations about him. The eighth plague, locusts, finishes destroying what the seventh plague, hail, left behind. The locusts also "covered the surface of the whole land, so that the land was darkened" (10:15), which points us to the ninth plague where the land is covered for three days in complete and total darkness. During the eighth plague, Pharaoh's servants warn him that Moses is a snare to Egypt and destroying their nation. By the end of the ninth plague, Pharaoh is offering death threats to Moses. How deep is the darkness!

God's instructions concerning the final plague not only warns Pharaoh of the judgment that is quickly coming, but it also prepares the children of Israel for their quickly approaching exodus. There's a ring of finality to this plague as Moses begins once again with, "Thus says the LORD" but he doesn't give the command "let my people go." By the time God is done, Pharaoh will be begging Moses to take God's people out of Egypt. Way back in 4:22–23, God spoke of Israel as "my firstborn son" and warned that if Pharaoh refused to let God's people go, the consequences would be the death of Pharaoh's firstborn son. Here Moses announces that these consequences will extend to all the people because of the hardheartedness of their leader.

In the previous plagues, God automatically distinguished between Egypt and Israel. In the instructions for the Passover, God gives them the process by which the Lord will make this distinction and pass over them during this final plague. These instructions also point forward to life after Egypt. Even after God delivers them into the promised land, Israel is supposed to commemorate this occasion and tell the next generation of this mighty act of God. At midnight, God does exactly what he promised. God passes over every home with a blood-stained door post and visits every home not covered by the blood. Everything God promised comes to pass.

The death of the passover lamb holds significance for more than just the children of Israel. 1 Corinthians 5:7 calls Jesus Christ our Passover lamb. John 1:29 speaks of Jesus as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Without the shedding of the Lamb's blood, there would be no forgiveness of sins. God has not merely overlooked our sins; he has placed them on the Lamb in our place. Dear reader, do you know your sins are covered by the blood of the Lamb? Praise the Lord!

How would your life be different if the Lord delivered you from death? Even as God gave instructions to Israel in chapter 12 concerning the Pass-over meal to remember his deliverance, he also gives instructions in 13:1–16 concerning setting apart (or consecrating) the firstborn. The weeklong feast of unleavened bread will fortify the Israelites to fear God and not the Canaanites when God brings them into the land. It is the mighty hand of God that delivered them out of Egypt and the strong hand of God will continue to protect them. In all the riches of today's reading, don't miss the gem in 13:19. In earlier times, Joseph told his family with confidence that one day God would deliver them from Egypt. Trusting in the promises of God, Joseph told his family they should take his bones with them when they left Egypt. In life and in death, Joseph is different because of the Lord's deliverance.

Knowing their fearful hearts, God did not take Israel on the most direct route to the Promised Land. Instead, he redirects them on a wandering path that is exactly according to God's plan. God goes before them and does not depart from them. God has announced he will get glory over hard-hearted Pharaoh, but did you notice that he doesn't tell Moses how it will happen? We know the story of the Red Sea, but Moses must walk by faith and trust the word of the Lord. His words to the people in 14:13–14 stand out to us as a wonderful testimony of confidence in the Lord.

Just as Pharaoh promised to never again see Moses except in bringing him death, Moses promises that Israel is never going to see the Egyptians again because God is bringing about their death. Yahweh will fight for his people. Time has passed and our circumstances have changed, but we take confidence today knowing God still fights for his people. In the most vivid illustration of God's salvation in the Old Testament, we see the waters of the Red Sea dramatically part and provide safe passage for Israel's crossing. Just as they parted at God's command through Moses, the waters returned to their natural position flooding the Egyptian army unto death. Thus Yahweh saved Israel.

Chapter 15 contains a song of Moses and a song of his sister Miriam celebrating the great salvation of Yahweh. When God's people reflect on their deliverance, shouldn't they sing? As much as we want to quickly condemn them, too often our singing is replaced by grumbling against God just like the children of Israel. How does your life look different because Christ has delivered you?

## Friday, February 21

Read: Exodus 5:1–6:13

Do you get “hangry”? To be “hangry” is to be so hungry that it causes you to be angry. Fresh off deliverance from death at the Red Sea, God’s people are hangry. They begin to grumble against Moses and Aaron, but it becomes clear they are really grumbling against Yahweh. He hears their grumbling and knows that it is ultimately not against the leaders but against himself. This isn’t the first time Israel has grumbled against God, and it won’t be their last.

God tells Moses that he is going to continue to meet Israel’s needs. He didn’t bring them from Egypt just to let them die in the wilderness. God promises to rain bread down from heaven, this special bread called manna. But not only is Yahweh providing for his people, but he is also testing them. Will they trust and obey the word of the Lord? Israel’s lives would be sustained by the word of God. Yahweh would meet their needs. Their lives would be governed and regulated by the word of God. Yahweh will tell them what to do in every situation, but will they obey? Our circumstances have changed today, and yet the question remains the same for us. God has spoken in his word. We do not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. Will we govern our lives according to his word?

Even before God gives the law at Mount Sinai, he is already preparing Israel for their distinctive lifestyles. He tells them that the manna will be miraculously preserved over the Sabbath, which they are to observe as a solemn day of rest. Some have tried to give a natural explanation of the manna rather than accepting its clearly supernatural characteristics as described in the Bible. The manna comes with the morning dew, yet melts in the sun. It will decompose if there’s an attempt to use it too long, except, of course, on the Sabbath. God is clearly providing for his people. He doesn’t use the manna method in our lives today, and yet we can still trust God to provide for his people.

Another generation of Jews would grumble one day, this time against Jesus. In John 6, Jesus makes many connections between the manna in Exodus and his sustaining life. He truly is the bread of heaven.

<sup>48</sup> *I am the bread of life. <sup>49</sup> Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died.*

<sup>50</sup> *This is the bread which comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. <sup>51</sup> I am the living bread that came down from heaven; if anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and also the bread which I will give for the life of the world is My flesh.”*

RAMAH MONTHLY



## *Weekend Devotion: What Happens When We Worship?*

Worship is a supernatural event. Have you ever considered that?

It's an obvious statement, really. An event in which we interact with a supernatural being must, by definition, be supernatural. Then why is it that we so often approach worship with a sense of boredom instead of astonishment, with yawns instead of awe, with resentment instead of reverence? Why is it that rather than seeing worship as a supernatural event, we clump it in with the other mundane things we have to get done during the week? Going to church gets the same checkmark on the to-do list as going to the grocery store or doing homework.

If I were to ask you, What happens when you go to church?—that is, what goes on during the actual worship service—how would you answer? Some people might answer, “Well, there’s some preaching, a little praying, and a lot of singing.” Others may say, “We read our Bibles, watch a presentation from the youth group, stand up at one point and shake everyone’s hand,” and so on. But that’s not what I mean. Those answers tell me the various elements that make up the service. My question is one that seeks to go beyond that. What are these elements for? What are they accomplishing? What happens when we worship?

This book is written from a simple but important premise: something is happening when we worship. Something happens to us, something happens between us and the people we worship with, and, most importantly, something happens between us and God.

Many people hold to a “spectator” approach to worship: church is somewhere you go to watch something. You might stand up here or there and recite a line or two printed in the bulletin or shown on the big screen; in that sense you are participating, but by and large the event is something to watch. This makes going to worship not much different from going to the movies or to a football game. Others hold to a “club” approach: church is somewhere you go to hang around with like-minded people and do projects together. From this perspective, what goes on in church is not different from what goes on at 4H, the Girl Scouts, or your local book club.

But what goes on in the church's worship is different from these things! Going to worship is different from going to the cinema or the stadium, and it's different from attending a meeting of a local social club because worship—real, true, faithful worship—is supernatural. The God of the universe appears and meets with His people, and by His sovereign and gracious power He changes them. It's astounding! It's unlike anything this world could ever offer. And yet how easy it is to forget that something as spectacular as this is happening when we come to church.

### The Church Is a Bore, but She Is Our Mother

Astounding and spectacular are perhaps not the first adjectives most people would use to describe the average church-going experience, especially in the traditionally Reformed genre from which this book is written. Along with astounding and spectacular you could also strike thrilling, exciting, and any other word that even hints at the idea that worship could capture affections and attentions. Instead, many people would charge worship with being boring, dull, dry, and tedious. And even if some of us haven't said it out loud, most of us have thought it at one point.

Some Christians think boredom in worship is a badge of honor. In an effort to ensure that the church remains distinct from the world, they have mistakenly presumed that God actually intends our services to be insipid. They believe the monotony to be a sign of sincere worship. Anything that might stir the emotions must be from Satan. There are still others who, though they may not enjoy that church is boring, have errantly concluded that this must be the way it is. They have resigned themselves to slugging through the humdrum of Sunday out of obligation (whether to God, family, or friends) but are dreaming of something better that must be out there for them—think forlorn Belle from *Beauty and the Beast* singing, “There must be more than this provincial life!”

Let's at least admit that at first glance the worship service can seem dull. There's no point arguing that. There is a lot of sitting. There is a lot of listening. There is a lot of patience required. For an active culture with a notoriously short attention span constantly inundated with images, videos, push notifications, and ringers, it is no wonder an hour of concerted stillness seems like a chore.

But just because it seems dull doesn't mean it is dull. It simply means we are not aware of what is happening when we worship. This is why God is not pleased with those who wear the boredom badge with honor or with those who dutifully suffer through the service while secretly wishing church wasn't an obligation. God is not pleased with this because in both cases these people have completely missed out on the marvel of worship. God wants from us nothing less than hearts, souls, and minds that are fully enraptured with the wonder of biblical worship from beginning to end—which is to say, He wants us to be fully enraptured with Him. He wants us thrilled at the thought of coming to church to sing His praise, fellowship with His saints, lift up our prayers to His throne, hear His word, celebrate the sacraments of His covenant, and receive His blessing. Anything else would mean we fail at the great exhortation of Psalm 100:2: "Serve the LORD with gladness."

### Awakened to Worship

Many people approach worship as though it were the ecclesiastical equivalent of brussels sprouts, which we all know can be stomached only if they are roasted in oil, tossed in balsamic vinegar and honey, and heavily salted (even better if wrapped in bacon!). But worship is not brussels sprouts. It doesn't need to be dressed up. It is entirely wonderful all on its own. But we can often be blind to that. Even in a church that seeks to worship according to God's prescribed methods in Scripture—in a service where God's Spirit is present and active—the worshipers themselves can be completely unaware of what is going on around them. This means that how a particular congregation approaches the worship service as a corporate entity is not all that matters—how I myself as a Christian individual and son and servant of God approach worship is of crucial significance.

If you are like me, you have grown up in the church and the aspects of worship have become somewhat second nature. They don't require you to give much thought to them. Much like you don't have to think very hard about the route you drive to church week in and week out, you find you do not have to think very hard about what you are doing in church when you actually get there. Almost mechanically your hand is on the songbook as the "amen" is said in the opening prayer. The check goes into the offering plate, and you don't even remember writing it. Worship has become a going-through-the-motions exercise. Sadly, this is the case for many Christians today.

This is not a new problem. Puritan Jeremiah Burroughs (1599–1646) had to exhort the people of his day to “learn what it is you do when you come to worship God.” He says that if he went from one side of his congregation to the next and asked each person, “Is it your duty to worship God?” they would all answer proudly in the affirmative. Burroughs laments, however, that if he were to go around the sanctuary again and ask, “And what does worship look like exactly? What is it that you do when you worship? What is happening when you worship?” many of those same congregants would be perplexed and speechless.

### The Aim of This Book

This book seeks to remedy that ignorance and indifference that have plagued and continue to plague many worshipping Christians. By exposing what’s really happening in these moments of corporate worship, I hope to take the rote out of the routine and in its place produce a zeal for God and gratitude to Him for what He does for us in worship. I want to open our eyes—to wake us up—to what is going on (and has always been going on) around us every time we gather to worship in Spirit and in truth. Since God is an infinite God, His worship is infinitely interesting. We can never plumb the depths of who He is nor ever exhaust the stores of His goodness, grace, and glory. Worship is the grand exploration and exaltation of who God is. If the moment of worship seems dull to us, the fault lies with us, not with God.<sup>1</sup>

*This Sunday’s  
Sermon text:  
Matthew 26:31–56*



Jonathan  
Cruse

---

<sup>1</sup> Jonathan Landry Cruse, *What Happens When We Worship?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Reformation Heritage Books, 2020). Excerpts from chapter one.

Do you get “hangry”? To be “hangry” is to be so hungry that it causes you to be angry. Fresh off deliverance from death at the Red Sea, God’s people are hangry. They begin to grumble against Moses and Aaron, but it becomes clear they are really grumbling against Yahweh. He hears their grumbling and knows that it is ultimately not against the leaders but against himself. This isn’t the first time Israel has grumbled against God, and it won’t be their last.

God tells Moses that he is going to continue to meet Israel’s needs. He didn’t bring them from Egypt just to let them die in the wilderness. God promises to rain bread down from heaven, this special bread called manna. But not only is Yahweh providing for his people, but he is also testing them. Will they trust and obey the word of the Lord? Israel’s lives would be sustained by the word of God. Yahweh would meet their needs. Their lives would be governed and regulated by the word of God. Yahweh will tell them what to do in every situation, but will they obey? Our circumstances have changed today, and yet the question remains the same for us. God has spoken in his word. We do not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. Will we govern our lives according to his word?

Even before God gives the law at Mount Sinai, he is already preparing Israel for their distinctive lifestyles. He tells them that the manna will be miraculously preserved over the Sabbath, which they are to observe as a solemn day of rest. Some have tried to give a natural explanation of the manna rather than accepting its clearly supernatural characteristics as described in the Bible. The manna comes with the morning dew, yet melts in the sun. It will decompose if there’s an attempt to use it too long, except, of course, on the Sabbath. God is clearly providing for his people. He doesn’t use the manna method in our lives today, and yet we can still trust God to provide for his people.

Another generation of Jews would grumble one day, this time against Jesus. In John 6, Jesus makes many connections between the manna in Exodus and his sustaining life. He truly is the bread of heaven.

*<sup>48</sup>I am the bread of life. <sup>49</sup>Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. <sup>50</sup>This is the bread which comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. <sup>51</sup>I am the living bread that came down from heaven; if anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and also the bread which I will give for the life of the world is My flesh.”*

## *Tuesday, February 25*

Read: Exodus 20; Deuteronomy 6

How would your life be different if the Lord delivered you from death? Even as God gave instructions to Israel in chapter 12 concerning the Pass-over meal to remember his deliverance, he also gives instructions in 13:1–16 concerning setting apart (or consecrating) the firstborn. The weeklong feast of unleavened bread will fortify the Israelites to fear God and not the Canaanites when God brings them into the land. It is the mighty hand of God that delivered them out of Egypt and the strong hand of God will continue to protect them. In all the riches of today's reading, don't miss the gem in 13:19. In earlier times, Joseph told his family with confidence that one day God would deliver them from Egypt. Trusting in the promises of God, Joseph told his family they should take his bones with them when they left Egypt. In life and in death, Joseph is different because of the Lord's deliverance.

Knowing their fearful hearts, God did not take Israel on the most direct route to the Promised Land. Instead, he redirects them on a wandering path that is exactly according to God's plan. God goes before them and does not depart from them. God has announced he will get glory over hard-hearted Pharaoh, but did you notice that he doesn't tell Moses how it will happen? We know the story of the Red Sea, but Moses must walk by faith and trust the word of the Lord. His words to the people in 14:13–14 stand out to us as a wonderful testimony of confidence in the Lord.

Just as Pharaoh promised to never again see Moses except in bringing him death, Moses promises that Israel is never going to see the Egyptians again because God is bringing about their death. Yahweh will fight for his people. Time has passed and our circumstances have changed, but we take confidence today knowing God still fights for his people. In the most vivid illustration of God's salvation in the Old Testament, we see the waters of the Red Sea dramatically part and provide safe passage for Israel's crossing. Just as they parted at God's command through Moses, the waters returned to their natural position flooding the Egyptian army unto death. Thus Yahweh saved Israel.

Chapter 15 contains a song of Moses and a song of his sister Miriam celebrating the great salvation of Yahweh. When God's people reflect on their deliverance, shouldn't they sing? As much as we want to quickly condemn them, too often our singing is replaced by grumbling against God just like the children of Israel. How does your life look different because Christ has delivered you?

Our reading today begins with a reminder of the hardened condition of Pharaoh's heart. We also see again God's commitment to preserving a people who will know him, worship him, and tell future generations about him. The eighth plague, locusts, finishes destroying what the seventh plague, hail, left behind. The locusts also "covered the surface of the whole land, so that the land was darkened" (10:15), which points us to the ninth plague where the land is covered for three days in complete and total darkness. During the eighth plague, Pharaoh's servants warn him that Moses is a snare to Egypt and destroying their nation. By the end of the ninth plague, Pharaoh is offering death threats to Moses. How deep is the darkness!

God's instructions concerning the final plague not only warns Pharaoh of the judgment that is quickly coming, but it also prepares the children of Israel for their quickly approaching exodus. There's a ring of finality to this plague as Moses begins once again with, "Thus says the LORD" but he doesn't give the command "let my people go." By the time God is done, Pharaoh will be begging Moses to take God's people out of Egypt. Way back in 4:22-23, God spoke of Israel as "my firstborn son" and warned that if Pharaoh refused to let God's people go, the consequences would be the death of Pharaoh's firstborn son. Here Moses announces that these consequences will extend to all the people because of the hardheartedness of their leader.

In the previous plagues, God automatically distinguished between Egypt and Israel. In the instructions for the Passover, God gives them the process by which the Lord will make this distinction and pass over them during this final plague. These instructions also point forward to life after Egypt. Even after God delivers them into the promised land, Israel is supposed to commemorate this occasion and tell the next generation of this mighty act of God. At midnight, God does exactly what he promised. God passes over every home with a blood-stained door post and visits every home not covered by the blood. Everything God promised comes to pass.

The death of the passover lamb holds significance for more than just the children of Israel. 1 Corinthians 5:7 calls Jesus Christ our Passover lamb. John 1:29 speaks of Jesus as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Without the shedding of the Lamb's blood, there would be no forgiveness of sins. God has not merely overlooked our sins; he has placed them on the Lamb in our place. Dear reader, do you know your sins are covered by the blood of the Lamb? Praise the Lord!

## *Thursday, February 27*

Read: Exodus 40

How would your life be different if the Lord delivered you from death? Even as God gave instructions to Israel in chapter 12 concerning the Pass-over meal to remember his deliverance, he also gives instructions in 13:1–16 concerning setting apart (or consecrating) the firstborn. The weeklong feast of unleavened bread will fortify the Israelites to fear God and not the Canaanites when God brings them into the land. It is the mighty hand of God that delivered them out of Egypt and the strong hand of God will continue to protect them. In all the riches of today's reading, don't miss the gem in 13:19. In earlier times, Joseph told his family with confidence that one day God would deliver them from Egypt. Trusting in the promises of God, Joseph told his family they should take his bones with them when they left Egypt. In life and in death, Joseph is different because of the Lord's deliverance.

Knowing their fearful hearts, God did not take Israel on the most direct route to the Promised Land. Instead, he redirects them on a wandering path that is exactly according to God's plan. God goes before them and does not depart from them. God has announced he will get glory over hard-hearted Pharaoh, but did you notice that he doesn't tell Moses how it will happen? We know the story of the Red Sea, but Moses must walk by faith and trust the word of the Lord. His words to the people in 14:13–14 stand out to us as a wonderful testimony of confidence in the Lord.

Just as Pharaoh promised to never again see Moses except in bringing him death, Moses promises that Israel is never going to see the Egyptians again because God is bringing about their death. Yahweh will fight for his people. Time has passed and our circumstances have changed, but we take confidence today knowing God still fights for his people. In the most vivid illustration of God's salvation in the Old Testament, we see the waters of the Red Sea dramatically part and provide safe passage for Israel's crossing. Just as they parted at God's command through Moses, the waters returned to their natural position flooding the Egyptian army unto death. Thus Yahweh saved Israel.

Chapter 15 contains a song of Moses and a song of his sister Miriam celebrating the great salvation of Yahweh. When God's people reflect on their deliverance, shouldn't they sing? As much as we want to quickly condemn them, too often our singing is replaced by grumbling against God just like the children of Israel. How does your life look different because Christ has delivered you?



Do you get “hangry”? To be “hangry” is to be so hungry that it causes you to be angry. Fresh off deliverance from death at the Red Sea, God’s people are hangry. They begin to grumble against Moses and Aaron, but it becomes clear they are really grumbling against Yahweh. He hears their grumbling and knows that it is ultimately not against the leaders but against himself. This isn’t the first time Israel has grumbled against God, and it won’t be their last.

God tells Moses that he is going to continue to meet Israel’s needs. He didn’t bring them from Egypt just to let them die in the wilderness. God promises to rain bread down from heaven, this special bread called manna. But not only is Yahweh providing for his people, but he is also testing them. Will they trust and obey the word of the Lord? Israel’s lives would be sustained by the word of God. Yahweh would meet their needs. Their lives would be governed and regulated by the word of God. Yahweh will tell them what to do in every situation, but will they obey? Our circumstances have changed today, and yet the question remains the same for us. God has spoken in his word. We do not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. Will we govern our lives according to his word?

Even before God gives the law at Mount Sinai, he is already preparing Israel for their distinctive lifestyles. He tells them that the manna will be miraculously preserved over the Sabbath, which they are to observe as a solemn day of rest. Some have tried to give a natural explanation of the manna rather than accepting its clearly supernatural characteristics as described in the Bible. The manna comes with the morning dew, yet melts in the sun. It will decompose if there’s an attempt to use it too long, except, of course, on the Sabbath. God is clearly providing for his people. He doesn’t use the manna method in our lives today, and yet we can still trust God to provide for his people.

Another generation of Jews would grumble one day, this time against Jesus. In John 6, Jesus makes many connections between the manna in Exodus and his sustaining life. He truly is the bread of heaven.

*<sup>48</sup>I am the bread of life. <sup>49</sup>Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. <sup>50</sup>This is the bread which comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. <sup>51</sup>I am the living bread that came down from heaven; if anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and also the bread which I will give for the life of the world is My flesh.”*

## *Weekend Devotion: The Gospel for Real Life*

Warring against the sin that remains in us and putting on Christlike character is usually called *sanctification*. But because the term *definitive sanctification* is used to describe the point-in-time decisive deliverance from the dominion of sin, it is helpful to speak of Christian growth as *progressive sanctification*. The word *progressive* indicates growth or positive change. To return to the tug-of-war analogy, it assumes that, though the rope may move back and forth, over time it moves in the right direction until finally we win the tug-of-war against sin at the end of our lives

There is no doubt that the tug-of-war rope must move in the right direction. The New Testament writers both assume growth and continually urge us to pursue it. We are to pursue holiness “more and more,” and to love each other “more and more” (1 Thessalonians 4:1, 9–10). We are to possess the qualities of Christian character “in increasing measure” (2 Peter 1:8). However, we can always expect resistance. To stay with the tug-of-war analogy, although the Spirit who dwells within us is stronger than the sinful nature, that nature continues to “dig in its heels” every step of the way. And sometimes it will pull the rope in the wrong direction.

What is it then that will keep us going in the face of this internal conflict? The answer is: the gospel. It is the assurance in the gospel that we have indeed died to the guilt of sin; that there is no condemnation for us who are in Christ Jesus; that the Lord will never count our sins against us; and that we are truly delivered from the reigning power of sin, that will motivate us and keep us going even in the midst of the tension between the Spirit and the sinful nature.

We must always keep focused on the gospel. Horatius Bonar, another nineteenth-century Scottish pastor and author, wrote:

The secret of a believer's holy walk is his continual recurrence to the blood of the Surety, and his daily [communion] with a crucified and risen Lord. all divine life, and all precious fruits of it, pardon, peace, and holiness, spring from the cross. All fancied sanctification which does not arise wholly from the blood of the cross is nothing better than Pharisaism.

If we would be holy, we must get to the cross, and dwell there; else, notwithstanding all our labour, diligence, fasting, praying and good works, we shall be yet void of real sanctification, destitute of those humble, gracious tempers which accompany a clear view of the cross.

False ideas of holiness are common, not only among those who profess false religions, but among those who profess the true. The love of God to us and our love to Him, work together for producing holiness. Terror accomplishes no real obedience. Suspense brings forth no fruit unto holiness. No gloomy uncertainty as to God's favour can subdue one lust, or correct our crookedness of will. But the free pardon of the cross uproots sin, and withers all its branches. Only the certainty of love, forgiving love, can do this...

Free and warm reception into the divine favour is the strongest of all motives in leading a man to seek conformity to Him who has thus freely forgiven him all trespasses.

Paul said the same thing very succinctly when he wrote, "for Christ's love compels us" (2 Corinthians 5:14). To be compelled is to be highly motivated. That is, we are to be motivated by Christ's love for us. And where do we learn of His love? Where do we hear Him say, "I love you"? It is in the gospel. The gospel, received in our hearts at salvation, guarantees definitive sanctification. And the gospel believed every day is the only enduring motivation to pursue progressive sanctification. That is why we need to "preach the gospel to ourselves every day." It is in the gospel that we find those unsearchable riches of Christ that produce not only justification but also sanctification.<sup>1</sup>

*This Sunday's  
Sermon text:  
Matthew 26:57-75*



Jerry  
Bridges

---

<sup>1</sup> Jerry Bridges *The Gospel for Real Life* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2002). Excerpts from chapter fifteen.

# Hymn of the Month

## “Sing Praise to God Who Reigns Above”

“Sing Praise to God Who Reigns Above” beautifully celebrates God’s sovereignty, care, and providence. Written by Johann Jakob Schütz in 1675, this hymn draws us to praise the God who reigns supreme over all creation, yet lovingly attends to his people.

The hymn opens by directing our attention upward: “Sing praise to God who reigns above, the God of all creation.” This echoes Psalm 103:19, which declares, “The Lord has established his throne in the heavens, and his kingdom rules over all.” God’s reign is not distant or detached; rather, he is intimately involved in his creation.

The second stanza directs our hearts to God’s provision in every circumstance: “What God’s almighty power has made, in mercy he is keeping.” This reflects Lamentations 3:22–23, reminding us that God’s steadfast love never ceases and his mercies are new every morning.

The third stanza assures of God’s nearness during trials: “The Lord is never far away, but through all grief distressing, an ever-present help and stay.” This resonates with Psalm 46:1, which declares “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.”

The fourth stanza shifts to a deeply personal response to God’s care: “Thus all my toilsome way along, I sing aloud his praises.” This stanza encourages us to maintain a heart of gratitude and joy, even amidst life’s challenges, as reflected in Philippians 4:4, “Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice.” It also highlights the role of the whole person—soul and body—in worship, aligning with Psalm 103:1, “Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name!”

As we sing this hymn, may its message and joyful melody lead us to rejoice in God’s unchanging character, lifting our voices with confidence and wholehearted singing in gratitude for his sovereignty, mercy, and faithful presence in every season.

-Pastor Laramie



Scan this QR code with your phone to access a recording of this song on Youtube.

# Sing Praise to God Who Reigns Above

Johann Jakob Schütz, 1675  
trans. Frances E. Cox, 1864, alt.

MIT FREUDEN ZART Bohemian Brethren's *Kirchengesänge*, 1566  
87 87 88 7

1. Sing praise to God who reigns a - bove, the God of all cre -  
2. What God's al - might - y power has made in mer - cy He is  
3. The Lord is nev - er far a - way, but through all grief dis -  
4. Thus all my toil - some way a - long I sing a - loud His

a - tion; the God of power, the God of love, the God of our  
keep - ing; by morn - ing glow or eve - ning shade His eye is nev -  
tress - ing, an ev - er - pre - sent help and stay, our peace and joy  
prais - es, that all may hear the grate - ful song my voice un - wea -

sal - va - tion; with heal - ing balm my soul He fills, and  
er sleep - ing; with - in the king - dom of His might, lo!  
and bless - ing; as with a moth - er's ten - der hand He  
ried rais - es; be joy - ful in the Lord, my heart! Both

eve - ry faith - less mur - mur stills—  
all is just and all is right—  
leads His own, His cho - sen band— to God all praise and glo - ry!  
soul and bod - y bear your part—

# *Weekly Calendar at Ramah*