

Monthly Support Report

March 31, 2017

Dear elders,

Greetings! Have you had a good month of March? I pray that you have. I pray that March has treated you and your family well and that the Lord's church there has prospered in many good ways. We're doing well. The Lord's church here is working hard and we're praying for good things to happen for the glory of the Lord. The Lord's glory must always be our aim in everything we do, and that's what we will continue to strive for. So, we prayerfully press forward with that in mind attempting to spread the good news of the kingdom and to encourage one another in the most holy faith. I trust that you are attempting to do the same there.

As a personal note, my son's High School made it through pre-state for the first time in school history and went to Wichita to play for the State Championship. Sadly, however the shots were not falling in the very first game and they lost. While that was disappointing to lose, they were gracious in defeat. And since he is only a junior, he and his team have already set their sights on next year. With most of the key players returning, they may have a legitimate chance of going deeper next year depending on how hard they work individually in the off-season. There's a rather clear comparison to our walk as a Christian in their defeat and willingness to set their sights on working harder to achieve even though they fell short. In my studies and preaching through 1 John – John makes it rather clear that Christians are NOT TO SIN. That the daily walk of a child of God must be to avoid sin at all costs and that means leaving no room for sin in our lives. One such passage is 1 John 3:9 where John says, *"Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in Him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God."* Let me ask you a question. Have you sinned since you first became a Christian? Go ahead and admit it. You have, haven't you? John acknowledges that Christians will sin from time to time (cf. 1 John 1:8-2:2). He isn't condoning sin in the life of a Christian, he's simply stating the obvious. Occasionally sin will work its way into the life of all of us even after we have become Christians. Yet, as soon as sin finds its way into the life of a Christian, we need to make sure that we show it the exit door by repenting of it, confessing it to God and through prayer, asking God to forgive us. So, what is John telling us in the passage I quoted? Sin must never come to be accepted in the life of a Christian as normal or acceptable behavior. Sin is a part of the "old man" and can never become a part of the "new man." No sin is not acceptable behavior for a Christian so put it away. Do like my son and his basketball team and take on their attitude. We fell short this time. But we can and we will do better. We are determined to not fall short again.

What should be obvious from the above paragraph is that I'm continuing to preach from 1 John and I'm finding it to be a rich and rewarding study. I'm making progress. This week's lesson will be taken from 1 John 3:16-20. It's the second in a short series on the subject of brotherly love. I figure the apostle John

brings it up multiple times so I need to preach on it multiple times. That's preacher logic if there is such a thing. It sounds logical to me. It's a great letter, brotherly love is a fantastic subject and I'm really enjoying my concentrated time in 1 John. Plus, being in the 3rd chapter I know that there's more to come that will be just as good.

I couldn't be happier about our study in the Parables of Jesus. Our more recent discussion concerning the Parable of the Wicked Husbandmen found in three of the four Gospels – Matthew 21:33-46; Mark 12:1-12; Luke 20:9-18. Much of our discussion centered on Mark 12:8 this past week. I brought up Mark 12:8 because most of our study questions were taken from Matthew's account of this Parable. Mark 12:8 reads, "And they took him and killed him and cast him out of the vineyard." In Matthew, the corresponding verse is Matthew 21:39 which reads, "And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and killed him." Luke's account found in Luke 20:15 reads similar to Matthew. When to read the sequence of events in Matthew you tend to think in terms of Jesus' being crucified outside the city of Jerusalem (cf. Hebrews 13:12). Historically all crucifixions took place outside the city walls or gates for various reasons. So at first glance I can see why your thoughts go in that direction. But then the question that I asked the class was: How do you reconcile the difference between the way Matthew and Mark are worded? Here's my response. First, there isn't anything in either Matthew or Luke that demands or even says that the vineyard represents the city of Jerusalem. Second, all you find in Mark 12:8 is the verbs are reversed: they killed him, and cast him out of vineyard. Isn't it entirely possible that both Matthew and Luke give the facts (and they do), and NOT in the order in which they occur? We do that all the time in conversation. Plus, Isaiah 5:1-7 makes it crystal clear that the children of Israel is the vineyard; not the city of Jerusalem. This one fact never changes whether you are reading this Parable in Matthew's Gospel; Mark's Gospel; or Luke's Gospel. It was a most enjoyable study. And let me add this before moving on to something else. There are times when someone might say, this represents a Bible Discrepancy. First of all a discrepancy is something when there is a variance or disagreement and there's no possible explanation. I hope you could see in my brief explanation that the difference in the wording between Mark was easily explained.

The work here continues to go well. We continue to be blessed with a number of visitors. And while the majority of them are not from the neighborhood, they are still a blessing and a great encouragement to us at our services. I spent much of this past week doing some additional follow-up on previous visitors that we have had in the past to see if there was still any interest. It seems like a few folks are interested for a while and then you don't see them for a few weeks. So, I thought I'd see if I could generate some interest in them to see if I could visit with them and talk with them. It's my prayer that I'll find some good and honest hearts.

I have heard that a family may be coming our way in a couple of months. I hope and pray that happens. That would be a great encouragement to us to have a new family with us. I know this family. They are a good family. I pray it will happen if it's a good fit for them and for us spiritually. That will be my daily prayer.

Our Daily Bible Reading that we have done as a congregation now for at least 8-years is now moving back to the New Testament. We will once again read through Matthew – Mark – Luke and John until we are finished studying through the Parables of Jesus, and then we will go back to the Old testament and pick up where we left off. It just made good sense to do this since we are studying the Parables because one of the things I've been attempting to do with each Parable is to put them into a "timeline of events" of the New Testament so we would have a good idea as to when each one is taking place. At least for me this really helps and enhances our understanding as to why Jesus told each Parable and when He did it. As Matthew 21 begins, we're about 1-week away from Jesus' death. And the Parable of the Wicked Husbandmen was spoken by Jesus on Tuesday of his final week prior to his death upon the cross. Sometimes pulling little detail such as this together enhances our understanding of the Bible account. Especially any study having to do with the 4-gospels. So, Tuesday of this week we started Matthew 1.

The work here continues to progress well in unity and love. We continue to pray for open doors and carefully look for opportunities to tell others about our Savior and his saving blood that was shed upon the cross for the remission of our sins. As per usual I wanted to take this opportunity to thank you for your fellowship with me in the gospel. You are truly a blessing. Your help is greatly appreciated and we thank God for you. Thank you! I probably don't say thank you enough. I pray that things will continue to go well for you, and for your families. We had a lot of rain this past week. Our son had open gym on Wednesday morning that his coach arranged. He had just gotten out – and was sitting in the commons area when he sent us a text that one of the students at his school was crossing the road and had been hit by a car and had to be taken to the hospital. I still don't know the extent of his injuries (I pray that he will soon be okay) but being a parent it made me a little nervous and concerned, knowing that things like this can happen so quickly. Take the time to hug your children and your loved ones an extra time from now on, and don't let a day go by without telling them you love them. Don't miss an opportunity! Thank you!

God bless.

Randy