

April 2026

STANDING ON FIRM FOUNDATIONS

“But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining towards what is ahead, I press on towards the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenwards in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 3:13b-14 NIV)

Last quarter, we reflected on God’s faithfulness to the Accra Ridge Church over its 90 year history, and His faithfulness to each of us over our own lifetimes. We were reminded of our mission as a Church and as individual Christians, and took stock of how far we had gone in fulfilling that mission. We examined what makes us able to call ourselves Christians, call God our Father, and embark on the mission Christ set for His disciples. We considered the change in perspective that these truths demand of us, and as we went through the Lenten period, we were reminded of the call of Jesus to each of us to take up our cross and follow Him.

We do not want to lose sight of any of the things we have discussed so far, but we need to move beyond the past we are thankful for, to all that God has for us in the future. As Paul said in Philippians 3, we want to press on towards the goal God has for us. In order to press on however, we need to be sure of the ground on which we stand, and the resources at our disposal, and so this quarter, we will be looking at how we can be sure we are truly qualified to call ourselves “Christians”, “disciples of Christ”, and “saints of God”. As we celebrate Pentecost in this 90th year, we will look at the support we get from the Holy Spirit, and finally we will examine the role of prayer in getting us where God wants us to be.

Evening Online Bible Studies

Every Sunday evening at 7pm GMT, an online bible study is held on the Zoom platform following this study outline. If you miss the in-person Bible studies for any reason, you are welcome to join us online. Just scan the QR Code below and you will be logged in to join us!



Download Study Material

This study material can also be downloaded as a pdf file, on your device. You can access a soft copy of the study material by scanning the QR code below.



EASTER REFLECTIONS

(Personal Study)

“But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.” (John 20:31 NIV)

John 20:1-20

Introduction

Most narratives captured in the gospels are fairly short on detail, but the last chapters of John’s gospel are striking in the level of detail they provide. John explains that his gospel is written to lead readers to believe in Jesus Christ as the Son of God, so that they might have “life in His name”. Hopefully, we have already crossed that milestone, already believe that Jesus is the Son of God, and have taken up our cross and are following Him. However, the story of that first resurrection Sunday still holds some treasure even for long established Christians.

This Resurrection Sunday morning, we will look again at these familiar passages and see if a closer examination will give us insights we have previously missed. This will require a much closer observation of the passage than we normally do, and a little more diligence in reading around the text.

Read John 20:1-10 in the NIV or any modern translation

Observation & Reflection

This time, not all the answers are provided in the text, we may need to look a little further in the narrative, or even speculate as to the possible answers (recognising that doctrine and interpretation cannot be based on speculation), but this helps us engage with the narrative and put ourselves into the story.

1. Mary at the tomb.

a) What time of the day was it when Mary set out to the tomb (v1)?

b) Was she alone (v2)?

c) Did she look into the tomb (v1-2)?

d) What made her turn back (v2)?

2. **The disciples at the tomb.**

a) Who were the disciples Mary reported to (v2)?

b) Why is the name of one disciple not given? Who was he (check John 21:20-24)?

c) Who got to the tomb first and who went in first (v4)?

d) What is significant about what they saw in the tomb (v5-7)?

e) What was it that the disciple believed in verse 8?

f) What were the disciples thinking about Christ's death after these events?

Application

3. What is significant in this passage? What does it teach us about trusting God when we do not understand what He is doing?

STUDY 1: ASSURANCE OF SALVATION

“I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.” (John 5:24 NIV)

1 John 5:11-13

Introduction

In the last three months, we saw that we were all originally living as enemies of God and destined for His wrath, but that through His death, Christ made it possible for us to be saved. We observed that this salvation was not obtained by “living good lives”, but by believing that the blood of Christ cleanses us from our sin. We also saw that by entrusting our lives to Him, we can “die to our sin” and be “born again” as children of God. This is what is called the good news or the gospel. We are saved by faith, through God’s grace, to live the good lives we were unable to live in our own strength. Yet one question often sows doubt in our minds every time we find ourselves falling into sin and failing to live as Christ requires: “Am I really saved”?

In our study today, we will examine the question of whether we can be sure we have been saved.

Read 1 John 5:11-13 in three different Bible versions

Observation

1. What does verse 11 say God has given us?

2. What is required to obtain this gift (v12)?

3. Why does John state these things (v13)?

Discussion Questions

Interpretation

4. What does it mean to “have the Son”?

5. Read verses 9-10. What does this tell us about the importance of believing the text of verses 11-13?

Reflection / Application

6. How should these verses help us when we are not sure that we are “really saved”?

7. Are you sure that you “have the Son of God”? Suppose you were standing before God and He asked you why He should let you into heaven, what would you say?

STUDY 2: WHEN OUR HEARTS CONDEMN US

“This is how we know that we belong to the truth and how we set our hearts at rest in his presence: If our hearts condemn us, we know that God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything.”

(1 John 3:19-20 NIV)

Text: Colossians 2:13-14, 1 John 5:11-13

Introduction

There are times in our lives when we do not feel we are Christians. This could arise from our falling into a huge sin that makes us question whether we were ever truly saved, or from repeating a sin we thought we had overcome. It could even arise from a lingering doubt that God could not really have forgiven some of the terrible things we have done in our past. Yet, whatever the source of our doubt, we can have confidence that we “belong to the truth”, and in our study today, we will examine the foundational truths on which we can base this confidence.

OBSERVATION

Read 1 John 5:11-13 in three different versions.

1. Who has eternal life according to verse 12?

2. Who has eternal life according to verse 13?

Read Colossians 2:13-14 in three different versions.

3. How many of our sins did Christ forgive (v13)?

4. What has God done with our sins (v14)?

INTERPRETATION

5. Based on the passages we have read, what weight should we place on our “feelings” in assessing whether or not we are saved or have eternal life?

Reflection/Application

6. If we cannot rely on our feelings, how can we be sure that we have put our faith in Jesus for our salvation, have received Christ into our hearts, and have submitted to His lordship over our lives?

7. Are you confident that you are saved? What is your confidence based on?

When we become Christians, God forgives all our sins. However, despite God's Spirit being in us, we still occasionally give in to our sinful nature and fall into sin. Fortunately, the sacrificial death of Christ covers these sins as well, and we simply need to acknowledge the sin we have committed, and ask God to forgive and restore us. 1 John 1:9 says: *“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”*

So when you become aware of an area of your life that displeases God, deal with it according to 1 John 1:9 and trust Him to forgive and purify you again. It is important to be honest with God (and yourself) about your heart condition and what it desires. Forgiveness is only available through confession (i.e. acknowledging our true heart position before God). Reflect on David's experience as captured in Psalm 32:1-5.

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THE GIFT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

“But the Counsellor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.” (John 14:26 NIV)

“When the Counsellor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, he will testify about me.” (John 15:26 NIV)

“But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counsellor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment: in regard to sin, because men do not believe in me; in regard to righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; and in regard to judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned.” (John 16:7-11 NIV)

The Holy Spirit plays a critical role in our Christian lives. He is involved in the process that resulted in our becoming Christians and accepted into the family of God, and He sustains us and gives us the power we need to remain or abide in Christ. Without the Holy Spirit we would continue to see ourselves failing again and again to live in the way that God desires, but with His presence in our lives, our only challenge is to continue to allow Him to lead and direct us. As we celebrate Pentecost in our 90th year as a church, we will use our studies this month, to focus on the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

BEARING FRUIT

(Personal Study)

John 15:1-5

Introduction

Abiding in Christ means to be one with Him by faith. It is to live the life that is empowered and controlled by the Holy Spirit. We do this by surrendering the control of our lives to Him, and drawing upon His resources to live a holy fruitful life. Christians throughout the world profess their love for Christ each week by attending church, studying their Bibles, and attending prayer meetings. Yet, all the talk in the world will never convince anyone that we truly love the Lord unless we obey Him and increasingly reflect His character in our own lives. This is what is described as being fruitful, and it can only happen if we “abide in Him”.

Read John 15:1-5 in three different versions.

Observation

1. How many times does the word "abide" (or "remain") appear in this passage? Why do you think it is repeated so often?

2. In verse 4, what is the absolute requirement for a branch to bear fruit?

3. What happens to branches that do not bear fruit (v2)?

Discussion Questions

Interpretation

4. What does it mean to “abide” or “remain” in Christ?

5. What kind of "fruit" is Jesus talking about in John 15?

Reflections /Application

6. What must we do to abide/remain in Christ? How can we be sure we are abiding in Christ?

The Spirit-Filled Life is an obedient and abiding life. It starts with experiencing rebirth and salvation through faith in Christ, receiving the Holy Spirit in our lives, and submitting to the Lordship of Christ. Once that is in place, we abide or remain in Christ by:

- Loving God with all of your heart/Putting God first in our lives
- Growing in the faith by spending time daily in prayer and Bible study
- Obeying God's commands (including being a witness for Christ)

STUDY 1: ASSURANCE - CONFIRMATION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

“Jesus answered, “I tell you the truth, no-one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit.” (John 3:5-6 NIV)

Romans 8:14-17

Introduction

There are two kinds of people in the world: those who live according to their sinful nature, and those who live according to the Holy Spirit. If you are a Christian, the Holy Spirit lives in you, to give you direction and the power or ability to live as God requires. Despite this, you can still choose to live according to the sinful nature that you had before you received the Spirit and the new life He gives. This is however a deadly choice, and it puts in question the genuineness of your profession of faith. However, when we allow the Spirit to lead and direct our lives, He also gives us an assurance and confidence that we are indeed children of God – even if we sometimes slip up and do things that displease God.

Observation

1. Who does verse 14 define as being "children of God"?

2. According to verse 15 what did the Spirit do for us when we received Him?

3. How does the Holy Spirit affirm our identity as children of God? (verse 16)

4. What are the benefits and the obligations of being children of God? (Verse 17)

Interpretation

5. What is the difference between slaves and children in a household when they do something wrong? How does it illustrate that those who have received the Spirit should not live in fear?

6. Does verse 17 suggest that if we do not “suffer” we lose our salvation?

Reflection /Application

7. How can we make sure that we are “led by the Spirit”?

8. Are there areas of your life where the Holy Spirit is not in control? What practical steps are you going to take this week to yield those areas to the control of the Holy Spirit's leading?

STUDY 2: LIVING THE SPIRIT-FILLED LIFE

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.” (Galatians 5:22-23 NIV)

Galatians 5:16-18

Introduction

Living a Spirit-filled life involves daily surrender to the Holy Spirit, allowing Him to direct our thoughts, actions, and emotions. If you are a Christian, the Holy Spirit already dwells within you. The Holy Spirit is "included" when you receive Jesus Christ as your Saviour and Lord. Therefore, you do not need to invite Him to come into your life again. The Holy Spirit did not only come to indwell you, but He imparted to you spiritual life, causing you to be born anew as a child of God, also baptized you into the body of Christ.

In I Corinthians 12:13, Paul explains, "We were all baptized by one Spirit into one body." There is but one indwelling of the Holy Spirit, one rebirth of the Holy Spirit, and one baptism of the Holy Spirit -- all of which occur when we receive Christ. Being filled with the Holy Spirit, however, is not a once-for-all experience; there are many fillings, to be filled continually with the Holy Spirit mean not to yield to the flesh.

Read Galatians 5:16-18 in three different bible versions.

Observation

1. What are the two main opposing forces mentioned in verse 17?

2. What does verse 16 say we must do in order not to end up doing the things our "flesh" or human nature desires?

3. What is the result of being "led by the Spirit" according to verse 18?

Discussion Questions

Interpretation

4. The passage we studied last week also focuses on the concept of being “led by the Spirit”. What does being “led by the Spirit” mean in practice?

5. Read Ephesian 5:18. How does the contrast made between being filled with wine and being filled with the Spirit help to explain the concept of being led by the Spirit?

Reflection /Application

6. What practical, daily steps can we take to be continuously led by the Spirit and not yield to the flesh?

STUDY 3: THE HOLY SPIRIT AS A TEACHER

“But the Counsellor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.” (John 14:26 NIV)

1 Corinthians 2:10-16

Introduction

Over the past two weeks, we have seen how the Holy Spirit is central to our becoming children of God and have discussed the need for us to be submitted to His direction in our lives so that we are “led by the Spirit” or “filled with the Spirit”. In this study, we go further to examine the role of the Holy Spirit in helping us grow in our faith and understand the nature of our calling as Christians.

Read 1 Corinthians 2:10-16 in three bible versions

Observation

1. How much does the Holy Spirit know about God, and His plans and purpose (v10-11)?

2. What is the result of us receiving the Holy Spirit (v12)?

3. What are the differences between people “with the Spirit” and those “without the Spirit” (v14-15)?

Discussion Questions

Interpretation

4. From this passage, what is the role of the Holy Spirit in our understanding of biblical truths and doctrines?

Reflection/Application

5. What should we do when a teaching we hear does not seem to agree with our understanding of scripture and makes us uncomfortable?

6. How should we respond when we are told that we are not accepting a teaching because “we are using our minds”, and we need to receive it by faith because the teaching is ‘of the Spirit’?

7. How can we enhance and support the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives?

STUDY 4: THE HOLY SPIRIT AND PRAYER

“In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express.” (Romans 8:26 NIV)

Ephesians 6:18

Introduction

The Holy Spirit plays an important role in our prayer life. He helps us to pray, and when we are not sure what to pray for, he intercedes directly on our behalf (Romans 8:26). In our study today, we will examine how we can harness the presence of the Holy Spirit in use to enhance our times of prayer, and make our prayer more fruitful and effective.

Read Ephesians 6:18 in three bible versions

Observation

1. How are we instructed to pray?

2. Who are we instructed to pray for?

3. Under what circumstances are we instructed to “pray in the Spirit”?

4. How many types of prayer do you know of? Which types are we instructed to use in prayer?

Discussion Questions

Interpretation

5. What does it mean to “pray in the Spirit”? Is it the same as what is described in 1 Corinthians 14:14?

Reflection/Application

6. The verse tells us to “be alert” or “watchful” and to keep the instruction to pray in the Spirit in mind and to persist in praying for other Christians. What does it mean to be alert or watchful in prayer, and how do we apply this to praying for ourselves and other Christians?

PRAYER AND FASTING

“For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.” (Eph 6:12 NIV)

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Ephesians 6:12 declares that “our struggle is not against flesh and blood” and warns us that there are “powers of this dark world” and “spiritual forces of evil” that are opposed to us. This warning is not designed to put us into a state of fear, and cause us to reach out to our local ‘prophet’ or ‘soothsayer’ for protection. In fact, this warning is captured within a passage that describes the armour that Christians must wear to remain victorious in the battle against these spiritual forces. The important truth that this passage teaches is that we already have everything we need to be victorious in battle, and do not need to live in fear of evil spirits.

Verse 18, however admonishes us to pray for each other, as prayer is the spiritual energy that makes the armour effective. Indeed, prayer should be our first response, rather than a last resort; we should pray “at all times and view every occasion as a call to prayer.

“And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.” (Eph 6:18 NIV)

We are not asked to look for someone to pray for us, but rather to be the one praying for others “with all kinds of prayers”. One of these ‘kinds of prayers’ is the prayer and fasting we are scheduled to undertake in the month of July. So, as we prepare for our month of prayer and fasting, we will examine what the bible teaches about the role of fasting in the context of prayer.

PRAYING FOR ALL THE SAINTS

(Personal Study)

“For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers.” (Eph 1:15-16 NIV)

Ephesians 1: 15-21

Introduction

Prayer should be our first response to every challenge, rather than a last resort; we should pray at all times and view every occasion as a call to prayer. We should see prayer as a wonderful privilege, not a burdensome duty. Hebrews 4:14-16 says, *“Since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”*

Paul sets a good example for us in praying for other Christians, and he begins most of his epistles with a summary of the prayers that he puts before God on behalf of the Christians he is writing to. In our study today, we will look at one such prayer captured in Paul’s epistle to the Ephesians.

Read Ephesians 1: 15-21

Observation

1. When did Paul start praying for the Ephesian church (v15)?

2. For how long did he continue to remember them in his prayers (15-16)?

3. What does he ask God for on their behalf (v17-21)?

Read Colossians 1:9-12

4. When did Paul start praying for the Colossian church (v9)?

5. For how long did he continue to remember them in his prayers (v9-10)?

6. What does he ask God for on their behalf (v9-12)?

Interpretation

7. What is there in common between the two passages, and what does that teach us?

8. From Colossians 1:10, why does Paul pray these prayers?

Reflection/Application

9. The church today is faced with many challenges. To what extent has our own attitude to prayer contributed to it, and what should we do about this?

10. What are the obstacles to us praying consistently for other Christians, and what can we do to overcome those obstacles and distractions?

STUDY 1: WASTED AND INEFFECTIVE FASTING

“‘Why have we fasted,’ they say, ‘and you have not seen it? Why have we humbled ourselves, and you have not noticed?’ ”Yet on the day of your fasting, you do as you please and exploit all your workers.”

(Isa 58:3 NIV)

Isaiah 58:1-5

Introduction

Fasting is a spiritual discipline practiced in many religions, as a means of drawing closer to God, and is found throughout both the Old and New Testaments. Prophets, judges, kings, and ordinary people fasted for many reasons, and Jesus himself went without food for 40 days before he entered public ministry. The children of Israel fasted regularly, and fasting was often associated with repentance at times when they recognised that they had sinned or displeased God. The Jews clearly believed that fasting was an important tool for attracting God’s attention to their prayer, yet in Isaiah 58, God appears displeased with the Jews despite them fasting.

Many people today believe that God “takes pleasure” or “is impressed” when we deprive ourselves of something that we enjoy. Thus, abstaining from food, entertainment, or sleep is seen as something that pleases God, or endues our prayer with additional power. Isaiah 58 however contains an important lesson we need to learn and understand, as we prepare for our month of prayer and fasting.

Read Isaiah 58:1-5 in three different bible versions

Observation

1. Who is speaking in this passage, who is being addressed, and who is the target of the message?

2. Who is unhappy or upset about the current situation and why?

Interpretation

3. From verse 3, what did the Israelites appear to think God was supposed to do when they fasted (i.e., abstained from food to spend time in prayer), and what was God’s expectation of fasting?

4. Verse 5 asks two rhetorical questions: “Is this the kind of fast I have chosen?” and “Is that what you call a fast, a day acceptable to the Lord?” Does this indicate that there is a type of fasting that is not acceptable to the Lord? If so, what makes it unacceptable?

Reflection/Application

5. If fasting *in itself* does not give our prayer additional power, why should we fast?

6. What is the heart attitude that God wants from us? Can we use fasting as a substitute for the heart attitude He desires from us?

7. What do you need to change about the way in which you approach God in prayer?

STUDY 2: THE ACCEPTABLE FAST

"But Samuel replied: "Does the LORD delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the LORD? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams. ""

(1Sa 15:22 NIV)

Isaiah 58:6-11

Introduction

Last week, we established that abstaining from food does not in itself make our prayers more powerful. Although the occult and some other religions suggest that spiritual power is automatically released when we give up something precious to ourselves (like food – or even sacrificing our own children), this is not supported by scripture. God does not desire us to give up things in order for Him to hear our prayer, and our prayer is not made more powerful by the value of the thing that we give up or sacrifice. As King Saul was told in 1 Samuel 15, God desires our obedience much more than any act of sacrifice, and as we will see in our study today, this teaching is directly applicable to fasting.

Read Isaiah 58:6-11 in three different bible versions

Observation

1. What does the fasting that God has chosen consist of (v6-7 & 10)?

2. What is the result of fasting in the way that God chooses (v8-11)?

Discussion Questions

Interpretation

3. How does fasting (i.e., abstaining from eating) relate to the things that define the fasting that God chooses? What was God telling the Jews through Isaiah?

Reflection/Application

4. What is God telling us today through this passage, and how do we apply it to our upcoming month of prayer and fasting?

5. What do we need to do as we prepare to dedicate the coming month (or any other time) to prayer?

STUDY 3: FASTING AND ITS REWARDS

“But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that it will not be obvious to men that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.” (Mt 6:17-18 NIV)

Matthew 6:16-18

Introduction

Over the last two weeks, we have seen how God spoke through the prophet Isaiah to correct a misconception that the Jews of that time had about fasting. We saw that fasting had no effect when it did not reflect a genuine subjugation of our will and preferences to God’s will. In other words, fasting cannot overcome the effect of our wilful disobedience and disregard of God’s instructions to us. In our study today, we move to the New Testament and look at the teaching of Jesus on fasting.

Read Matthew 6:16-18 in three different bible versions.

Observation

1. Can we tell from verse 16 whether Jesus expected His hearers to fast?

2. In verse 16, whose practice did Jesus tell His hearers not to copy, and what was the practice?

3. What reward did the people described in verse 16 receive?

4. What did Jesus encourage His hearers to do when they fast (v17)?

5. What reward would they receive by following His advice (v18)?

Interpretation

6. What is the wrong motivation in fasting that Jesus was teaching against in this passage?

7. Is Jesus suggesting in this passage that we should expect a reward from God when we fast? If so, what kind of reward should we be expecting?

Reflection/Application

8. How does fasting “in secret”, apply to fasting with a church or fellowship? Does God still reward such fasting?

9. What are you going to do differently during the upcoming month of prayer and fasting?
