



**This week meditations on liturgical texts
from **Skynia Magazine****

September 12-18
The Gregorian calendar

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Stages of meditation

Please find below some schematic prompts for each stage of the meditation on the Word of God. [Read more.](#)

1. Reading

- Read the text
- What does it tell by itself?
- Clear up the context
- Look up the comments
- Find the key-phrase

2. Meditation

- What is my here and now?
- What does the Word tell me?
- Use your imagination
- "Digest" the text
- The Word and my life

3. Prayer

- What will I say in response?
- Recognition and request
- Gratitude and glorifying
- Prayer in the Word
- My participation in the Divine Liturgy

4. Contemplation

- A call to conversion
- Now I am silent
- Staying in the presence of God
- Now He is guiding me

Biblical readings and meditations

September 12

**Sunday 16, before the
Exaltation of the Cross**

- [Reading](#)
- [Meditation](#)
- [Prayer](#)
- [Contemplation](#)

Galatians 6: 11-18

John 3: 13-17

Galatians 6: 11-18

Brethren, see what large letters I make when I am writing in my own hand! It is those who want to make a good showing in the flesh that try to compel you to be circumcised—only that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ. Even the circumcised do not themselves obey the law, but they want you to be circumcised so that they may boast about your flesh. May I never boast of anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. For neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is anything; but a new creation is everything! As for those who will follow this rule—peace be upon them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God.

From now on, let no one make trouble for me; for I carry the marks of Jesus branded on my body.

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers and sisters. Amen.

John 3: 13-17

No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

“For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

“Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.”

Meditation

Today’s reading from the Gospel refers us to the book of Numbers, which recalls an incident that happened to the people of Israel in the wilderness, when many people died from the bites of poisonous snakes. Moses, at God’s command, raised a serpent of brass for the people, and he who looked at it did not die. It was a symbol which foreshadowed the cross of Christ. John the evangelist explains: *And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up* (John 3:14). And further, almost literally reproducing the biblical scene, he adds: *They will look on the one whom they have pierced* (John 19:37).

The cross speaks only of love and forgiveness to all. The cross seeks to show everyone the incomprehensible love of Jesus for people, for each of us.

The cross is the place where death and life meet for the final battle. This battle takes place in the body of Christ. A drama from which we can see and understand only a part when we hear Jesus address the Father with the words of the psalm: *My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?* (Matthew 27:46). But immediately, as if showing His victory, Jesus breathes His last, saying to the Father: *Father, into your hands I commend my spirit!* (Luke 23:46).

Jesus died, it is true, but on the cross He finally defeated selfishness, - the egocentrism that keeps people in bondage from their birth. Under the cross, all mockingly cried out to Jesus with irony: *Save yourself* (Mark 15:30). This is the «gospel» of the world – to save yourself at any cost. But it is not and cannot be the gospel of Jesus.

How could He Who never lived for Himself save Himself? Jesus said of Himself: *The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve* (Matthew 20:28). We can paraphrase: *I did not come to save myself, but others.*

By dying in this way, Jesus showed the victory of love. Today we are invited to address the cross, and especially the Crucified One. Our hearts are also poisoned, and we need to change our lives.

September 13

Monday

Ephesians 1:22 - 2:3

Mark 10: 46-52

- [Reading](#)
- [Meditation](#)
- [Prayer](#)
- [Contemplation](#)

Ephesians 1:22 - 2:3

Brethren, and he has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

You were dead through the trespasses and sins in which you once lived, following the course of this world, following the ruler of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work among those who are disobedient. All of us once lived among them in the passions of our flesh, following the desires of flesh and senses, and we were by nature children of wrath, like everyone else.

Mark 10: 46-52

They came to Jericho. As he and his disciples and a large crowd were leaving Jericho, Bartimaeus son of Timaeus, a blind beggar, was sitting by the roadside. When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout out and say, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" Many sternly ordered him to be quiet, but he cried out even more loudly, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" Jesus

stood still and said, "Call him here." And they called the blind man, saying to him, "Take heart; get up, he is calling you." So throwing off his cloak, he sprang up and came to Jesus. Then Jesus said to him, "What do you want me to do for you?" The blind man said to him, "My teacher, let me see again." Jesus said to him, "Go; your faith has made you well." Immediately he regained his sight and followed him on the way.

Meditation

On His way to Jerusalem, Jesus together with His disciples and a large crowd passed through Jericho. On the way out of the town by the roadside a blind man named Bartimaeus was sitting and begging. When he heard that Christ was passing by, he began to shout out and say, *Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!* Apparently, no one paid attention to him, did not see his need, did not consider it necessary to bring him to Christ; but when he was shouting out to Jesus, they quarreled over him to be silent. However, the blind man did not despair, he continued to shout out even louder: *Son of David, have mercy on me!*

When Christ called the blind man, he threw off his cloak, sprang up and came to Jesus. Bartimaeus takes off his cloak, gets rid of what can prevent him from quickly coming to the Master, what can cause him, as a blind man, to stumble and fall down.

Bartimaeus was healed because he believed and was persistent. Without faith, he would not have turned to Jesus, but would have sat by the roadside. Without perseverance, after the remarks of his countrymen, he would have lost hope that Christ would help him,

that he deserved to be healed. Jesus, as God, entering the town knew about this man, He could heal Bartimaeus after his first request. Repeated shouting of the blind man *Son of David, have mercy on me!* indicates to the importance of perseverance in asking God for something. Persistence helps not to give up when there are difficulties and we do not immediately get what we ask for.

What would I shout in Bartimaeus' place? Lord have mercy on me? Or, perhaps, I would complain that the Lord was unjust to me, that I deserved a better life? The behavior of the blind man encourages us to reflect on the questions: Can I accept the difficult circumstances of life without complaining, without looking for those to blame, but with faith turning to the Lord for help? Am I persistent in my requests, or do I despair if I don't get what I ask for right away? Do I reject what I may stumble over on my way to God? And, finally, do I know what I really need from the Lord?

September 14

Tuesday

**The Universal Exaltation of
the Precious and Life-Giving
Cross**

1 Corinthians 1: 18-24

**John 19: 6-11,13-20,25-28,
30-35**

- [Reading](#)
- [Meditation](#)
- [Prayer](#)
- [Contemplation](#)

1 Corinthians 1: 18-24

Brethren, for the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart."

Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, God decided, through the foolishness of our proclamation, to save those who believe. For Jews demand signs and Greeks desire wisdom, but we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God

and the wisdom of God. For God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength.

John 19: 6-11,13-20,25-28,30-35

When the chief priests and the police saw him, they shouted, "Crucify him! Crucify him!" Pilate said to them, "Take him yourselves and crucify him; I find no case against him." The Jews answered him, "We have a law, and according to that law he ought to die because he has claimed to be the Son of God."

Now when Pilate heard this, he was more afraid than ever. He entered his headquarters again and asked Jesus, "Where are you from?" But Jesus gave him no answer. Pilate therefore said to him, "Do you refuse to speak to me? Do you not know that I have power to release you, and power to crucify you?" Jesus answered him, "You would have no power over me unless it had been given you from above; therefore the one who handed me over to you is guilty of a greater sin."

When Pilate heard these words, he brought Jesus outside and sat on the judge's bench at a place called The Stone Pavement, or in Hebrew Gabbatha. Now it was the day of Preparation for the Passover; and it was about noon. He said to the Jews, "Here is your King!" They cried out, "Away with him! Away with him! Crucify him!" Pilate asked them, "Shall I crucify your King?" The chief priests answered, "We have no king but the emperor." Then he handed him over to them to be crucified.

So they took Jesus; and carrying the cross by himself, he went out to what is called The Place of the Skull, which in Hebrew is called Golgotha. There they crucified him, and with him two others, one on either side, with Jesus between them. Pilate also had an inscription written and put on the cross. It read, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." Many of the Jews read this inscription, because the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city; and it was written in Hebrew, in Latin, and in Greek. And that is what the soldiers did.

Meanwhile, standing near the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing beside her, he said to his mother, "Woman, here is your son." Then he said to the disciple, "Here is your mother." And from that hour the disciple took her into his own home.

After this, when Jesus knew that all was now finished, he said (in order to fulfill the scripture), "I am thirsty."

When Jesus had received the wine, he said, "It is finished." Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

Since it was the day of Preparation, the Jews did not want the bodies left on the cross during the sabbath, especially because that sabbath was a day of great solemnity. So they asked Pilate to have the legs of the crucified men broken and the bodies removed. Then the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first and of the other who had been crucified with him. But when they came to Jesus and

saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. Instead, one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once blood and water came out. (He who saw this has testified so that you also may believe. His testimony is true, and he knows[g] that he tells the truth.)

Meditation

Today Paul the apostle speaks about the main symbol of Christianity – the cross. It is still a major stumbling block for other religions. Indeed, if not through the eyes of faith, it is difficult to view the place of execution of Jesus as an instrument of our salvation. Only we, Christians, according to the apostle, are called to *look not at what can be seen but at what cannot be seen* (2 Corinthians 4:18). That is, through the eyes of faith, we are able to look beyond the veil of the visible world and see that the cross is not only an instrument of the Lord's suffering, but also a mediator of His victory over death.

The embodiment of the Son of God embraces and at the same time transforms everything in itself, and, therefore, not only human life, but also human death. Perhaps we, like the ancient Jews, - Paul's contemporaries, - want to see our God powerful and always successful, but what we see instead is a complete defeat: the cross and shameful death... And perhaps everything would have been so, if not for the Resurrection. In its light, the cross is no longer a sign of the weakness of Jesus, Who could do nothing against His executioners. It becomes a proof of God's greatness, which consciously assumes the sufferings of all mankind and gives them meaning.

On this cross the transformation of the inglorious into the glorious takes place, thus, it is not without reason that the icon of the Crucifixion of the Lord in the Byzantine tradition is called the King of Glory.

When I talk to a girl who has a severe form of cancer, or to a woman who has lost her one-year-old child, I, a stranger, who can only sympathize with their grief, for a moment start thinking that any words about the cross are really stupid, because I stand helpless in front of their grief and everything I say seems superfluous. I do not want to take on the role of Job's friends, who were trying to explain to him the reason for his sufferings. However, these people, who are touched by such deep personal sufferings, at the same time touch some Mystery of God, unknown to other people.

And even if they cannot fully understand the meaning of their cross, they feel that by their suffering they are participating in the cross of Jesus, and He shares their cross with them.

September 15

Wednesday

Ephesians 3: 8-21

Mark 11: 23-26

- [Reading](#)
- [Meditation](#)
- [Prayer](#)
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Ephesians 3: 8-21

Brethren, although I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given to me to bring to the Gentiles the news of the boundless riches of Christ, and to make everyone see what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things; so that through the church the wisdom of God in its rich variety might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. This was in accordance with the eternal purpose that he has carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have access to God in boldness and confidence through faith in him. I pray therefore that you may not lose heart over my sufferings for you; they are your glory.

For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth takes its name. I pray that, according to the riches of his glory, he may grant that you may be strengthened in your inner being with power through his Spirit, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love. I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and

height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

Mark 11: 23-26

And the Lord said: “Truly I tell you, if you say to this mountain, ‘Be taken up and thrown into the sea,’ and if you do not doubt in your heart, but believe that what you say will come to pass, it will be done for you. So I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.

“Whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone; so that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses. But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses.”

Meditation

Let us recall that in the prayer *Our Father* that is so often repeated by us, we ask the Lord: *Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors* (Matthew 6:12). Today’s reading of the Gospel is the more detailed interpretation of the prayer *Our Father*, in particular, concerning forgiveness. *Whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone; so that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses. But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses.* In

other words, if we have not forgiven somebody in our hearts and each time we pray *Our Father*, we tell God: ***Don't*** forgive me my sins as I ***don't*** forgive my trespasses. Sounds not optimistic, doesn't' it?! And I ask God about this every time!

As we can see, forgiveness is of extreme importance, primarily, for ourselves, if the prayer taught by Jesus Himself tells that. But there may be situations in life when it is extremely difficult to forgive: treason, insults, murders, violence, etc. It seems that one cannot forgive. One verse above Jesus says: *Whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.*

Sometimes forgiveness is above us. But today God teaches that I just need to be willing to forgive, since if I pray about the power to forgive, He will definitely give it to me. For my own sake.

September 16

Thursday

Ephesians 4: 14-19

Mark 11: 27-33

- [Reading](#)
- [Meditation](#)
- [Prayer](#)
- [Contemplation](#)

Ephesians 4: 14-19

Brethren, we must no longer be children, tossed to and fro and blown about by every wind of doctrine, by people's trickery, by their craftiness in deceitful scheming. But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body's growth in building itself up in love.

Now this I affirm and insist on in the Lord: you must no longer live as the Gentiles live, in the futility of their minds. They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of their ignorance and hardness of heart. They have lost all sensitivity and have abandoned themselves to licentiousness, greedy to practice every kind of impurity.

Mark 11: 27-33

Again they came to Jerusalem. As he was walking in the temple, the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders came to him and said, "By

what authority are you doing these things? Who gave you this authority to do them?" Jesus said to them, "I will ask you one question; answer me, and I will tell you by what authority I do these things. Did the baptism of John come from heaven, or was it of human origin? Answer me." They argued with one another, "If we say, 'From heaven,' he will say, 'Why then did you not believe him?' But shall we say, 'Of human origin'?"—they were afraid of the crowd, for all regarded John as truly a prophet. So they answered Jesus, "We do not know." And Jesus said to them, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things."

Meditation

In the Gospels we can see that Jesus often does not give a direct answer. In today's reading to the questions of high priests, scribes, and elders *By what authority are you doing these things? Who gave you this authority to do them?* He answers in a question: *Did the baptism of John come from heaven, or was it of human origin? Answer me.*

The scribes and the Pharisees saw that Jesus acted like a man in power. They understood that a carpenter's son, a simple laborer, could not behave like this: explain the Scriptures, lead people, work miracles, expose the behavior of the teachers of the law, expel merchants from the temple... His conversations alone were full of authority. *They were astounded at his teaching, because he spoke with authority* (Luke 4:32). This could not fail to be noticed by the teachers of the law. They were troubled by one question: where did this power come from, who gave this authority to Jesus, whose will was He doing? However, they were not ready to hear the truth and

accept it. The scribes and the Pharisees were probably not interested in the very answer to the origin of Jesus' authority. They could use any answer as an accusation against Christ.

Jesus knows the intentions of their hearts and asks a question they cannot answer. No answer will be beneficial for them. Behind their answer *We do not know* something more than ignorance is hidden – the fear of accusation that they did not believe John, who pointed to Christ, and the fear of the people, who considered John a prophet.

To answer *We do not know* is easy. It is much easier than to express one's own opinion or beliefs, than to admit the truth or accept one's defeat, than to consciously put oneself in an uncomfortable situation but to give an answer that will be unfavorable to me.

When I feel tempted to say *I don't know*, I should think about what stands behind it: my fear of what others will think of me, how they will perceive it, my desire to hide something, belittle it, or exaggerate, avoid something, or maybe my mistrust, insecurity...

September 17

Friday

Ephesians 4: 17-25

Mark 12: 1-12

- [Reading](#)
- [Meditation](#)
- [Prayer](#)
- [Contemplation](#)

Ephesians 4: 17-25

Brethren, now this I affirm and insist on in the Lord: you must no longer live as the Gentiles live, in the futility of their minds. They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of their ignorance and hardness of heart. They have lost all sensitivity and have abandoned themselves to licentiousness, greedy to practice every kind of impurity. That is not the way you learned Christ! For surely you have heard about him and were taught in him, as truth is in Jesus. You were taught to put away your former way of life, your old self, corrupt and deluded by its lusts, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to clothe yourselves with the new self, created according to the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

So then, putting away falsehood, let all of us speak the truth to our neighbors, for we are members of one another.

Mark 12: 1-12

Then he began to speak to them in parables. “A man planted a vineyard, put a fence around it, dug a pit for the wine press, and built a watchtower; then he leased it to tenants and went to another country. When the season came, he sent a slave to the tenants to collect from them his share of the produce of the vineyard. But they seized him, and beat him, and sent him away empty-handed. And again he sent another slave to them; this one they beat over the head and insulted. Then he sent another, and that one they killed. And so it was with many others; some they beat, and others they killed. He had still one other, a beloved son. Finally he sent him to them, saying, ‘They will respect my son.’ But those tenants said to one another, ‘This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.’ So they seized him, killed him, and threw him out of the vineyard. What then will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and destroy the tenants and give the vineyard to others. Have you not read this scripture: ‘The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; this was the Lord’s doing, and it is amazing in our eyes’?”

When they realized that he had told this parable against them, they wanted to arrest him, but they feared the crowd. So they left him and went away.

Meditation

Listening to the parable about winegrowers from today’s Gospel readings, you are surprised by how wise and well the landlord has

arranged this vineyard. There was everything in place there to get a good vintage and to produce wine of it. Only one thing was not quite good in it – winegrowers.

Those hired employees to whom the landlord had entrusted his vineyard just for some time decided for some reason that they it fully belonged to them. At first they just would not give the harvest back, obviously considering that the effort paid by them to get is justified this. Besides that, they knew better how to process those fruits, transforming them into expensive wine. And, finally, those tenants came to own not just the vineyard, but deprived the son of their landlord of his life.

Christ teaches us that everything we *want to have* does not belong to us. That is all God's gift He has provided us with in order to come at a certain time and to take the fruit rightfully belong to Him, since He is the Master. But how often we forget about that, considering that we know better what and why should be done. How often, on performing something He urges us to do, we decide that we have understood and perceived His great intention and plan.

If something does not fit within our clear picture of God's intention, we are ready to encroach on the life of Jesus in our heart.

O Lord, give us the humbleness and wisdom, the tenderness of heart, for us to become good workers in your vineyard!

September 18

**Saturday after The Universal
Exaltation of the Precious
and Life-Giving Cross**

1 Corinthians 1: 26-29

John 8: 21-30

- [Reading](#)
- [Meditation](#)
- [Prayer](#)
- [Contemplation](#)

1 Corinthians 1: 26-29

Consider your own call, brothers and sisters: not many of you were wise by human standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, things that are not, to reduce to nothing things that are, so that no one might boast in the presence of God. He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification and redemption, in order that, as it is written, "Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord."

John 8: 21-30

Again he said to them, "I am going away, and you will search for me, but you will die in your sin. Where I am going, you cannot come." Then the Jews said, "Is he going to kill himself? Is that what he means by saying, 'Where I am going, you cannot come'?" He said to them, "You are from below, I am from above; you are of this world, I am not of this world. I told you that you would die in your sins, for

you will die in your sins unless you believe that I am he.” They said to him, “Who are you?” Jesus said to them, “Why do I speak to you at all? I have much to say about you and much to condemn; but the one who sent me is true, and I declare to the world what I have heard from him.” They did not understand that he was speaking to them about the Father. So Jesus said, “When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will realize that I am he, and that I do nothing on my own, but I speak these things as the Father instructed me. And the one who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone, for I always do what is pleasing to him.” As he was saying these things, many believed in him.

Meditation

Again we see Jesus talking to a group of people that argue with Him about His words. The topic is His identity, which is viewed from the perspective of His imminent death. The controversy began with the statement that His imminent departure would push these people to search for Jesus. We hear a very strong statement, even a threat of condemnation: *You will die in your sin*. The term *sin* refers to the distrust that drives people away from God toward death. Death here is meant not so much in the physical sense as in the sense of escaping from the One Who is the source of life and severing ties with Him. The Jews misunderstand what is being said and think it is about suicide. Jesus then explains His statement. To disbelieve in the words of Jesus *I am* means to deny that divine reality has appeared in Him. The one who opposes this lives without raising his head to heaven, looking for answers only in his own thoughts, inspired by the world. Therefore, such people are in sin, that is, they

live a life separated from God, regardless of His will. If we live like this, communication with Jesus will be impossible. The question of the Jews *Who are you?* shows their outright distrust. And the reaction of Jesus confirms such an evaluation. He emphasizes that the problem is not in the complexity of His words, which were clear and understandable from the very beginning, but only in the readiness of people to accept these words. John emphasizes the inability of the opponents of Jesus to understand Him. They stubbornly do not want to see in Him the One Who speaks of the Father. Finally, Jesus explains the words about His death: what they cannot comprehend now will become apparent to them when they crucify him. Then they will see in Him the revelation of God Himself, because His obedience to the Father is perfect. Even during that terrible hour, He will not be alone, He will not be forsaken, and He will continue to be in a close relationship of love with the Father. The effect of this explanation may come as a surprise: despite the unbelief and hostility, most Jews eventually open up to the words of Jesus.

What is Skynia Magazine?

Skynia Magazine is published with the purpose to help its readers meet the Lord with the help of the Bible.

This is why on most pages of the magazine our readers can find daily meditations on the Word of God: biblical readings according to the liturgical calendar of the UGCC. These meditations are the fruit of the personal prayer of their authors: priests, nuns and laity, who strive to live in the rhythm of the life of the UGCC, trying to tackle present-day issues.

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