

Day 1 Preserved Alive

Nothing says perseverance to me like the ironman triathlon. Men and women go into strict training to compete, not just finish the iron man. The ironman consists of a 2.4-mile swim, a 112-mile bike ride, and a full 26.2-mile marathon. Can you imagine the type of training that would go into preparing for such a race? Another fascinating feature of this event is there is a time cut off for each stage of the triathlon. If you don't complete the whole thing in 16 or 17 hours, you do not get the title. One of my previous volunteers was an iron man. He was a guy who actually felt close to God through his training. He spent tons of time in the preparation of becoming an ironman, which included doing some double marathons and even ran a 100-mile running race. I once asked him which was harder and he said the 100-mile run taxed him way more than the ironman did. It crazy for the average person to consider some of these ultra-endurance races, but some people make it one of their life's goals to complete them. I once convinced myself that I would train to do an ironman, but gave up that thought when I ran a half-marathon. God created each and everyone of us unique and desires that we grow in our perseverance, but not all of us were created to become an ironman.

Today, we are going to take a look at how David sees the way God provides, delivers, protects, and allows us to persevere through His strength. Let's take a look and see what we can learn from David.

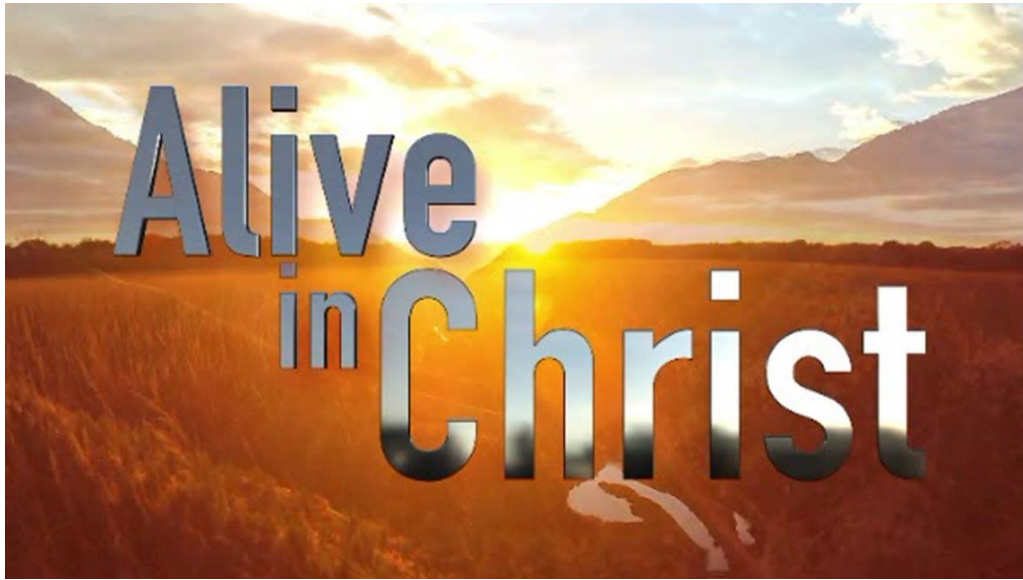
Read Psalm 41

What the hardest thing you have ever done? What the longest thing you have ever completed? Are these two the same or different? Explain.

Practice makes perfect and no pain no gain are slogans that coaches throw around all the time. How so they relate to today's scripture?

What is integrity? How does one grow in it?

David credits God with doing all kinds of things in this psalm. What are some of the ones you find? How would you live differently if you believed God did those things for you?



Day 2 Alive Refined

I spent some time watching a glass blower on one of my travels to Italy. I found it remarkable how they would continually have to reheat the glass as they shaped it into all kinds of shapes. They would heat it up to the exact temperature that they needed without even using a thermometer. They could tell by just looking at the molten glass. They would shape it into the with tools but the greatest tool that the glass blower would use is his breath. I find that interesting because when God formed man, he sculpted us and then breathed into us making us alive. I was mesmerized by the glass blower, but not nearly as much as I am by God. He shapes us and refines us using our everyday experiences. If we allow Him to, he will shape us into the masterpiece that desires us to become much like the glass blower does with the glass he works on.

Today, we are going to look again at the psalms to see what we can learn about being refined spiritually. Let's take a look at it.

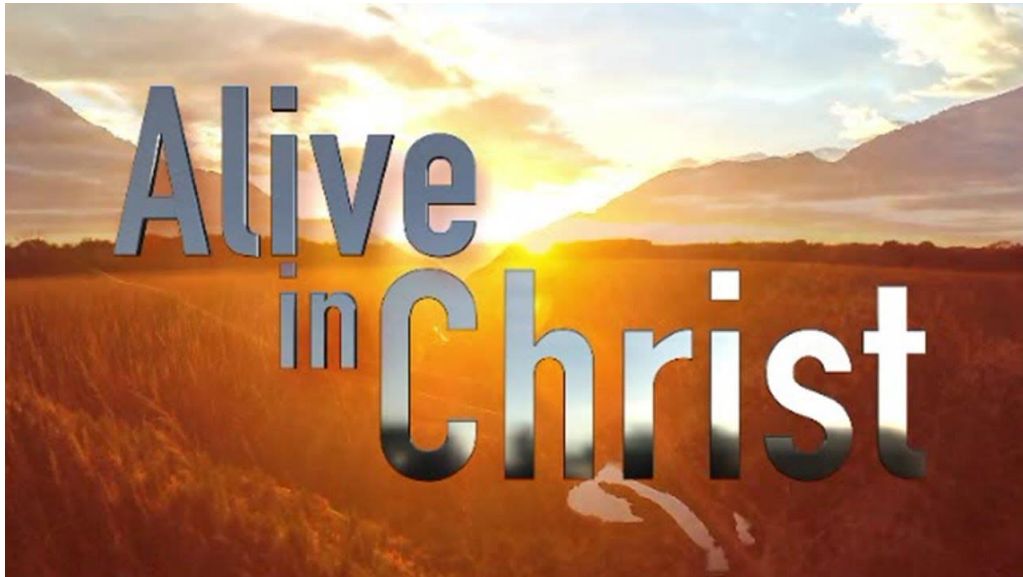
Read Psalm 66

What type of writing is this passage? How should it be read?

Why do we consider gold, titanium, diamonds, and silver to be valuable? How do they become more valuable?

How does coal turn into diamonds? Are humans that much different than coal?

Aladdin was adeptly known as a diamond in the rough. David was known as a man after God's own heart. What do these two have in common?



Day 3 Alive in Obedience

One of my favorite little kids' books was the "Chronicles of Narnia." In the story the author relates a lion to the image of Christ. One of my favorite lines from the movie is: "He's not a tame lion, but he is good." God is good. God is love. God is the only truth that calls to uninterrupted obedience. Time and time again, we read in Scripture God calling people to do something. He even gave us the prophets to tell us what he was calling us to do. God wants to protect us and have us experience life to its full. The only way that we can experience this is through having a relationship with Him. When we obey God, we are showing him that we love Him.

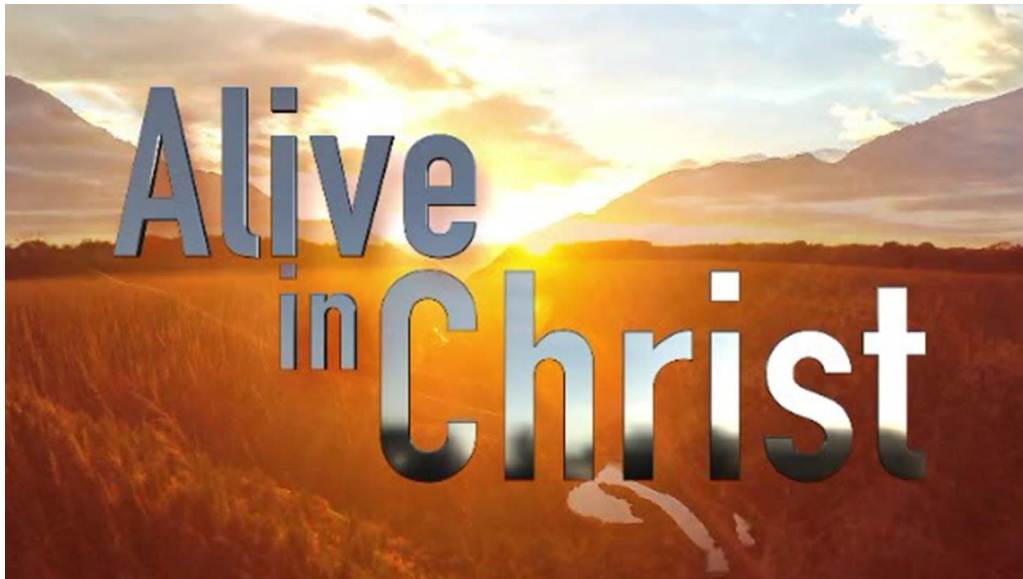
Today, we are going to look at the history of the Israelites and see how obedience plays into their story. Let's take a look and see what we can learn.

Read Deuteronomy 4:1-14

On a scale of 1 to 10, how important is obedience to God? How important is obedience to you? Do your numbers match? Why or why not

What kind of reputation does God tells us the people will have if they obey his commands?

Think of two instances where you were changed to obey or not. I want you to think about the aftermath that transpired based on your choice. Was it positive or negative?



Day 4 Unknowingly Alive

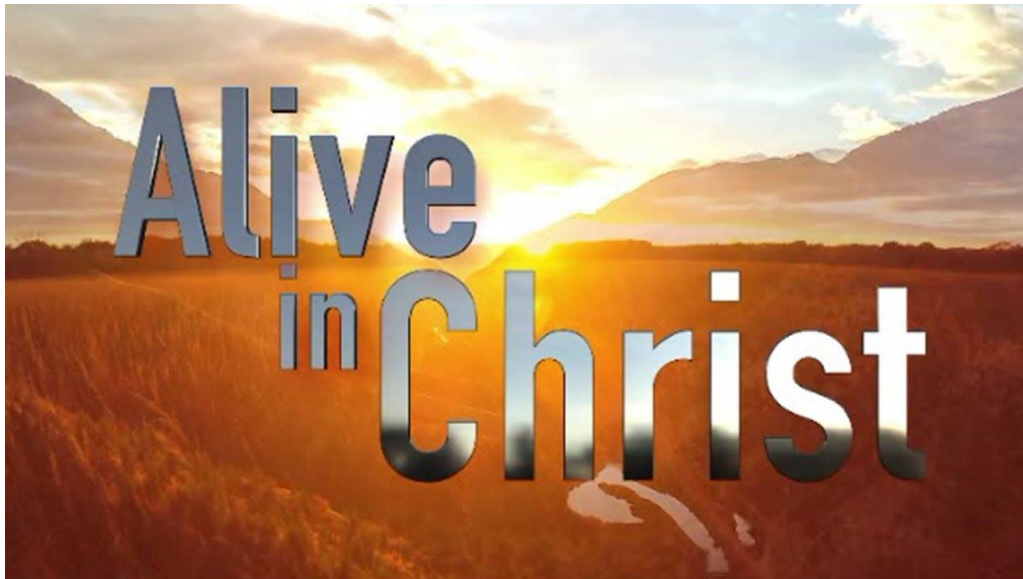
One of the newer phenomena that seems that has taken over in the last few years is that of blind auditions. Shows like the voice for instance have the contestants perform without the judges seeing who they are until they decide whether or not they are worth their time. Paul uses a similar approach to the people of Athens in today's reading. Paul challenges them to identify who their unknown God is because he tells them that it is Jesus. Don't take my word for it though. Let's read it for ourselves.

Read Acts 17:16-34

Have you ever admired someone even though you didn't really know them and then got to know them? What happened when really got to know them? How did that information change your view of the individual?

God is a God of clarity. Where in your life are you currently needing clarity?

God is calling us on a journey. Some people are in-step with God. Others are simply checking it out and deciding if it is worth it to follow Him. Some have already decided not to follow. I want to challenge you to think about which person you are? What would it take for you to get instep with God?



Day 5 Alive in Christ

In Philippians Paul mentions that to live is Christ and to die is gain. His outlook on life was drastically altered while on a walk one day. Have you ever truly made a decision to follow Christ with everything you have. There is some incredible information out there on the life of Paul. We can read about some of his circumstances and persecutions he endured in the Bible in 2 Corinthians 11. His outlook on life goes against the very heart of the American dream. How do you think our life and society would be affected if we stopped seeking self and began seeking God. I hope that as you read through the words of Paul today that you consider how you too can be alive in Christ.

Read Ephesians 2:1-10

What does this scripture tell us about being saved?

Who can become saved and what are we saved from?

Read Galatians 2:20 & Romans 12:1-2. How do these passages relate to today's scripture reading?