



Cape Coral Church of Christ

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<http://www.thelordsway.com/capecoralfl>

Schedule of Services

Sunday: Bible Study: 9:30 A.M.

Worship: 10:30 A.M. and 5:00 P.M.

Wednesday: Bible Study: 6:00 P.M.

Vol. 40, No. 27

July 5, 2026

The Flag We Fly

As Americans, there are few sights that thrill us as much as seeing the "Stars and Stripes" billowing in the breeze over a free nation. When July 4th rolls around, many of us find ourselves rallying around our flag, thankful for the freedom we enjoy in our great country. The common purpose and unity that we feel under that flag should be something that binds us together toward causes greater than ourselves.

Likewise - but in a much more meaningful and important sense - Christians rally together under a common flag: Jesus the Christ. The prophet Isaiah spoke of a time when "the root of Jesse" (a term for the Messiah) would stand as a banner to the people, and the Gentiles would seek Him (Isaiah 11:10). Both Jews and Gentiles would rally to the Messiah, which means this passage was looking forward to a time when the church had been established.

In the New Testament, Jesus said that if He was lifted up, He would draw all peoples to Himself (John 12:32), calling them to a true spiritual freedom through his sacrificial death on the cross (John 8:32,36). Both Jews and Gentiles rallied to the banner of the Messiah, wiping out all national lines as far as the kingdom of God was concerned (Gal. 3:26-29).

What a beautiful image! Those who seek to know God in truth will come to Jesus through His gospel and be united together in His kingdom for a common salvation and mission. There is no greater freedom! So while we celebrate our political freedom this year, remember too how Christ has made us free, and rally always to His banner.

The Past Does Not Equal the Future

Saul's encounter with the risen Christ on the road to Damascus (Acts 26:13-19) abruptly interrupted a life headed the wrong way, reclassified his past, assigned him a divine task, and promised protection amid suffering. The passage yields three practical truths for believers:

First, Saul was certain he was right in persecuting Christians. Yet Jesus' question: "Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" exposes spiritual misdirection. Human judgment can be blind; zeal and error can coexist. Solomon tells us, "There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Prov. 16:25).

The image of "kicking against the goads" shows that resisting God only brings pain. Truth is determined by God and revealed in Scripture, not by feelings, majority vote, or cultural norms. We need to regularly measure our lives, words, and habits against Scripture; if they conflict with what the Bible teaches, we need to repent and make a course correction.

Second, Jesus told Saul, "I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness" (Acts 26:16). Past sin does not have to disqualify one for future service; a redeemed past can become a powerful tool and motivation instead of a source of shame that paralyzes us.

Third and finally, Jesus promised Paul, "Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles," (Acts 26:17) indicating God's divine protections and preservation in the midst of opposition and suffering. Biblical protection usually means His sustaining presence and ultimate preservation, not exemption from hardship. Paul's later life included imprisonments, beatings, and shipwrecks. These illustrate that trials accompany God's work, but God tells us, "all things work together for good to those who love God" (Romans 8:28). Christians are sent into hostile environments, but we have the assurance that nothing can ultimately thwart God's purpose.

Let me encourage you to evaluate your path in the light of Scripture. If there is error, repent and rise; turn and step into the light of God's Word. In doing so, we must prepare for difficulties, build endurance through prayer, Scripture reading, fasting, meditation, fellowship, and sacrificial service; clinging to God's promises. Solomon says, "Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths" (Proverbs 3:5-6).

Paul's conversion reveals to us a pattern: radical interruption, re-orientation and commission, and a lifetime of obedience and faithfulness amid intense suffering. It warns us against moralism that mistakes zeal for righteousness, it rejects paralysis from past failures, and it affirms that the gospel advances when people are willing to risk themselves for the Lord's work. The command "Rise and stand upon thy feet" is both an invitation and an imperative: move away from wrong path, get into active service, and trust God to guard and use you.

Improvement

"The biggest room in the world is the room for self-improvement."
- Unknown

"I do not think much of a man who is not wiser today than he was yesterday." - Abraham Lincoln

As hard as it may be to admit, every human being has room for improvement. In 1980, Mac Davis released a song, "It's Hard To Be Humble," in which the lyrics stated, "When you're perfect in every way." Regretfully, we are far from perfect. Honesty would compel us to admit that we are flawed, and that we all make mistakes. This doesn't mean that we can't make improvements in our lives. To the contrary, those flaws and mistakes can propel us onto great heights.

The Bible uses interesting terms to show us the need for improvement. For instance, the apostle Peter in his writings spoke of growth and knowledge. "As newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby" (1 Peter 2:2). "But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3:18).

There is another interesting word: that is, learn. Jesus said, "Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me..." (Matt. 11:29). "The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you" (Phil. 4:9). "Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content" (Phil. 4:11). Even our Lord Himself learned. "Though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered" (Heb. 5:8).

Learning, growth, and knowledge can all be enhanced when we realize some things are better than others. For example, "... in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself" (Phil. 2:3). "But, beloved, we are confident of better things concerning you ..." (Heb. 6:9). "But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country" (Heb. 11:16).

All of us would do well to determine that we are going to be a better person than we have been in the past. That we are going to try harder to be the Christian that Christ would have us to be. Improvement is a choice. May God help you to make the choice to be better every day.

Things That Are Precious

Of all our needs, none is more pressing than our need for a better sense of values. Too many of us neglect the most priceless treasures to seek after worth less trinkets. Rather than pursuing things of eternal value, people are trading life and soul for fleeting goods and pleasures. We ought to put things that are really precious first! In the Bible the word "precious" means "costly, dear, very expensive, of great value." Think of some of the things the inspired writers described with this important word:

1. The precious blood of Christ. It is not with perishable things like silver or gold that we are redeemed from an empty way of life, "but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot" (1 Peter 1:19). No more costly price was ever paid than that by which God redeemed us. We need to be putting Him first and living for His precious Son!

2. The precious faith of Christ. Peter wrote, "To those who have obtained a faith of equal standing with ours by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 1:1). Faith which endures the trials of life is "more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire" (1 Peter 1:7). Money, pleasure, and fame will fade away, but faith will be "found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ." Don't give up the faith for the useless things of this world!

3. The precious promises of God. Through Christ, God "has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire" (2 Peter 1:4). On the day of death, nothing will be of more value than the precious promises of God. However, we will not be able to lean upon those great promises unless we have regarded them as precious during our lives. We must lay up treasures in heaven now while we have opportunity!

Nothing tells more about the heart of a man than what he holds to be precious. Jesus said, "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Matthew 6:21). Let's make sure our lives are centered upon things that are precious.