

The following Scripture passages are offered to aid beginning fellowships. The readings and commentary for this week are more in line with what has become usual; for the following will most likely be familiar observations. The concept behind this Sabbath's selection is *spiritual procreation*.

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## Weekly Readings

For the Sabbath of July 15, 2006

The person conducting the Sabbath service should open services with two or three hymns, or psalms, followed by an opening prayer acknowledging that two or three (or more) are gathered together in Christ Jesus' name, and inviting the Lord to be with them.

*The person conducting the service should read or assign to be read Philipians chapters 1.*

**Commentary:** The ideal behind "bringing to completion" (1:6) the good work started in disciples has been taken by Evangelical Christianity to mean that once a person *makes a decision for Christ* the person is heaven bound, and nothing the person does changes this *once saved, always saved* condition. But such a reading of the Apostle Paul's epistle here is contrary to God enduring vessels of wrath until the time of their destruction, or God making from the same lump [of clay] vessels for honored and vessels for dishonorable use. Therefore, bringing to completion the good work that has been started dovetails into "let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ" (1:27) to become instructions for how you handle the *greenware* that you are after God has formed you into a vessel intended for honored use.

The Apostle Paul used, in his epistle to converts at Rome, the analogy of disciples being clay in God's hands (Rom 9:20-23 — compare with Isa 64:8 & Jer 18:2-10), with God as the Potter able to make from the same lump vessels for honored and dishonorable use, vessels of wrath and vessels of mercy. The Apostle Paul extends the analogy of disciples being clay farther than either Isaiah or Jeremiah initially takes the analogy; for Paul says that the clay does not tell the potter what it will be, that the potter makes from the clay what seems good to the potter. Thus, the *once saved, always saved* expression of *Christian determinism* descends from Augustine's and through Calvin's understanding of *predestination*, with their theological basis being Paul's epistles. But when Pelagius encountered the corruption that had already crept into Christianity when he went to Rome, he denied any form of *hard determinism* to teach that salvation was achieved through *free will*. Augustine had taught that God's predestining grace was given on the basis of God foreknowing the person's desire to pursue salvation, but after Augustine began to write *On Christian Doctrine*, he began to teach that a person needed God's grace to awaken within the person the desire to pursue salvation. Thus, Augustine advanced the degree of *determinism* under which salvation is possible, making it such that if God doesn't intervene in a person's life, the person cannot choose to pursue salvation because of

original sin. However, Augustine and those who came behind him operated under the delusion that human beings are born with immortal souls—God had already sent the Church, because of its lawlessness, into Babylonian captivity before Augustine began to write. Therefore, just as God will send a delusion over all endtime lawless disciples (2Thess 2:11-12) because of their unbelief, and just as God gave to circumcised Israel statutes by which the nation could not live (Ezek 20:25-26) because of its unbelief, and just as God pronounced a death sentence on the nation that left Egypt (Num chap 14, with Ps 95:10-11 & Heb 3:16-19) because of its unbelief, God sent a delusion over the Church when He exiled the Church, because of its unbelief, to spiritual Babylon, its king the Adversary (Isa 14:4-21). This delusion caused the Church to believe what was false in order that those who did not love righteousness enough to make the circumcised nation jealous (Rom 11:11, 13-14) might be condemned. And the foremost falsehood that the Church believed was the lie of the old serpent that, “You will not surely die” (Gen 3:4), but that human beings are born with immortal souls. They are not born with immortal souls, but must be born from above [i.e., born of Spirit] before they have life in the heavenly realm. The *old man* or *old creature* that forms the self-conscious awareness characteristic of human beings is not an immortal soul that needs regenerated, but the product of physical breath coupled with Satan’s broadcast of disobedience to form a corrupted human nature that is biologically akin to the predatory natures of lions, wolves, and bears, all of which are changed when the Holy Spirit is poured out on all flesh (Isa 11:6-9, with Joel 2:28). Hence, the *human nature* that disciples have remains a product of biology—and it is about this *human nature* that the Apostle Paul writes when he says he doesn’t understand his own actions (Rom 7:13-25, v.15 in particular). It is this *human nature* that testifies to disciples remaining in bondage to sin and death, and being in need of liberation at [a Second Passover](#). Therefore, when the Apostle Paul acknowledges that he doesn’t understand a mystery of God, a disciple certainly cannot trust any dialogues, apologies, arguments, explications of theologians in spiritual Babylon for guidance when it comes to understanding *God bringing to completion the good work He started in you*.

All historic discussions of Christian predestination, especially in the Western Church, are traced through Augustine, and are attempts to reconcile free will with predestinating grace, without understanding either Grace or spiritual birth. All of these discussions are as important or unimportant as are Augustine’s discussion of *signs*—and it isn’t to Augustine that modern linguists turn to understand the nature of human language.

Human beings can be compared to clay, which isn’t just any flour of stone ground to microscopic size—all living things are composed of the elemental elements of the earth and as such are dust to which life has been added by some means, the means really beyond scientific analysis. Thus, as clays form a special classification of “dust” in that they are distinguishable from other stone particles by their small size, their flake or layered shape, their affinity for water, and their high plasticity index, human beings form a special classification of living things not based upon the elements composing their flesh but upon what has been added to these elements to form their human nature. So the correspondence can be established that clays are to stone flour [i.e., stone ground into dust] as human beings are to

other living things. Therefore, clay deposits that lie undisturbed in the ground are as human beings in their wild or natural state (the Apostle Paul introduces the idea that the circumcised nation of Israel being God's human cultivar, selected for the fruit of righteousness the patriarch Abraham bore by faith). Therefore, clay that has been dug by the potter to be made into vessels is analogous to those human beings that God has drawn from the world (John 6:44, 65). And it is right here where, unknowingly, Christianity has struggled with *predestination*; for Scripture affirms both *free will* and *determinism*.

When a person, as clay dug from a deposit, is drawn from the world, the person is offered the choice of life and good, or death and evil (Deu 30:15)...on this day (whether one literal day or on several literal days is immaterial), the person chooses life or death, with this choice determining whether God will make of the person a vessel of mercy or of wrath, a vessel for honored or dishonorable use. On this day of salvation—between when the clay is dug and the clay is centered on the wheel—the disciple, by faith, chooses life or death, with God holding the person to his or her choice just as God held the nation that left Egypt to its choice, with repentance not allowed (Num 14:40-41), and as God will hold disciples making up the great falling away to their choice by sending a delusion that prohibits them from repenting. For once this day of salvation passes, God determines the fate of the disciple. God determines what kind of vessel the disciple will be, how the vessel will be used, how much honor or dishonor will be heaped upon the vessel. There is no more choosing that the disciple can do. In an actual sense, the disciple has begun a voyage from which the disciple will not return alive. Once a disciple figuratively puts his hand to the plow, he is yoked to that plow for the remainder of his life. But this yoke is easy and the burden light (Matt 11:29-30), for God forms the disciple into a vessel appropriate to the use for which God intends the vessel.

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*The reader should now reader Philippians chapters 2, 3, & 4.*

**Commentary:** The yoke of Christ will cause disciples to do nothing from rivalry, will cause disciples to look not only to their interests but to the interests of others, will cause disciples to become obedient even to the point of death, even to martyrdom.

The act of faith that brings the Gentile into the second covenant is living as a Judean, circumcised in heart and mind. The act of faith that brings the natural Israelite into the second covenant is confessing that Jesus is Lord, and believing that the Father raised Him from the dead (Rom 10:9). The Gentile believes and confesses when he or she turns from disobedience and is baptized into the death of Jesus, thereby becoming a wild olive branch grafted onto the root of righteousness, the cultivar God selected and nurtured and propagated from Abraham to John the Baptist.

God works in us to shape us into that vessel of honor or dishonor that He intends for us to be, based upon our initial decision to choose life or death. Within time, that work of shaping takes years, takes most of a lifetime, but in the timeless heavenly realm, where the shaping is actually done, it takes God no longer to make from us a vessel than it takes a potter here on earth to make a vessel. Almost by magic, the vessel takes form on the wheel of the potter. The clay seemed to open by itself, to stand by itself, to take on its form and its beauty by itself. But the clay did nothing by itself. The potter did everything—and it is the potter that gets the credit for the vessel, not the clay.

The faith that is counted as righteousness in both the Jew and the person from the nations will cause the disciple to imitate Christ Jesus, but as the Apostle Paul acknowledges, many [most] disciples walk as enemies of Christ, with their end being destruction, their god their bellies [*“My family comes first”*], with their glory becoming the shame of all Sabbatarians, and their minds set only on physical things, such as whether the present warring in the Middle East will begin the Tribulation.

Paul closes this epistle to the Philippians by thanking them for their gifts, thanking them for supplying his needs when those to whom he was preaching and teaching did not do so. The needs of saints are granted by God, but usually through men. It is a shame when God has to use those who are not of the Body to supply these needs, thereby denying to the Body the rewards that He would have given.

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The person conducting the Sabbath service should close services with two hymns, or psalms, followed by a prayer asking God’s dismissal.

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