Grace and peace to you this day. For this week, we will pick up where we left off in our walk through the Biblical books and take a brief look at the Book of Ephesians.

When our kids were growing up, one of the things we told them fairly often was “make good choices.” Perhaps you told that to your kid as well, or even heard it when you were a kid growing up.

One of the things my Dad always encouraged us boys was to do things the right way and for the right reason. He discouraged us from choosing shortcuts. One of his sayings to me was “If you take the shortcuts now, you’ll be taking them for the rest of your life.” His point was that we need to develop the habit of making good choices and doing things the right way and for the right reason. I’m sure I rolled my eyes at him at the time, but looking back on it, of course he was right.

The ability to make choices implies, and confirms, that we have free will. The will to choose right, and the will to choose wrong. The will to choose good, and the will to choose evil. However, if we think that the concept of “will” is a uniquely human quality, we would be very mistaken.

One of God’s attributes is that He also has a will. Unlike our will, because He is perfectly holy, He is not capable of choosing something that is morally wrong or evil. However, He does exercise His will towards us, and He makes choices with regard to our well-being. Unlike we humans, His will, and the choices He makes, are always for our benefit. They are always for our good and for our spiritual prosperity. This was a choice He made in eternity through His Son Jesus. This is how the apostle Paul says in his letter to the church at Ephesus:

“For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will—to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves” (1:4-6).

Before Creation existed, God knew you. And He loved you. And He chose you. As you go through your day today, know that He made the choice to send His Son for you, His chosen one, so that you can live with Him in eternity.

IHS,
Pastor Lou
Greetings to you this day.

For the last few years, I’ve started to develop a new hobby: Woodworking. For our daughter’s wedding last year, she asked if I could make her a wine box so that she and her husband-to-be could keep a special bottle of win in it. So, I set out to make wine box.

I selected two different colors of mahogany. I looked up different designs and finally settled on one. I decided to make one that had a special kind of joint for the corners called “pin” joints. They’re kind of a dovetail but instead of “V” shaped, they are straight. And the ones I chose were small. I had to build a special jig and get a special blade for my table saw to get it right. I made lots of mistakes and spent lots of hours getting it right. I also made LOTS of scrap. I have to say, I was quite pleased with the finished product. More importantly, so were Jillian and Hank. It was truly a labor of love, and it now sits in a special place on a shelf in their living room.

When I think about this, I am reminded that we are the Lord’s labor of love. He crafts us with great care and with a specific purpose in mind. This is what the apostle Paul says in his letter to the Ephesians:

“For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do” (2:10).

Think of it. We are the personal work of the Almighty. We are handcrafted by the same hand that set the stars on their course. However, unlike Jillian and Hank’s winebox, our purpose is not to simply rest on a shelf. Scripture teaches that “we are created in Christ Jesus,” meaning that we are created anew in Jesus, for the purpose of doing good works. These works don’t grant us salvation, but they do display our salvation. What’s more, God has prepared these works for us in advance.

I know everyone likes the “Elf on a Shelf” at Christmas time, but that is not our call. Our call is to show the world the amazing gift of salvation through our works; works that the Father has chosen for us. So let me encourage you: “Don’t be an elf, give of yourself.”

IHS,

Pastor Lou
March 1

Happy March everyone.

“Grow up!”

Have you ever said that to anyone? Maybe one of your kids? Or maybe your parents said it to you when you were a kid.

“Grow up already, will ya?”

We usually say this in response to behavior or a comment that is immature or childish. Even though Scripture is full of verses that advise us to approach the Lord with child-like awe and innocence, nonetheless, “child-like” and “childish” are two very different things.

The fact is that while we are advised to approach the Lord with child-like wonder, we are, at the same time, equally advised to grow and mature in our faith. The apostle Paul said it like this in his letter to the Ephesians:

“Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work” (4:14-16).

Paul is saying here that absent a faith that is mature and grounded, we are subject to be blown about by the winds and whims of false teaching. That is often the genesis (pun intended) of sin, because that’s exactly, in a sense, what led Adam and Eve down the wrong garden path (again, pun intended): “God didn’t really say that to you, did He, Eve?” “That’s not really what He meant, is it?” Said another way, “that’s not really what the Bible says, is it?”

Modern times gives us many false teachings about Scripture, and people have many words to describe God’s Word: insignificant, unimportant, irrelevant, and so on.

Well, I have a word for God’s Word as well, and that word is this: Truth.

IHS,

Pastor Lou
Greetings, DGCC Family.

“And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord’s holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God” (Ephesians 3:17-19).

Many words have been used to describe God’s love for us:

Abounding.
Abiding.
Indescribable.
Lavish.
Radical.
Extravagant.
Luxurious.

And so on. You get the idea.

In our Scripture passage for today, Paul says something even more amazing about God’s love. He says that he is praying that we may have the power, or the strength, to fully grasp the width and length and height and depth of God’s love for us.

And where does that strength or power come from? From God Himself through the Holy Spirit. In other words, we need to be in tune with the Spirit of God to understand the love of God.

And so my prayer for you today is this: Whatever today may bring, I pray that the Holy Spirit, who dwells in your heart, fills your heart with the powerful and immeasurable love of God.

IHS,

Pastor Lou
March 3

Happy Friday, everyone!

Here’s your musical devotional for the week. Turn up the volume and enjoy!
https://youtu.be/F2tKVqZZiI4

IHS,

Pastor Lou