

**LIVING THE LIVING WORD**  
**Bible-Based Bible Study and Application**

**Grace Chapel**  
**Orange, CA**

**Mr. Timothy R. Nichols**  
**Spring 2008**

**PAUL**

**1. INTRODUCTION**

Last week we saw how Paul and Stephen both applied biblical history in their interactions with unbelievers. This week, we will look at how Paul applies both biblical meditations (in Psalms) and biblical history to the daily lives of believers.

**2. PAUL'S USE OF THE BIBLE**

*Ephesians 4:26*

Read Ephesians 4:26. Now hold your finger there and turn back to Psalm 4. It is easy to see where Paul got “Be angry, and do not sin”—it’s right there in Psalm 4:4. But where did he get “Do not let the sun go down on your anger”?

Re-read Psalm 4:5-8. What do you see?

A second issue in Ephesians 4:26 is the pragmatic one: how can it be okay to be mad a minute before sunset, and two minutes later, the same emotion becomes sin? It does seem strange, doesn’t it? Here again, we turn for answers to Psalm 4. What motivates David’s anger in Psalm 4? How does he handle his anger? He is hurt, but notice that he takes the situation directly to God. He calls on God to be deal with his enemies’ unrighteous conduct.

Would it be possible for him to handle his situation differently? Sure. He could leave God out of it, and try to take revenge himself. Would this be okay, as long as he resolved the matter before sunset? Of course not.

Paul is not trying to tell us that astronomy has something to do with anger, but that the anger which does not sin is anger that *God’s* standards have been violated, and such an anger takes the situation to God and leaves it in His hands, confident that He will stand up for Himself. Therefore, it is resolved before evening. The righteously angry man confidently trusts the Lord, and is glad. He falls asleep with a contented smile on his face.

In light of what we learn in Psalm 4, Paul is giving us an artful summary, a proverbial expression that gives us an “indicator light” to watch out for. If your “brake” light comes on in your car, the problem is not that the light is on; the light indicates a deeper problem. If you’re going to bed angry, there’s a deeper problem; righteous anger doesn’t “hold on” like that.

### Romans 6:1-14

Paul begins the book of Romans by telling his audience, a group of mature, productive believers, that he would like to preach the gospel to them. He then explains that there are two basic kinds of people: those who knowingly sin, and encourage others to do the same, and those who knowingly sin, and scold others for doing the same. In either case, they sin, which means that they are condemned before God. But Paul goes on to explain that righteousness can be obtained through faith in Christ rather than by human works, and proves this point from the lives of David and Abraham. He then begins to explore the ramifications of this fact. What does everyday life look like, when you have righteousness that is a gift from God, and not from your own works? Among the obvious implications is that no matter how much sin you commit, there is always even more grace.

That raises the question, why not sin a lot, then? Paul immediately disagrees with this, but on what grounds? To what does he appeal? He goes straight to the cross of Christ. Follow the logic, Paul says: If you have all this grace because you're identified with Christ, then doesn't that mean that you're identified with His death and resurrection? And if that's true, then you're identified with His death *to sin*—which means you are also dead to sin—and with his resurrection *to new life*—which means you're also raised to a new life. If that's true, then why go back to living like you did *before* you were identified with Christ? What's the point?

In other words, Paul considers the practical, ethical question of why we shouldn't sin. In order to get a clear, compelling answer, Paul goes back to our history, and our history shows very clearly what we should and should not do.

Paul doesn't just leave it there, notice. Insight does not equal change, and Paul doesn't just want them to have insight. He actually wants them to live in a way that pleases God. So he follows the insight with a command to think about it, to *consider* yourselves dead to sin and alive to God.

This is the furthest thing from sticking a note card on your mirror that says "I am thin" in an effort to lose 20 pounds. That can actually work, because God really did design us to live the way we think. But that sort of lying affirmation is a perversion of what God intended us to use that faculty for, and it's a pale, sickly imitation of what Paul is doing. See, meditating on affirmations that are not true is lying to yourself in order to make it true. Paul, on the other hand, is challenging us to tell ourselves the truth, so that we'll stop living a lie.

## **3. THIS WEEK'S CHALLENGES**

### Your Daily Walk

The kind of applications and implications we see Paul making come from a lifestyle of thinking about the Word of God. You, too, should be thinking about the Word of God. Whether you're doing the Psalm 139 assignments or not, read the section below for its suggestions on how to start a lifestyle of constant thought about God's Word. If you've other passages you should be thinking about instead of Psalm

139, that's fine. Studying Psalm 139 right now is optional. A lifestyle of thinking about God's Word is not.

### Honing Your Skills (30-60 min.)

Over the preceding several weeks, we have seen several examples of reflection on Scripture. In fact, we've seen Paul's example in the church epistles this week. In Psalm 139 this week, your assignment is simply to reflect on the psalm. Make a concentrated effort to think of it regularly, multiple times throughout the day. Writing down a few key verses on a note card and keeping the card in your purse or pocket might be one way of reminding yourself. Perhaps you will find it helpful to write "Psalm 139" on five sticky notes and put them at your desk, in your car, or around the house, in places where you spend time. You may be worried that you'll forget to do this by tomorrow morning—a valid concern. So do it tonight. Too tired? Take just 30 seconds tonight to start by putting one note somewhere prominent where you'll see it tomorrow morning, and remember to complete the job.

Of course maybe none of these suggestions will work for you. That's okay; the index cards and sticky notes aren't the point. Find ways of reminding yourself that work for you, and use them. But do *something*. Don't just say, "That won't work for me," and wind up doing nothing at all. This week, make reflection on Psalm 139 a part of your lifestyle.

### Reading (1-2 hrs.)

Congratulations! If you've been keeping up with the reading in *Living by the Book*, you've finished it. This means that over the last few weeks you've read over 300 pages in your quest for better understanding of the Word of God. That's quite an accomplishment.

In the last two weeks of our time together, I want to get you started in another book that will greatly deepen your ability to enjoy God's Word. I am talking about Leland Ryken's *Words of Delight*.<sup>1</sup> Ryken is an English professor, and at times he writes like one. This is definitely a harder read than Hendricks, but it is well worth the effort. It is one of the two<sup>2</sup> most useful books I've found for introducing people to how stories work. As with all other non-biblical reading, Ryken has to be measured by Scripture. He's not perfect, and he won't be right about everything, but his work is very useful. For this week, I would suggest reading the introduction and chapters 1-2.

### Heavy-Duty Homework (2-3 hrs.)

In the following table, you'll find references for the Old Testament quotes in Romans 1-3. Consider the Old Testament passage carefully in its context, then bring that into Paul's argument in Romans. What is Paul's point in each case? What does the quote add to his argument?

---

<sup>1</sup> If at all possible, get the second edition; the author added a lot of new material.

<sup>2</sup> The other one is *Deep Comedy* by Peter J. Leithart. If you read *Deep Comedy*—which I heartily recommend—be aware that it's easy to get bogged down in the middle (part 2). If that happens, skip to part 3, which will still make sense without the philosophical backdrop. Once you've read part 3, it may be much easier for you to understand part 2.

Romans	Old Testament Reference
1:17	Habakkuk 2:4
2:6	Psalms 62:12; Proverbs 24:12
2:24	Isaiah 52:5, Ezekiel 36:22
3:4	Psalms 15:4
3:10-12	Psalms 14:1-3, Psalm 53:1-3
3:13	Psalms 5:9, Psalm 140:3
3:14	Psalms 10:7
3:15-17	Isaiah 59:7-8
3:18	Psalms 36:1

#### 4. LAST WEEK'S CHALLENGES

##### Your Daily Walk

What historical events did you reflect on this week to help you live in a way that pleases God? Did it help to do this?

##### Honing Your Skills (30-60 min.)

Over the last week we revisited the applications you had developed earlier in our study, to see how you're doing. As you examined those areas of your life, did you see improvement, or does it seem to be getting worse?

##### Reading (1-2 hrs.)

Congratulations! You've finished Hendricks. As you revisited your applications of Psalm 139 this past week, did your reading in Hendricks help to clarify your thinking about formulating and implementing sound application?

##### Heavy-Duty Homework (2-3 hrs.)

As you looked at the life of John Mark, what did you see?

Here are some additional questions to consider:

- When Mark left the mission field, was it his fault? Was it a sin? How do you know?
- When Mark left, where did he go? Who did he associate with?
- After his initial bad experience, did Mark give up on missionary work?