



# St. Paul's Epistle - July 2024

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## **Are You A Rock or A Sponge?**

By Rev. Reed Stockman, Lakeland Region Pastoral Counselor

“The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and lifting up wickedness, rebellion and sin.” EXODUS 34:6-7, (translation courtesy of Rev. Dr. Reed Lesing) This translation ends with “and lifting up wickedness, rebellion and sin.”

There are only three Hebrew words for sin and God uses all three right here. Why is that? To show that He “lifts up,” which is another way of saying He forgives every type of sin. Yahweh lifts up wickedness, rebellion and sin. “Wickedness” means twisted depravity. It means we are crooked and bent. “Rebellion” refers to treason against our Lord and King — God. “Sin” means missing the mark. The Ten Commandments are the bull’s eye. We take aim and miss them far too often. Yet God lifts up wickedness, rebellion and sin. Where does He put all of it? That brings us to Good Friday, when Jesus lifted up the huge mess and placed it where? Upon Himself — all wickedness, rebellion and sin.

Jesus is God in the flesh, “the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and lifting up wickedness, rebellion and sin.” Jesus teaches this love. Jesus lives this love. Jesus demonstrated this love by shedding His blood on the cross for you. Palm Sunday announces it. Good Friday shows it. And Easter Sunday celebrates it and His defeat of death. Every time we look at the cross we are reminded of Christ’s love. Let that permeate through your whole being. Let it inspire you and fill you with joy if it hasn’t already. Put another way, be a sponge and not a rock. Some Christians come to church as a rock and leave as a rock, and that is not a compliment. Put a rock in the ocean and what happens? Its surface gets wet, but the inside of the rock stays untouched. Place a sponge in the ocean and what happens? It absorbs water. The ocean saturates the sponge. God’s abounding steadfast love surrounds us like an ocean. Amazing! What’s our response? Rock or sponge?

Rev. Stockman serves as pastor of Zion, Morris

## Ladies Summer Dinner

Tuesday, July 9, 2024

5:30 p.m.

Thunderbird Lodge

Please sign up by Sunday, July 7 on the bulletin board at church.



**Roof Update:** Work continues on our roof project, new gutters were installed and some landscaping work was done to deter water leakage. Stucco work is upcoming. Thank you to everyone for the donations that are regularly coming in!



## July Birthdays

*Happy Birthday to these brothers and sisters in Christ celebrating during July!*

2nd: Jolene Quast

3rd: Josh Koenig

5th: Wade Bacon, Heather Toth

6th: Brett Lucek

7th: Steve Hams, Susan Lucek

8th: Zelpha Crawford, Deb Larson

13th: Hadley Whitbeck

15th: Betty Vance

16th: Lorraine Manninen

19th: Stella Hasser

21st: Catherine Crawford

29th: Ralph Johnson





