

# Floodgates of Heaven

PSALM 23.

A Psalm of David.

*The Lord is my shepherd;*

*He maketh me to lie down*

*in green pastures:*

*He leadeth me beside the still*

*waters:*

*He restoreth my soul:*

*He leadeth me in the paths of*

*righteousness for his name's sake.*

*Though I walk through the valley*

*of the shadow of death, I will fear*

*not: because thou art with me, thy rod*

*and thy staff, they have comforted*

*me. Thou hast prepared a table*

*before me, and thou hast anointed*

*my head with oil, and my cup*

**Volume 1 ~ 365 Days**

Gary Caudill

# Floodgates

Of

# Heaven

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## Volume I

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Refreshing Water for the Thirsty Soul

*[www.floodgatesofheaven.org](http://www.floodgatesofheaven.org)*

**Gary D. Caudill**

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Unless otherwise stated, all devotions are written by Gary D. Caudill.

## *~ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS~*

First of all, I want to thank my Lord for saving my soul, then counting me faithful and putting me in the ministry. Without Him, I am nothing! Thank you Jesus for Your grace and mercy, and for allowing me the privilege of serving you!

Secondly, I want to thank my precious wife and children for believing in me, supporting me, and for giving me hours alone in the office while I work diligently to fulfill the dream that God has placed upon my heart of becoming a Christian author! Also, special thanks to my sweetheart for the hours she spent proofing and editing for me! I love you Amy!!

Thirdly, I want to thank Scott and Kari Boatner and their church family for believing in me, and for all your prayers, love and support! I could not have come this far without you! Your generous gift which enabled us to print our first book will never be forgotten, and I pray the Lord will enable you to reap a never-ending harvest for the seeds you have sown into my family's ministry!

Fourthly, I want to thank you the reader for your interest in this devotional series. Our prayer is that your faith will be strengthened and that your walk with God will be more meaningful as a result of our labor of love in the Word!

And last but not least, to my five sons, Elijah, Caleb, Joseph, Jonathan, and Jude, I love you all dearly! You are my life! Many around the world will read your daddy's devotionals, but I'm really doing this for you guys (no offence to anyone else)! My prayer is that as you develop a hunger for God's Word, I can pen something down today that will give you guidance for tomorrow and eternity! Go for God!!

*~Forward~*

“Gary Caudill -humble - teachable - powerful - an amazing servant of God!!

Gary is like a watered garden, growing in leaps and bounds. His latest discovery on the God journey is that he is a very gifted writer. God has opened the door for his unique gift to be put in print for you to enjoy. As you embark on your day to day journey of faith, please allow Bro. Gary's insight into the scriptures to enhance your Bible study. His words pour from a heart that is overflowing with God's Grace and Compassion. His day to day devotional thoughts will help you in your desire to know more about God.

It is Pastor Gary's desire to help the body of Christ grow in knowledge and grace. The Bible says that we should desire the sincere milk of the Word that we may grow thereby. Gary not only gives us milk but meat. The meat of the Word makes us strong. These devotional writings will give you strength for the journey. It is our honor to introduce you to Bro. Gary's first book, the first of many! Enjoy!!”

**Scott & Kari Boatner**  
**PS. 91**

## *~how to get the most~*

Floodgates of Heaven is designed to follow a one year Bible reading plan. Each day starts off with a suggested reading, which, if followed all the way through, will lead you through the entire Bible within 365 days, along with a daily devotion derived from each day's reading for your reflection and meditation!

We like to think of our plan more as a discipleship/study tool, because more is involved than a simple two minute read. Floodgates of Heaven is a must-have for those who want to go deeper in their devotions! We highly encourage you to read the entire passage each day, and not just the verse and thought of the day!

It is our passion to inspire you to develop a healthy habit of reading your Bible every day, and in so doing, share truths with you that will aid you in your spiritual development and walk with the Lord!

Above all else, our goal is to uphold and honor God and His Word! All scriptures are taken out of the King James Version, and we highly recommend that you use a KJV alongside this devotional series to get the most out of your Bible reading and studies.

Sincerely,

Bro. Gary D. Caudill

## *Today's Reading: Gen 1-3*

Today's Reflection: Gen. 3:14-15

*14 And the LORD God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life: 15 And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.*

As I read this passage, my heart leaps for joy within me! It is here that we have the first prophetic word of the coming Messiah which shall save His people from their sins! Amazing as it may seem, though, this is not God's first thought of redeeming grace, as the scriptures clearly proclaim that even before the foundation of the world, the Lamb was slain (Rev 13:8, Heb 4:3)! It should thrill us all that our sins did not catch God by surprise, nor deter His love for us! Calvary was not a mere "plan B" should things go bad. No, my friend, Calvary was the one and only plan, so that, not IF, but WHEN we sin, we can be redeemed and restored back into full fellowship with our Creator God through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, made possible by His shed blood on our behalf! Today I say, "Thanks to Calvary!"

**Rev 13:8** And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

**Heb 4:3** For we which have believed do enter into rest, as he said, As I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world.

## Day 2

### *Today's Reading: Gen 4-7*

Today's Reflection: Gen 7:15-16

*15 And they went in unto Noah into the ark, two and two of all flesh, wherein is the breath of life. 16 And they that went in, went in male and female of all flesh, as God had commanded him: and the LORD shut him in.*

Notice it says, “And they that went in, went in male and female...” What was God doing? He was preserving seed! Remember that the ‘promised seed’ mentioned in Gen. 3:15 (yesterday’s reading) had already been foretold, and so just like clockwork, everything God does is on time, and for divine purpose. How many times do you read elsewhere in the scriptures where things were done “so that the scriptures might be fulfilled”? How could the prophesy of the promised seed (Jesus Christ the Savior) have come to pass had a seed not been preserved? Had God wiped everyone out, including Noah and his family, then the prophesy would have failed! But wait! God had already spoken, and what God speaks sets in motion a sequence of events destined to fulfill His Word, and nothing, not even the vilest of sinners, or hell itself, can deter His plan! Therefore, we will sum it up today in this one word: GRACE! “Noah found GRACE!” He was a direct beneficiary of God’s ultimate plan of salvation, preserving the lineage of Christ! Once again, the theme here is the grace of God pointing us to Calvary’s divine flow.

**Gen 3:15** And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.

**John 17:12, John 19:24, John 19:28**

### *Today's Reading: Gen 8-11*

Today's Reflection: Gen 11:30 *But Sarai was barren; she had no child.*

What could be God's purpose in selecting a barren lady seemingly "at random" out of such a vast multitude of people? Always remember that with God, nothing is without purpose; nothing is random! There is great significance in this tidbit of information about Sarai, because she would later become known as Sarah, whom we know today was the wife of Abraham, the father of faith! It was of Abraham that it was said, "Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." Gal 3:6. Our focus has been, to this point in our readings, primarily about seed...promised seed and preserved seed. Let us learn a couple of quick lessons about seed today as it relates to faith. You see, **BECAUSE** Abraham believed God (had faith in Him), God blessed his seed. It was out of Abraham's seed that the **PROMISED** seed came! Hence the reason that, in Abraham's seed all the kindred of the earth are blessed (see Acts 3:25)! So, not to give away the story before it unfolds, but God specifically picked barren, childless Sarai out because it would be through her that He would continue the lineage of Christ! Isn't that just like God? To pick the most unlikely candidate, the direst of circumstances, so as to teach us a great lesson: no matter what the obstacle, hindrance, shortcoming or failure, through faith and faith alone the seed is brought to life, and divine purposes are rendered! You may say today, "I don't have much to offer God; nay, I have nothing to offer Him!" But I ask you two questions: 1) Do you have a seed? and 2) Do you have faith? Faith is what converts a small, seemingly insignificant seed, into a beautiful, fruitful vineyard! I once heard it said, "You can count the seeds in an apple, but you can't count the apples in a seed." My friend, **ACTIVATE** and **FERTILIZE** your seed today by simply **BELIEVING GOD!** If you do, God will take the barren lands in your life, and multiply them as the sands of the sea and the stars of the heavens by number! "Where do I get seed and faith?" you ask? See Hebrews 4:2 and Romans 10:17!

## Day 4

### *Today's Reading: Job 1-5*

Today's Reflection: Job 2:9 *Then said his wife unto him, Dost thou still retain thine integrity? curse God, and die.*

It is mind-boggling today to look around and see countless hundreds and thousands who, in the midst of crisis, have lost their integrity! Have you ever been there? Having lost it all, the only thing worse is to add insult to injury by losing your integrity as well. Let's remember in the midst of struggles and hardships that a good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favor rather than silver and gold (see Prov. 22:1). In our text, Job sinned not, nor did he charge God foolishly! How foolish it would be for us to turn on God at the very hour we need Him the most! It should never surprise us when, in the midnight hour, we hear the voice of the enemy saying, "Curse God, and die." We shouldn't be ignorant of his devices (see 2 Cor 2:11), but should expect him to taunt us in our weakest hour. When the enemy whispers in our ears, we **MUST** keep the right perspective, else we will be persuaded by hopelessness, doubt, lies and fear instead of hope, faith, truth and power! God has not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind (see 2 Tim 1:7)! Who are you listening to today: the voice of the enemy, or the voice of the Spirit of God?

**Pro 22:1** *A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favour rather than silver and gold.*

**2Co 2:11** Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices.

**2Ti 1:7** For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.

### ***Today's Reading: Job 6-9***

Today's Reflection: Job 9:10 *Which doeth great things past finding out; yea, and wonders without number.*

Even in the midst of Job's storm, he was sure of this one thing; God was up to something BIG! "Past finding out," indeed, but FULL of wonders none the less! We can find comfort in knowing that, even when we don't know what God is up to in our lives, HE DOES! God is able to give us peace of mind in troubled times, the kind of peace that doesn't make sense to the natural man (see Philippians 4:7)! These phrases ("great things past finding out" and "wonders without number") simply tell us that what God is doing is so huge, so big, so vast, so thorough, and so numerous, that it's off the chart! Our finite minds can't even fathom a small fraction of His Master plan! I once heard it said that when we can't see His hand, we can still trust His heart, to which I readily agree! What, might you ask, is the heart of God concerning your life? Allow me to share couple of references that come to mind! You had better hold on to your seat, because these will blow you away! See Ps 139:17, Jer 29:11, & Rom 8:28! Dear friend, rest assured that if you are a blood-bought child of God, He has your BEST interest in mind! Sometimes it may not look like it or feel like it, but just remember this: "Though thy beginning was small, yet thy latter end should greatly increase." Job 8:7!

**Php 4:7** And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

**Psa 139:17** How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them!

**Jer 29:11** For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.

## Day 6

### *Today's Reading: Job 10-13*

Today's Reflection: Job 13:15 *Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him: but I will maintain mine own ways before him.*

Now that, my friend, is FAITH! Someone once said, "True faith is trusting and obeying the Lord, regardless of the circumstances or consequences." This is definitely the kind of resolve Job is modeling in our text! Today, would you be willing to have that same resolve in your spirit as Job did? That, even if things are not going well, you'll still trust in the Lord? This world is not impressed with "fair weather" Christians, but "tried and proven" Christians! "God, grant us the grace to endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ, and serve You regardless of what's happening around us, in us, or to us!" Let me remind you that when you're in your darkest trial is when your testimony of His enduring strength shines the most! Out of tragedy comes triumph, and out of travail comes new birth! This could be the very hour that your diligence pays off, that your faithfulness is rewarded, that your prayers are answered, and that your lost friends and loved ones are paying the most attention, waiting to be swayed towards Christ by your expected victory! Child of God, be not afraid nor discouraged, for your Heavenly Father will see you through! Tell yourself, your brethren, and your enemies, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him!" See also Daniel 3:16-18.

**Dan 3:16** Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we *are* not careful to answer thee in this matter. **17** If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver *us* out of thine hand, O king. **18** But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.

### ***Today's Reading: Job 14-16***

Today's Reflection: Job 14:14 *If a man die, shall he live again? all the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come.*

Although Job maintained his integrity through his crisis, this does not mean that he didn't have thoughts of hopelessness. God knows what we are made of (see Ps. 103:14)! We don't have a God who is disconnected from our emotions, but He knows how we feel (see Heb. 4:15)! He knows the pains and heartaches associated with our griefs and sorrows! God is not caught by surprise, nor has He lost control. However, when we are in the midst of the storm, things look so out of proportion that it's very easy for hopelessness and despair to set in. Job was ready to die! He basically said, in a nutshell, "I'm just going to sit here and wait to die!" He was beginning to allow his circumstances to shape his attitude, instead of the other way around, and this is a very dangerous place to be! He asked, "If a man die, shall he live again?" His attitude was this, "Once it's over, it's over!" This is such a gloomy conclusion for one to make who, several chapters later, will be given back twice what he had before! If at this moment in his emotional breakdown Job could have seen a glimpse of the bright future ahead of him, he no doubt would have seen things differently! Friends, we **MUST** remember that, no matter how bad it may get circumstantially in our lives, hope still lives, and we **CAN** live again! The fact is, one thing Job had right was this: God wants us to die! He wants us to die to self! Paul said, "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live!" (see Gal. 2:20). God has a way of stripping us down to nothing but HIM, so that, when we finally die to self, we are then resurrected into newness of a life of anointing, favor, and a double-portion of God's best! Instead of questioning God's purpose, let us yield to it, allowing this appointed time of death to pass so that we can be renewed again in the Power of His might! "God, grant me the desire to die to self, and wait patiently for it to occur, 'till my change come'!"

## Day 8

### *Today's Reading: Job 17-20*

Today's Reflection: Job 19:9, 25-26

*9 He hath stripped me of my glory, and taken the crown from my head.*

*25 For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth:*

*26 And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God:*

God truly has a way of stripping us down to nothing but HIM! Why does He do this? I believe the answer is found in v.9: "He hath stripped me of MY glory, and taken the crown from MY head." As the story of Job continues to unfold, we shall discover that eventually Job will stop talking so much about himself and start talking more about God! You see, man's glory is faded at best! At the end of the day, we have nothing to boast of! Paul said, "But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ..." Gal 6:14a. God is simply growing us to a point, not only to where He's all we have, but also to where He's all we need! When we're finally dead to self, and when we finally have no one to look to but Christ, then and only then shall we get a clear, vivid picture of who our Heavenly Father really is, because all the distractions have been removed! In the midst of all of this gloom and despair, Job begins (after being reduced to nothing) to see the Glory of God in His resurrection power! "I know that my redeemer liveth....yet in my flesh, I shall see God!" What a glorious day it is when we change our focus from, "God, change my circumstances!" to, "God, change ME!" Oh, the double-portion that awaits us, when at last our fleshy eyes have been anointed, and we finally "see God!" Make haste, dear reader, to die to self, so that you too can genuinely see God with clarity in your life more so than ever before! It's not until we get a good look at Him that we are truly changed by His power to effectively portray Him to a lost and dying world! As found in John 12:21, may THIS be our desire today, "We would see Jesus!"

### *Today's Reading: Job 21-23*

Today's Reflection: Job 23:3, 8-10

Nothing challenges our faith any more than when God becomes silent and untraceable in our lives! Doubt, confusion, and terror haunt our thoughts and blur our vision to the point of spiritual paralysis. If you're here, even though it doesn't look like it, rest assured that the Son will break through the clouds again one day! One thing that helps us through these seasons is to learn that it is not unusual for God to allow this to happen in our lives, although at first it's a shocker! When God behaves in ways we do not expect Him to behave, we become very frightful, unstable, and uncomfortable. However, even though God is silent and invisible to us at the moment, that does NOT mean He is absent! Job said, "He hideth Himself on the right hand, that I cannot see Him." Has God ever played hide-and-seek with you? Know this: the ONLY reason God would hide Himself from us is so He can teach us how better to seek Him! Jesus said, "Seek, and ye shall find!" The frustrating part is simply not knowing the WHERE and the WHEN! "WHERE is He?", you ask? Job also said, "He knoweth the way that I take..." Friend, we may not know exactly where He is, but He definitely knows where we are! Though we may not see Him, He IS there! The next question is WHEN.....WHEN will He reveal Himself again? WHEN will I hear His voice again? WHEN will I have confidence in His call on my life again? When, when, when? Though we may not know THIS "when", here is one "when" Job was sure of! "WHEN He hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold!" Find comfort today in knowing that God IS there, and that there IS coming a "when" day in your life, where this season of trials shall pass, and like Job, you shall come forth as gold, purified in the fire, and thereby cleansed, tried, tested and proven for the Master's work! WHEN that day comes, remember the Word He gave you today to help see you through! Until then, keep on trusting His Word, even WHEN you have nothing else to stand on!

## Day 10

### *Today's Reading: Job 24-28*

Today's Reflection: Job 26:14 *Lo, these are parts of his ways; but how little a portion is heard of him? But the thunder of his power who can understand?*

How often do we hear everything except what we need to hear, when we need to hear it? Job is expressing his frustration that he has heard everything but a good word from God. Wow! You'd think that Job's three friends knew all there was to know about God, Job, and everything else on the planet!! To hear them talk, these dudes were too cool for school. Eliphaz judged Job according to his own personal experience, Bildad by tradition, and Zophar by human merit. When you judge your fellow family member in the body of Christ by your personal experience, tradition, or merit, you just became a Pharisee. A Pharisee is one who looks down on others from their holier-than-thou throne. They talk much about what they do for God, but never about what God has done for them. The Christian experience is not about your work for God, but rather God's work in you!! Job was hopelessly drowning in an ocean of fear (see Job 3:25) and his friends were just throwing rocks to further sink him rather than the flotation device called Hope and Grace. Show me your friends and I'll show you your future!! Become a friend of Jesus today!! Quit living by a bunch of religious rules and conduct your life by the law of GRACE. The Grace of God was sent to change us, the law to condemn us; and condemned we are without Jesus!

~Scott Boatner, guest author

**Job 3:25** For the thing which I greatly feared is come upon me, and that which I was afraid of is come unto me.

### ***Today's Reading: Job 29-31***

Today's Reflection: Job 30:19 *He hath cast me into the mire, and I am become like dust and ashes.*

Is the glory of a fire found in the dust and ashes lying beneath its blaze? Is it not found in the intense beauty, brightness and heat of the flame itself? I know not of anyone who is not awe-stricken by the sheer beauty, intensity and power of fire! And yet, fire in all of its splendor must be fueled, else it does not exist! Dear reader, our God is a consuming fire (see Heb 12:29), and we are but the fuel He wishes to ignite! "Can He shine without us?" is not the question we should be asking, but rather, "Is it His desire to shine without us?" Romans 12:1 admonishes us to become a "living sacrifice" for Him! When we are consumed by Him, others will come and watch us burn! Jesus says "Let your light SO shine before men!" (see Mat 5:16). Once we have been consumed by Him, we are reduced to dust and ashes, and have yielded our lives to a much greater purpose: that of exalting Jesus! It's not US they will be so impressed with, but it's HIM in us! John the Baptist said, "He must increase, but I must decrease." (Jn 3:30). Is there any value in dust and ashes? Can anything good be gotten of the mire? Let's consider the following: Out of dust God created mankind, breathed into him the breath of life, and he became a living soul (see Gen 2:7)! Out of ashes comes beauty (see Isaiah 61:3)! And out of the mire come trophies of grace (see Ps 40:2)! You see, when we have been brought to the irreducible minimum in our lives, the only thing left is God, and that's when true life just begins to happen! Do not think that your travail is the end of all good things! Through travail comes birth, and through birth comes newness of life, and a future, and a hope! Be encouraged in the Lord today, and resolve in your spirit to wait patiently for your deliverance! See also Jer 20:9

## Day 12

### *Today's Reading: Job 32-34*

Today's Reflection: Job 34:12 *Yea, surely God will not do wickedly, neither will the Almighty pervert judgment.*

Whatever God does or allows, He does so justly! We may not understand Him but we must trust Him nonetheless! How often does a parent give a command that the child does not understand? The fact is, there are many things that a child simply can't understand even if you were to try to explain yourself! In the same way, our Heavenly Father has so much wisdom that we could not even begin to understand, even if He were to attempt to show us! Understanding may come with growth, maturity, and faithfulness to His name, and yet some things we will not be able to know until we lay down this corrupt flesh and put on immortality! The key to serving God even when He doesn't make sense to us is this: TRUST! Is this not what faith is all about? When you are limited in your understanding regarding a subject, where do you go? You go to the "expert", right? For example, when those who are not mechanically inclined hire a mechanic to fix their vehicle, they are exhibiting trust. It would be foolish to demand the mechanic to teach you in a few moments what it has taken him years of schooling and experience to learn. We don't expect this do we? No! We just want the car fixed, and we trust the judgment of the mechanic, because we know that he knows more on the subject than we do! Why then do we give God such a hard time, when He chooses not to reveal to us the why? Should we not simply trust His great judgment? There's nothing wrong with asking God why, for did not our Lord ask why on the cross? It only becomes sin when we get to the point where we become angry with God for not giving us the understanding that we have asked for. Remember that God always answers your prayers. He either says yes, no, or wait! My friend, have you inquired of the Lord lately for understanding that He has not given you as of yet? Trust Him regardless! Wait on the Lord, and be of good courage, and He WILL strengthen your heart!

### *Today's Reading: Job 35-37*

Today's Reflection: Job 35:10 *But none saith, Where is God my maker, who giveth songs in the night;*

Elihu came to a conclusion much the same as what Paul the Apostle did in Romans 3:11! Amazing, isn't it? By default of the old Adamic nature in us, we are very slow to seek after God in our dilemmas, IF we seek Him at all! Why is it that so many times we seek Him as a last-ditch effort to avoid total disaster, when in fact He should be the FIRST one that we seek? The Psalmist David said, "Early will I seek thee!" (see Ps 63:1). If anyone in the Bible knew of the 'songs in the night', it would have been David! To think that we, in our darkest hour, would choose to seek help from everywhere but God our maker is sad, especially when we consider that He is the only one who can give us that song in the night! Yet, if we're not careful, we will be guilty of doing just that. If we only knew how much sweeter our valley experiences would be if we turned to the Savior early in our problems, we wouldn't hesitate one moment to come before His presence! Perhaps we can be taught a lesson by the Holy Script today, to remember always that He 'giveth songs in the night'! Oh weary soul, how long has it been since you've hung your harp on the willow tree, asking yourself "How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?" I ask you this question, "How can you NOT?" Take your harp back down at once and come boldly before the throne of Grace, that He may fill your heart with songs of praise and victory even in the midnight hour! You have this promise in Pro 8:17, "I love them that love me; and those that seek me early shall find me." Seek Him early and He SHALL put victory's song back in your heart, that will make even the gates of hell to shake and tremble!

**Psa 63:1** O God, thou *art* my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is;

## Day 14

### *Today's Reading: Job 38-39*

Today's Reflection: Job 38:1a *Then the LORD answered...*

It is a great hour when the LORD speaks up! Darkness is dissipated, doubt is driven out, and truth prevails! When He speaks, it would be wise if we were to shut up and listen (excuse the expression)! Everyone up to this point in the book of Job has had their say, and “then the LORD answered”! When He speaks, we are to be quick to listen, and slow to speak! After Job spent his energy boasting of his knowledge of the ways of God, all of the sudden God speaks up for no other reason than to prove to Job that he has not even come close to figuring Him out yet! As we have already learned, His ways are past finding out! If for no other reason, we should serve Him to explore the knowledge of His holiness! Many wonder what we will do to keep from getting bored throughout eternity, but may I suggest that the LORD's person and wisdom are so inexhaustible and infinite, that not even an eternity could yield enough time to find Him completely out! Paul made this statement in the New Testament, revealing his passion, “that I may know Him!” Yet, when we all get to Heaven, we will still endeavor to explore Him yet more, speaking the same passionate creed, “that I may know Him!” When will we stop putting God in our little boxes, and realize that He is way beyond anything that we could ever drum up or imagine? The sooner we realize that we'll never get Him figured out completely, the better off we'll be in serving Him! With this kind of information about Him, it's much easier to simply trust Him at His word, rather than trying to figure out the ‘how’! Friend, when God speaks a word, don't doubt it, and don't try to figure it out first, but simply trust it! When you do, faith is at its best, and God is at His greatest liberty to work in you and through you!

### ***Today's Reading: Job 40-42***

Today's Reflection: Job 42:5 *Now I See Him*

There is a dividing line in Christianity. There is a distinction between those who merely do Christian things and those who experience the true presence of God! Job says that now he sees God; now, after 42 chapters of real day-to-day challenges, he finally sees God. Wow!!! Did you happen to notice that God doesn't say a word to Job until chapter 38? Thirty-seven chapters passed and not one word to Job or his super-spiritual friends.

Job was the most spiritual person he knew until God began to speak. When God speaks, light from heaven invades our space and we see ourselves for what we really are. In chapter \*40:4, Job tells us who he really is "I am vile"; not, "I have done some bad things," but, "I am vile." What happened to the "perfect guy" in chapter one? Oh don't worry, Job hadn't gotten drunk or committed adultery, he just found out that he was not all that!!! Job is no longer wandering in the wilderness of self-pity, self-righteousness, etc. He has now stepped into the Holy of Holies. He has seen God in His presence and raw power; have you? Are you growing in the grace and knowledge of Jesus or just adapting to a religious lifestyle?

What is the strongest voice in your life? Is it friends, flesh, fear, or the voice of the Holy Spirit? Be true in your answer and you will find out where you are: in chapter 1, or in chapter 42.

~Scott Boatner, guest author

**Job 40:4** Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth.

## Day 16

### *Today's Reading: Gen 12-15*

Today's Reflection: Gen 12:9a *And Abram journeyed, going on still...*

Though this path we're on is full of hardships and surprises, it is also full of victories, and that is why we must go on still! "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed;" (2 Cor 4:8-9). "Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong." (2 Cor 12:10). When we are at our weakest, He is at His strongest! We CAN make it, child of God. We CAN make it! "Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts." (Zec 4:6). We are mighty THROUGH GOD to the pulling down of strongholds (see 2 Cor 10:4)! Paul said, "Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; In journeyings often, in perils ... In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness." (2 Cor 11:25-27). Yet he still has the resolve to say this in Philippians 3:14, "I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." In other words, "I'm going on still!" Dear reader, our Savior will strengthen you in your weakest hour to go on still! When the brethren say you're out, tell them, "I'm going on still!" When the family forsakes you, tell them, "I'm going on still!" When you've lost everything, say, "I'm going on still!" When the devil says it's over, tell him, "I'm going on still!" (Whew! I feel like preaching!) When your past haunts you, get it under the blood, then tell it, "I'm going on still!" When your present is dark, say, "I'm going on still!" When your future is uncertain, say, "I'm going on still!" Be encouraged, my friend! I once heard it said like this, "You're invincible until God is through with you!" So go ahead and tell the devil, the brethren, yourself, and everyone around you that God's not through with you yet! You're GOING ON STILL!

### *Today's Reading: Gen 16-18*

Today's Reflection: Gen 18:14a *Is anything too hard for the Lord?*

Many times we are guilty of picking and choosing what we believe God is and is not able to do. For example, for many of us it's easy to believe that God created the heavens and the earth, but then it's difficult for us to believe that He would make fruitful the barren womb. It's easy for us to believe that He called Abraham out of the Ur of the Chaldees for His name's sake, but then it's difficult to believe that He would call any of us. It's easy to believe that He shut the mouths of the lions when Daniel was thrown in the lion's den, but it's difficult for us to believe that He will deliver us from Satan's roar and rage. It's easy to believe that Jesus healed the sick, cast out devils, and raised the dead, but it's difficult to believe that He will raise up our sick loved ones off the bed of affliction. It's easy for us to believe in the resurrection of Jesus, but it's difficult to believe that He can raise the vilest sinner friend or family member out of spiritual death into newness of life. I could go on and on, but the point is, we need to get our thinking back up! There seems to be a disconnect in our minds between "The Bible days" and our day, but the moment we realize that these, too, are "Bible days", the more we can connect with the writings of the scriptures! Yes, we have the complete cannon of scriptures, and there will be no more adding to the Bible, but the Bible is alive and well for our generation! Its message, though aged, is timeless! It is for every generation! Do not think that what God did back then, He cannot do anymore! Our God is the same yesterday, today, and forever! If you need healing, He is able TODAY! If you need a financial breakthrough, He is able TODAY! If you need an answered prayer, He is able TODAY! If you need peace, He is able TODAY! If you need a salvaged marriage, He is able TODAY! If you need salvation, He is able TODAY! If you need a miracle, He is able TODAY! There is absolutely nothing, and I mean NOTHING, too hard for God! Trust Him and believe, then YOU will see for yourself!

## Day 18

### *Today's Reading: Gen 19-21*

Today's Reflection: Gen 19:17 *Look not behind thee...*

Your heart will always follow your eyes! This is the reason behind the sharp warning given to Lot and his family as they fled their home town before the Lord destroyed it. Jesus said, "No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." (See Luke 9:62). The eyes are a gate to the soul, revealing its innermost desires. Jesus also said, "The light of the body is the eye..." (Matt 6:22a). Do you remember what it was that took Lot down to "Sin City" to start with? It was his eyes! Gen 13:10a "And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered every where..." What we see here is the Lord ever so graciously giving Lot a chance to repent, or to get back ON where he got off! God will always require that which is past (Ecc 3:15)! He will always take you back to the place where you left Him before you can be completely restored back into full fellowship with Him! This was Lot's chance to be delivered from the vexation of his righteous soul (see 2 Pet 2:8). The true test was this: would he look back? The Lord literally had to 'drag' Lot and his family out of there because of the attachment they had to this world's system (see Gen 19:16)! However, even then, the Lord ultimately gave Lot a choice: would he look back, or would he 'forget those things which are behind' (see Php 3:14)? The sad thing is that even though he passed the test temporarily, his heart really never left Sodom and Gomorrah. Let this be a lesson for all of us...Our eyes AND our heart MUST be towards Christ TOGETHER in order for there to be true repentance not to be repented of (see 2 Cor 7:10)! Dear reader, have your eyes veered off the path of righteousness and led you down to "sin city"? Then fix your eyes on Jesus today, so that He may fix your heart on Him as well! You CAN get back to where you were with Him, IF you will allow your heart to follow your eyes back to Him! See also Ps 101:3 and Pro 4:25.

### *Today's Reading: Gen 22-24*

Today's Reflection: Gen 22:8 *God will provide himself...*

It's interesting to note the verbiage in our text! Without careful observation, one could easily assume that Abraham was speaking of the sacrifice that God would provide on that particular day; however, we soon discover that God did not provide a lamb on that day, but rather a ram. Coincidence? Accident? Typo? I don't think so! Abraham's words were prophetic in nature, as he was not speaking of that day, but he was speaking of Calvary! Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness (Gen 15:6)! The fact is, Abraham was looking ahead to the Lamb of God that was slain before the foundation of the world (Rev 13:8)! He knew that there would come a day that the Messiah would come through his lineage, even as God had promised, and save His people from their sins (Mat 1:21). And when God could find no other worthy to become the final sacrifice for sins once and for all (Rom 3:10), He provided Himself (Eph 2:15)! In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word WAS God (John 1:1), and the word was made flesh (that's Jesus!), and dwelt among us (John 1:14)! Friend, Jesus was more than just another prophet; He was God made flesh, who walked a mile in our shoes, and paid our sin debt once and for all (Heb 10:10)! Hallelujah! What a Saviour! Will you receive Christ today? See Rom 10:9-10, 13!

**Rom 10:9** That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. **10** For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

**Rom 10:13** For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

## Day 20

### *Today's Reading: Gen 25-26*

Today's Reflection: Gen 26:19-22

You cannot be fruitful in the land until such a time as the Lord makes room for you! There is, shall we say, a testing ground, a time of maturing, a time of character-building our Lord brings us through in order that He may prepare us to be able to handle the responsibilities that await us in our destiny. Nothing is more trying, nothing more frustrating, & nothing more potentially devastating to our future (depending on how we handle it) than the cold damp rags of discouragement thrown on us by others who are not nearly as interested in our success as their own. There's always someone else demanding to be first at your expense! It's like taking one step forward and two steps back. As soon as you think you're making headway, here come the herdmen of Gerar saying, "The water is ours!" As soon as you think your ministry is beginning to take off, all of the sudden the phone stops ringing, and the invitations become fewer and farther between, while others' ministries take off and thrive! And the whole time you're thinking, "I dug that well. That well should have been mine!" However, Isaac sets a great example for us in our text! He did not whine, pout, or become bitter because others took advantage of or succeeded as a result of his labor without showing any gratitude or acknowledgement whatsoever; rather, he moved on to the next chapter in his life! He learned that some battles were not worth fighting, and so he resolved to just move on! Have you ever noticed that the more God blesses you with, the more is demanded of your resources by those around you? Look not on this as a burden, but as a test of your character! Pass the test, resolve to let the Lord replenish what you have given away or what has been taken from you, and one day the Lord will make room for you to be fruitful in the land! One day, there will be plenty to go around for you and those around you! And when God scrapes off a spot for you, can't nobody do nothing about it! See also Pro 18:16.

### ***Today's Reading: Gen 27-29***

Today's Reflection: Gen 27:1 ...*his eyes were dim, so that he could not see...*

Amazing, isn't it? Such a huge mistake a little vision would have avoided! Pro 29:18a says, "Where there is no vision, the people perish." Isaac tried his best to discern the situation with his other senses; he listened to Jacob's voice, he felt of his hands, he smelled of his neck, and he even tasted his soup, and yet against his better judgment, because of a lack of vision, he was unable to get the clarity he really needed to make a sound decision. There is no substitute for vision! All of your other senses, as good as they may be, cannot do together what vision can do alone! Our vision must be clear if we are to navigate life's journey and achieve the success God intended for us! So much hinges off of your vision: your focus, your attention, your goals, your dreams, your direction, and your decisions. Remember that your heart will always follow your eyes; therefore, how do we ensure that our vision is clear and concise? We go to the Word of God! When you use God's Word, you're given God's perspective and God's outlook on things! When this happens, you have no other alternative but to succeed! Look to the Bible today, and allow the Holy Spirit to renew your eyes, that seeing you may see, and hearing you may understand! Just like the blind man in Mark 8, God doesn't just want us to "see men as trees walking", but He wants us to see "every man clearly"! Now, once we see clearly, we need to "lift UP" our eyes on the fields which are white already to harvest (John 4:35)! 20/20 vision will never do us any good if we never lift UP our eyes! When you move your eyes off of your problems and up to the heavens, your focus shifts from one isolated fixation point to a vast canvas of endless possibilities! As in the words of the Psalmist David, "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help." Fix your eyes on Jesus, and He will NEVER mislead you!

## Day 22

### *Today's Reading: Gen 30-31*

Today's Reflection: Gen 31:5b *I see your father's countenance, that it is not toward me as before; but the God of my father hath been with me.*

It is a strange thing to experience rejection from others due to your own God-given success! Contrary to popular belief, progress isn't always applauded, especially by those around you who are not willing to accept the changes taking place in your personal and spiritual growth and development. One of the biggest challenges of prosperity is to accept the fact that some may never forgive you for becoming successful! Another challenge is to resolve not to allow those who reject you to cause you to become bitter and unforgiving of them. That's partly what enables us to have a Canaan land experience that many will never know; the ability to move on into the future of God's best for our lives without getting hung up on someone else's hang-ups. If they are not willing to cross over Jordan with you, then that's their choice and not yours! Don't let others keep you from pursuing that land flowing with milk and honey!

Somebody must lead the way, so it might as well be us; if they choose to go with us, fine, and if not, fine, but we must go on! All we can do at this point is pray that God will grant them faith sufficient enough to open their eyes to the promises of God that await them, instead of focusing on the "evil report" of all the giants and obstacles awaiting them! My friend, Pastor Scott Boatner, once said, "Faith will take you places that others will not go, and allow you to see things that others will not see!" My former pastor, Bro. Bruce Freeman, once said, "What we're willing to walk away from will determine what God brings to us!" Friend, though your journey of success may lead you away from familiar places and familiar friends who are dear to your heart, do not be discouraged or disheartened, for what you have been willing to sacrifice cannot even compare to what you will gain on the other side of Jordan! You owe no one any apologies for walking in the blessings that God has bestowed upon you, so walk freely in the fresh anointing of the Holy Spirit and enjoy the journey that God has for you!

## ***Today's Reading: Gen 32-34***

Today's Reflection: Gen 32:30b *I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved.*

It is in the night seasons of our lives that we wrestle with the Lord! When circumstances are out of our control, fear of the unknown begins to cloud our view! Yet, even in our darkest hour, we as children of the Most High God are sure of one thing; our only hope is to lay hold on Him until the blessings of His Daystar arise in our hearts, and He sheds light into our dark world! Jacob was no different! It's interesting to note that God actually was the one who started this wrestling match (see Gen 32:24)! Jacob knew there MUST be a reason behind what God had started and allowed into his life, and he wasn't going to let go until he got what he believed was God's intent and capability to give! Has God ever picked a fight with you? Rest assured that He has a purpose. Here, at the breaking of the day, God instructed Jacob to let Him go, but Jacob refused, and said, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me." This was a test; would Jacob simply give up what he was so close to obtaining, or would he fight to the finish? Perhaps the Almighty has put you to the test to see just how hungry you are for Him. Will you pass the test? Will you say as Jacob, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me!"? Friend, when there seems to be no reason or rhyme in our journey with God, we must resolve to hold on to our faith in Him until the day that what we know is true in principle becomes reality! Keep on believing, keep on serving, keep on tithing, keep on being faithful, and keep on giving Him your best, because one day you will begin to receive God's reward for your faithfulness! He that comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him! God pays back pay! All of your seeds sown in tears shall reap an equal harvest of joy! All of your years of heaviness shall be traded in for garments of praise! All of your shattered dreams shall be but faint memories in the light of the brightness of your future! Press on, child of God, press on!

## Day 24

### *Today's Reading: Gen 35-37*

Today's Reflection: Gen 37:11 *And his brethren envied him; but his father observed the saying.*

People of vision are often misunderstood, and therefore resented! It would do us good to learn not to judge others so quickly just because we are not at first able to catch their vision! Most who dare to dream and walk by faith will have their share of critics and doubters, but it is those who dream that God calls to be great leaders! Before we criticize those we think dream too big, let us first hear them out; it could be that their dreams are heavenly inspired! Although Jacob rebuked Joseph, it also says that he “observed the saying”. Even though he did not understand Joseph’s dream, he did not completely reject it either! He was willing to put it on the back burner of his heart in hopes to gain more understanding at a later date, which he did! Too many times God will put someone in our lives to lead us spiritually into greener pastures and cooler waters, but if we reject their message, then we are doing ourselves a great disservice. 2 Chron 20:20b says, “Believe in the LORD your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper.” Do not as Joseph’s brothers, and envy those who have a greater vision than you. Ponder what you do not understand in your heart, until the day that God either confirms or nullifies their credibility. Isaiah 44:26a says that God “confirmeth the word of his servant”. God SHALL confirm the word of His servant, but the question is, will we wait long enough for Him to do so? Dear reader, if God has put someone in your life that matches this description, I encourage you to give them a chance to inspire you, to teach you, and to lead you closer to God! Use the Word of God and the Spirit of God as your checkpoints of validity, and if all lights are green, then enjoy the path that He is leading you down, even if it’s a path of unfamiliarity! Don’t wait for other people to approve, because it’s highly unlikely that all of your “brethren” will follow suit! Just remember this; even when you do not understand God completely, you can ALWAYS trust His leadership!

## ***Today's Reading: Gen 38-40***

Today's Reflection: Genesis 39:1 *And Joseph was brought down to Egypt; and Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, captain of the guard, an Egyptian, bought him of the hands of the Ishmeelites, which had brought him down thither.*

In this verse we read, "And Joseph was brought down to Egypt;" What a confusing and heartbreaking turn of events this young man had to endure. However, what Joseph did not realize was that God had a plan! God's plan was to teach Joseph that no matter what, no matter where, and no matter whom, HE was still in control. Within God's master plan He needed to get Joseph to move to Egypt because a famine was on the way. He would use Joseph to ensure both protection and provisions for Israel. You see, there are times in our lives that God works in ways that we often dislike or would not choose in order to get us where we need to be, both to be blessed by Him, and for our lives to bless others. How many young mothers have wept at the loss of a child only to find that the Heavenly Father will hold her and rock her as she weeps? That same young mother that found God to be faithful grows into a grandmother that prays over her family, and is often the same one that feeds and spiritually nourishes those precious grandchildren. In no way would I ever make light of tragedy, but many saints carry this testimony; had God not allowed their lives to shatter into a thousand pieces, they would have never turned to Him. Romans 8:28 teaches us that, "...all things work together for good to them that love God..." This question then arises; what is God doing in your life today? You may not understand it, like it, or even notice it, but know this, God IS working!

~Chris Doster, guest author

## Day 26

### *Today's Reading: Gen 41-42*

Today's Reflection: Gen 41:51-52 *And Joseph called the name of the firstborn Manasseh: For God, said he, hath made me forget all my toil, and all my father's house. And the name of the second called he Ephraim: For God hath caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction.*

My heart is encouraged to read Joseph's declarations! To know that others have been delivered from their own personal dungeons offers hope that perhaps, I too shall be able to realize victory over mine! Nothing is more dreadful to one's soul than to feel like you've been played like a puppet amidst people and circumstances over which you have no control. It is a terrible place to be, when you feel as if everything in your life has gone wrong, and then to feel that you're completely powerless to change any of it for the better! In this dungeon there is a constant nagging voice of doubt and fear that reminds you of your failures and losses, consequently stifling the very life out of you. It's one thing to have failed and lost, but it's another to be constantly reminded of it and haunted by it while trapped in this dungeon of despair. However, there is good news! The Lord was with Joseph (Gen 39:2, 21)! Sure there may be moments where we don't feel His presence, but we're still alive! We're still in our right mind! We're still clothed! We're still fed! We're still provided for! We're still LOVED! Hallelujah, what a Savior! The Psalmist said, "Unless the LORD had been my help, my soul had almost dwelt in silence." God could have restored Joseph back with his family, but rather He chose to turn Joseph's land of affliction into a well-watered garden! God will move things around in your life so that His purposes are to your advantage! Today, if you find yourself in the dungeons of fear and doubt, listen to the Words of Christ in the quietness of this moment and allow the Comforter to speak peace to your soul! "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls." Matt 11:28-29

## *Today's Reading: Gen 43-45*

Today's Reflection: Gen 45:27b *and when he saw the wagons which Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of Jacob their father revived...*

It is true that the gift itself is not nearly as cherished as the one who gives it! In like manner, here come wagons to pick up what once was a heartbroken father. Jacob thought it was over. He had given up hope of ever seeing Joseph alive again! As far as he was concerned, all hope was gone. But then he sees the wagons! These were not just any old wagons but these were wagons of royalty, first class if you will! Best of all, these were wagons of provisions! But wait, Jacob is not nearly as excited about the wagons, as he is the one who had them delivered! There were several indicators that convinced Jacob before he ever laid eyes on Joseph that he was alive and well! Perhaps Joseph remembered from his childhood what his father enjoyed eating, what style of clothes he preferred, what kind of jewelry impressed him, and so on. Perhaps, having known exactly what his father would like, Joseph loaded his wagons down with every thoughtful gift he knew his father would enjoy, based upon his memory of him! After Jacob saw the wagons, he knew that only Joseph could have sent them! Not even Benjamin held quite the place in his heart as Joseph. Therefore, when he saw Joseph's personal touch all over these wagons, his spirit revived, for he knew without even looking upon him that he WAS alive! No one else could have sent THESE wagons! In like fashion, I can say today that no one ever cared for me like Jesus! No one ever was so kind as He! No one else could take the sin and darkness from me! Oh how much He cares for me! When God tailor-makes your blessings, there's no denying that it's Him! This is how I know He lives, because of His personal care for me! Today, I'm not in love with His stuff or His provisions, but I love Him because He first loved me! Even when I see His provisions on the way, my heart leaps within me, because I know that He is not far behind! Oh that I might see HIM!

## Day 28

### ***Today's Reading: Gen 46-47***

Today's Reflection: Gen 47:6b *...if thou knowest any men of activity among them, then make them rulers over my cattle.*

One who is wise in his business will not leave any task in the hands of the slothful. Do not think that those sitting idly by are anxiously awaiting an opportunity to show their worth! Most likely, if you find someone who has all the time in the world to do something, then they shall also take all the time in the world, and still not finish! Let us learn a lesson from Pharaoh's wisdom; you assign jobs to those whose lives are already full of activity, and the job shall be done well! Busy people get the job done, because they are willing to hustle! Pro 12:24 says, "The hand of the diligent shall bear rule: but the slothful shall be under tribute." Diligence not only pays off in this earthly economy, but also in God's economy! Do you think you're gifted in an area for which a door has not yet been opened? Then be diligent in the areas where you do have an opportunity, even if they are not exactly what you're looking for! God looks for those who are willing to do the small stuff, so that He can entrust them with greater responsibilities. You cannot hi-jack your calling; you must grow into it! Be not as the wicked and slothful servant who hid his talent in the ground, and in the end lost it all, even the principle! When you have no principle, you have nothing! Even when you have principle, but you do not increase it, you still have nothing! God has given each of us at the very least a "certain measure of faith"...a seed, or principle, if you will! Something we can build upon with His favor on our efforts! Child of God, do not squander the opportunities God has given you to increase and to be productive for His kingdom! Go for God! Make it count! Take risks! Don't be ashamed! Be bold and courageous! Be full of faith, zeal, and enthusiasm! Don't let anyone slow you down! You have nothing to lose, and everything to gain! Live for God with all your might, seize every moment, and you will be amazed at the greater doors that await your passage!

### ***Today's Reading: Gen 48-50***

Today's Reflection: Gen 50:21 *Now therefore fear ye not: I will nourish you, and your little ones. And he comforted them, and spake kindly unto them.*

Joseph's reaction to his brethren (who had previously sold him into slavery) speaks of his willingness to forgive, as well as his spiritual maturity. It is the author's opinion that there is not a better type of Christ in the Old Testament, than what is found in Joseph! Was it not said even of Christ, "He came unto his own, and his own received him not." (Jn 1:11)? Yet, the more they rejected him, the more he loved them! So it was with Joseph. Oh sure, there was pain involved, past hurts, foul memories, and scars that will always be there, yet Joseph chose not to go down the path of bitterness and revenge, but down the path of forgiveness and acceptance of God's sovereignty in it all! It should be our desire today that the Holy Spirit would give us the same kind of grace and forgiveness as was given to Joseph! Christ also said in Matt 5:44, "But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;" The thing we must realize when it comes to forgiveness is this: our greatest enemy is unforgiveness itself, not those to whom we offer no forgiveness. In the end, the one who is defeated by unforgiveness is the one who has lost the most! Do not allow your circumstances and what others have said or done to you cause you to become bitter; allow them to make you stronger and better! When your enemy curses, choose to bless! When they rail, choose to speak peaceably! When they afflict, choose to comfort! Romans 12:20 says, "Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head." Today, how will you choose to react to the wrongs that have come your way? Will you react with revenge, or will you react in forgiveness? My prayer for all of us is that it shall be the latter!

## Day 30

### *Today's Reading: Exodus 1-3*

Today's Reflections: Ex 1:1-12

As we read our text, we notice that the one-time friends of Israel (the Egyptians) had turned into their enemies because they feared that the Israelites (who were growing in number, in leaps and bounds) would eventually turn against them in time of war. But the interesting thing here is how that in time of increased affliction, Israel continued to multiply and grow. So here, in time of increased affliction, in time of what seemed to be darkness, we find growth: growth of a nation, growth of families, growth of intimacy between husbands and wives. There is something about afflictions, or hard times, that have the potential of creating growth in all of these areas, and potentially others as well. Although affliction is never fun to go through, it is during these times that we can see real development, even in our own spiritual lives. We need to cry out to God for help in our times of trouble, and trust Him to come through for us. He did so for Israel, He has done so for me many times, and He will do so for YOU!

Ex 1:13-22 encourages us even more to do the will of God, even when it goes against the grain. These midwives feared God more than Pharaoh and his Egyptian government. Even though they knew that it could cost them their own lives, they still chose to do what was right. A true measure of our own standards is this... Would you be willing to die for what you stand for? You see, not only should you be willing to die for God's Word and its principles, but when it comes to your own preferences, your own convictions, or your own traditions, this would help you decide what is truly Biblically based in your own thinking. It's time that we have some gumption about ourselves, and stand for the Lord and His Word, fearing God (not man) along the way, just as these midwives did.

~Chris Caudill, guest author

### ***Today's Reading: Exodus 4-6***

Today's Reflections: Exo 6:9 *And Moses spake so unto the children of Israel: but they hearkened not unto Moses for anguish of spirit, and for cruel bondage.*

If we're not careful, we can get so entrenched in our problems that we fail to remember that there is still hope of deliverance! If so allowed, two things can determine whether or not we will listen to and believe the voice of Hope: the condition of our spirit, and the condition of our circumstances. Anguish of spirit and cruel bondage had gotten the best of God's people! They could not even recognize real hope staring them in the face! Have you ever been around anybody so negative about their circumstances and surroundings that no matter what was said, they always went right back to their old story of gloom? Child of God, depression will eat your lunch IF you let it! However, we who are saved are indwelled by the Holy Spirit of God. Greater is He who is in us, than he who is in the world (1 Jn 4:4)! Our hope is in the fact that Christ is in us (Col 1:27)! I'm certainly not saying that the children of Israel were living on easy street (and neither are we), but I will say that today's Christian has an advantage that they did not have in Moses' day! We have the very power of God IN us! That's why even Jesus said that we shall do greater works than he himself after his ascension to the Father (Joh 14:12), because only then could he through the person of the Holy Spirit indwell us, working in and through us the mighty works of God! Is your spirit in anguish today? Do you feel as if you are in cruel bondage with circumstances beyond your control? Do not let them have the last word! Look at your challenges not as final verdicts, but as temporary setbacks that make you stronger for better days ahead! Care not if your circumstances appear to be in direct contradiction to what God has spoken! One or the other MUST give, and I can promise it won't be God! Faith in His Word SHALL remove mountains! Today, I choose to believe God's Word over the words spoken by a defeated spirit shaped by impossible situations.

## Day 32

### *Today's Reading: Exodus 7-9*

Today's Reflections: Ex 8:23 *And I will put a division between my people and thy people: tomorrow shall this sign be.*

Amazing as it may seem, God puts His people in a class all their own! Thank God we're not second-rate citizens, but we're children of the Most High God! Know assuredly that He's got your back! Even as the Psalmist said, "A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee." It is a wonderful thing to know that you're living under the Almighty's protective custody! If you do not know Him, you too can learn to live in His presence, by first trusting in His Son, Jesus Christ!

**Psa 91:1** He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.

**2** I will say of the LORD, *He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust.*

**3** Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, *and from the noisome pestilence.*

**4** He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust: his truth *shall be thy shield and buckler.*

**5** Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; *nor for the arrow that flieth by day;*

**6** *Nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness; nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday.*

**7** A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; *but it shall not come nigh thee.*

## *Today's Reading: Exodus 10-12*

Today's Reflections: Ex 10:21 *And the LORD said unto Moses, Stretch out thine hand toward heaven, that there may be darkness over the land of Egypt, even darkness which may be felt.*

When darkness creeps in around you, you can feel it! Hopelessness, despair and depression all kick in when darkness is prominent. May I suggest that what we “feel” in the dark hours of our lives is False Evidence Appearing Real (F.E.A.R.)? Child of God, when you feel the darkness all around you, only put your trust in Jesus Christ, and His glorious light from Heaven will invade your darkness! God did not leave us in the dark, but He gave us His Word! Get into the Word today to dissipate the darkness in YOUR life!

**Isa 9:2** The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined.

**Mat 4:16** The people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up.

**2Co 4:6** For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to *give* the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

**Joh 3:18** He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

**19** And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.

**20** For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd.

**21** But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.

## Day 34

### *Today's Reading: Exodus 13-15*

Today's Reflections: Ex 14:31a *And Israel saw that great work which the LORD did...*

Oh to see a GREAT work in our generation! History tells us of His many great works of the past, but I yearn to see Him in all of His splendor in MY day! I'm not satisfied just knowing that my ancestors saw great and mighty works of the Lord, because I need Him today! Don't get me wrong, I am very grateful for what He has done because that's what has brought us what we have today. Yet yesterday's awakenings will not suffice for today's sleeping church! Oh Lord, wilt thou not revive us again? Dear reader, pray and believe God with me that He will do great wonders in our generation, the likes of which have never been witnessed before! Does scripture not say that the Lord will do a new thing in the earth? Let's seek, ask, and knock on Heaven's door until our Lord opens up the floodgates of Heaven and pours out His Spirit upon all flesh, and sends times of refreshing through His fount of many blessings flowing from Emmanuel's veins! Without Him, we are nothing! In Him is LIFE, and that more abundantly! Let us endeavor to be satisfied with nothing less than those cool refreshing waters flowing from the throne of God, delivered by His Spirit, and reserved in His Word for whosoever will!

**Psa 44:1** We have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us, *what* work thou didst in their days, in the times of old.

**Psa 85:6** Wilt thou not revive us again: that thy people may rejoice in thee?

**Act 3:19** Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord;

## *Today's Reading: Exodus 16-18*

Today's Reflections: Ex 16:20 *Notwithstanding they hearkened not unto Moses; but some of them left of it until the morning, and it bred worms, and stank: and Moses was wroth with them.*

“I told you so!” These are the words that I would have wanted to say if I were Moses! It never ceases to amaze me at the number of people who totally ignore the godly advice and counsel of the man of God, only to their own demise! When God puts one of His men in our lives to give us wisdom and direction, it would serve us well to listen with heart-felt consideration! God will honor those who honor him with their lives! So, honor God, and honor His servants!

**Pro 29:1** He, that being often reprov'd hardeneth *his* neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.

**Pro 11:14** Where no counsel *is*, the people fall: but in the multitude of counsellors *there is* safety.

**Eph 4:11** And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;

**12** For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:

**13** Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:

**14** That we *henceforth* be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, *and* cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;

**15** But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, *even* Christ:

**16** From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.

## Day 36

### *Today's Reading: Exodus 19-21*

Today's Reflections: Exodus 20:21 *And the people stood afar off, and Moses drew near unto the thick darkness where God was...*

In this chapter we see that God has given Israel the Ten Commandments and has shown them pictures of His judgment (v. 18-thunderings, lightings, smoke, noise). It is at this time that the people stand afar off from the presence of God. In v. 21 we find Moses gets near to the place where God was but the rest of the people stay afar off. This people have been brought out of Egypt and crossed over the Red Sea, so they have experienced God's grace towards them, yet they stand afar off. He has already provided many miracles since they have been in the wilderness, yet they stand afar off. He has given them the commandments so that they would "sin not," yet they stand afar off. I find today that many people are standing "afar off" from God. Though He has saved their soul, though He has loved and cared for them, though He has never forsaken them, they stand afar off. While Moses took the opportunity to get as close to God as he could, they stood afar off. Thank God for Moses and him drawing near to God. May you decide on this day that you will not stand away from God in your spiritual contentment, but that you will boldly step toward the presence of God. Take the first step, and then it will get easier. Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you. Do not continue to stand "afar off!" Draw near to where God is!

~David Harrell, guest author

**Heb 10:22** Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.

**Heb 4:16** Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

## ***Today's Reading: Exodus 22-24***

Today's Reflections: Ex 23:30 *By little and little I will drive them out from before thee, until thou be increased, and inherit the land.*

Has the Lord given you a vision greater and bigger than yourself? Is not this His way of doing things? To call us to a place higher than we are! I dare say that if the task you are attempting to accomplish is easily manageable within your own means, then your task is not Heavenly inspired! When God calls us into Canaan land, He is calling us into a place that is virtually unattainable without His aid! Do not be surprised when God asks you to do something that is beyond you! When He does the impossible in our lives, this is His way of guaranteeing that His name is high and lifted up! How is God going to accomplish the impossible in our lives? Our text sheds light on His methods when it says, "By little and little..."! Friend, do not underestimate the "small" stuff going on in your journey with the Lord! Each step in and of itself seems so small and insignificant in the grand scheme of things, but one day, if we continue to walk "by little and little" with the Lord, we'll look back at the great distance we've journeyed, and then we'll realize that God did the impossible in our lives! It wasn't a new-found zeal for prayer that Daniel obtained AFTER he was thrust into the lion's den that saved him, but it was his day-by-day, consistent, "by little and little" prayer life he had BEFORE his lion's den experience that shut the mouths of those hungry lions! It wasn't a fly-by-night, non-committed individual whom God used to turn the world upside down, but it was men like Paul, Peter, James and John, who were all committed, faithful, and consistent in their journey and devotion to their Savior, and who crossed over barriers of various sorts "by little and little" UNTIL the entire world was touched by the Gospel of Jesus Christ! In like manner, we the people of God, with the help of the Lord, shall overcome any and every obstacle in our way, one day at a time, one step at a time, one mountain at a time, one valley at a time, "by little and little", UNTIL God gives the increase!

## Day 38

### *Today's Reading: Exodus 25-27*

Today's Reflections: Ex 25:31, Ex 27:20

Both the candlestick and its oil are “beaten” works. It’s an amazing observation to note that light is manifested here only after a process of beating has occurred. This word “beaten” in our text comes from the Hebrew word “nâkâh”, which means “to strike”. This Hebrew word is used again in Zec 13:7, interpreted “smite”, which is quoted by our Lord in Mar 14:27; “And Jesus saith unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered.” What a beautiful type and picture of the “beaten” work which took place there on Calvary some 2,000 years ago! I am awe-stricken that my Great Shepherd was beaten on my behalf, so that His glorious light could invade my lost dark soul, and illuminate my life with the hope of eternal life, bought and paid for by His own precious blood! Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted (Isa 53:4). But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed (Isa 53:5). Oh, what a Savior He is! Though they crucified our Lord, and placed Him in a borrowed tomb, yet on the third day He arose with healing in His wings (see Mal 4:2)! Today, the death, burial, and resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ IS the light which shines into the darkness of an otherwise hopeless world (see John 1:5)! It was pictured in our text, personified by our Lord, and proven with many infallible proofs (Acts 1:3)! Dear reader, if you find yourself in utter darkness, lost without the hope of Christ, will you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ for your salvation (see Acts 16:31)? I trust that you will, for you will never regret it!

**Joh 3:16** For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

### ***Today's Reading: Exodus 28-29***

Today's Reflections: Ex 29:21 *And thou shalt take of the blood that is upon the altar, and of the anointing oil, and sprinkle it upon Aaron, and upon his garments, and upon his sons, and upon the garments of his sons with him: and he shall be hallowed, and his garments, and his sons, and his sons' garments with him.*

Here, we shall liken the priest to what we know today as a pastor or preacher of the Gospel. I wish to make a couple of observations. Firstly, note that what was first mentioned was the necessity of blood and anointing oil! Blood, of course, speaks of the atoning work at Calvary, and the anointing oil is symbolic of the filling of the Holy Ghost! Fellow laborers in Christ, if we are to continue in the work of the Lord with dignity, character, and effectiveness, then it is necessary for us to keep our sin account short (that is, to be quick to repent and get it under the blood), and to be filled with the Spirit of God! Secondly, note that their garments, as well as their persons, were to be sprinkled with blood! This speaks symbolically of our duty as ministers of the Gospel to ensure that we're not just cleansed inwardly, but outwardly as well! Our calling should set for us a higher standard of righteousness and holiness than that of others. We as shepherds of our flocks are to model for our sheep the kind of separation that is required in order to be fit for the Master's use, thereby pleasing our Heavenly Father! However, it seems that in our day (at least on a larger scale), it is even as it was in Ezekiel's day, who said, "[The priests] have put no difference between the holy and profane..." (see Ezekiel 22:26). It is a sad day when even the supposed ministers of the Gospel put no difference between that which is holy, and that which is sinful! God help those of us who are ministers to study and obey the Word of God, to preach what we read, and thereby practice what we preach! It DOES make a difference how we live our lives, as others are paying more attention to what we do many times than we ourselves! Let us endeavor therefore to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called (Eph 4:1)!

## Day 40

### *Today's Reading: Exodus 30-32*

Today's Reflections: Ex 32:1-2

*1 And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him.*

*2 And Aaron said unto them, Break off the golden earrings, which are in the ears of your wives, of your sons, and of your daughters, and bring them unto me.*

It's amazing how quickly Aaron was willing to cater to the crowd! Here was a man (Moses' brother of all people) who was easily led astray! Yet the crazy thing is that though he was led astray, he was under the impression that he was leading the way! If we're not careful, we can become so true to ourselves that we can then deceive ourselves! Here, Aaron, without so much as a flinch, jumped right into an opportunity to "become the leader", when in fact, because he had no self-discipline or guidance from the Spirit of God, he was actually being played like a puppet! One of his problems was that (much like the rest of the crowd) he had not developed a true personal relationship with God, as had Moses. When the man of God stepped off the scene, things went haywire! It was as if he couldn't do anything right without the presence of his godly brother. Friends, don't wait until you see what everybody else is going to do before you make a choice; rather, get plugged into God, and be and do only what you know would be pleasing to the Lord! Get your own walk with God, and you won't be distracted by the absence of someone else's! Start your journey at Calvary, and go from there!

**Gen 5:24** And Enoch walked with God: and he *was* not; for God took him.

### *Today's Reading: Exodus 33-35*

Today's Reflections: Exodus 33:14-15 *And he said, My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest. And he said unto him, If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence.*

There is a phrase in the Bible that always brings a reverence or awe to me; it is the phrase “the presence of the Lord.” This phrase is always connected to the doctrine and practice of worship and praise. If there is one thing that we need in our lives, it is the presence of the Lord. The presence of the Lord is the place that we so often neglect. We like to get somewhat around the outside corridors of His presence, but we lack in getting in His presence. In these verses God is promising Moses that He will go with Moses, and that His presence will be present. What a great peace to know that where God directs, His presence follows. Pastors or laymen, people may not always follow you in the direction that God directs, but rest assured that His presence will! I like the cry of Moses when he declares that if God's presence doesn't go, then he doesn't want to go either. We should live our daily life like this: to wake up and say, I want your presence in my life, and if your presence isn't going to go, then I don't want to go either. How long has it been since you felt His presence? Did He lead you to where you are today? If so, then His presence is there with you. What a comfort for the child of God who follows the Lord's direction.

~David Harrell, guest author

**Psa 95:2** Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms.

**Psa 100:2** Serve the LORD with gladness: come before his presence with singing.

**1Co 1:29** That no flesh should glory in his presence.

## Day 42

### *Today's Reading: Exodus 36-38*

Today's Reflections: Ex 36:2 *And Moses called Bezaleel and Aholiab, and every wise hearted man, in whose heart the LORD had put wisdom, even every one whose heart stirred him up to come unto the work to do it:*

Perhaps this is one of the best “snapshots” of what revival really looks like! It is an amazing thing to watch the Lord put wisdom in someone, and to see their heart stir them up to do the work of God! Notice the sequential order of events; first the wisdom, then the stirring up! No wonder God said, “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge...(Hos 4:6)” Without God’s wisdom, insight, and perspective, we would have no reason to “stir up the gift of God” which is in us (see 2 Tim 1:6)! First, because we wouldn’t know where to start; and second, even if we did, we’d lose heart very quickly after attempting to live this life from an earthly point of view! However, when God imparts unto us a Heavenly wisdom which gives us a Heavenly point of view, then all of the sudden we view life from God’s perspective, and as a result learn to live the life of an over comer! When this happens, you will change your vocabulary from “I can’t” to “I can do ALL things through Christ who strengthens me (see Php 4:13)!” From “It’s impossible” to “With God, ALL things are possible (see Matt 19:26)!” From “I’m just a bearer of bad luck” to “No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly (see Psa 84:11)!” You see, God knows the end from the beginning (Isa 46:10), so when we would have thought it to be over, God saw the breakthrough just around the bend! When we would have fainted, He helped us to strengthened our hands for this good work (Neh 2:18)! When we were too sick to stand, He sent his word, and healed us, and delivered us from our destructions (see Psa 107:20)! The fact is, when it’s the Lord imparting the wisdom, then it’s also the Lord stirring us up to serve Him with a revived heart, with a sure word, and with fresh revelation!

## *Today's Reading: Exodus 39-40*

Today's Reflections: Ex 39:32 *Thus was all the work of the tabernacle of the tent of the congregation finished: and the children of Israel did according to all that the LORD commanded Moses, so did they.*

It's refreshing to see a finished work, is it not? Anyone can start something, but it's the finishers whose accomplishments are worthy of notice! It ought to be each of our prayers to be able to say even as Paul, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith!" (2 Tim 4:7). Nothing is more tragic than to witness one who started off well, but did not finish. Paul wrote to the Galatians, "Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth?" (Gal 5:7). Joseph said to his brothers, "See that ye fall not out by the way." (Gen 45:24). Much is said in the scriptures about finishing, as we can already tell! Luke 14:28 says, "For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it?" We would be wise to revive this principle of commitment in a world that seems to know little of it! However, I will say that even when we're unfaithful, yet our Heavenly Father abideth faithful (see 2 Ti 2:13)! When my best-made plans seem to be inconsistent at best, I find a calm assurance that my Lord will still see me through! I think of the works of God, and have yet to find one that He has not finished on schedule, nor will I! Rest assured that what God starts, He finishes, and what He finishes turns out VERY good!! I now turn your thoughts to the words of Christ as He hung there on the cross to pay for the sins of the world; "It is finished!" (see John 19:30)! Glory to God, what a Savior He is! Because of the FINISHED work of Calvary, a home in Heaven and a guilt-free past can be secured by faith in Christ! And to top it all off, here's one final word of encouragement to help us in our journey until we reach our Heavenly home; "Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:" (Php 1:6)!

## Day 44

### *Today's Reading: Leviticus 1-4*

Today's Reflections: Lev 4:14 *When the sin, which they have sinned against it, is known, then the congregation shall offer a young bullock for the sin, and bring him before the tabernacle of the congregation.*

As we begin our reading through the book of Leviticus, it will be interesting to note the many sin-specific offerings that were required repetitively under the Mosaic law in order to make atonement for sins. Yet, even then, to “cover all the bases” we see an offering for sins of ignorance as well. Now, as good as that sounds, let's not forget what Heb 10:4 says; “For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins.” You see, under the law, these sacrifices were only a temporary covering of sin, not a permanent solution. Each year, the sins of that new year, as well as all years prior, were uncovered, and atonement had to be made yet again! Therefore, no matter what sin it was, whether it was willful or ignorant, they couldn't keep their sins covered. Gal 3:24-25 says, “Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster.” The truth is, the law in and of itself was not the remedy for sin, but only an introductory course to point us to an all-sufficient Saviour! Question: Were ANY of the old-testament saints JUSTIFIED by the law, or of the blood of bulls and goats? Our answer is found in Gal 3:21-22! Friends, the only way to be justified before a Holy God is to put your faith in Christ! It is HE of whom it was said, “For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.” (Heb 10:14). In other words, it always has been by faith, and it always will be by faith! The Cross takes center stage throughout all of history, as those before Christ looked FORWARD to the cross, and those after Christ look BACK to the cross! It's Christ, and Christ ALONE that saves sinners! And may I say, He does a fine job! “By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.” (Heb 10:10).

### ***Today's Reading: Leviticus 5-7***

Today's Reflections: Lev 5:16a *And he shall make amends for the harm that he hath done in the holy thing...*

It is a sad reality that much harm has been done in holy things, for which there have been no attempts to making amends. We respect the literal context of our passage; however, we shall attempt to make some spiritual applications for our generation. How many people have been “harmed” in or by or because of the ministry, and have yet to be restored? We who are supposed ministers of the Grace of God are to deal delicately with the hearts of those whom we wish to win to Christ! Too many times I have regrettably been guilty of, and have witnessed others guilty of harming someone rather than helping them get to Christ. Furthermore, it is most unfortunate that when we realize our wrongs, we are often unwilling to make amends. We are often too proud to admit we were wrong. And sadly, the damage has been done. Hearts and minds have been forever tainted by well-intended, yet ill-willed and unskilled ministers of the Gospel of Christ. God, have mercy on us for the times we have so foolishly and so carelessly mishandled ourselves in dealings with the lives and souls of men! God, help us to be Spirit-filled and well-skilled in the Word, so as to be tender and sensitive to the spiritual needs of others, rather than being blinded by our own preconceived notions, convinced by our stereotypical ideology, and guided by law-like religious tendencies which breed only condemnation and spiritual death! If we have wronged someone in holy things, let's make amends! If we were wrong, let us immediately admit it before God and our wronged brother, lest we be the fool we have accused them of being! Let's swallow our pride, and lead in the ways of humility and meekness by submitting ourselves to be the servants to those whom we thought ourselves to be lords over! “God, forgive us our arrogance, and help us to be ministers of Grace, guided by the Spirit, and filled with the Love of Christ for lost humanity!”

## Day 46

### *Today's Reading: Leviticus 8-10*

Today's Reflections: Leviticus 8:12 *And he poured of the anointing oil upon Aaron's head, and anointed him, to sanctify him.*

God anoints His servants for a specific task He has assigned to them. In Aaron's case, he was to be the high priest. What is the case in your life? Has God called you to a task that is humanly impossible? Then seek His anointing at once and He shall fill you to overflowing, thereby supplying you with the wisdom and power you need to do His will! We as Christians **MUST** seek His anointing if we are to be as effective as God intends for us to be in reaching others with the good news of Jesus Christ! Do not think that the anointing is limited to a select few; rather, the anointing is the act of being filled to overflowing with the Holy Ghost. Then God's Spirit can work through you to effectively reach those around you who have yet to trust Christ, and to bless and encourage those who have! It makes no difference whether you're a pastor, Sunday school teacher, or layperson in the church...you need God's power as provided by the anointing in order to be what God has specifically called you to be and to do what God has specifically called you to do! Again, the Spirit-filled life is for **EVERY** believer! Jesus said, "Without me, ye can do nothing!" (John 15:5). It is safe then to conclude that we need **HIS** power to perform the assignment He has for us, and that comes only with the anointing. The challenging part for many Christians is that they may be unwilling to allow God to "set them apart" for His use! It's easy to get caught up in our own plans, dreams and ambitions! "God, help us all today to be willing to be set aside, specifically for **YOUR** use in **YOUR** glorious kingdom!"

**Eph 5:18** And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit;

**19** Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord;

## *Today's Reading: Leviticus 11-13*

Today's Reflections: 13:3b *"...and the plague in sight be deeper than the skin of his flesh..."*

Mankind was born with a problem that goes much deeper than what meets the eye (Ps 51:5)! Just as leprosy was a dreaded disease which brought with it nothing short of a death sentence, even so we, in our sins, without Christ, were given the death sentence. This death sentence began in Gen 3:3 when God told Adam and Eve, "But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die." After they sinned, this same death sentence was then passed down to every generation, to include every man, woman, boy, and girl that has ever lived or ever will live, other than the God-man, Christ Jesus the Lord! Rom 5:12 says, "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:" What a tragic truth! I remember the day that I was found guilty before a Holy God, hopeless, helpless, and bound for Hell! However, there is good news! Rom 5:20b says, "But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound;" Rom 5:8 says, "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." When for the first time in my life I realized that I was lost without Christ and headed for a devil's Hell, THEN, for the first time in my life, I also heard the voice of my Savior, who told me in the middle of my despair and helpless estate, "You're Special!" Anyone who would lay down His life willingly for a sinner such as I surely saw more value in me that what I ever realized was there! He did not see me that day for who I was, but He saw me for who He could make me to become! Friend, if you do not know Him, will you turn from your sins to Him by faith today? If you will be saved, then He will surely save you!

**Eph 2:13** But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.

## Day 48

### *Today's Reading: Leviticus 14-15*

Today's Reflections: Lev 15:25b *...all the days of the issue of her uncleanness shall be as the days of her separation: she shall be unclean.*

We all have issues, don't we? There are things in each of our hearts that, if we do not seek the Lord to help us get a grip on, shall get a grip on us! And as long as we have our issues, as long as we allow them to follow us around and influence our attitudes, our ways of thinking, and our actions, they will always continue slowly but surely to drain the life out of us!

Consider the woman with the issue of blood found in Mark 5:25-34. She had a serious issue for 12 long, hard years, which had totally consumed her life with uncleanness and separation from those she loved dearly.

The harder she tried, the worse it got! As a matter of fact, the text says that she "suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse". Even those she sought help from only caused her more suffering and loss. She had come to the end of her rope. Her whole life was wrapped up with her issue, and she was powerless to do anything about it. What is your issue today? Has it drained your life of everything and everyone precious to you? It could be a bad habit, an addiction, or worse, a root of bitterness in your heart. Regardless of what your issue is, regardless of how long it has been there, and regardless of what it's taken you through up to this point, you CAN get the bleeding to stop! My advice to you is to press through the crowd, press through the pain, press through the hurt, press through the memories, press through the past, press through this valley of death you are in, and reach out and touch Jesus! One touch is all you need! When you have a GOD-SIZED issue, then you MUST "press the issue" with HIM! When this happens, you shall find help in your time of trouble! Jesus will look beyond the fault to see and meet the needs in your life, if you'll reach out and touch Him by faith today!

## ***Today's Reading: Leviticus 16-18***

Today's Reflections: Lev 16:21-22 *And Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness: And the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities unto a land not inhabited: and he shall let go the goat in the wilderness.*

We must be spiritually fit to be able to thoroughly let go of our past! Have you ever noticed that even though the only one that really matters (God) has forgiven us, and also chosen not to remember our sins against us any more, still, even then, it can be difficult for us to learn to walk away from the bondage and guilt of past sins and mistakes! God instructed Israel to send the scapegoat away by the hand of a fit man for a reason! Just as that scapegoat would have been too stubborn and hard-headed to just walk away on his own, even so, memories of our past, if we allow them, will be too stubborn to acknowledge our new status of "saved and forgiven" in Christ! Our memories do not work alone; rest assured that others will come to assist, such as the devil, friends, family, co-workers, and even the brethren! However, 1 Jn 3:20a says, "For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart..." As hard as we are on ourselves for past sins and mistakes, we must learn that it's OK to just let it go! Vs. 22b "...and he shall let go the goat..."! Friend, if you've been washed in His blood, you have not only His permission, but His command to let it go! How can you get spiritually fit enough to do this? 1 Jn 3 goes on to say in vs. 21, "Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God." Simply put, we must exercise our faith in Christ to get to this point! Do not follow your heart into self-pity and condemnation, but lead your heart into the loving, forgiving, compassionate arms of a gracious and forgiving God! He "let it go" at Calvary, and so should you!

## Day 50

### *Today's Reading: Leviticus 19-21*

Today's Reflections: Lev 21:4 *But he shall not defile himself, being a chief man among his people, to profane himself.*

Here being addressed in our text are the sons of Aaron the high priest. Young ministers growing up to be the next generation of priests, they are given a heavy warning against the dangers of losing their sexual purity. They were not to be “defiled”! Even as our Lord expects ALL of His children to walk in purity, it is especially true of His men! “Being a chief” among our people, we as ministers of the Gospel (especially those of us who are younger both in age and in the work) are to keep our guards up at all times, lest we give an occasion to the flesh. Young ministers, Satan shall attempt to lure you with the best bait he has...do not fall for his lies! Serve God, give Him your life, and walk in purity, and Christ shall crown your ministry with favor and anointing! Do not forfeit God's best for your life for just one “occasion”. “This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.” (Gal 5:16). It is sad but true that we have an epidemic in our culture of men in the ministry caving in to the lusts of the flesh, whether it is an extra-marital affair, pornography, or worse. Dear reader, do not let that be you! Do not become another statistic! Stay close to the heart of God, and if you're married, stay close to the heart of your loving spouse, and pray daily for the strength and grace of God to maintain your integrity in the ministry. Too many lives are at stake for us to become careless and foolish in our decisions, thereby yielding to uncontrolled appetites. When we're filled with HIS spirit, there is no room for self to take the reins. Let us endeavor from now 'till Jesus comes or takes us home that we shall remain loyal to Him in all that we do, both in word, and in deed! We need some men of integrity who shall be unselfish, loyal, truthful, honest, pure, holy, upright, loving, caring, faithful, and filled with the Holy Ghost!

### ***Today's Reading: Leviticus 22-23***

Today's Reflections: Lev 22:24 *Ye shall not offer unto the LORD that which is bruised, or crushed, or broken, or cut; neither shall ye make any offering thereof in your land.*

God deserves more than our leftovers! He gave us His best; why not do the same for Him? "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." Rom 12:1. "For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." 1 Co 6:20. Although we could never repay our Lord for all He's done for us, we still ought to give Him our very best! A man's gift before the Lord should reflect his level of appreciation and admiration for Him. If we were to use what we are willing to give our Lord as a measuring device to determine our love for Him, sometimes the readings would be very low! Sometimes I wonder if, after my half-hearted, feeble attempts to express my love for Christ, He in turn would be thinking, "You mean after all I've done for you, that's all you have? That's all you can do for me?? That's it???" Sometimes I'm ashamed and embarrassed at myself for my level of inadequacy in this area of my life. Yet, I shall not despair. I shall continue to seek ways in which to more successfully, more meaningfully, more whole-heartedly and more thoroughly give my all to Him. After what He's done for me, it's the very least I can do for Him! The best we can do is the best we can do! So be it! Let's make much of Jesus, because with His own blood He has made much of us! Let's worship Him in Spirit and in truth! Let's say even as Paul, "I am not ashamed!" We may not have much to offer Him today, but that shouldn't stop us from giving Him the very best of what little we do have! Let's show out for Jesus from this day forward, how about it?

## Day 52

### *Today's Reading: Leviticus 24-25*

Today's Reflection: Leviticus 24:1-2 *And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Command the children of Israel, that they bring unto thee pure oil olive beaten for the light, to cause the lamps to burn continually.*

You've heard the expression, "Never a dull moment!" but what about this, "Never a DIM moment!" There are times in this Christian journey that we as the people of God get weary in the work. Do not be alarmed, for this is a necessary process to go through. Life is full of seasons, some good, and some to the contrary, but all to the glory of God! We cannot expect to reap a harvest without first shedding blood, sweat and tears. The agonies of labor are rewarded with the joys of harvest! The pains of travail are crowned with newness of life! The sorrows of yesteryear grow dim in light of the hope that is set before us! Great loss is often followed by great gain--just ask Job! Years of exile can be turned into years of honor-- just ask Moses! Years of rejection and imprisonment can be turned into years of great purpose, favor, and blessings--just ask Joseph! The barren can give birth--just ask Sarah! The harlot can be forgiven--just ask Rahab! Your past can be put to rest--just ask the woman who met Jesus at the well! The sick can be healed--just ask the woman who reached out and touched the hem of His garment! The blind can see--just ask Bartimaeus! The dead can live again--just ask Lazarus! The alcoholic can get delivered! The drug addict can be changed! The broken heart can be mended! The busted up family can be restored! The marriage can be salvaged! The church can be revived! America can be restored! Weeping may endure for a night, but Joy cometh in the morning (Psalm 30:5)! Some of you are on the verge of your harvest! Your season is due! You've paid your dues in sorrow, pain, and heartache, but as the song writer once said, "Press on, it won't be very long!" Our text admonishes us to "cause the lamps to burn continually!" One day, may it be said of each of us that there was "Never a DIM moment!"

***Today's Reading: Leviticus 26-27***

Today's Reflection: Leviticus 26:3-4 *If ye walk in my statutes, and keep my commandments, and do them; Then I will give you rain in due season...*

There's nothing like a cool, refreshing rain on a hot summer day to end a long, hard season of drought! Rejoicing is in the air! Hope of a harvest at last is come! People dance in the streets! There is shouting! There is celebration! THERE IS RAIN! How long, oh weary soul, will you pretend that your drought is preferred over God's divine purpose for your existence? If you were honest with yourself, you would admit that your soul is parched and dry! Hast thou naught to draw? Is the well too deep? Cast thy cares on Christ, and He'll draw for thee! As if God's MERCY (keeping us from the sentence of death which we rightfully deserve) isn't good enough, He also gives us GRACE (giving us that which we do not deserve)! He gives us an incentive program. If we walk in His statutes, and keep His commandments, and do them, He will, in essence, open the floodgates of Heaven upon us! We will ALWAYS have rain in due season...just when the time is right! The favor of the Lord can be upon us so richly, that we should NEVER experience leanness in the soul again! How foolish we as a nation have been to walk away from the Divine nail-scarred hands that have provided for us! Our leaf is withering, our flower is vanishing away, and our glory is fading, but oh for a fresh rain from Heaven! It seems as if the earth is brass beneath our feet, and the heavens are as iron. Yet, there is hope! God says that if we will confess and forsake our sins, and walk in His ways again, that He will remember His covenant! The same God that made this nation great is the same God that can restore the foundations thereof! Let this be our prayer today, "Lord, forgive us our iniquities as we turn away from our sins and turn back to thee! Lord, send the rain!"

## Day 54

### *Today's Reading: Numbers 1-2*

Today's Reflection: Num 1:5a *And these are the names of the men that shall stand with you..... Num 1:16 These were the renowned of the congregation, princes of the tribes of their fathers, heads of thousands in Israel.*

A leader, by definition, has followers! But, we must take it a step further; leaders must have leading followers! Too many times we as leaders in the ministry take too much upon ourselves. A point should be made here: As great a leader as Moses was, he did not go it alone, nor could he! Moses did not single-handedly lead God's people out of Egyptian slavery. He had help! Of course, we know that his most important helper was God, but I wish to point out that he had appointed leaders who helped in the ministry. Ex 18:13-26 tells us of a time even in Moses' ministry that he took too much upon himself! I encourage you to read it, but here's the gist; Moses sat all day as people literally stood in line for hours to speak with him about different matters. His father-in-law said to him, "What is this thing that thou doest to the people?...The thing that thou doest is not good. Thou wilt surely wear away, both thou, and this people that is with thee: for this thing is too heavy for thee; thou art not able to perform it thyself alone." Moses thought he was being super-spiritual, but what he didn't realize is that he was wearing himself away, along with the people he thought he was helping! When we as leaders try to do it all ourselves, we end up being inadequate, insufficient, and more harmful than helpful to those around us! If you are a leader in the ministry, here's some advice: If you can't do it, don't do it! If we take the time to develop leaders, loving, encouraging and enabling them to grow in their walk with God, we shall develop people who involve not only their hands, their energy, their time and their resources, but who'll involve their hearts! If their heart is not with you, their hands soon won't be! "God, grant us the patience and strength to focus on the process instead of the end-results!"

## *Today's Reading: Numbers 3-4*

Today's Reflection: Num 3:10a *And thou shalt appoint Aaron and his sons, and they shall wait on their priest's office...*

The word wait here comes from the Hebrew word *shamar*, which means to hedge about (as with thorns), that is, guard; generally to protect, attend to, etc. It is one thing to just sit idly by and watch the time go by, waiting for your turn at the ministry. It is yet another thing to actively protect and secure your turn with careful caution and diligent observation. You may think that it is taking an eternity for you to arrive at your desired destination in the calling God has for you, but allow me, with the aid of the scriptures, to remind you that there is plenty to do in the areas of preparation and preservation. One who is well-prepared is well-equipped, while one who is ill-prepared is ill-equipped! Never underestimate the power of preparation! Every step taken to be better prepared will more securely ensure success in the days to come! Even our Lord waited until He was 30 years old before beginning the thrust of His earthly ministry. Do not become anxious and restless in your spirit when it comes to a place to serve, for your day will come! I once heard it said, "It's better to want something you don't have, than to have something you don't want!" Too many have entered into positions of service prematurely, only to find that they were not ready. Young person, do thy diligence to protect, to guard, and to preserve that special place God has for you in future ministry! If you become weary in the wait, it would be easy to let your guard down and thus miss your opportunity to serve to the capacity that God intended! Many just throw their lives away for a few moments of pleasure, only to wake up with ruin and regret. Do not forfeit God's best for you! Protect it! Build up a hedge around it! Tend to it! Watch and wait patiently for it! If you do, then in due time you will be prepared to step into the place God has for you, just at the right place and the right time in your life! Let me tell you, it is worth every minute of the wait!

## Day 56

### *Today's Reading: Numbers 5-6*

Today's Reflection: Num 6:12 *And he shall consecrate unto the LORD the days of his separation, and shall bring a lamb of the first year for a trespass offering: but the days that were before shall be lost, because his separation was defiled.*

One moment in sin can destroy the testimony of a lifetime! It is sad but true that regardless of men's accomplishments and achievements, they are all too often remembered, not for their nobility, but for their shame! Although it is virtually impossible for us to achieve sinless perfection this side of Heaven, may it be our desire that we keep our bodies under subjection to the will of God, so that at the very least we shall minimize the damage that is caused by our carnal man! A man who yields no control to the Spirit of God in order to rule his flesh is also a man who will always take one step forward and two steps back in his feeble attempts to walk with the Lord. I think of all the wasted years, all the mistakes, all the blunders of the past, and I am ashamed to think of how much further I would be in my walk with the Lord had I not been so prone to wander! When we fail the test, we must start back at ground zero, and do it all over again! Let us determine today that we won't be caught in a vicious spiritual cycle of failure, but that we shall pass the test this time so we can get our spiritual promotion to move to the next level! It ought to be our goal to determine with the help of the Lord to experience no more spiritual set-backs because of careless, selfish sinful behavior! On that great and noble day when we stand before our Lord, instead of hearing "Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth?", I want to hear "Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord."

What about you?

## *Today's Reading: Numbers 7*

Today's Reflection: Numbers 7:9 *But unto the sons of Kohath he gave none: because the service of the sanctuary belonging unto them was that they should bear upon their shoulders.*

Somebody MUST bear the burdens! "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ." Gal 6:2. The sons of Kohath were ordained for this very purpose. Wouldn't it be safe to say that our Lord still appoints "sons of Kohath" for His work today? Bearing burdens is not an easy task if you do it in your own strength. As a matter of fact, many today shun from this task, looking not for an opportunity to serve "behind the scenes", but only for those positions where they can "make a scene"! Some are just not happy unless they are seen! Some need the spotlight. Some need the attention. Some need to shine, or so they think! However, in God's kingdom, here's how it works: The first shall be last, and the last shall be first (Mat 19:30)! Not every burden-bearer can become a Moses, but every Moses must first become a burden-bearer! Forty years on the back side of the desert bearing the burdens of tending sheep is on Moses' record! Before you think it's easy to be a Moses, consider his history! Matthew 23:12 says, "And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted." The truth is that God is not looking to use self-promoters! God is looking for that one who is willing to lose his or her "self" in Him; someone who is not looking for recognition, authority, or fame, but someone who simply wants to help bear the load to get the job done! It is not always easy to bear burdens, but remember the words of our Lord Jesus, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." Matt 11:29-30. If we'll yoke up with Jesus, His strength will carry us through any burden, no matter how heavy it may be!

## Day 58

### *Today's Reading: Numbers 8-10*

Today's Reflection: Numbers 9:23 *At the commandment of the LORD they rested in the tents, and at the commandment of the LORD they journeyed: they kept the charge of the LORD, at the commandment of the LORD by the hand of Moses.*

We as Christians are to take our Q's from the Holy Ghost! I once heard it said that we are to find out where God is moving, and jump aboard. As long as the cloud tarried upon the tabernacle, the children of Israel stayed put. They waited until the Lord was finished in one area before they moved to the next. It would do us good to learn some lessons from this. I've known some who, in a spirit of anxiety, could not learn to settle down in any one spot, regardless of whether or not the Lord was manifesting Himself in that place. Do not let restlessness and anxiety drive you, but allow the Holy Spirit be your guide! If God is moving where you are currently serving, then stay put until such a time as it is evident that He's through manifesting Himself to you in that place! Now here's the tricky part: For the New Testament church, many times God may not be through working in a particular ministry, but He may just be through with you in that location! He may have some place else to take you. If you seek His face, stay in the Word of God, and don't allow sin to muddy the waters, you should be able to determine whether or not God is manifesting Himself to you in your current location of service. Therefore, it is just as important to make sure you don't stay past your appointed time, as it is that you do not leave before your appointed time is up! Perhaps you're in a place of ministry where you're no longer effective. If that is the case, could it be that the Lord has dried up your brook to get you to looking elsewhere for water? "Whether it were two days, or a month, or a year..", make sure that your decision to either stay or go is based solely upon the Lord's leading, and not upon sentimental ties, family bonds, emotional attachments, men's expectations, or traditional opinions. Follow the Lord, and you'll not regret it!

## *Today's Reading: Numbers 11-13*

Today's Reflection: Numbers 11:1 *And when the people complained, it displeased the LORD...*

Amazing, isn't it? After all God has brought the children of Israel through, proving His ability to provide for, to protect, and to guide them, they still complained! God help us not to do the same today! In our home, we teach our five sons that there are three "big no-no's": 1) No lying, 2) no disobeying, and 3) no bad attitudes! God here is dealing with the attitude issue! Nobody likes a whiner or a complainer! As a matter of fact, they don't even like themselves. And when we as the children of God, having been washed in His blood, secured by His Spirit, and made accepted in the beloved, begin to complain, it brings Him much displeasure. The only reason people complain is because of a lack of contentment. Our Heavenly Father wants nothing more than for us to be content with Him! "But godliness with contentment is great gain." 1 Tim 6:6. Do you want "gain" in your walk with God? Do you want growth? Then live with an attitude of gratitude, thanking God for what He has given you, instead of constantly nagging Him for what He hasn't! I find that when my children obey the rules at our home, and maintain a sweet attitude, they come a lot closer to getting what they want! The same is true of our Heavenly Father! "Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart." Psa 37:4. Friends, do not get an attitude with God. Believe Him! Trust Him! Thank Him! Love Him! Worship Him! Serve Him! Praise Him! If you do, then you'll come to a place of contentment in Christ that will prevail over any bad attitudes that were intended to rob you of God's best for your life!

**Eph 5:20** Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ;

## Day 60

### *Today's Reading: Numbers 14-15, Psalm 90*

Today's Reflection: Numbers 14:2b, 28b “...would God we had died in this wilderness!...As truly as I live, saith the LORD, as ye have spoken in mine ears, so will I do to you:”

Be careful what you ask for, because you just may get it! You get out of life what you want out of life. If you want to live for God, you shall! But, if you want to live for temporary pleasure, you shall. If you want to indulge in sinful lust, you shall. If you want to live selfishly, you shall. If you want to doubt God's Word, you shall. If you want to ignore the Holy Spirit, you shall. If you want to by-pass the cross, you shall. If you want to have it your way instead of God's way, you shall. If you want to live a Christ-less existence, you shall. But remember this one thing, oh sinner: “Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.” Gal 6:7. Do not blame God when things go south, when all along it has been you that has set yourself up for disaster by ignoring His Word! The Word of God has been given to us as a road map with which to navigate life and to learn to live up to our fullest potential in Christ. Therefore, when we do not heed His Word, we need not be surprised when chaos becomes king of the hill! Let this be a warning to us all; trust your life WITH, and build your life UPON the Word of God, and you'll avoid the dangers associated with those who refuse to do so!

**Gal 6:7** Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.

**8** For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.

**Ecc 3:15b** ... God requireth that which is past.

### *Today's Reading: Numbers 16-17*

Today's Reflection: Num 16:7b "...ye take too much upon you, ye sons of Levi."

Perhaps there is nothing more misunderstood in ministry than the anointing of the Lord. It goes without saying that those who are anointed suffer the most from this misunderstanding! Here, a lust-filled people, desiring vain glory, accused the man of God of taking too much upon himself, as if HE was the one who set himself up to be the "prince", as they called it! They were so blinded by their own ill motives, that they soon forgot that only God could have done through the servant Moses what had been done up to this point. I have witnessed this in today's church as well. There are those who assume that their pastor is just "out for a name", when in fact all he is doing is living out his calling under the anointing of the Lord! Moses said well, "I have not taken one ass from them, neither have I hurt one of them." Too often is the case, that the very man of God sent into someone's life to be nothing but a blessing, can on the same hand be falsely accused of "taking" more than he gives. We have here a two-fold application. First, to the servants of God I write, do not be surprised when others are not excited about what God is producing through His anointing in your life! There will always be those who rise up against the man of God. However, do not let this discourage you, because God will always confirm the word of His servant (see Isa 44:26)! He has your back! He shall cover you with His wings! He shall strengthen you! He shall anoint you yet the more for your suffering! Now, secondly, to the rest I write, let this serve as a warning to anyone who would take it upon themselves to speak or act against the man of God, whoever he may be in your life! God still has a type of fire that shall manifest itself against anyone who raises themselves up against His chosen servants! Honor God, and honor His servants, and God will honor you!

## Day 62

### *Today's Reading: Numbers 18-20*

Today's Reflection: Num 20:10-12, 24

How easy it is for us as ministers to add our own personal flare and attitude in the delivery of an otherwise perfectly sound message! When you preach, is your attitude, "I'll show them!" or is it, "I'll show HIM!" You see, the Lord said, "Because ye believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them." What did Moses doubt? He doubted that God's planned delivery of the message would be sufficient! Therefore, he not only changed it, but added to it! Did the Lord command Moses to rebuke them? No, He did not! He only said to speak to the rock. However, Moses thought they needed a good, stiff rebuke! How foolish it is for us in our law-shaped frame of mind to think that our thrashings yield better results than God's Grace flowing from the rock! It was said of our Lord as He hang upon the cross, "They gave him vinegar to drink mingled with gall: and when he had tasted thereof, he would not drink." Gall being symbolic of bitterness, our Lord refused to drink of the waters of bitterness! I wish it were so of every man of God. Unfortunately, we get hurt, disappointed, let down, and downright bitter if we do not daily empty ourselves before His presence, and allow Him to replace that bitterness with His Spirit! How often have we mingled our sermons with gall, only to hurt ourselves and those closest to us? I see here that Moses was the one with the attitude, but Aaron also suffered! Our closest followers are a direct manifestation of who we are. We need to be careful what we sow, for in due season we shall reap a full harvest! "But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another." Gal 5:15. If your preaching has no Grace, do not be surprised when your followers die with a root of bitterness. May this be our prayer today as ministers of God's Grace, "Lord, help us from this day forward to be full of the Spirit of God, and therefore full of Grace!"

### *Today's Reading: Numbers 21-22*

Today's Reflection: Num 21:4b *...and the soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way.*

I wonder how different this verse would have read, had Israel completely obeyed the Lord and maintained an attitude of gratitude up to this point. People talk about how hard it is to be a Christian, yet they never know what it is to obtain favor from the Lord for making good, godly decisions on a consistent basis! Let's just face it; much of the blame for the weariness of the way rests upon our own shoulders for being hard-headed and disobedient to the Lord. We bring much sorrow upon ourselves! That's not to say that even those who honor God with their lives never have trouble, but my point here is this: We can avoid a lot of heartache by simply responding to the Word of God properly! This will not remove all trouble, but it will eliminate self-inflicted trouble, and overcome the rest! Did not our Lord say that His yoke is easy, and His burden light? Why then do we make it so hard? It's easy to be discouraged when you must reap the full consequences of your own disobedience. "Oh, it's just so hard to live for God now-a-days!"...it sure is, but only when we do not take His yoke upon us, and learn of Him! Israel should have DONE been in their promised land, but it was their own doubt that brought the burden upon them of wandering around in the wilderness for forty years! Child of God, do not take upon yourself unnecessary burdens! Forgive me, but God never intended for Israel to walk around in circles for forty years, and neither did He intend for the New Testament church to walk around in discouragement, depression and defeat all the time! Let's snap out of it, put the blame where it belongs, repent, and start enjoying the Christian journey the way God intended for us to! A verse to consider: Pro 13:15 Good understanding giveth favour: but the way of transgressors is hard.

## Day 64

### *Today's Reading: Numbers 23-25*

Today's Reflection: Num 24:9b *Blessed is he that blesseth thee, and cursed is he that curseth thee.*

We as the people of God are not just blessed, we are securely blessed! We are so blessed, that even our enemy, in attempting to curse us, shall turn around and bless us instead (see Pro 16:7)! No weapon that is formed against us shall prosper (Isa 54:17). If God be for us, who can be against us (Rom 8:31)? No one shall be able to contend with the Almighty (Job 40:2)! When God is on our side, there is nothing to fear (Psa 118:6)! We are so blessed, the devil can't do anything about it! Now, there are conditional covenants and unconditional covenants. Here, I speak of the unconditional covenant of Abraham. God made a covenant with Himself (to ensure that it could not be broken) that Abraham and his seed shall be blessed. This covenant is not solely with the house of Israel, the Jewish nation, as it pertains to flesh and blood. It extends to the church as well, which includes all those found in Christ (read Gal 3:13-16)! The question here is not, "How are the children of God behaving?", but "What has God said?" I couldn't help but notice in our reading that directly after this blessing was spoken, Israel was found worshipping false gods and committing sexual sins! Did their behavior break the covenant? No! Why? It was a covenant of Grace, guaranteed to work! However, I will go on to say that even though the unconditional covenant blessings are secure, the conditional covenant blessings are just that, conditional! So, even though we are secure in Christ as it pertains to our salvation and where we will spend eternity, yet if we want the BEST of the journey this side of Heaven, we should not only desire that eternal security in Christ provided by His unconditional covenant blessings, but we should also seek His conditional covenant blessings, learning how to make right choices and be rewarded by Him for the same! To learn more, read Deut. 28:1-14, and enjoy the journey!

### *Today's Reading: Numbers 26-27*

Today's Reflection: Numbers 26:9-10

Much can be avoided by simply reading signs! Here, God literally made an example out of those who dared to strive against Him. Even so, today we can look around us, and by process of elimination determine what TO do by simply observing what NOT to do! If you see a "sign" in your life...someone who has reaped what they have sown in sin, then take your lesson from them not to go down that road! What we do not know by personal experience we can know at the expense of someone else's experience! As a teen, the lifestyle that led to sex, drugs, and rock-n-roll never appealed to me. Why? Because of my father's past mistakes before he met Jesus! It cost him enough to tell me as a young man that I didn't want the hell and heartache associated with that kind of life. His testimony was a "sign" pointing me away from sin towards the Savior! Today, he is saved and serving God (thanks to Calvary!), and is a great role model now! However, here's my point. It would do us well to understand this simple principle: If we don't want to end up like someone else, then we do not need to behave like someone else!! On the flip side of my testimony, I've witnessed other teens who thought they could live in sin like their parents, except with a better grip on life, so as not to let it get so bad out of hand. Guess what....they were wrong! You cannot play with fire without getting burned. It's amazing if we'll just open our eyes around us today and look around at what kind of trouble we'll miss out on by simply taking mental notes of other's stupid decisions! Isn't it wonderful to know that we don't HAVE to learn everything by the school of hard knocks? As a matter of fact, it would do us all well to find a "sign" today...that one person in your life that has become the biggest loser of anyone you know personally, study their habits, and determine to NEVER do what they did to get to where they're at! Again, if you don't want to BE like them, then don't DO like them! Today, walk in wisdom. Read and heed the "signs" around you!

## Day 66

### *Today's Reading: Numbers 28-30*

Today's Reflection: Num 30:2 *If a man vow a vow unto the LORD, or swear an oath to bind his soul with a bond; he shall not break his word, he shall do according to all that proceedeth out of his mouth.*

Apparently God takes our oaths very seriously! God has never spoken an idle word. As a matter of fact, His Word always has purpose and power! He created us in His image, with the ability to speak. It should therefore go without saying that He would expect us to only speak when our speech has purpose as well! But oh to the contrary! As a thirty-one year old man, I've witnessed in my own short lifetime an alarmingly increasing amount of pointless chatter, cursing, idle words, empty promises, and lies all the way from the White House down! However, let us not forget what Christ said in Matthew 12:37, "For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned." Words are so powerful that God used them to create this universe! Likewise, our words create or destroy our future, depending upon what we speak. This is especially true in the area of keeping your word. In a generation that knows very little about the word "commitment", God still expects us to keep our word! If we make a promise, we ought to keep it! Even if men do not have the power to hold us to it, God does! If we were to be constantly reminded of the fact that God takes our words far more seriously than we do, it would definitely change our speech, and for some of us, we would never speak again! God help us to speak only that which is truthful, and only that for which we have the commitment to follow through on!

**Col 4:6** Let your speech *be* always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.

**Mat 5:37** But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.

***Today's Reading: Numbers 31-32***

Today's Reflection: Numbers 32:9, 13

We MUST dare to believe! Too many Christians spend more time avoiding labels than they do encountering God! The scriptures plainly tell us in 2 Tim 1:7, "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind." If we operate out of fear, we will soon cease to operate at all! F-E-A-R (False Evidence Appearing Real) will paralyze you as a Christian if you let it. Your enemies do not want you to succeed, and so they will use every tactic available to discourage you from believing God! Whenever it finally occurs to us that any and every obstacle standing between us and the promised land is not of God, but is of the devil, then and only then will we develop the faith and the courage it will take to cross over Jordan! However, instead of calling that obstacle what it is, an all-out attack from Satan, we spiritualize the situation and call it "a trial" sent from the Lord! I do not deny that trials come into our lives for divine purpose, but I'm afraid a lot of what we are calling trials are actually manifestations of the power of the enemy in our lives. We must recognize the enemy before we can attack him, but as long as we misdiagnose the situation, we will continue to accept defeat as "the Lord trying to teach us something", instead of doing battle against the enemy in the name of the Lord! Child of God, do not accept anything that will hinder the furtherance of the Gospel in your life! Many hindrances may in fact manifest themselves at different seasons in our lives, but that does not mean that we are just to lie down and die in our temporary set-backs and dilemmas! Faith will lead your inner man into the Promised Land way before your external man can follow! The key to realizing your Promised Land experience is in keeping the faith in spite of all the external obstacles that are in your way! Do not let your external obstacles become internal obstacles, lest they rob your faith! Dare to Believe God in spite of it all, and God will honor your faith EVERY TIME!

## Day 68

### *Today's Reading: Numbers 33-34*

Today's Reflection: 33:9 *And they removed from Marah, and came unto Elim: and in Elim were twelve fountains of water, and threescore and ten palm trees; and they pitched there.*

Oh to be in a place where there is LIFE! Out of all the places Israel migrated (and there were many), Elim was the only place given this description. However, had they been a people of obedience and faith, they would, at this point, have had places similar to this on every hand! Child of God, Canaan land is flowing with milk and honey. Why do we settle for an occasional blessing, when we can in fact LIVE in God's presence every day? Why are we selective with the moments in which we decide to be obedient and receive His anointing for the task, when we can in fact LIVE in a state of obedience and anointing? There is absolutely no substitute or no comparison for God's best in our lives; let us resolve to accept God's invitation to experience His continual favor, and NEVER settle for anything less!

**Psa 27:4** One *thing* have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to enquire in his temple.

**Isa 38:20** The LORD *was ready* to save me: therefore we will sing my songs to the stringed instruments all the days of our life in the house of the LORD.

**Psa 23:6** Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.

**Psa 92:13** Those that be planted in the house of the LORD shall flourish in the courts of our God.

### *Today's Reading: Numbers 35-36*

Today's Reflection: 35:25 *...and the congregation shall restore him to the city of his refuge, whither he was fled: and he shall abide in it unto the death of the high priest...*

The scriptures teach that he who is guilty of breaking even one of God's commandments is guilty of them all (see James 2:10). If we're guilty of them all, and the avenger of blood is after our soul, where shall we go? Allow me to tell you about a city of refuge named GRACE! The one who built this city is Jesus Christ! When the avenger of blood would have prevailed over our wicked, guilty soul to cause us to pay for those crimes which we had committed, Jesus stood between us and him, taking the death blow on our behalf, and shedding His own blood to redeem mankind! He took the very wrath of God on the cross, so as to give us GRACE! Jesus is not only the founder of GRACE, but He's the door to GRACE. If you want to benefit from GRACE, you must come through Christ! All who are outside GRACE are yet under the wrath of Almighty God. Run to His refuge, oh sinner, lest it become too late! If you will run from your sins into the arms of Christ, believing in His death, burial, and resurrection, and seeking forgiveness and power over your sins as well as shelter from the condemnation of your sins, Christ will save you, both immediately and permanently! Not only is Christ the founder of this city of refuge called GRACE, and not only is He the door, but He's also the High Priest! As long as He shall live, you shall abide in this city of refuge! Oh my soul, give glory to God, for He has spared me from the wrath which is to come! Let us thank Him today for His amazing, wonderful, matchless GRACE, for He our High Priest shall never die!

**1Co 15:10** But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which *was bestowed* upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.

## Day 70

### ***Today's Reading: Deuteronomy 1-2***

Today's Reflection: Deut 1:6b *Ye have dwelt long enough in this mount:*

When the Lord says it's time to go, it's time to go! I'm afraid that many may be guilty of "overstaying their welcome" spiritually speaking. One of the biggest challenges of the Christian journey is the ability to pull up and move at a moment's notice. As they say, we shouldn't drive our tent stakes too deep, because you never know when God may move you to another locale to do His will! The Bible uses wind to describe the working of the Spirit of God in our lives (see John 3:8). One who is Spirit-filled is one who is able to determine when the direction of the wind has changed! How can you tell when it's time to move on? Just pay attention to the wind of the Holy Spirit! If you seek His voice, His winds of direction shall blow over your soul, leading you beside still waters! When His wind is moving you, there is almost restlessness in your spirit that will not allow you to settle back down until at last He has moved you to your new place of service. No matter what you do, you cannot keep sailing in the same direction as before! In Acts 27:4, Paul said this, "And when we had launched from thence, we sailed under Cyprus, because the winds were contrary." Although Paul set out thinking he knew where he might end up, God had a different destination in mind! Many times we think that because our journey starts out in a particular direction, that we must continue in it. We must understand that "A man's heart deviseth his way: but the LORD directeth his steps." Pro 16:9. It may sometimes feel as if God is taking us around the world to get us to where He wants us, but rest assured His plans are perfect, and when He charts a course, each stopping place along the journey has its purpose! Another aspect to consider is this; this walk with God is not a destination, but a journey! Even when Joshua and Caleb entered into the Promised Land, they didn't just kick into retirement! Keep moving, child of God, keep moving!

## *Today's Reading: Deuteronomy 3-4*

Today's Reflection: Deu 3:22 *Ye shall not fear them: for the LORD your God he shall fight for you.*

Men of God, isn't it refreshing to know that the Lord shall be our defense in times of battle? Of all the perils that encompass us daily, no weapon that is formed against us shall prosper! Paul even said in Acts 27:23-25 "For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve, Saying, Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Caesar: and, lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee.

Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me." Here, two men of God in two different passages were given basically the same promise; God would side with them! What is the common denominator? Faith! Both Joshua AND Paul believed God, and therefore God came to their aid. When we have nothing to stand on and no one to stand with us, yet as long as we have His Word, and believe His Word, we have all we need! That is a simple yet profound reminder of our Commander in Chief's ever present help in time of trouble! Whatever you're going through right now, and no matter how hot the battle gets, our Lord shall be your shield! He shall be your refuge! He shall be your strong tower! Believe Him, and you'll surely come out on the other side of your battle singing victory's song!

**2Ch 20:15** And he said, Hearken ye, all Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem, and thou king Jehoshaphat, Thus saith the LORD unto you, Be not afraid nor dismayed by reason of this great multitude; for the battle is not yours, but God's.

**2Co 10:4** (For the weapons of our warfare *are* not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;)

## Day 72

### ***Today's Reading: Deuteronomy 5-7***

Today's Reflection: Deu 6:24 *And the LORD commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the LORD our God, for our good always, that he might preserve us alive, as it is at this day.*

The Lord truly has our best interest at heart! He gives us His Word as a rule book. If we honor and obey His Word, then the blessings of His promises will be bestowed upon us! This is no guarantee that there will never be another battle, but that we will win any battle we face! This is no guarantee that we will never go through another valley, but that He will see us through to the other side! This is no guarantee that we'll be rich beyond our wildest dreams, but that we'll have what we need when we need it! This is no guarantee that we'll never be heart-broken or disappointed again, but that we'll have a constant companion called the Comforter! God's commandments are not grievous (1 Jn 5:3)! He gives us what we need to know in order to function at our highest and to give Him our best! Anything done outside of these parameters, spelled out by the Word of God, is doomed for utter failure! In order for us to maximize our existence, to reach our fullest potential, and to be all we can be, we MUST find our place of service with respect to the sovereign will of our Creator God. When we do this, we will have found our purpose for existence, and we'll be miserable doing anything less. That's why the happiest people in the world are those found serving their Creator, living by His Word! We would not expect someone to try and use a light bulb to dig a ditch, nor would we expect someone to try to use a shovel to light up a room! The reason is obvious; each tool is designed specifically for one purpose and one purpose only! So it is with the child of God. We are designed for one purpose and one purpose only; to trust, obey and worship our Creator God, thereby giving Him honor and glory with our lives! To do anything else with our lives is to be totally dysfunctional! Today, do not forget that God's plans are "for our good always"!

## ***Today's Reading: Deuteronomy 8-10***

Today's Reflection: Deut 9:6 *Understand therefore, that the LORD thy God giveth thee not this good land to possess it for thy righteousness; for thou art a stiffnecked people.*

“Understand therefore...”; it is amazing how that, when we keep things in proper perspective, our whole life stays in balance! In Hos 4:6, God says, “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.” If therefore a lack of knowledge yields destruction for even the people of God, then likewise an abundance of knowledge shall build them up and sustain them! When God says “understand therefore”, pay attention, for He is about to impart unto you certain knowledge and wisdom, without which you will not be able to survive! What is it our Lord wants us to understand? Read it again: “The LORD thy God giveth thee not this good land to possess it for thy righteousness; for thou art a stiffnecked people.” God knows how frail we are! He knows that it is man’s nature to let success go to his head. How dare we, the people of God, who have been washed by His blood, filled with His Spirit, called to His service, and sanctified by His Word, forget our humble, small, weak, sinful beginnings without Him! It would be easy for us, after having been made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, in our lofty position, to look down upon those who are yet as pitiful as we once were before Christ came to us! Nothing will re-ignite the flickering coals of the soul-winner’s heart for his lost colleagues like that of relating to their present affairs with his pre-Christ estate. It is the ex-drug addict who has the greatest zeal to bring the gospel to the streets of the inner city! It is the ex-harlot who desires nothing more than to see God take another lady of the night, wash her with His precious blood, and make her a child of the King! It is the ex-religious that is most burdened for those who attend church every week, but who have yet to experience the second birth! Are we now so pious that we care not for those who are no more a sinner than what we were before Christ came to us? Let it never be so!

## Day 74

### *Today's Reading: Deuteronomy 11-13*

Today's Reflection: Deut 11:11-14 *But the land, whither ye go to possess it, is a land of hills and valleys, and drinketh water of the rain of heaven:*

<sup>12</sup>*A land which the LORD thy God careth for: the eyes of the LORD thy God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year.*

<sup>13</sup>*And it shall come to pass, if ye shall hearken diligently unto my commandments which I command you this day, to love the LORD your God, and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul,*

<sup>14</sup>*That I will give you the rain of your land in his due season, the first rain and the latter rain, that thou mayest gather in thy corn, and thy wine, and thine oil.*

Consider the significance of the spiritual applications we can draw from this passage! To know that our God is already in our tomorrows waiting for us to get there is reassuring! Our God is very strategic. With Him there is purpose and order to everything in our lives, even when it seems chaotic to us. He has a way of making the crooked paths straight. He has a way of making something out of nothing. He has a way of making the useless useful! He has a way of even turning what the enemy meant for evil into good for His divine purposes! Never say that God can't! Never assume that there's no way He could take your life, your experiences, and your specific circumstances and use them to fulfill a higher purpose, and to bring about a better tomorrow. God is able! He can take the direst of circumstances and bring maximum glory to Himself! Many of us when we were children were taught to make the best of every situation. That's what God does with Grace! He makes the best of every situation! He'll take your mess and make a miracle! You may think that you have no hope or no future, but rest assured that if you place yourself in the hand of the potter, He can make you over again! He'll not only prepare you for what is ahead, but He'll also prepare what is ahead for you! Go ahead, give Him your mess and watch what He can do...I dare you!

## ***Today's Reading: Deuteronomy 14-16***

Today's Reflection: Deut 16:16b ...*and they shall not appear before the LORD empty:*

When we come before our Lord, it is a reasonable service for us to bring an offering with us! Some may think that they have nothing to offer. If this is your thought, ask yourself this question: What would the Lord require of you? I think of 1 Sam 15:22, which says, "And Samuel said, Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." This reminds me that even if my hands are empty, my heart doesn't have to be! Many times I have come to the Lord knowing that any amount of offering I could muster up would not suffice; yet, I've found Him to be so gracious and receptive of even the smallest, seemingly insignificant offerings, when I have with grateful heart and tear-filled eyes willingly offered Him my meager best! Remember the widow lady who cast in all the living that she had, which was but a little? Jesus said of her that she had cast in more than they all! Aren't you glad that God doesn't measure the value of our gifts like men do? God does not ask of us that which we do not have; He only asks of that which we do have! Have you given God yourself? If not, that's the best place to start!

**Psa 27:6** And now shall mine head be lifted up above mine enemies round about me: therefore will I offer in his tabernacle sacrifices of joy; I will sing, yea, I will sing praises unto the LORD.

**Psa 116:17** I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the LORD.

**Rom 12:1** I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, *which is your reasonable service.*

## Day 76

### *Today's Reading: Deuteronomy 17-20*

Today's Reflection: Deut 17:16b *Ye shall henceforth return no more that way.*

"There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." Prov. 14:12. "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." Matt 7:13-14. The Bible says a lot about the right way and the wrong way. As a matter of fact, life can be defined by the choices we make, and the way we go. For the child of God, that way in which we were found before Christ came into our lives was leading us down a path of destruction and eternal damnation in hell. Had it not been for His saving grace, many of us would still be going that way. However, now that we're saved from the errors of our own ways through His shed blood, we have been given a new way to walk. This way is found in Christ. He said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." Those who truly follow Christ will walk away from their old sinful ways and walk in newness of life. God will change their course. We are new creatures when Christ gets a hold on us! Therefore, God speaks to His children who were saved from the bondage of Egypt (a type and picture of this world system without Christ), saying, "Ye shall henceforth return no more that way." Why, oh reader, would anyone consider returning to the dregs of sin, after having been saved from such? Consider this; if the Christian life after your profession of faith is no more attractive to you than that which was before, then your heart was never truly converted. Here's why; 1Jn 2:15 says, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." When Christ converts the heart, He gives you a brand new outlook on life! All of a sudden, what sins you used to enjoy, you can no longer participate in or commit without being convicted by the Holy Spirit. Child of God, let this be a reminder to us all, that where God has saved us from has nothing to go back to, and where God has saved us to has nothing to run from!

## *Today's Reading: Deuteronomy 21-23*

Today's Reflection: Deut 23:5 *Nevertheless the LORD thy God would not hearken unto Balaam; but the LORD thy God turned the curse into a blessing unto thee, because the LORD thy God loved thee.*

Oh child of God, what is it that your enemy has said about you or against you that is troubling you today? Do not be troubled, for our God shall turn the curse into a blessing! From the time the curse comes off the lips of the enemy to the time of fulfillment, God will turn it completely around so that you'll not be troubled by it, but you shall be blessed by it! (Psa 118:23 This is the LORD'S doing; it is marvellous in our eyes.) Even as the Bible says, "...with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again." in Mat 7:2, even so the same is true of your enemy. The same measure of cursing they speak upon you shall fall upon their own head. If you're not sure, consider Pharaoh, who threatened to kill all the first-born of Israel, but who instead suffered the same at the hand of the Lord upon his own people. (Psa 91:8 Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold and see the reward of the wicked.) Furthermore, that same measure which fell as a curse upon his own head, fell as a blessing upon the heads of the children of Israel, because in blessing God blessed them, and in multiplying God multiplied them! The devil said, "I'm going to kill you!" but God said, "I'm going to multiply you!" With the same intensity your enemy curses you, is the same intensity God shall bless you! As a matter of fact, God uses the level of warfare that is against you as a measuring device to determine how much He shall bless you! He will not be outdone by the devil! He will bless you way more than the devil could ever curse you! That's why you may have noticed that the more they curse you, the more blessed you are (See Joel 2:23-26)! If you have been purchased by the blood of the Lamb of God, you can rejoice in that God has got you covered!

**Joe 2:23** Be glad then, ye children of Zion, and rejoice in the LORD your God: for he hath given you the former rain moderately, and he will cause to come down for you the rain, the former rain, and the latter rain in the first *month*.

## Day 78

### *Today's Reading: Deuteronomy 24-27*

Today's Reflection: Deut 25:4 *Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn.*

Our Lord said in Luke 10:7, "...for the labourer is worthy of his hire." How is it that many, on one hand, expect so much for so little from others, while on the other hand they expect the exact opposite for themselves? Here is the lesson: Enable others to profit from their efforts, and God will enable you to profit from yours. Conversely, if you disable others from profiting for their efforts, God will disable you from yours! I'm amazed at how many today are so selfish in their ambitions that the only one they're interested in seeing become a success is themselves! May it never be said of a servant of God! We are not sent or called to be self-indulgent, greedy, heartless people who bring only curses and bondage upon others, while securing our own personal success. We are called to BLESS! Not convinced? Consider what Jesus said in Mat 5:44, "But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;" Now, if this is the treatment we are to offer our enemies, how much more should we treat the children of God with the same respect! "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, **especially** unto them who are of the household of faith." Gal 6:10. Paul was so convinced of this line of thinking that, to ensure that he was not a financial burden to his flock, he took a job as a tent maker, even when he admitted himself that he could have justifiably expected full compensation from the church for his efforts (see 1 Cor 9:14-18)! **If our success is only at the detriment of others' welfare, then God forbid that we succeed!** If we will adopt this attitude, God will make sure that there's plenty to go around! God help us to be people that give more than we take, and do so with a willing and grateful heart! It's not what God wants to flow TO us, but what God wants to flow THROUGH us!

## *Today's Reading: Deuteronomy 28-29*

Today's Reflection: 28:32 *Thy sons and thy daughters shall be given unto another people, and thine eyes shall look, and fail with longing for them all the day long; and there shall be no might in thine hand.*

I would like to focus today on what I feel is one of the worst curses that can come upon those who choose NOT to trust and believe the Lord. First, allow me to say this: Any "alternative" to serving God with all of your heart, soul, mind and strength DOES NOT PAY! Pro 14:12 says, "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." Always remember that the rewards of sinful pleasure and indulgence are only temporary. Even Moses, who was raised in the palace, understood this concept, for it was said of him in Heb 11:25, "Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season;" Moses understood that his worse days serving God would be better than his best days serving himself or the devil! Why? Because what God gives LASTS, even through the direst of circumstances! "And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock." Mat 7:25. It's not that we will not face the storms and perils of life even as others who do not love or serve God (though self-infliction can be minimized), but rather that, after the storm, we'll still be standing! However, our chosen text today gives us a sober warning; if we choose our own way, not only will it bring a curse upon us, but also upon our children. If you do not want them to wind up in the same place as you, then you need to RELOCATE YOURSELF! If you want them to succeed, then you must succeed! If you want them to excel, then you must excel! You'd be surprised just how far they will go with you, whichever path you take! Why not make it a good path? If you don't, later you'll watch your children slide down the slippery slope of sin, and you'll be powerless to help! Today's challenge: become *first* what you want your child to become *later*! No one in their right mind would want their child to live less than their God-given potential. Pursue God, and bring your children with you!!

## Day 80

### *Today's Reading: Deuteronomy 30-31*

Today's Reflection: Deut 30:8-9 ***And thou shalt return and obey the voice of the LORD, and do all his commandments which I command thee this day. And the LORD thy God will make thee plenteous in every work of thine hand, in the fruit of thy body, and in the fruit of thy cattle, and in the fruit of thy land, for good: for the LORD will again rejoice over thee for good, as he rejoiced over thy fathers:***

It's not too late to start over! After the Lord had proclaimed the curses that would befall Israel should they have chosen to doubt and disobey His commandments, He inserted what I would like to call "The Grace Clause"! Basically, God said, "If you find yourself in sin, under the curse, you can turn the tide by turning back to me!" Can I say this? It's not too late for America! I know that "we've come a long way baby!" BUT, in spite of all we have done in forsaking the God of our forefathers as a nation, even as Israel had a "Grace Clause", so we as a nation can turn back to God, and He will lift the curse! Let's not forget that 2 Chronicles 7:14 is still in the Bible! "If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land." The key word to this verse is "if MY people". Aren't you glad to know that God's not waiting for the heathen to repent! He's not laying the future of America on the shoulders of the lost masses who do not even acknowledge Him! Children of God, the ball is in our court! If WE, the people of God, will repent of OUR wicked ways, then WE, with God's help, can turn the tide in America for the glory of God! Now, I understand that it is our responsibility as the children of God to get politically involved...we must fight the evil trends of our culture and government on all fronts. However, the most important and significant front that we are fighting is at the House of God! We MUST get back to serving God with all of our heart, soul, mind and strength! We MUST stop the religious games we so enjoy playing, put away our toys, and pull out "the big guns", faith, hope, and charity!! Let's get REAL with God, and He will get real with us!!

## ***Today's Reading: Deut. 32-34, Psalm 91***

Today's Reflection: Deut. 32:47a *For it is not a vain thing for you; because it is your life: ...*

Serving God is no small matter! "It is your life!" It seems that as significant as God is, we'd pay Him more attention! After all, He's *just* our life! I mean, come on! You mean to tell me that you'll be just fine without Him? I don't think so! "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." Matt 4:4. It amazes me how surprised people act when they reap the full consequences of their Christ-less existence, all the while having been warned by the Word of God through the man of God about the pitfalls of sin. It's too late to heed the Word of God as it pertains to raising your children, once your children are grown, gone and rebellious! It's too late to heed to the Word of God as it pertains to sexual purity once you wake up to a devastating STD which resulted from immoral, sinful behavior. It's too late to heed the Word of God as it pertains to the dangers of alcohol once you have wasted your entire life away bowing to its deceitful demands. I could go on, but hopefully you get the point. Don't get me wrong here...God can take anyone with anything left and make the best out of what remains, but why don't more people realize that much of life's pitfalls can be avoided by simply heeding God's Word? I have my own share of totally avoidable pitfalls as a result of my own stubbornness and disobedience. However, it was not because I wasn't told! To both the sinner and the child of God I say, your whole life depends upon the Word of God, whether you realize it or not! If you want to be saved from the destruction of sin both now and throughout eternity in Hell, then you **MUST** heed the Word of God! And if you want absolutely the best life that you could possibly have in Christ, then you **MUST** heed the Word of God! It all comes down to His Word! If you're tempted to think, "Well, I don't know...I've tried that 'Bible' thing and it didn't work for me.", then I ask you to read our text again, "For it is not a vain thing for you; because it is your life:" Remember this: It is no vain thing for you to believe and act in obedience to God's word...your life depends upon it!

## Day 82

### *Today's Reading: Joshua 1-4*

Today's Reflection: Joshua 2:24 *And they said unto Joshua, Truly the LORD hath delivered into our hands all the land; for even all the inhabitants of the country do faint because of us.*

I would like to address the soldiers of the Lord today. Forty long, wasted years did the children of Israel wander around in the wilderness unnecessarily, only because of one preconceived notion that their enemies were stronger and more courageous than they! However, the truth of the matter was that the enemies were shaking in their boots!! Child of God, hear me well. Though Satan may be real, and though he may be powerful, yet at the Word of the Lord and at the advancement of His mighty army, Satan gets weak in the knees! Why? Because Jesus said, "...upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Matt 16:18b. James 2:19b says, "...the devils also believe, and tremble." You see, when Satan is afraid of losing the battle, he resorts to his most effective battle strategy: the fear tactic. He does not really have the stuff he needs to win against us, but if he can **CONVINCE US** that he does, then he can win the battle without even one real weapon! Need I remind you again of Isa 54:17, which says, "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and their righteousness is of me, saith the LORD."? That's why anything that is not of faith is sin, because doubt is the enemy of faith. My beloved readers, do not let the devil intimidate you into a state of panic and paralysis! He may look intimidating now, but if you could get inside his head, you'd find out that he is more intimidated by you than you are of him! Here's why; "Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts." Zec 4:6. The fact is, you and I could never take the devil on "one-on-one"; but when we say, "Satan, the Lord rebuke thee!" and when we say, "The battle is not mine, but God's!" then the devil has to run! Still not convinced that you can put the devil on the run? Consider this: "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." James 4:7. Therefore, **MARCH ON**, ye soldiers of the cross, **MARCH ON!!**

## ***Today's Reading: Joshua 5-8***

Today's Reflection: 5:12b ... ***neither had the children of Israel manna any more; but they did eat of the fruit of the land of Canaan that year.***

In their infant years as the children of God, Israel was constantly cared for as a child who had no power to protect itself, nor any wisdom to provide for itself. However, it was time to come to maturity. So it is with us. God cannot move us into our place of purpose and destiny as long as we continue to feel, act, and think like infants! The place He is leading us is a place of success, but never forget that with success comes great responsibility! It is not that we become so self-sufficient that we no longer need the Lord, but rather that we must be weaned off the milk and brought into the meat of His Word! We must come to be a people of principle and trust. Let me explain. Before now, Israel was used to "having it made", if you will! There was the cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night. Whenever the visible glory of God lifted off the tent of the tabernacle they would move, and when it would rest upon the tent, they would camp out. In other words, in their infant stages as a people of God, they needed constant reassurance and visible manifestations of God's presence before they could do anything, and although this stage of development was necessary in order that they might learn the necessity of their dependency upon God, it was never God's intent for them to remain an infant! Therefore, God took the cloud from them by day, and the fire by night, and the visible glory of God, so that they at last could learn to walk, not by sight, but by faith! Let's not forget that the Lord has purposed to use us, the body of Christ, as His hands and feet, with which to build! He does not wish to work without us, but through us! But, when we're infants, He is still working in essence without us! It is when He instills within us a certain level of faith and confidence in His presence and His calling upon our lives that He can through us begin to do a new thing in the earth! It ought to be the desire of every child of God to get to a place where we no longer need the constant manifested presence of God in order to serve Him. When we learn to walk by faith, we understand and trust Him at His Word! That way, when the battle is on, and circumstances go south, and we don't know which way is up, and we can't seem to see God in our lives, we still have a Word!

## Day 84

### *Today's Reading: Joshua 9-11*

Today's Reflection: 9:14 *And the men took of their victuals, and asked not counsel at the mouth of the LORD.*

The enemy comes in many disguises! Have you ever noticed how the devil will always come at you in your weak spot? I see here a parallel between what happened to Joshua's leadership, and what happens to many of us serving as leaders in the ministry today. Just as these people played on the sympathy of Israel, so we are to watch for those who come to us playing the part of the needy just to secure a position which undermines our leadership and weakens our effectiveness. I believe this is one reason young Timothy was given this warning in 1Ti 5:22; "Lay hands suddenly on no man, neither be partaker of other men's sins: keep thyself pure." This is a lesson we must learn. We should not trust what God does not approve! Even the disciples were instructed to be "wise as serpents, and harmless as doves" in Matt 10:16. This is a delicate balance to maintain in ministry. It's not easy learning how to encourage someone to serve the Lord on one hand, while on the other hand holding them back until they are at last approved of God. Many who have attempted this have yielded to the temptation of going to one extreme or the other; either they were so cautious with others that they allowed them to serve in areas they had no business serving for fear of hurting feelings, or else they were so careless that they ran someone off who otherwise would have been a great asset to the ministry. How do we find balance, and know when to trust and when not to? The answer is found in the text! Here it is: Just ask God! If we don't, we'll make a pact with the enemy, all the while thinking the enemy is our ally! If you find yourself in a position of leadership where you are the one doing it all, do not be quick to give up one of your tasks to the first person to come along and say they'd like to help! It's always better to want something you don't have, than to have something you don't want! Serve the Lord with gladness and singleness of heart, and God will strengthen you for all of your responsibilities! Your day will come when God will send the right person or persons along to help you in the ministry, and if you'll inquire of the Lord, He'll let you know when that is and who it is! Until then, remember that, as always, godliness with contentment is great gain!

## *Today's Reading: Joshua 12-15*

Today's Reflection: Joshua 14:12a *Now therefore give me this mountain...*

When you have cast your eyes upon that which God hath said is yours, be not as Caleb's brethren. They perceived the giants of the land as insurmountable "obstacles" rather than seeing them as God saw them: instruments used to keep the good land from being overcome with beasts until the time at which they were to make advancement and settle in (see Ex 23:29-30)! Many times what we see as a curse, God plans to use as a blessing! Caleb and Joshua were the only two of their generation that saw it come to pass, BECAUSE they were the only two that believed God! Joh 16:13 teaches us that the Spirit of truth will "shew you things to come". Only believe Him when He does! People who believe God are visionaries. They, even as Joshua and Caleb, see things that others do not see! They pay no mind to the petty little giants of the land, for sake of the giant clusters of grapes, the milk, the honey, and the houses which are all laid out for their taking, even as God had spoken! Do not let what the enemy has said drown out what God has said! While others were critical of Caleb's optimism and his faith, he never took his eyes off that mountain that had HIS name on it! As a matter of fact, even as they criticized him, they were dying out on his left side and his right, until he was the only one besides Joshua remaining! The closer you get to your destiny, the more visible and attainable your mountain, and the fewer the voices of doubt surround you! Forty-five long years Caleb waited for this day, and he wasn't about to give up now! He set his eyes on the prize, and believed God for it, until at last it came to pass, even in his old age! Child of God, do not give up on divine dreams! When God places a vision upon you, a dream, a glimpse into YOUR promised land, DO NOT forfeit it at the hands of people of doubtful disposition. The only thing standing between you and your mountain is not the giants, nor the obstacles, nor the brethren; it is your willingness to believe God, or the lack thereof! Dare to believe! Go for it! Above all else, trust God! If you do, you'll see come to pass in your lifetime things that others only entertain the idea of with wishful thinking!

## Day 86

### *Today's Reading: Joshua 16-18*

Today's Reflection: Joshua 17:15 *And Joshua answered them, If thou be a great people, **then get thee up to the wood country, and cut down for thyself there in the land of the Perizzites and of the giants, if mount Ephraim be too narrow for thee.***

My subject of interest today: expansion! Here, the children of Joseph had already outgrown their lot so they went to Joshua asking for more. Our selected text is his response. If you'll read verses 16-18, you'll find that the children of Joseph were thinking that this lot Joshua had selected for them had a couple of problems. They first said, "The hill is not enough for us," and then they said, "The Canaanites that dwell in the land of the valley have chariots of iron." However, Joseph then responded, "Thou art a great people, and hast great power...the outgoings of it shall be thine: for thou shalt drive out the Canaanites, though they have iron chariots, and though they be strong." For every excuse they gave, Joshua had a solution! I find that for many, success itself is not worth the price that must be paid to achieve it! However, as it pertains to the will of God, always remember that the destination IS worth the journey! In essence, Joseph was saying, "It's not going to be easy, and you're going to have to fight for it, but it CAN be done!" The child of God must come to this understanding: Living out your God-given destiny is not going to come easy, but it CAN come, IF we fight the good fight of faith! It is a fight! Never assume that "success" means "easy street"! Contrary to popular belief, people who are truly successful do not "have it made in the shade"! As I have stated before, faith does not DENY the realities of obstacles, struggles, and trouble; however, faith does DEFY those realities! Again, in our text, these people did not want to have to fight the giants of the land, but Joshua reminded them of their strength and their abilities that only God could have given them! I believe God would have us today to be reminded of Philippians 4:13 which says, "I can do all things **through Christ** which strengtheneth me." Children of God, if we are to lead as many people to Christ as we possibly can, then we MUST be willing to expand, no matter the costs involved! Only depend upon His supply of strength, and it shall come to pass!

## *Today's Reading: Joshua 19-21*

Today's Reflection: Joshua 21:45 *There failed not ought of any good thing which the LORD had spoken unto the house of Israel; all came to pass.*

Oh, the goodness of God! Yet, as good as He is, I'm afraid that the majority of the religious world today views God more as a harsh disciplinarian than a loving Father! They really believe that His primary role is to see just how miserable He can make their lives because of their sins! It seems to me that God gets a whole lot more credit in the world for all the "bad" things happening than He ever does for the good! No wonder this world is not attracted to Him! We've given them the wrong impression of Him! Now, don't misunderstand what I'm saying, God is the judge, and He WILL judge the sinner who has not trusted Christ as Savior, and they WILL spend an eternity in Hell without Christ, should they not do so! God also disciplines (chastens) His children when we step out of line! No doubt all of this is true! However, we need not ONLY focus on these truths about God when we are presenting Him to a lost and dying world, or when we're teaching about Him to His beloved flock! Jesus said in John 3:17, "For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved." Notice that His emphasis is on salvation, not condemnation! Romans 2:4 says, "Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?" According to this verse, it's not the wrath of God that leads men to repentance, but it's His goodness! That's what Grace is all about; God being better to us than we deserve! We deserve Hell, but God sent His only Son to die on an old rugged cross, so that with His precious blood He could redeem us from our sinful state! Glory to God for His matchless Grace! We need not look at God just as a judge, but also as a Savior! Oh sinner, know this; today you have an opportunity while there's time and while there's hope to receive forgiveness for your sins, get saved from Hell fire, and to start a brand new life in Christ! God does not desire to condemn you, but to save you! However, you must accept His free gift of salvation! Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved!

## Day 88

### *Today's Reading: Joshua 22-24*

Today's Reflection: Joshua 22:20 *Did not Achan the son of Zerah commit a trespass in the accursed thing, and wrath fell on all the congregation of Israel? and that man perished not alone in his iniquity.*

Sin always has a much more devastating effect than what one might anticipate. The old saying, "It's my life, and I'm not hurting anyone but myself!" simply is not true! Romans 14:7 says, "For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself." The truth is your personal sins and my personal sins have a trickle effect; the negative impact reaches much further than we would be willing to admit. Perhaps the people who suffer the most are our immediate friends and family. Sin is UGLY, not some of the time, but ALL of the time! The reason it's so devastating is because it always starts out looking so harmless! For example, the drug addict never started out saying, "My goal in life is to be hooked on crack cocaine!" Rather, he most likely started out with one joint of marijuana, thinking to himself, "Just one won't hurt!", and before you know it, progressively tried more and more, then started getting into harder drugs, until at last he woke up one day a crack addict. My point is this; never underestimate the devastating effects of even the "smallest" sin, because behind that door is a whole new world of deceit, dishonesty and disgust that can become your worst nightmare. Romans 6:23 says, "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." The good news is that you can overcome the power, deception, and condemnation of sin by turning from your sin to Jesus Christ! When you trust Christ, here's what happens: "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:" John 1:12. It's awesome to realize that before Christ one has no power in and of himself to get free from the pull of sin, but after Christ, He empowers us to do so! The difference now that I'm a believer is this: before, I couldn't quit sinning if I wanted to, but NOW I have an option! I have Christ in me, who empowers me to say NO to sin, and better than that, changed my whole appetite to where I do not even like sin the way I used to! If you want help out of your sins, and their devastating consequences both here on this side of eternity, as well as Hell on the other side, then put your trust in Jesus Christ!

## *Today's Reading: Judges 1-2*

Today's Reflection: Judges 2:10b .... *and there arose another generation after them, which knew not the LORD, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel.*

Somebody dropped the ball! It behooves us, ladies and gentlemen, that if we have one stitch of knowledge of the Holy One, that we instill the same in our children! We do not gain knowledge and truth by osmosis! We must be taught. The same is true of our children. We cannot afford the risks involved in assuming that our children are going to just "catch on" one day! Today, just as found in our text, is a great generational gap. We have on our hands a generation that, for the most, knows very little if anything about the God of the Bible. What happened? Was not our nation founded upon Christian principles? Did not our founding fathers speak boldly and write often of their deep-found commitment to the truths of the Word of God? Where did we go wrong? Though there are many contributing factors, I'll dare say that the number one problem lies not at the feet of the government, nor the casino, nor the bar room, nor the secular educational system, nor the religious institutions of our day, nor the college professor, but at the feet of the parents. I do not wish to offend my readers, but at the risk of doing so I must say that it's difficult to raise a child in the ways of the Lord when you're an absent parent! You may not be absent in body, nor in provisions, but what about time well spent with your child? I speak to all of us who are parents! It's very easy to pursue the American dream with such vigor that little Johnny grows up under our roof and by the time he's a teenager we barely know him, and worse yet, he barely knows us, much less our God that we say we serve! God help us to get back to spending the appropriate time needed with our children, not in front of the TV, and not at the ball games, though there's nothing wrong with either in moderation, but more importantly in the family altar, and in family devotions, and in the House of God! We cannot say to ourselves, "Well, if they get lost, they'll find their way back home!" This is only wishful thinking, for what if they don't find their way back home? We MUST be diligent to build a legacy of faith and pass it on to the next generation, unless it is said of them, "[they] knew not the LORD, nor yet the works which he had done..."

## Day 90

### *Today's Reading: Judges 3-5*

Today's Reflection: Judges 3:9-10 *And when the children of Israel cried unto the LORD, the LORD raised up a deliverer to the children of Israel, who delivered them, even Othniel the son of Kenaz, **Caleb's younger brother**. <sup>10</sup>And the Spirit of the LORD came upon him, and he judged Israel, and went out to war: and the LORD delivered Chushanrishathaim king of Mesopotamia into his hand; and his hand prevailed against Chushanrishathaim.*

It is no coincidence that it is in the family of Caleb, a man of tremendous faith, that God raises up a deliverer for Israel! People of genuine faith impact those around them for future generations! Our desire should be that the lives we lead will be so impactful that our descendants way down the line will continue to build upon the legacy of faith that God has enabled us to establish for our immediate family and circle of influence! Dare I say that if our faith doesn't impact our own family, then how shall it affect anyone else? It is sad but true that many are guilty of "winning the world" to Christ, while their own family is untouched by their faith. Let it not be so! I think here of Noah, a preacher of righteousness, who after many years of preaching, won nobody but his family, to whom I say should be given recognition for great success! Why is it so easy for us to be so connected to others, yet so distant to our own families? The devil knows the power of the family unit coupled with faith! It is through the family structure that God delivered the promised seed! It is through the family structure that the church is built and maintained! It is through the family structure that children, as arrows in the hands of a mighty man, hit their target, or in other words, reach their maximum potential under the direction and care of their God-fearing parents ([see Psa 127:4](#))! This is not to say that God cannot use someone who is in a broken family; do not take me wrong here. What I am saying is, we cannot improve upon God's design and initial plan! I'll say this; if we win no one else to Christ on the planet, and if we pass our faith down to no one else, we **MUST** make our family a priority! There is not a garden you can toil in, no matter how small it may look today, that can yield more fruit and touch the lives of more people down the road, than the garden of your family.

## *Today's Reading: Judges 6-7*

Today's Reflection: Judges 7:11 **And thou shalt hear what they say; and afterward shall thine hands be strengthened** to go down unto the host. Then went he down with Phurah his servant unto the outside of the armed men that were in the host.

Have you ever needed a word from the Lord? Have you ever felt at such a distance from God, that it felt even as if God had forsaken you, just to leave you dying in your own misery? Have you ever been to a place where you thought, "If I could just hear even a small hint of a whisper from Heaven, I could make it!"? I will have to admit that nothing can be more fearful or dreadful than to feel as if the Heavens have turned to brass against your agonizing prayers. This is a place that if you ever visit, you think you'll never come back out, and when you finally do come out, you'll never want to go back in a million years! When darkness sets in, fear is at an all-time high! Here, Gideon was taken out of his comfort zone. He was a simple farmer minding his own business, when all of the sudden God stepped in and called him to do something he had never been trained to do, nor planned on doing....leading an army! Gideon was so taken back by this new-found call on his life, he kept on second-guessing it! He kept seeking confirmation from the Lord, and the Lord graciously kept giving it to him! Yet, just before it was time for Gideon to step up and do battle at the Lord's instructions, he was given one more chance to strengthen his faith and confidence in the God who had called him to serve. The Lord said, "But if thou fear to go down, go thou with Phurah thy servant down to the host: And thou shalt hear what they say; and afterward shall thine hands be strengthened..." In other words, "Gideon, I've got a WORD for you!" I remember what pulled me out of my dungeon experience; it wasn't my friends, it wasn't my money, it wasn't entertainment, it wasn't good times, it wasn't even good talented music or gifted speakers, teachers, or preachers. It was a divine Word from God! It's not until AFTER you hear from God that you are able to arise from your ashes, shake the dust of sorrow off, and move on! BUT, after you have heard from God, all I can say is "Watch out devil!" because not a demon in hell can stop a child of God filled with the Word of God and empowered by the Spirit of God! Today, allow His Word to fill you up!

## Day 92

### *Today's Reading: Judges 8-9*

Today's Reflection: Judges 8:4 *And Gideon came to Jordan, and passed over, he, and the three hundred men that were with him, faint, yet pursuing them.*

Living for God has its challenges, to say the least! Only, those challenges are different than they were before Christ. Before, the challenges were impossible to overcome because we were going it alone. Now, the challenges are only opportunities for God to reveal Himself to us afresh and anew each time we have our backs up against a wall! Someone said, "Once you're saved, all of your troubles will be over!" Nothing could be further from the truth! We still have the same old world in which to live, the same old temptations to fight, the same old flesh to contend with, and the same old devil trying to kill us; only now, those of us who are truly in Christ have a <sup>1</sup>companion who will go with us and fight for us! Do not forget that our Lord said, "<sup>2</sup>Without me, ye can do nothing." That's why He gave us the Holy Spirit! He is our comforter and guide. He is our strength! You may be wondering how you're going to make it. You may feel faint, even as Gideon and his men. The amazing thing about this journey of faith is the ability God gives us to be able to continue to pursue even when we're faint! We were certainly born *once* a loser (because we were born in sin), but those who have received Christ were born *again* an overcomer! I'm going to make it because I'm a child of the King! I'm going to make it because I have been sent on a mission by this King, and He will see to it that I have what I need to fulfill the purpose for my existence! I'm going to make it, because He fills me with His Spirit to strengthen me in spite of how faint I may be! See also Gal 6:9.

<sup>1</sup> **Joh 14:16** And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever;

<sup>2</sup> **Joh 15:5** I am the vine, ye *are* the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.

## Today's Reading: Judges 10-12

Today's Reflection: Judges 10:13-14 *Yet ye have forsaken me, and served other gods: wherefore I will deliver you no more. 14 Go and cry unto the gods which ye have chosen; let them deliver you in the time of your tribulation.*

Be careful where you place your loyalty, for it *may* come back to haunt you! Gal 6:7 says, "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." Paul also said in Rom 6:16, "Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, **his servants ye are to whom ye obey**; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?" In other words, you get what you want! If you want to have it your way, you can do that! If you want to serve other gods besides the true and living God of the Bible, you can do that too! Just don't be surprised when you reap the full consequences for doing so! If you serve a dead god while things are going well, then you'll only have a dead god to call upon when you're in distress. If you live in direct disobedience to the Bible, then you'll also be subject to the <sup>1</sup>penalties associated with that! If you want to be a servant *to* sin, then you will truly be a servant *of* sin! If you do not listen to God today, what makes you think that God will listen to you tomorrow? The fact is, God is not interested in "fair weather" relationships with His people. His heart is <sup>2</sup>grieved when this is the case! It's not His desire that we put Him on ignore until we feel we need Him! Furthermore, we can not blame Him for allowing us to reap what we ourselves have sown, especially since He has given us plenty of warnings along the way! If we are going to serve Him, let's do so from this day forward; both for now, and forever! Let's be true to the only One who will be true to us. Give your life to Christ, and live for God, and you'll have few regrets!

**<sup>1</sup>Rom 6:23** For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**<sup>2</sup>Jdg 10:16** And they put away the strange gods from among them, and served the LORD: and his soul was grieved for the misery of Israel.

## Day 94

### *Today's Reading: Judges 13-15*

Today's Reflection: Judges 13:25 *And the Spirit of the LORD began to move him **at times** in the camp of Dan between Zorah and Eshtaol.*

With God, timing is essential! It would do us well to remember that there is a reason for each season of life we go through! Behind the scenes, God is working. He is preparing people, events, circumstances, climates, you name it, so that, at just the right moment, connections are made and His purposes are thereby initiated and fulfilled! When we learn the necessity of cycles, we then appreciate their beauty! It cannot always be summer, for then we'd never know the beauty of winter's snow. It cannot always be spring, for then we'd never know the beauty of the leaves during fall! Although winter and fall are not generally thought of as "productive" seasons, it is imperative that they come, else the land would get no rest, and the fruitful seasons of spring and summer would thereby suffer. So it is with the servants of God! We are filled with His Spirit for a task, which only comes "at times". When that task is accomplished, there is a break or a season of rest before we go into the next task. The key to being Spirit-filled is not to work for Jesus 100% of the time, for that is neither humanly possible, nor practical! The key to being Spirit-filled is simply to be readily available at all times, so that when our seasons come, we are prepared to allow His Spirit to flow through us and use us to get the job done! When will we ever learn that God can do more in a moment than we can do in a lifetime? May I suggest that a misunderstanding of this truth is one of the reasons people experience what we like to call "burn out" in the ministry? Relax! God is in control! As I heard it once said, "Jesus has already died for the world; you don't have to!" People with good intentions can easily take upon themselves burdens that the Lord never intended for them to bear. Jesus said that His yoke was easy and His burden light! A note for pastors here; if we as leaders were to allow our people seasons of rest as well as seasons of labor, we'd find them to be much more fruitful and productive! "God, help us to maintain a healthy balance of "rest" seasons and "work" seasons so that we may be ready at "<sup>1</sup>all" seasons to give an answer to every man!"

<sup>1</sup>1Pe 3:15 "... *be ready always to give an answer to every man ...*"

## *Today's Reading: Judges 16-18*

Today's Reflection: Judges 16:21 *But the Philistines took him, and put out his eyes, and brought him down to Gaza, and bound him with fetters of brass; and he did grind in the prison house.*

All it takes to lose your vision is to lose your focus. Sampson was a mighty man of God, but his sins brought him down to his knees, blind and miserable! We should never take the anointing of the Lord for granted! Do not allow your holy confidence be turned into pride and arrogance! It is one thing to be confident in the Lord's strength, yet another to be confident in yourself. I think of 1Co 10:12, where it says, "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." Israel was once warned in Deut 8:17 against the temptation of saying "My power and the might of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth." It is a common problem for sinful men to buy into the illusion that blessings which can only be received by the favor of the Lord can also be obtained through personal strength, wealth, or perseverance. Remember Simon (Acts 8:20) who thought that the gift of God could be purchased with money? The truth is, all of us need to guard ourselves against the tendencies of becoming puffed up with pride. Let's remember what Paul said in 1 Cor 15:10, "But by the grace of God I am what I am." If there is any blessing, if there is any anointing, if there is any success or favor, all credit belongs to the Lord! Had it not been for Him, we would fall apart! By HIM all things consist (see Col 1:17)! He holds us together, and that is why we have made it thus far, and that is why we shall make it farther on! This Christian journey always boils down to faith; a total reliance upon our Savior Jesus Christ to finish what He has started in our lives. As long as we continue to rely upon Him, seeking His face and honoring His Word, we shall avoid the pitfalls associated with losing our focus, because we'll always be looking to Him!

**Heb 12:2** Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of *our* faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

## Day 96

### *Today's Reading: Judges 19-21*

**Today's Reflection: Judges 21:25** *In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes.*

Situational ethics has been around much longer than today's "new age" religion. The problem with this kind of thinking is this: not everyone can be right! Someone must be wrong! Our generation has been flooded by the deceptive teachings of this kind of philosophy. To say, for instance, that it would be ok for one person to steal, while it would not be ok for someone else, depending upon the situation, is far from intelligent! The truth is, this line of logic was only designed so that those who benefit most are mainly those who seek to avoid consequences for their sinful behavior. Beware, however, for the Bible teaches in Gal 6:7, "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." You may think that your decisions were justified, and therefore warrant no consequences, but regardless of whether or not you "do the time" for your crime, you will pay for them none-the-less! Reaping and sowing is a natural law. For every action, there is a reaction. There may be some consequences you feel you have danced around, but rest assured, your day is coming! Even if we never pay for our sins on this side of eternity, there is a God in Heaven who is judge over all, and every one of us shall give account of himself to Him (see Romans 14:12)! We must get back to the standard: the Word of God! When we do, we restore the moral backbone of mankind. To think for a moment that we do not need God or His Word is detrimental, not only to ourselves, but to everyone around us! Remember, there's nothing wrong with doing right! In a world where right is wrong and wrong is right, and where every man is doing that which is right in his own eyes, there is total chaos and confusion. This leads to a moral decay and decline that undermines God's design and plan for us. God does not give us rules and regulations just to make us miserable; He does so that we may maximize our potential and live life to its fullest! His plans are to help us, not to harm us; to enable, not to disable; to raise up, not to cast down. The only way to receive these kinds of benefits from God our Creator is to live by His rules!

## ***Today's Reading: Ruth 1-4***

Today's Reflection: Ruth 2:16 *And Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God:*

Perhaps there is not a greater picture of Grace throughout the entire Old Testament! Here, Ruth was just a stranger to the people of God; a Gentile! She was just an average, ordinary person. She was a poor widow lady who had, up to this point, not even known the ways of the Lord. Yet, she made a simple decision one day that changed her life, as well as the course of history, forever! She said, "I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God." Do not underestimate the significance of even one person giving their life wholly to the Lord! Dear reader, do not sell yourself short of the miracles God wishes to birth through your loins! We are talking about someone here who walked away from it all; her old life, her old friends, her family, her home place, everything! Perhaps one of her favorite songs might have been "I'd rather have Jesus!" Either way, she was "sold out for the whole route"! Little did she know that because of her willingness to do so, God would bestow upon her the greatest honor that could be given to a woman; through her lineage would come the Christ child! Does the field you're called to labor seem so small or little known? It is great if God is in it, and He'll not forsake His own! Little is much when God is in it. Labor not for wealth or fame. There's a crown and you can win it, if you'll go in Jesus' name! I'm glad to announce to my readers that out of famines come great harvests; out of tragedy comes triumph; out of impossibilities come the miraculous! Keep your faith in Christ and stick by His side, and one day your harvest will come! One day your labor will pay off! Boaz told Ruth in 2:12, "The LORD recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the LORD God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust." God is not impressed with titles, positions, wealth, or fame among the children of men. He only seeks those who worship Him in Spirit and in truth! No matter who you are, if this is your aim in life, then even if no man were to recognize your zeal for the Lord, rest assured He does, and He WILL recompense thy work!

## Day 98

### *Today's Reading: 1 Samuel 1-3*

Today's Reflection: 1 Sam 1:6 *And her adversary also provoked her sore, for to make her fret, because the LORD had shut up her womb.*

Do not let the lies of the enemy get in your head! Hannah knew a bit about the ways of the Lord (1 Sam 2:1-10)! She knew that His great wisdom determined when to take life, and when to give it. She also knew that He would hear her prayer and honor her faith. She did not allow the voices of her adversary keep her from believing God for a man child! I can hear them now, can't you? "Hannah's a loser! Hannah the Barren! Hannah, you're a reproach! Hannah, God must not like you; otherwise He would give you a baby! Hannah this, Hannah that, bla bla bla!" The criticism was so bad, that even the old man of God (Eli) mistakenly accused her of being drunk with wine, when all she was doing was pouring her heart out before the Lord! Has your good deeds ever been misinterpreted as something evil? Maybe you pour your heart and soul into a ministry, only to hear that others perceive you to be "just after the money" or "arrogant" or whatever. "Who does he think he is? Why, if I were him, I'd do it this way!" On and on it goes, and the enemy, our adversary the devil (the accuser of the brethren) specializes in highlighting all of the above in our ears, hearts and minds, so as to make us fret! But, dear readers, there is GOOD news! When God begins to bless the fruit of your labor, the enemy must shut up and eat crow! Hannah said, "My mouth is enlarged over mine enemies!" In other words, "Who's laughing now, devil? Who has the last Word now?" I just love it when God breaks through for us and rubs it in the devil's face. God will make him watch while we're so blessed that he can't even do anything about it! For every tear we shed, we're given a shout! For every nightmare, we're given fresh revelation! For every yoke, we're given an anointing strong enough to break it! All of this is at our disposal if we'll simply dare to believe God as Hannah did! So, go ahead and let them laugh, but while they're too busy laughing, you can be going on with your life, receiving at the hand of the Lord what they said you'd never obtain! As a matter of fact, I dare say that God was just waiting on the "challenge" (which is really no challenge at all to Him), JUST SO He could prove them wrong!

## *Today's Reading: 1 Samuel 4-8*

Today's Reflection: 1 Sam 4:1 *And the word of Samuel came to all Israel. Now Israel went out against the Philistines to battle, and pitched beside Ebenezer: and the Philistines pitched in Aphek.*

When God has a word for a people, His message is always delivered! That's why Isa 55:11 says, "So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper *in the thing* whereto I sent it." Think not that the Lord is unable to get His message to His people! Missing a message is risky business. When God sends a memo from Heaven, it is His full intent and purpose that it be not missed! What we do with it at that point is up to our willingness to respond, but the message has been delivered none-the-less! I think here of Romans 10:14-15a, which also says, "How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent?" God will always get His Word to His people, because He always has a man! Our text says, "And the word of Samuel came to all Israel." That was an amazing accomplishment, considering they had no modern methods of communication that we have today; no satellite TV, no internet, no radio! Yet, the word reached ALL Israel! If God gives you a message to deliver, He will also give you the means with which to deliver that message to His intended audience! If He has given you a word for the broken-hearted, then He will connect you with the broken-hearted. If He has given you a word for the lost, He will connect you with the lost. If He has given you a word for the backslider, then, you guessed it, He will connect you with the backslidden of heart! His Word will always accomplish what it was specifically sent for. Psalm 107:20 says, He sent his word, and healed them, and delivered *them* from their destructions." However, maybe you're not on the delivering end, but on the receiving end! If you need a word, God has one on its way! When it comes, you will have no doubt it was sent just for you! God is just like that, always caring for His own, making sure that they hear Him loud and clear so as to dissipate all doubt and confusion! Hear Him today, and rejoice at the Word He sent you!

## Day 100

### *Today's Reading: 1 Samuel 9-12*

Today's Reflection: 1 Sam 10:6 *And the Spirit of the LORD will come upon thee, and thou shalt prophesy with them, and shalt be turned into another man.*

Here, we witness the supernatural birthing of a new administration. We shall draw from this passage certain principles which apply to the new birth of any God-ordained ministry. I will first say that God never starts with a new building. He never starts with a new program, a new organization, or a new idea. God always starts with a new man! Not just a man, but a NEW man! Our selected text tells us that Saul would “be turned into another man” once the Spirit of the Lord came upon him and he began to prophesy. Have you ever been given a word from the Lord to deliver, but it wasn't until after you delivered it that you realized it wasn't for anyone else? It was for you! The transforming word of God we preach, which has the power to change lives and turn the world upside down, must first have that very effect on us! We must be so totally transformed by the word ourselves, that when we declare it to others, there is no doubt in our own hearts as to the validity of our message. We can't convince others if we ourselves have not been convinced! It's also interesting to note that even before the Spirit of the Lord came upon Saul, God had already given him “another heart” (see 1 Sam 10:9)! God knew that if Samuel were to receive the prophetic word which was to propel him into his divine destiny, his heart must first be prepared to receive that word! Isn't it amazing to experience the same truths in your own personal walk with God? I speak from personal experience. Had it not been for the Lord preparing my heart in advance, I would not have received His word with gladness; but He did! Dear reader, whatever it is in your life right now that you do not understand, it has been sent to prepare your heart to be able to receive a word from God which will take you to the next level in your walk with Him! He's preparing you for the work He has for you. Don't be afraid of His anointing! In today's reading, when Saul was hiding among the “stuff,” God still pointed him out so that Samuel could anoint him to be king! The birthing of a new ministry through the making of a new man will make anyone uncomfortable, as things are somewhat unfamiliar; however, we must walk in that anointing if we are to realize our purpose!

### ***Today's Reading: 1 Samuel 13-14***

***Today's Reflection: 1 Sam 14:6*** *And Jonathan said to the young man that bare his armour, Come, and let us go over unto the garrison of these uncircumcised: it may be that the LORD will work for us: for there is no restraint to the LORD to save by many or by few.*

“It may be” is not a lot to go on, or at least it doesn’t appear that way! However, when we consider the fact that Jonathan moved into battle without being certain of the outcome, we must conclude that he was definitely counting on the Lord to come through for him. The truth is, some time-sensitive decisions in life must be made whether or not we are totally prepared to make them! Jonathan knew that an opportunity had presented itself for him to slip away and do battle, and that he had a companion to go with him. Furthermore, he knew that the battle would not be won doing nothing at all, so he took a risk. Living by faith is much like taking risks; the only difference is that those who take the biggest risk are those who do not live by faith at all. If we knew what all we were missing, we would begin trusting and relying upon God immediately! One of the strange things about doubt is its ability to steal from you that which you did not even realize was missing! We are not called to live our lives just so that when we get to the end of our journey, we say, “What if?” Part of faith is going into unknown, unfamiliar, uncharted territory and just plain trusting God to see us through! Allow me to share a personal testimony with you. Back when I purchased my home, I made an offer not knowing whether or not the offer would be accepted; or if it was, whether or not I would be able to obtain favorable financing; or if I did, whether or not I could afford the mortgage payment, which was unknown at that time. All I had was a prayer and an offer! I didn’t know for sure whether or not this was the house for me, but all I knew was I had a window of opportunity in which to work, and if I did my part, MAYBE God would work out the rest. Well, let me tell you, not only was my offer (about 60% of the appraised value) accepted, but I also received 100% financing, cash back at closing, and a good locked in mortgage rate, right in the midst of the banking crisis of ’08! So I say to you, go ahead and test your faith; it MAY BE that God will do for you what you are expecting Him to, but the only way to know for sure is to just go for it in faith believing!

## Day 102

### *Today's Reading: 1 Samuel 15-17*

**Today's Reflection: 1 Sam 17:48** *And it came to pass, when the Philistine arose, and came, and drew nigh to meet David, that David hastened, and ran toward the army to meet the Philistine.*

Oh, to be as fearless as David! How often are we taught to fear the unknown? David surely could have been paralyzed by fear, just as the armies of Israel, but he was too full of faith for that to happen! Think about it; here is a young man who was just a shepherd boy. He spent most of his time tending to sheep. No doubt his older brothers highly discouraged him from getting too close to the battle, as he was only a youth. Yet, in all of this, young David had this advantage: while the others were in a trance from the lies and threats of the enemy, he was filling himself up with the Word of God! That's why when David came on the scene he did not see the giant as a problem, but as an opportunity for God to show Himself mighty! David wasn't interested in what everyone else was saying, but only what God had already spoken in His Word! David already had an encounter with the Great Shepherd, and therefore knew that everything was going to be alright! With that knowledge of the Holy One, and with that Confidence in Him, David did not even flinch when the enemy started in his direction; as a matter of fact, when his enemy drew closer to him, David ran out to meet him! He wasn't running FROM his opponent, but rather running TO him! Would to God that we His people would have the same vigor, faith, enthusiasm, zeal, and confidence to step out by faith and trust God to bring us through every time we face a giant! Here's the truth--we CAN! We don't have to be afraid of the storm! We don't even have to be afraid of the devil! "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear **no** evil:..." Let's not forget that 2 Tim 1:7 is still in the Bible: "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind." Child of God, whatever you're facing today, why not allow the Prince of Peace to flood your soul with that peace which passes all understanding! He will fill you to overflowing, and enable you to overcome your fears with His Word! Learn to laugh in the face of danger, even as David was shouting for the battle even in the midst of an army who was scared stiff! Be courageous and trust God; you have nothing to lose, and a victory to gain! ~ G.C.

### ***Today's Reading: 1 Sam 18-20, Ps 11, 59***

**Today's Reflection: 1 Sam 18:29** *And Saul was yet the more afraid of David; and Saul became David's enemy continually.*

Jealousy is the fuel that ignites the hatred of our enemies. Saul here was jealous of David, because he knew that God's anointing had left him and had rested upon David. Have you ever noticed that the more God blesses you, the more your enemies hate you? Even Satan himself is jealous of the relationship we have with God through Jesus Christ, because even he once had sweet communion with God before he was cast out of Heaven for his pride! Never forget that the reason our enemy is at odds with God and with us is because of their own choosing! Do not blame yourself for what heat you are under for serving God! You did nothing wrong; they did! They KNOW what we have with God, and that's why it is their goal to destroy us! "Saul SAW and KNEW that the LORD was with David (18:28)." You would think that if your enemy knew that God was on your side, surely they would repent of their hatred, lest they be consumed by the Lord; yet, they are blinded in their own personal ambitions! They feel threatened by our very existence! When God's anointing comes upon us, the enemy trembles because he knows he is about to lose more power over his domain, even as Saul knew that it was just a matter of time before the Lord would promote David as king in his place! Child of God, that's why the devil tries so hard to kill you, and if he can't kill you, he will at the very least attempt to make your life miserable! However, David wrote in Ps 118:6, "The LORD is on my side; I will not fear: what can man do unto me?" Paul wrote in Rom 8:31, "What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?" I'm glad to announce to you that even though the enemy rages, because we are IN CHRIST, we cannot be defeated! The very gates of Hell shall not prevail! They shall not hold us back! In Jesus' name, we're storming the gates of Hell, and we shall break through and make advancement into the enemy's territory! We are on the rise! We are not cowering in defense, but we are mobilizing in offence! Hell does not have us backed into a corner, but to the contrary, we have Hell backed into a corner because of the blood of Christ! Walk in your anointing, child of God, and watch His protective hand win your battles for you!

## Day 104

### *Today's Reading: 1 Sam 21-24*

**Today's Reflection: 1 Sam 21:9** *And the priest said, The sword of Goliath the Philistine, whom thou slewest in the valley of Elah, behold, it is here wrapped in a cloth behind the ephod: if thou wilt take that, take it: for there is no other save that here. And David said, There is none like that; give it me.*

Here, David, running for his life, is without weapons due to the speed at which he left the kingdom under the threat of Saul. However, isn't it amazing how that God had reserved for him in this spot, not just any sword, but the sword of Goliath, whom he slew! When David was told this, he said, "There is none like that; give it me." No doubt the sword brought back those precious memories, where God had enabled David to win his first great battle, which brought him into notoriety! Not only did this encourage David's heart, but imagine the fear that this sword struck into the hearts of his enemies! You see, the enemy recognizes this sword, because it once belonged to him! Here was a small young shepherd boy who had been given a God-sized task; and to do so, he wasn't to use just any sword, but the sword of a giant! While God is raising him up to be a king, He's training David to use king-sized weapons. Why, dear reader, is our faith SO tried in the fire? It is because where God is taking us is going to require the use of king-sized faith! Rev 1:6 says that Jesus "...hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him *be* glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen." Why do we the children of God so often think so small? We must stir up the gift within us (2 Tim 1:6), and begin to think like champions if we are to become champions! Do you remember what David started out with? God graduated him from a sling shot to the sword of a giant! David knew the day he slew Goliath, that his defense was in God, and even this day he still knows that! He doesn't really need the sword to win this battle; he just needs what it represents, both to him AND to his enemy! When God promotes us in His kingdom, it is not the things He gives us, nor the positions we realize that we need the most; it is simply what they represent! They are only reminders both of what God has done, and what God is yet able to do! They serve notice, not only to ourselves, but to our enemies, that we are winners in Christ, and that because of Calvary, we shall overcome!

***Today's Reading: Psalm 7, 27, 31, 34, 52***

**Today's Reflection:** **27:13-14** *I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living. Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the LORD.*

The Psalmist did not say, "I had fainted, unless I had seen the goodness of the Lord." Rather, he said, "I had fainted, unless I had BELIEVED to see the goodness of the Lord." Let's not forget that faith IS the substance of things hoped for (Heb 11:1)! In other words, it shall not come to pass unless it is believed to come to pass. I think here of two reasons why that is: first, because God said it to be so! Heb 11:6 says, "...without faith it is impossible to please him...", therefore God has set it up so that faith is a prerequisite to His favor on our lives! It starts at Calvary! Had it not been for Jesus, who is indeed the author and finisher of my faith, I would have forfeited God's grace pertaining to salvation from hell, as well as the abundance of life I have experienced since my sins were washed away by His precious blood! Now, the second reason is because of the simple fact that we act upon what we believe. If we believe something to be so, then we base our actions upon that belief. For example, if I believe that God shall see me through, then I will make decisions that will better prepare me to receive His deliverance once it comes! But, if I believe that it's all over, I will wallow in self-pity and worsen my own condition by quitting before my time to quit! You can not just lay down and die in your inner man, for your outward man will follow! Your actions follow your beliefs. That's why a whole generation of people died in the wilderness, having never crossed over Jordan to experience the goodness of the land of Canaan, because they didn't believe they could go over and conquer, so they didn't! Child of God, we will indeed feel faint at times, but that doesn't mean we have to die! It is often the case that survivors of dire and extreme circumstances testify that it was their hope of survival, believing that help was on the way, that kept them from giving up! What is going to keep us going on in the midst of adversity and hardship? When we choose to believe that one day we shall see the goodness of the Lord in delivering power! This is both a reliance upon the supernatural, as well as a survival strategy for the natural. Believe God, and it shall come to pass!

## Day 106

### *Today's Reading: Psalm 56, 120, 140-142*

**Today's Reflection: Psalm 56:3** *What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee.*

When we speak of faith, courage, boldness, and confidence in the power of God, sometimes we speak as if we never struggle with real fear. What man is there that could honestly say that they have so much faith that they are never shaken? I dare say that there is none! The truth is, even as the Psalmist expressed in our text, we learn to trust in the Lord because of the very existence of fear; “**What time I am afraid**, I will trust in thee.” It is not the mere fact that we never cope with fear, but rather that in doing so we shift our focus from that which we are afraid of to He whom we trust! It is not the absence of fear that enables us to believe, but rather it is the existence of fear which necessitates our faith! As I have said before, faith does not deny reality; it simply defies it. Were it not for the times in which I was terrified of what might become of myself, I would not have with such intensity and fervor ran to the Rock of my salvation! That’s why the child of God is able to overcome any obstacle, because we have a Refuge to run to! One thing is for sure, God has never let me down! Psalm 142:3a also says, “When my spirit was overwhelmed within me, then thou knewest my path.” Isn’t it reassuring to know that even when our faith is weak, He is yet strong? He doesn’t need a whole lot of faith to work with, just enough to measure up to the size of a grain of mustard seed! God can use our small faith to overcome our massive doubt! “Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.” (see Mark 9:24). Rom 3:3-4a says, “For what if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make the **faith of God** without effect? God forbid:” We therefore understand that since Jesus is the author of our faith, He shall also be the finisher (Heb 12:2)! When we place our trust in Christ, we are simply activating the faith that HE has deposited into our hearts by the Word of God (Rom 10:17)! Therefore, though our faith may get weak at times, HIS faith remains pure! We simply need to go back to the Word of God that deposited that seed of faith in its purest form to start with, and then bank on it! When we do, we shall say even as David, “What time I am afraid, **I will trust in thee.**”

## *Today's Reading: 1 Sam 25-27*

**Today's Reflection: 1 Sam 25:30-31** *And it shall come to pass, when the LORD shall have done to my lord according to all the good that he hath spoken concerning thee, and shall have appointed thee ruler over Israel; That this shall be no grief unto thee, nor offence of heart unto my lord, either that thou hast shed blood causeless, or that my lord hath avenged himself: but when the LORD shall have dealt well with my lord, then remember thine handmaid.*

Even as a woman soon forgets the anguish of her travail after her child is delivered into the world (see John 16:21), even so the pains of our anguish today shall be forgotten once our Lord delivers us from these jaws of death! The Lord sent Abigail by to remind David of this very truth, while he was on his way to avenge himself by taking matters into his own hands. How often are we tempted to do the same! Dear reader, what harms have you suffered undeservingly at the hands of your enemies? Do not get discouraged, nor emboldened in bitterness to take upon yourself what only belongs to the Lord (Heb 10:30). Victory will be sweeter, and the joys thereof more enduring, for those who wait upon the Lord. It may feel that the Lord is “taking His time” (indeed He is), but rest assured that when He deals with it, it will be dealt with righteously and thoroughly. One thing we need to remember is that it's only a matter of time before what looks like a problem to us today will only be a faint memory of the past tomorrow! We must not be so present minded; we must be future minded! We must develop the ability to look beyond today's injustices all the way into tomorrow's recompensed rewards, both on the wicked and upon the righteous. Child of God, be not hasty in resolving that which only God can truly handle; put it in His hands, for this too shall pass! Resolve to let those matters rest until such a time as our Father deems it necessary to deal in justice, even if that means waiting until Judgment Day. If we do this, we shall avoid the pitfalls of acting in the blindness of bitterness and making matters worse than they already are! Look past your past, and look past your present; envision yourself in the safety, peace and security of your Heavenly Father, enjoying His dainties, while your enemies look on only wishing they could have what you have! You won't be disappointed!

## Day 108

### *Today's Reading: Psalm 17, 35, 54, 63*

**Today's Reflection:** Psalm 17:3 "...thou hast visited me in the night..."

The night seasons of our journey are not the most pleasant, but perhaps they are the most impactful. We typically use "night" as a metaphor of all the dark times we experience throughout life; however, let us consider the benefits of night. First, were it not for night, we could not appreciate light! So it is with life; were it not for those dark times we experience, we would know nothing of the rays of hope that God shines into our hearts; the darker the night, the brighter God's light becomes to us! Second, night is a time of rest. Jesus said in John 9:4, "...the night cometh, when no man can work." When we go through hard times, our vision is often blurred, our understanding darkened, and our capabilities minimized. This is not always a bad thing, for it is then we learn best the importance of relying upon the hand of the Lord to see us through! In essence, while we are trying to do something, or trying to figure it out, our Lord is bidding us to rest in Him for the night. Morning will come soon enough, when He shall employ our services with a fresh anointing! Third, the absolute best benefit of the night is that we get personal visits from our Lord! His timing is always impeccable! God is never a day late or a dollar short; in fact, He is careful to select the times in our lives where His visits will be most appreciated, needed, comforting, and impactful. It is true that in our lives, the darkest night is just before dawn. If you're in a night season, I promise according to the authority of the Word of God, that He shall visit you in your darkness when you least expect Him to! When I thought that my hour of darkness couldn't get any worse, and I took as much as I could possibly take from the fears and insecurities of the storm, at that very moment God paid me a visit! I had heard of Him doing so for others, always fearing that my day would never come. Have you ever been there; a night so dark that you doubted God would even care? Rest assured, my beloved reader, that our Lord cares for you! One day you will hear Him knocking at your heart's door, just to pay you a visit! It is His Holy visitations that have transformed my life, enabling me to put on the garments of praise for the spirit of heaviness. I bless the name of the Lord for visiting me in the night, and fully expect Him to do the same for you!

***Today's Reading: 1 Sam 28-31, Psalm 18***

**Today's Reflection:** **1 Sam 30:6** *And David was greatly distressed; for the people spake of stoning him, because the soul of all the people was grieved, every man for his sons and for his daughters: but David encouraged himself in the LORD his God.*

David showed spiritual maturity by simply encouraging himself in the Lord! The sooner we learn to do the same, the better off we'll be. There are two types of people; those who need compliments to survive, and those who survive without them! This brings up a question; do you serve God to please others around you, or to please God Himself? Many of us who have been trained to serve the Lord have done so under the care of spiritual advisors and mentors; it is therefore a temptation to become carbon copies of our mentors in an effort to gain their approval and acceptance. Therefore, our idea of "success" comes with ease for the constant voice of cheering and coaching which comes from those who trained us. However, what about when we are weaned from their care? What will happen to us when God places us in a battle all our own, where we are the leader, and there's no one there to comfort us, to cheer us on, or to encourage us? We must learn to be as David, a man capable of drawing from that well of living waters within! What becomes particularly challenging is when God will have you to do something completely different than what you were trained to do. This is difficult because you were trained by people who approve of your efforts so long as you did it the way they did it; then, when the Lord shows you something He didn't show them, or leads you somewhere He didn't lead them, all of the sudden those who once were your advisors are now your enemies! Those whom you were trained to please are now the ones who bring you the most opposition. This is what changed Saul from David's friend to his chief foe! Notice here that David (vs. 8) did not inquire of Saul (once his leader and his king), but of the Lord! Why would he ask Saul what to do? After all, Saul was after his life because of jealousy! I assure you that David had great respect for Saul and his anointed position as king (1 Sam 24:6). David simply learned that God was taking him to a place that Saul could not go, and therefore became reliant upon God alone for his encouragement. We'd do well to do the same!

## Day 110

### *Today's Reading: Ps 121, 123-125, 128-130*

**Today's Reflection: Psalm 130:5** *I wait for the LORD, my soul doth wait, and in his word do I hope.*

To wait upon the Lord is to trust the Lord. Never think that you wait in vain, for your waiting speaks of expectancy, which speaks of faith! Whoever said “Good things happen to those who wait” said it well, for this is especially true when one is waiting upon the Lord. The most challenging part about waiting is the inability to see any activity or progress during the wait. It’s not what we know that bothers us, but it’s what we don’t know. The Lord doesn’t always give us status reports or ETA’s; often we just wait in silence. What do we do when we have waited and waited in silence, only to find ourselves doubting? I’ll tell you what David did; according to our text verse, he hoped in the Word of God! When we can’t hear Him speaking in the now, we trust what He’s already spoken! How often do we miss out on something good for lack of patience? We must learn that what God is doing does not depend on our knowing the details or timing! Just because we don’t see any activity doesn’t mean that God is not moving. That’s why Ps 27:14 also says, “Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the LORD.” The question is this: will we wait through? Perhaps you’ve heard of praying through, but have you ever had to wait through? When do we wait? We wait when we know that it is beyond our control. We wait when we have no more strength to stand. We wait when we’re not sure which way to go. God told Moses at the Red Sea to stand still! In other words, just wait and watch! If there’s one thing I’ve learned in my seasons of waiting, it’s this: the reward is well worth the wait! It’s when we get hasty in our spirit that we take matters back into our own hands, trying to force into existence naturally what can only be birthed supernaturally. Let’s not forfeit what God has in store for us by getting too hasty! Abraham got hasty concerning the promised seed, and as a result birthed an entire nation of conflict. There is no substitute for God’s plan. We can not rush Him; we can only wait on Him and trust Him at His Word! What are you waiting on from the Lord? I assure you according to the Word of God that your faith manifested in your waiting will pay off right on time!

## *Today's Reading: 2 Sam 1-4*

**Today's Reflection: 2 Sam 1:25a** *How are the mighty fallen in the midst of the battle!*

Here, David laments the death of his king. Although others might have expected him to rejoice at the fall of one who had brought him so much pain and misery, David no doubt had been with God during his times of suffering, and had learned the mind of God upon the situation, which is, "Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth, and let not thine heart be glad when he stumbleth." (Proverbs 24:17). This was a hard time for David; a time when he should have been fighting battles WITH his king, but instead was running FROM his king. He had on a couple of occasions opportunity to slay King Saul, but refused to touch God's anointed. This tells us that David understood the anointing, for he knew that if God raised him up, then it would only be God that put him back down. Although king Saul was "in the wrong", David knew that it was God's business to deal with the sins of His anointed servant. What's so sad about this story is that what could have been a triumph became a tragedy. Where did Saul go wrong? I think here of a couple of verses. 1 Cor 10:12 says, "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." One who is anointed is never to assume that he is immune to failure; this is a mistake that even the mighty Sampson made, remember? Also, Pro 16:18 says, "Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall." Saul's pride drove him to jealousy, which drove him mad, which drove him to an early grave! Never be jealous of God's anointing upon someone else; rejoice in their blessings and success, for there's plenty to go around for all of God's humble servants! Perhaps then, the number one killers of mighty men are arrogance, pride, and carelessness. If not, they are definitely towards the top of the list! We are to thank God for every man of God we hear of that has lived out their lives honoring God, and who as a result died with honor! However, we ought also to weep every time we hear of one whose ministry fails because of reasons mentioned above. Let this be a warning to those of us serving God; we are to take heed, lest we fall into the same snares that we have witnessed or maybe even criticized others for falling into! We are but flesh; therefore, we need God every moment of our lives!

## Day 112

### *Today's Reading: Ps 6, 8-10, 14, 16, 19, 21*

**Today's Reflection: Psalm 6:9** *The LORD hath heard my supplication; the LORD will receive my prayer.*

The Lord HATH, and the Lord WILL! The only thing standing between your prayers which *hath* been offered up, and the Lord's answer which *shall* come down, is the present; this means that God is working even now! His answer is in transit! However, the Lord must prepare us before we can receive even what we have prayed for. In other words, do not be surprised when you discover that it is you He's working on! Also, do not think that God's sovereignty nullifies our ability to influence Him to move in on our behalf; to the contrary, it is His sovereign will that we pray to Him in faith believing, so as to stir Him up to help us in times of need. Prayer is too powerful to become boring or ritualistic. If prayer has become boring to us, then it is because our prayers have become ineffective. Consider Isa 59:1-2, "Behold, the LORD'S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear." Notice in our text that before David had confidence that God heard his prayer, he first prayed a prayer of confession in verse two; "Have mercy upon me, O LORD; for I am weak:" I submit to you, dear reader, that the primary reason most Christians have lost confidence and effectiveness in their personal prayer life is because of unconfessed, unrepented sin in their lives. However, 1 Jn 1:9 says, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." 2 Chron 7:14 is still in the Bible! "If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land." If we will but get our sins under the blood, confessing that we are weak and frail without Him, He will hear and answer our prayers! Many times we're guilty of asking the Lord to work on everyone else around us, when the truth is, we've not even begun to get totally honest with Him about ourselves. What would happen if all we the people of God were to do this? I tell you, if we'll do our part, God will do His!

## *Today's Reading: 1 Chronicles 1-2*

**Today's Reflection: 1 Chron 2:3b** *And Er, the firstborn of Judah, was evil in the sight of the LORD; and he slew him.*

If you're like me, you're probably wondering, "What did Er do that was so bad that the Lord killed him?" There are other references throughout both the old and new testaments where the scriptures reveal to us the specific "sin unto death" that had occurred. Among those are complaining (Num 11:1), disobedience (Gen 19:26, 2 Sam 6:6-7), lying (Acts 5:3-5), and refusing to give God the glory for what He had done (Acts 12:22-23), just to name a few. However, our concern should not be what sins we can get by with today, and what sins we should avoid! Our concern should be that we sin not at all (1 John 2:1)! Rom 3:23 says, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;" The word "sin" simply means "miss the mark". Although one could argue that some come closer to hitting the mark of holiness than others, it can also be said that none but Christ have hit the bull's eye! Therefore, unless we are made perfect by the blood of Christ before God, then we are all guilty unto death! Rom 6:23 says, "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." Before Christ, we are walking dead men, but after Christ, we have been quickened, or made alive! Eph 2:1 says, "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins;" See also Col. 2:13! Allow me to remind you that there is a death worse than physical death; it is spiritual death. Rev 20:14-15 says, "And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire." So, before we conclude that we're not as bad as Er of the Bible, thinking we have escaped the wrath of God, we should ask ourselves this question and this question alone; are we under the blood of Christ? 1 Peter 4:18 asks, "And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" The truth is, we don't stand a chance without the righteousness of Christ being bestowed upon us! Philippians 3:9 says, "And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith:" Get it under the blood, and you'll have nothing to fear!

## Day 114

### *Today's Reading: Ps 43-45, 49, 84-85, 87*

**Today's Reflection: Psalm 84:7** *They go from strength to strength, every one of them in Zion appeareth before God.*

We use milestones as measuring devices to help us determine both how far we have come, and how far we have left to go. The same is true of our journey with God. Though we do not necessarily measure in terms of literal distance what God has brought us through, we do have “milestones”, or reference points, in our past! For instance, my first reference point of significance was when I first felt the tug of the Holy Spirit pulling me to Christ one night while I was watching Billy Graham on television and listening to the invitational song “Just as I Am”, when I was too young to even remember my age! Another one was listening to the old-time preacher preaching like there was no tomorrow while his zeal alone left a lasting impression upon a child still young enough to get by with laying in the floor up under the church pew! I then go to the day I got saved, which was by far the biggest reference point of my life! Then I go to when I surrendered to the ministry, then to the day I answered the call to preach the Gospel, then to the day I married my wife, and the list could go on and on. My point is, events of significance that happen in our lives is what we use to measure our levels of spiritual growth and development, or the lack thereof! I’ve noticed that some only refer to the “valleys” of life. They do not view their walk with God as one going from “strength to strength” but from “trouble to trouble”! Friends, we must realize that for every valley is also a mountain-top experience! God uses our valleys to make us stronger! That’s why our text says “from strength to strength”! When we become addicted to the ministry (1 Cor 16:15), our focus shouldn’t be so much on the trials themselves, but the victories they render, and the strength we gain from them! That’s what keeps me going when I’m in a season of trial; I’m looking for my next victory, my next breakthrough, my next answered prayer, my next mountain-top experience, my next God encounter where He clothes me with His strength (see Ps 93:1)! We should learn to live our lives in Christ from strength to strength, not from misery to misery! See also 2 Cor 3:18! Be not as concerned with your next trial, but with the next giant you shall slay with the Lord’s strength upon you!

## *Today's Reading: 1 Chronicles 3-5*

**Today's Reflection: 1 Chronicles 5:20b** ...they cried to God in the battle, and he was intreated of them; because they put their trust in him.

It's time for a battle cry! The text says that God was entreated of them! This literally means that He was "Prevailed on by urgent solicitation; consenting to grant what is desired (the word *entreated* as defined by Webster's 1828 dictionary)." In other words, their urgent, earnest prayer of faith obligated God to do something! You may say, "God will be obligated to no man!" However, remember that in this particular text, God was not obligated to mere man, but to His own Divine nature and word! Jesus said in Matt 21:22, "And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive." James 5:16b also says, "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." God has defined for us in His word the parameters in which He agrees to work; FAITH! When we trust Him, He must move on our behalf, not because He is made a puppet, but because He has made a promise! God will not do anything we ask Him to, but He will do anything we ask Him to do when we ask in pure faith! If it cannot be asked in faith, then it should not be asked at all. That's why God doesn't answer ridiculous prayers which contradict faith and His word! Pure faith always goes back to the cross of Calvary. At the cross is where sin is taken care of. At the cross is where we begin our journey of faith in Christ. At the cross is where we submit our will to His. Therefore, in the Christ of the cross we live, and move, and have our being (see Acts 17:28)! When therefore we set our affection on Christ and His will for us, we do not pray earnestly in genuine faith for things that do not exalt Him in our lives. Understand this; pure faith is so simple that even a child can teach us a few lessons! When I teach my children new things, with full faith they acknowledge and accept what I teach them; they trust me fully! It is not until children begin to think of themselves as adults and listen to other influences of this world that they begin to question our teachings. So it is with God's children. That's why Jesus said in Luke 18:17, "Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall in no wise enter therein." So, go ahead and offer a battle cry to the Lord today, trust Him at His word, and then watch what He does!

## Day 116

### *Today's Reading: Psalm 73, 77-78*

**Today's Reflection: Psalm 78:7a** *That they might set their hope in God...*

Perhaps the greatest desire of this author's heart is to exalt Christ in such a way that generations to come might set their hope in God! The song writer said it well; "My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness. I dare not trust the sweetest frame, but wholly lean on Jesus' name! On Christ the solid rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand; all other ground is sinking sand!" I have stood in many of those sinking sand traps of the world myself, just to find empty promises and shattered dreams. However, when I met Christ, I knew at once what it meant to be set upon a Rock! There is nothing more sure, steadfast or unmovable than that which is provided at the cross of Calvary; not one place with more certainty, peace, security, comfort or rest! I certainly owe my all to Him for what He's done for me. It would do us well periodically to reflect upon just how shaky our lives were before Christ entered the picture; no peace of mind, no real friends you could trust, and no one to call on in your biggest time of need. I could go on and on, but my point is this; if we could show this world a "before and after" shot of our lives (before Christ and after Christ), then our lives ought to testify that there is no alternatives to being made alive in Him! This world needs to know that we have a Savior they can call on, who will cleanse them with His blood, save them by His grace, and enable them by His power to make an eternal impact on this world, making their lives count for something bigger than the temporal. Surely there is yet emptiness in the heart of every unbeliever screaming out to the fact that there is more to life than the here and now. Facing life WITH Christ has enough challenges of its own; much less facing life WITHOUT Him. Nevertheless, there are still many who do just that every day, looking for all the right answers in all the wrong places. Somebody must tell them that when they put their hope in God, they will never be disappointed. But then, that would require that we trust Him first, wouldn't it? Just another reason our faith is tested so much as it is, that we might better testify of God's unfailing love and faithfulness!

## Today's Reading: 1 Chronicles 6

**Today's Reflection: 1 Chronicles 6:32b** ...and then they waited on their office according to their order.

It has been said that preparedness is half the work; in ministry, I'd say it's more than that! *Preparation for service* is much more vital than *position of service*; however, many times we're guilty of focusing on obtaining a position than we are preparing for it. Question; if you are not well equipped, what are you going to do with it when you get it? Never belittle the stages of preparation you must go through before you come into your prime of ministry; waiting is essential! Think about this; before Calvary, God was preparing for all of eternity past for that one moment in time when at last His Son Jesus Christ would present Himself as the final sacrifice for sins once and for all. One solitary life, having only 33 years on earth in which to become the center of history and the sole source of light and life, Christ gave us the single-most pivotal point of reference by which to gage our lives both here on earth, as well as where we'll spend eternity; that point of reference is Calvary! About 4,000 years had passed since the creation of the world and the fall of man into sin; no need to worry, for God had a plan, and was well prepared to step down from eternity into time at just the right moment so that whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved! So then, if everything before the Cross led up to it, and everything after the Cross looks back to it, then we should learn that since preparedness was important enough for even God Himself, then we ought also to place value upon it. Friend, God is preparing you for your season of productivity; the better prepared you are, the more productive you'll be once you get there! Everything in your life up to this point has been used to make you the person you are still becoming; it is to prepare you for your most significant place of service. All those lonely nights and tears of sorrow shall pay off when at last you'll be able to minister effectively to the broken-hearted. All those weary days when your strength almost failed you shall pay off when at last you'll be able to encourage another fellow-laborer in Christ to go another mile! Don't skip line, or you'll lose too much credibility; rather, if you will wait your turn, then when your turn comes, you will be as effective as you'll ever need to be!

## Day 118

### *Today's Reading: Psalm 81, 88, 92-93*

**Today's Reflection: Psalm 88:18** *Lover and friend hast thou put far from me, and mine acquaintance into darkness.*

At times our journey will take us into places where we're at distance from those to whom we feel we should be the closest. It is difficult for others to understand the path God has selected for your life, when you don't even understand it yourself! Even our Lord went into utter isolation, where on the cross he cried, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" The psalmist said in Ps 142:4b, "...no man cared for my soul." However, I speak of these times only as seasonal moments, for it wasn't until after the cross that the resurrection came! Know this; your season of loneliness is intended only to bring death to that part of you which shall hinder you from becoming more Christ-like. To be like Christ is to be a friend even to the vilest of sinners and the worst of your enemies. It's not the easiest road to take, nor the most popular, yet it is at last the most fruitful field in which to find your self! Jesus said in John 12:24, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." This was not only prophetic of His purpose for going to the cross, but also of what we must experience in our walk with Him! We must die to self in order that He might live through us. In doing so, at the end we shall not die alone; rather, we shall bring forth much fruit! We may in fact pour our whole lives into people that seemingly care nothing for, nor acknowledge our sacrifice on their behalf; yet, one day this body of death shall be resurrected into newness of life, and what seemed fruitless and pointless shall be turned into a watered garden. The question, then, is this; will we be willing to go all the way to the cross with Him? In doing so, we shall be able to say even as Paul, "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead." So, child of God, what you think is going to kill you will in fact bring you more abundance of life through the resurrecting power of Christ than you ever dreamed possible! One day you'll say even as David in Ps 92:10b, "I shall be anointed with fresh oil." The anointing is worth the price!

## *Today's Reading: 1 Chronicles 7-10*

**Today's Reflection: 1 Chronicles 9:13** *And their brethren, heads of the house of their fathers, a thousand and seven hundred and threescore; very able men for the work of the service of the house of God.*

God is still capable of providing “very able men” for His work. Here were mentioned 1,760 in particular. I personally have in times past made this comment with regards to the work of the ministry, “It’s just hard to find good help these days!” However, after reading this verse I must admit I was wrong; it’s not hard at all for the Lord to find them. As a pastor, my heart is encouraged to know that even now God is preparing very able men for the work of the service of the house of God. Just because the people we need to aid us in the ministry are not in our lives right at the moment, does not mean that they are not being prepared to serve! Our Lord is very strategic in His work; He knows the who, the how, and the when. Often, we as leaders of the work feel as if it’s our burden and obligation to scout, screen and secure the services of those individuals whom we feel are best qualified for the job. The fact is, except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it (Ps 127:1a). Whenever the Lord sends someone into our lives to aid us in the ministry He has called us to, we are not to question His pickings! I’m afraid that all too often we “disqualify” others before we give them a real chance to shine for Jesus. This reminds me of when the sons of Jesse were being looked over to see who was best suited to be king. Samuel picked out Eliab because of his countenance and his height of stature, but the Lord said, “Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for *the LORD seeth* not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart.” God had already picked out His anointed servant David, and had been preparing him for such a time as this! What then are we to do when the harvest is great, but the labourers are few? Jesus answers this question in Luke 10:2b, when He says, “...pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest.” 1 Chron 9:27 goes on to say, “...they lodged round about the house of God, because the charge was upon them...” Leaders, ask, and ye shall receive!

## Day 120

### *Today's Reading: Psalm 102-104*

**Today's Reflection: Psalm 104:10** *He sendeth the springs into the valleys, which run among the hills.*

Water runs to the lowest point of elevation. So it is with the springs of the Lord! He sends forth His Word from lofty mountain grandeur to lowly wretched man. From Calvary's mount comes that living water which flows to the lowest depths of our sinful estate. There is a fountain filled with blood, drawn from Emanuel's vein, and sinners plunged beneath that flood lose all their guilty stains! Amid this parched desert-land experience we call life is placed a wellspring of living waters for weary pilgrims passing by. Oh soul, are you here without comfort or rest, marching down the rough pathway of time? Come anchor your soul to the haven of rest, and say "My Beloved is mine!" Christ came that we might have life, and that we might have it more abundantly; there is therefore no reason why you should live another moment without Him. You may feel you have reached the lowest low, and that consequently you have disqualified yourself from ever receiving God's grace; however, I assure you, dear reader, that where sin abounded, grace did much more abound (Rom 5:20)! Your "all-time low" is no match for His grace! Romans 8:38-39 says, "For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, **nor depth**, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Even as water travels to the lowest point, His grace finds you where you are. Romans 5:6-8 says, "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." God does not wait for you to "clean up" before He saves you; if He did so, He would wait in vain. Knowing this, He comes to us in our sin! Even when we're not looking for Him, He is looking for us. Dear sinner friend, regardless of your past or present condition, hear me; God loves you! He wants you in His family! If you are ready to turn from your sins to Him, He'll save you even now. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved!

### ***Today's Reading: 2 Sam 5:1-10, 1 Chron 11-12***

**Today's Reflection: 1 Chronicles 12:33b** ...*fifty thousand, which could keep rank: they were not of double heart.*

If ever there is a time when the children of God need to “keep rank”, or, in other words, remain loyal to God’s Word, it is now! In a world where many have been sung to sleep by the lullabies of new age philosophy and situational ethics, it is difficult to take a stand for any one thing, especially when everyone does that which is right in his own eyes. Absolute moral code, as defined by the Holy Bible, has been diluted with the lies of this new age. As a result, what used to be black and white is now only an inconsistent mix of murky gray. However, Psalm 119:89 says, “For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven.” This is great news; for even though this world has tried to dilute, discredit, and even destroy the Word of God, God has miraculously preserved His Word. Even though we have lost our way as a nation, we can find our way back home through the Word of God! The Bible should be the standard by which we live our lives, and therefore it is time we get back to the Bible! On this note, there are many diluted bibles which do not hold true to the original copies which the first church accepted as the “received text”. It is therefore the author’s conclusion after much study that the most reliable translation of the Bible in English is the King James Bible. We understand that many of our readers do not share the same conviction. Our goal is not to bring division to the body of Christ, but simply to advise that all be very cautious as to which Bible you subject yourself to, and upon which you stake your eternal destiny. When we need to hear a Word from God, it is imperative that we get HIS Word, and not a diluted version of His Word! When we decide that we will hear what God said, and not what others think He said, then and only then will we be able to regain our long-lost morality as a nation! Proverbs 30:5a says, “Every word of God is pure...” Therefore, we MUST get back to the Word of God as our standard, and be willing to take a stand for what is right even in the midst of a world that has grown hostile towards truth! If we “keep rank” with the Word of God, we shall overcome! Someone once said, “If you take a stand for nothing, then you’ll fall for anything!” Stand for God’s Word, and you’ll never go wrong!

## Day 122

### *Today's Reading: Psalm 133*

**Today's Reflection: Psalm 133:3b** *...for there the LORD commanded the blessing, even life for evermore.*

I want to be where ever it is that the Lord commands the blessing! In our reading, verse one tells us the place in which the Lord does so; the place of unity. God says in essence, "I like that unity so much, I command the blessing upon that group of people!" I have been in places where there was no unity, and as a result there were also no blessings. I do not wish to ever revisit those places again! There are those who feel as though they accomplish more with controversy and division, all in the name of "taking a stand," than they do with unity. I'm all for taking a stand for something, as long as it's worth taking a stand for! However, many times people fight the wrong battles; we're not here to fight one another, but we're here to unite with one another to do battle against the devil and his kingdom of darkness (see Eph 6:12). When the devil convinces one of God's children that a sister or brother is their enemy, then he has successfully distracted and detoured that individual into dedicating all their energy in the wrong area, making matters worse instead of better. I wonder how many people in the church have aided satan's cause more than the unbelieving world has? Let us never forget this; divided we fall, but united we stand! Jesus even said that a house divided against itself shall not stand (Matt 12:25). It is embarrassing to admit this, but the truth is that there have been so many unnecessary church splits that speak to our shame as Christians that our salt, in many places, has lost its effectiveness; we have been tossed out to be trodden under the feet of men. Instead of uniting our efforts and resources for one common goal of advancing the Gospel, we have split over the non-essentials, and therefore are so divided into splinters that God could not bless many of our churches if He wanted to! Instead of solving problems, we simply split! At times, even those who share the same doctrinal beliefs seem to be able to get along with no one but themselves. Our prayer this day should be that we learn some lessons about unity, for it is a revival of unity that we need in our churches! If this were to happen, then once again God's blessings could fall fresh on our ministries, thereby yielding effectiveness in spreading the Gospel!

### *Today's Reading: Psalm 106-107*

**Today's Reflection: Psalm 106:24** *Yea, they despised the pleasant land, they believed not his word:*

It was difficult for me to understand why the children of Israel despised the promised land until I too was almost paralyzed by doubt. Then I understood just how vulnerable the human spirit is to circumstantial pandemonium, even to the point of denying the very promises of God! What we must learn to do, dear reader, is to put on our spiritual eyeglasses of faith which see through the fog of present day obstacles; otherwise, we will begin to despise that which God intended for us to enjoy and forfeit our pass into the promised land experience. That's why it is easy for those who have not yet tasted of the grapes of Canaan to be so critical towards those who dare to cross over Jordan; their vision is blurred! They think that what they already have is as good as it gets, so when God begins to bless someone else with something they don't have, they despise rather than celebrate! You know who despises you by knowing who criticizes you! I have observed that those who are of doubtful dispositions concerning the blessings of God are the same ones who do not receive an abundant supply from His storehouse! Could it be that the reason these individuals are in this predicament is because of their unbelief? Often, those who would doubt would also justify their doubt based upon their own present and past experience, thinking, "Well, that's never happened to me!" Never once does it occur to them that it could happen to them, if they would only believe! If you can see it, then you can get it. The problem with most of Israel was that they just couldn't see it. They chose to believe the evil report instead of the report of faith delivered by Joshua and Caleb. Because believing is seeing, and they did not believe, therefore they could not see. Lack of faith is nothing short of blindness. That's why faith and vision go hand in hand; without a vision the people indeed will perish, but I'd also like to say that without faith the vision will perish. Joshua and Caleb caught a glimpse of what they could have, and then they went for it! They didn't just see what they saw with the natural eye that day they spied out the land; they saw through the spiritual eye what their future would hold! May it never be said of us, "They believed not His word!"

## Day 124

### ***Today's Reading: 2 Sam 5:11-6:23, 1 Chron 13-16***

**Today's Reflection: 2 Sam 6:11** *And the ark of the LORD continued in the house of Obbedom the Gittite three months: and the LORD blessed Obbedom, and all his household.*

Obbedom was the beneficiary of nothing more than the overflow of God's goodness! What a beautiful picture of grace. Here, the ark of the Lord is symbolic of His presence; with His presence comes power and provisions. Wherever God is, good things happen! Our text said, "...the LORD blessed Obbedom, **and all his household.**" Please notice that nothing is said of Obbedom's spirituality, his dedication of service or zeal to the Lord, or anything else for that matter. We are not told that he was deserving of the blessings of God; we are only told that he was blessed! Whenever God begins to show up at your house, whether it is through a child, a friend, or a spouse, things happen that can only be explained as the goodness of God on behalf of the believer's sake! You may be the only one in your household who is a believer, but do not be discouraged, because it will be through your faith that God channels the blessings even upon those in your household whom you feel are least deserving. After all, it is the goodness of God that leads men to repentance! It is interesting to note in our reading today that King David was afraid of the ark of God, until he heard that God was blessing the house of Obbedom; then, he wasn't afraid anymore! He immediately fetched the ark and brought it up into the city of David with gladness. If one were to ever to get a glimpse of God in all of His splendor, glory and goodness, they would no longer be frozen by fear but motivated by His grace to come and dine at His table! Dear reader, do not be terrified of the Lord as if He is out to hurt or condemn you; John 3:17 says, "For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved." Please note that in our reading, the reason that Uzzah was smitten of the Lord was because he was outside of the parameters of the Word of God. When we violate the Word of God, we have much to fear; yet, when we yield to the Word of God by trusting the Son of God, we then find ourselves in the tender loving care of the Savior of the world! We now live in the day of grace, where through faith in Christ, His blood will cleanse us from all our sins! Hallelujah!

### *Today's Reading: Psalm 1-2, 15, 22-24, 47, 68*

**Today's Reflection: Psalm 68:9** *Thou, O God, didst send a plentiful rain, whereby thou didst confirm thine inheritance, when it was weary.*

After mediating and studying the subject of faith throughout the Bible, I have noticed a pattern; the Lord always waits until the most significant moments in which to deliver His people out of trouble! This pattern has also played out in my own life on many occasions. I have come to the conclusion that in our weakest moments, when it seems like we're going down for the last time, is when we need to be most jubilant; for these are the times in which the Lord magnifies Himself greatly in our lives. Notice the phrase "thou didst confirm thine inheritance, when it was weary." We do not need confirmation when we are strong! Our Heavenly Father knows just when to send His Word like rain upon our thirsty souls. At times this journey of faith will lead us into treacherous territory, where, if we do not occasionally get confirmation from the Lord, will also lead us to believe that we've made a mistake. However, isn't it just like the Lord to confirm His Word in our weakest moments? Hallelujah! Paul said in 2 Cor 12:10b, "...for when I am weak, then am I strong." Like an archer tests the strength of his bow, so the Lord tests the strength of our faith. The very instant just before the archer releases his arrow, the bow has the most pressure applied to it at any point during the process, only to realize its greatest strength when at last the arrow is propelled! Dear reader, get ready for your release! The pressure is on, and your strength is almost gone, but Your Heavenly Father is prepared to release some things out of your life and propel some things into your future that you've only dreamed of up to this point! It is at our breaking point that we are endued with power from on high; we are not supplied with strength in moments of leisure, but in moments of stress! Ps 68:13 goes on to say, "Though ye have lien among the pots, yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold." You may have lien among the pots as well; this speaks of lamentation and distress. In Job's trial, he found himself in this very place, scraping sores on his body with broken pieces of pottery. Yet, even Job said in Job 23:10, "But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold." Deliverance SHALL come!

## Day 126

### *Today's Reading: Ps 89, 96, 100-101, 105, 132*

**Today's Reflection: Ps 105:17-19** *He sent a man before them, even Joseph, who was sold for a servant: Whose feet they hurt with fetters: he was laid in iron: Until the time that his word came: the word of the LORD tried him.*

“Whose feet they hurt with fetters...” Feet speak of the past in that they tell of miles gone by. They speak of the present to tell whether one is still or moving on. They speak of the future by the direction in which they are pointed. Romans 10:15b says, “How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!” Feet which travel the path less trodden for the cause of Christ, though they be scratched, bruised, worn, and callused, are no doubt the most beautiful feet of all! The beauty is not so much in the natural realm as in the supernatural; for it's not the scars, but the reasons for them that are beautiful! Joseph didn't know at first the pain his travels would bear upon his feet but don't you know that when he arrived at the palace, he realized the destination was well worth the pain! There is one thing our past, present, and future all have in common; they are all defined by time. Our text goes on to say, “...he was laid in iron: Until the time that his word came:” No doubt the wait was long and hard for Joseph; yet, he waited patiently until the word came! One day he got word that his days in prison were over, and so they were! However, please note it says, “...the word of the LORD tried him.” It is a trying time when one knows what the Word says, but has yet to experience its truth! Timing is everything; that's why it is important to wait for YOUR word! Pro 25:11 says, “A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver.” Perhaps this will be a fitly spoken word of encouragement for you: Just because God hasn't, does not mean He won't! He is simply waiting for the time in which you are best prepared to receive the word! When are we best prepared to receive the word of deliverance? When we have passed the test! Joseph knew that what he was going through in prison was not what he had dreamed just a few years earlier. His only option was to wait it out in faith, taking it one day at a time, until at last his word came. So it is with you and I; God gives us glimpses into a future that we can only realize one faith-step at a time!

***Today's Reading: 2 Sam 7, 1 Chron 17***

**Today's Reflection: 2 Samuel 7:8b** ...*I took thee from the sheepcote, to be ruler over my people...*

God takes people from the strangest places to do the strangest things! It is definitely safe to say that God and man are not even on the same wavelength. When men train leaders, we typically use conventional means to do so; however, God specializes in using the unconventional! What business has a shepherd boy in a palace anyway? That's what men would ask, but not God! It is not a lofty pedigree, traditional training, nor conventional methods which guarantee the best results. In more cases than not, success is birthed out of the direst of circumstances, and in places which it was most likely not to have happened. If you could have asked any of David's brothers what David was preparing for, they would have simply said, "A better shepherd!" Perhaps even David as a boy may have thought that his future career was already laid out for him. It is the author's opinion that David would have been content with that, as long as he could continue to write and sing about his Lord! However, there came a day when David outgrew his position. God had grown him as much as he was going to grow as a shepherd boy, and so it was time to give him his first giant! Please note that God could not have graduated David, had David not been content beforehand; God wants our contentment to be in Him, not in present-day circumstances. That way, when circumstances change, our foundation stays intact! Godliness with contentment is great gain (1 Tim 6:6). It is when we are content with God and His great wisdom that we are then able to move on to higher ground. In essence, God says, "I need you to be able to trust me before I can move you on! First things first!" With each level there is always going to be the contentment test. However, do not confuse contentment with satisfaction! Contentment is not an end; it is only the means to an end. To be content is not to say, "Let's just settle for what we have, because it was just meant to be!" Rather, it is to say, "I'm willing to stay where I'm at as long as it takes for the Lord to prepare me for the next level!" There must be a mixture of contentment AND expectancy! If we will do this today, then some tomorrow we'll find ourselves in places of service we could not have even imagined!

## Day 128

### ***Today's Reading: Psalm 25, 29, 33, 36, 39***

**Today's Reflection: Psalm 25:12** *What man is he that feareth the LORD? Him shall he teach in the way that he shall choose.*

First of all, it is God's prerogative if He wants to give us a choice! Never allow non-biblical, traditional religion to constrain you from exercising your God-given right to choose. "Choose you this day!" Many are guilty of indecisiveness for fear of making the wrong choice. Which is the greater sin; making a potentially bad choice, or making no choice at all? James 4:17 says, "Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." When God gives us a choice, not choosing at all is to make the wrong choice in and of itself, for there is no middle ground! Now, many have made altogether different choices in life, while at the same time remaining loyal to their Savior! For example, the body of Christ is as diverse as the nations of the world when it comes to personal career choices amongst individual believers. What is difficult sometimes, whether it is a career choice, a ministry decision, or any other situation, is not deciding between right and wrong, but trying to decide between two rights! Many times we have not just one option in a given situation, but many options from which to choose. Furthermore, timeframes and deadlines often force us to make quick decisions based upon what limited knowledge we have at the moment in which we must make the choice. This can often lead to insecurity and frustration when we feel ill-prepared to make the soundest decision. However, our text gives us great news! As long as we fear the Lord, He will teach us in the way that we shall choose! When the Lord taught me this concept, I was immediately freed from the fear of failure, knowing that my Lord would still be with me every step of the way, regardless of the uncertainties that surround me! It's not like the Lord is going to ditch you if you make a "good" choice over a "better" choice, nor even if you make a "bad" choice over a "good" choice! He promised He would never leave us nor forsake us; therefore, there is no road that we can go down where He will not be with us! Just remember, he did not promise to teach you in the way that you choose should you walk in dishonor to His name; He may not leave you, but He can't teach you when you're not listening! Today, fear Him, make your choice, and then succeed!

**Today's Reading: 2 Sam 8-9, 1 Chron 18**

**Today's Reflection: 8:6b** *And the LORD preserved David whithersoever he went.*

I wish to just take a moment and praise the Lord for His power to preserve His servants! It is with utmost confidence that we can serve Him fearlessly in the face of our enemies, because of this very truth. Some might think I'm just a young, naïve, unseasoned saint to speak of boldly marching into enemy territory and doing damage to his kingdom for the cause of Christ; however, before you criticize my ambition, please consider my source of inspiration...the Word of God! I may yet be young, but I'm just young enough to take Him at His Word! If He said He'll preserve me, then I believe it! If He said He'll prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies, then I believe it! Dear friend, do not be as many Christians who give the enemy too much credit. Respect his power and understand the weakness of your flesh, but always remember that faith in God's word will help you overcome both! When we walk in the power of HIS might, then we ARE over comers. We do not have to cower into a corner and shake in our boots at the very mentioning of the devil. We simply need to rely upon the strength of the Lord, enabling Him through our faith to fight the battle for us. I wonder just how much advancement the church could make in just one week if every believer would dare face his giant with Holy Ghost boldness! Learning to trust the Lord to do battle for you is nothing short of developing a dependency upon Him! We must get to a place where we not only believe Him and trust Him, but we depend upon Him and Him alone to see us through! That's why Eph 6:16 says, "Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked." Notice it says "ALL"! That shield of faith is like an invisible wall of defense (invisible to the enemy, that is) designed to set the enemy up for a trap. Just the moment he thinks he has you is the moment his weapon which was meant to destroy you backfires in his face! 2 Chronicles 20:22 says, "And when they began to sing and to praise, the LORD set ambushments against the children of Ammon, Moab, and mount Seir, which were come against Juda; and they were smitten." God will do what it takes to preserve His servants!

## Day 130

### *Today's Reading: Ps 50, 53, 60, 75*

**Today's Reflection: Psalm 60:3** *Thou hast shewed thy people hard things: thou hast made us to drink the wine of astonishment.*

The journey, though clothed with many victories, is yet laden with many hardships along the way. We do not speak of the victorious Christian life as if it were a cake walk: for without battles, there would be no victory! "Thou hast shewed thy people hard things..." It is necessary for our Lord to expose us to the harsh elements of the open battlefield of faith, otherwise we would not grow in the same! Hard things are seen in battle, much of which not only shapes who we are, but forever burns in our memories images and experiences which we wish we never saw, and in vain wish we could forget! Yet, those memories remain, reminding us over and over of the pitfalls of sin upon the children of disobedience and unbelief. We do not rejoice when others fall in the battle, not even our enemies! Even they could have with repented heart joined rank with the blood-washed band of Christian soldiers with whom we march. Yet, we see so many fallen in the heat of the battle, neglecting to surrender to the call of God in their lives. We as soldiers are exposed to these hard scenes of loss and death for two reasons; one, to remind us of the harsh realities of the effects of sin, and, two, to motivate us to keep marching forward in this fight for the freedom of whosoever will! Today, if I can but help one more person avoid spiritual casualty, then I have done my duty! These hard things our Lord shows us should not harden us; if anything, they should tenderize our hearts to do all we can to bring another soldier home alive! I am saddened at the memories I have even now of dear friends of yesteryear who are in the grave today as a direct result of lewd living, having rejected Christ and His offer of Salvation to them. They could have celebrated their 30<sup>th</sup> birthday this year, with their whole life ahead of them! Yet, it wasn't cancer that killed them, nor was it old age, or a heart attack, but it was sin. The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus! God help us to use the tragedies of life as reminders of why we do what we do for God! Lives are at stake, and souls hang in the balance. It is a matter of life or death; let us therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ (2 Tim 2:3)!

### ***Today's Reading: 2 Sam 10, 1 Chron 19, Ps 20***

**Today's Reflection:** 2 Samuel 10:3b *...hath not David rather sent his servants unto thee, to search the city, and to spy it out, and to overthrow it?*

Can not a man of war also be a man of peace? So often is the case that mighty men are perceived only as over comers; very seldom is the case where their gentle side is seen or understood. It has been my observation over the years that the preacher is often viewed the same way! Can we not on Sunday preach a fiery message of correction and conviction to a needy soul, and then afterwards extend our personal friendship to the same? Preachers are ordinary people, just with an extra-ordinary call! Do not mistake our sermons of correction to be intentionally personal, for we are only delivering God's mail to His people! Just because the preacher "stepped on your toes" does not necessarily mean that he is personally at odds with you. It could simply mean that the Holy Spirit has given him a sermon just for you! In my years of preaching, I have at times preached with such conviction upon a subject, that the hearer has allowed the message itself to drive a wedge between our friendship, taking what was said as if I was intentionally pointing out the errors of their way, when in fact I had no idea it was them that was most in need of the sermon. Now, although preachers are not perfect, and unfortunately there are always exceptions to the rule, may I suggest that you be very cautious before prematurely falling into the trap of viewing your pastor as cold or distant, for most likely he is one of the best friends you have! The devil is real good about causing people of the church to misinterpret the good intentions of their pastor. In our text, David had only meant to do good to his neighboring people in this particular incident, yet they brought sorrow upon sorrow unto themselves for allowing the lies of their real enemy, the devil, to permeate their thoughts! Do not make the mistake of doing the same with your relationship to your pastor. If he indeed is a man after God's own heart, then the worst thing that could happen to you is to allow something to come between you and the hand that seeks to feed you spiritually! Though he is but a man, he is still God's man, and we had better respect him as such, for the Lord has hand-picked him for the task!

## Day 132

### **Today's Reading: Ps 65-67, 69-70**

**Today's Reflection:** Psalm 67:5-6 *Let the people praise thee, O God; let all the people praise thee. Then shall the earth yield her increase; and God, even our own God, shall bless us.*

Somebody ought 'a testify! Although our times are in the hand of the Lord (see Ps 31:15), and many of His plans are unpredictable, there is one thing we can do to ensure that He shows up every time: PRAISE! "Let all the people praise thee. **Then...**" If faith is the seed, then surely praise is what activates that seed! "**Then** shall the earth yield her increase..." Praise brings faith to a whole new level. Whereas before faith is the substance of things hoped for, now, after praise ushers in the presence and power of God, faith has now come into fruition! What before was just a thought is now tangible: what was not seen before is now on open display for all to see! Praise is that which germinates our faith, and causes that which is not to come into existence. That is why I believe that praise is the deepest level of faith one can express, for it is the fertile ground in which our intimacy with God yields the most productivity, evidencing His increase in our lives! I am reminded of Acts 4:13, where it says, "Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marveled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus." Here, Peter and John just couldn't shut up about their Lord! They were so bold and confident in Christ, that the only conclusion that the critics of their day could come to, the only explanation, was that they had been with Jesus! It ought to be the desire of each and every Christian that our love for Jesus is so bold, and our confidence in Him is so firm, that others would have no doubt that we don't just talk about Him, but we've been with Him! When our testimony becomes this compelling to others, then we're at a point where we can really make a difference in their lives. A silent Christian will never be known as a great soul-winner, only those who open their mouths boldly to speak of Jesus and His love! God help each of us, from this day forward, to be bold, courageous, and daring in our speech concerning Jesus and what He's done for us! May we always lift Him high no matter who is around! May we then realize God's fullest anointing in our lives!

### ***Today's Reading: 2 Sam 11-12, 1 Chron 20***

**Today's Reflection:** 2 Sam 12:14 *Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme, the child also that is born unto thee shall surely die.*

Let us never forget that if we profess the name of Christ, we are living epistles (2 Cor 3:3), representing Him before this world! We ought therefore to consider our ways, for they speak to His glory or to our shame. Though Christ bore our shame once on the cross in salvation's plan (Heb 12:2), He shall not do so again in sanctification's plan (See Heb 10:26-27). Here, David was widely known as a servant of the Lord. When word got out about his sins of adultery and murder, this gave "great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme"! The LORD therefore defended His name by showing disapproval upon David's actions. This He did by taking the life of David's son who was conceived in sin. I dare not imply that the Lord cared not for this child; it is obvious that it's not the child He is dealing with (for the child was innocent), but it was David's sin He was dealing with. As his Heavenly Father, God dealt with David as with a child in need of chastisement (see Heb 12:8). The surest way for a father to recover from shame brought onto the family name, is to correct the child which brought the shame. God has invested too much in exalting His name among the heathen for His own children to disgrace Him without consequence! He chastens us not only in defense of His own name, but in loving concern for His children (Heb 12:6). Before one is tempted to think that God takes pleasure in disciplining us, consider what 2 Sam 12:24 goes on to say concerning David's next son Solomon, "...and the LORD loved him." It so grieved the heart of God to have to take David's first child with Bathsheba, that He was delighted to give him Solomon as a reminder of His love and mercy! Though the Lord must deal harshly with our disobedience, He looks for every chance possible to restore that which we have lost even as a result of our own sins. God through chastening will always confirm His never-dying love for us! Perhaps one of the most difficult things to endure during chastisement is that of looking into the loving, tear-filled eyes of our Heavenly Father. From this day forward, let us determine to bring our Lord the honor due His name!

## Day 134

### ***Today's Reading: Ps 32, 51, 86, 122***

**Today's Reflection:** Psalm 32:7 *Thou art my hiding place; thou shalt preserve me from trouble; thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance. Selah.*

I remember how, when I was a little boy, I would climb up in bed with my mother and hide up under the covers whenever a storm would come over, because I was afraid of the lightning and thunder. I would always go there because it was the most comforting place in the house for me to run. Mom would always make me feel better! One of the things I remember the most was this song she would break out and sing every time a storm would come through.... "Till the storm passes over, till the thunder sounds no more, till the clouds roll forever from the sky, hold me fast, let me stand, in the hollow of Thy hand. Keep me safe, till the storm passes by!" In like manner, the Psalmist David says of the Lord, "Thou art my hiding place!" To be in the safe, strong, warm, loving arms of the Lord when the storms of life come is to be in the safest place in the universe! Nothing speaks peace to our troubled soul like the presence of our Heavenly Father. Yet, I am intrigued further by this verse, in that the Psalmist goes on to say, "...thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance." After reading this verse, it occurred to me that every time I felt that breeze from another world in the midst of my dilemmas, every time I experienced a breakthrough in my prayer life, and every time my countenance was lifted up by the Great Comforter, was when my Lord was singing to me! I have at times found myself balled up in a fetal position like a baby, balling my eyes out before the presence of the Lord (if not physically, at least spiritually), just to suddenly be picked up, embraced, held, and serenaded by His Heavenly voice! His song is always comforting, to say the least! This song can only be felt by the soul, for what God sings cannot be put into the limited framework of man-made sentences! That's why this song is unlike any other song you will ever hear, because while seeming to say nothing at all, it speaks volumes even an eternity could not tell! However, I imagine that if one were to attempt to put it into words we could understand, it wouldn't be much different than that old song my mother would sing, "Till the Storm Passes Over!"

***Today's Reading: 2 Samuel 13-15***

**Today's Reflection:** 2 Samuel 15:37a *So Hushai David's friend...*

Friendship is vital to our success in the kingdom of God. We will go through seasons as His servants where it feels as if we don't have a friend in the world; yet the truth is, God is always faithful to give us a friend! As I read about the conspiracy held against King David, which was led by his own son Absalom, I am reminded of just how lonely you do feel when those you thought were closest to you turn their backs on you! However, it's amazing to observe that when you need a companion to come alongside you to hold up your hands in the battle, the Lord will send someone along just when you need them the most. It doesn't have to be a relative, a fellow church member, or even a coworker. It could even be just an acquaintance, but no matter who it is, they always show up when you need them the most! God created us to draw strength from one another, and that's why the Word teaches that one shall slay a thousand, but two shall slay ten thousand! It's not that we couldn't make it on our own with just the Lord's companionship (indeed we have those seasons as well), but that we can do so much more with someone by our side. If you have even one friend who has been there for you, and will continue to be there for you no matter what you've been through, you ought to just stop right now and take a few minutes to thank the Lord for that person who has been an inspiration in your life! Now, don't stop there: pick up the phone, send an email, write a letter, pay them a visit, do something to let them know how much you appreciate their friendship! Have you ever noticed that your friend doesn't have to do much for you to draw strength from them? For most of us, all it takes is to know they are there! Thank God for friends He puts in our lives at just the right moments and times. Dear reader, are you in a place of loneliness, where you literally have no one to call on to help share your burdens? Tell it to Jesus, for He cares for your soul! Ask, and ye shall receive! You may say, "How do you know God will give me a friend if I ask for one?" I know because I've had that prayer answered for myself on more than one occasion! As a matter of fact, it seems that for every friend I loose, I gain the double. Even today, God is preparing you for someone else, while at the same time preparing them for you!

## Day 136

### ***Today's Reading: Ps 3-4, 12-13, 28, 55***

**Today's Reflection:** Psalm 12:1 *Help, LORD; for the godly man ceaseth; for the faithful fail from among the children of men.*

We're in a world of trouble when the godly cease to be godly, and when the faithful fail to be faithful! Could you imagine where you would be were it not for someone in your life who was faithful--faithful to the Lord, faithful to their family, faithful to their friends, faithful to their spouse, faithful to their responsibilities? Then, what about godliness? Were it not for godly men and women who paved the way, it would be challenging for us to even know what leading a godly life is about. Yet, it seems as if the moral fabric of our society is decaying before our very eyes at the lack of these two character traits alone: godliness and faithfulness! No wonder the Psalmist cried, "Help, LORD!" Today I join David in this cry! I pray, "God, give us some godly, faithful men and women who will not compromise at the first sign of resistance or ridicule, but who will stand for what is right because it is the right thing to do! Lord, give us people who will live right and love Jesus just for the very principle of doing so, and for no other reason at all! Lord, give us some soldiers of the Cross who will live for You, not only when it's convenient, but especially when it's not!" Someone once said, "What's wrong with doing right?" I say amen! I have a few questions: What happened to those who would keep their word, even to their own inconvenience or hurt? What happened to those who lived godly because it was esteemed the highest honor among men to do? Why has our culture gone from honoring truth and integrity to tolerating and even propagating lies? Why have we gone from celebrating purity to ridiculing and mocking the same? What once caused men to blush is now publicized as comedy on national prime time television. I realize that sin has always been around since Adam and Eve, but one would be a fool to deny the fact that America has forgotten the godly foundation upon which she was built! Today, let each of us be challenged to check our own character, to make sure that we are not just another average spineless coward who would sacrifice truth and justice in the name of popularity, fame or fortune! May this be our creed, that we would live godly, faithful lives for the cause of Christ and the hope of our future!

***Today's Reading: 2 Samuel 16-18***

**Today's Reflection: 2 Samuel 16:1a** *And when David was a little past the top of the hill...*

Wow! Are you thinking what I'm thinking? Just imagine what's around the bend, child of God! What you're going through today will be worth it all, just a little past the top of the hill! Your struggles, your pain, your suffering, your loneliness, your tears, your losses, your fears, your trials, they'll all pay off soon enough! I couldn't help but go to Luke 9:51, where it is said of our Lord, "And it came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, he stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem." Again, in Isaiah 50:7, it says, "For the Lord GOD will help me; therefore shall I not be confounded: therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed." Then again in Heb. 12:2, "Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." Notice this part in particular, "...who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame..." Jesus knew then what He reveals to us today through our text, that joy was awaiting just a little past the top of the hill! This is why we can endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ, because even our blessed Lord Jesus did the same! Dear reader, if our Lord had to bear His cross in order that He might obtain the prize, do you think that we His servants can easily escape our cross and glide with ease to the top of our mount? No, but to the contrary, He teaches us in Matthew 16:24b, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." We each have our own cross to bear. Do not let this disturb you, for it is through the death of the cross that we are resurrected in newness of life! Paul said in Gal. 2:20a, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me..." Rest assured that one day our cross will be traded for a crown, and one glorious day break we shall trade our mourning for gladness, and we shall forever put on the garments of praise for the spirit of heaviness! We shall overcome, child of God, we shall overcome! Do not allow your present sufferings to even be compared with that which shall come just a little past the top of the hill!

## Day 138

### ***Today's Reading: Ps 26, 40, 58, 61-62, 64***

**Today's Reflection: Ps 40:17** *But I am poor and needy; yet the Lord thinketh upon me: thou art my help and my deliverer; make no tarrying, O my God.*

I wish to focus on this portion, "...yet the Lord thinketh upon me..." The songwriter got it right who said, "When He was on the cross, I was on His mind!" In this world, men have a tendency only to think of the mighty, the brave, the strong, the significant, the wealthy, the influential, and the famous. We generally recognize those who have a certain level of clout or social standing in our culture, yet the Lord doesn't pay any attention to labels, power, or prestige. The Psalmist said, "But I am poor and needy; yet the Lord thinketh upon me." You see, the Lord is ever mindful of us, because He really cares for us! And the best thing about it is the fact that He is not interested in what He can GET out of us (for we have nothing to offer), but He is only interested in what He can MAKE out of us! To better illustrate, imagine both a beggar and a wealthy individual walking into a market place at the same time. Now, imagine who will get the attention of the salesmen and who will not! We all know the truth of the matter; the men of business will always gravitate towards what looks like money! Now, having said that, it is obvious to us that our Lord had no ulterior motive in mind when He chose to love us, for what could we possibly offer the Creator of the universe? He showed us what genuine love is, the kind that gives 100%, without demanding anything in return! He knew we were poor and needy, yet that did not cause Him to become disinterested in us. Dear reader, rejoice with me that our Lord is interested in us, even when we're poor and needy! It's as if He is saying to us, "I've been thinking about you all day, and I just can't get you off my mind!" Wow! When no one else even gave me the time of day, my Lord has been thinking the whole time about me! I find comfort in knowing that He is ever mindful of me, for if I'm in His thoughts, then surely I'm in His heart! That tells me that whatever I'm going through right now, He's making plans to help me right on through! We can rejoice that our Heavenly Father, our Deliverer, and our Helper ALWAYS comes to the rescue! Put your trust in Him today, for His mighty hand of deliverance is on the way!

## *Today's Reading: 2 Samuel 19-21*

**Today's Reflection: 2 Samuel 21:15b ...and David waxed faint.**

What is this we read? Could it be that King David, a mighty man of conquest, has waxed faint in the battle? We need not be surprised when even those giants for Jesus we look up to and admire so much grow weary in the way. Battle scars, bloodshed and betrayal have taken their toll on King David, and likewise today's battle-worn soldiers of the cross do at times wax faint for much the same reasons, though they be more on a spiritual level. Yet, I wish to point out that even though David may have become weak in the battle, yet had he great strength around him! Isaiah 40:28-29 says, "Hast thou not known? Hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? There is no searching of his understanding. **He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength.**" What a comfort it is to know that when our strength is gone, He will step in and give power in our greatest hour of need! For David, it was Abishai that the Lord had placed there to slay the giant who sought to kill him. I also wish to point out here that it's not only the seasoned saints of God which grow weary, but even those who are yet young, and haven't been through as much as others, that still grow weary! Isaiah 40:30 says, "Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint." You may be young in the ministry, thinking to yourself, "I'm too young to feel this battle-worn!" Ah, but you're not! The battle takes it's toll on both young and old, yet be encouraged to know that the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him, and he shall strengthen us for the remainder of our journey, wherever we may be in that journey! He may supernaturally give you personal strength, and yet he may send an Abishai your way to succor you, that is, to assist, relieve and deliver you from your present difficulty! Either way, know assuredly, my fellow co-laborers of the faith, that our Lord shall enable us to finish and accomplish that which He has begun in our lives! Hallelujah!

## Day 140

### *Today's Reading: Psalm 5, 38, 41-42*

**Today's Reflection:** Psalm 42:1 *As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God.*

After hearing the songs of the psalmist it is easy to see why he “panted” after the Lord. It seems that he was continually surrounded and pursued by his enemies. Everywhere he turned it seems someone was trying to harm or kill him. Have you ever felt like that? Life certainly is miserable when we find ourselves chased, cornered and chastised. But, take heart weary saint, God has a place of rest, refreshment and renewal provided for you. When David was forced from his home, 2 Samuel 23:15 records that, “...David longed, and said, Oh that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem, which *is* by the gate!” There are times when our mouths are parched with thirst and the only thing that will satisfy our thirst is that cool, refreshing water that only God can provide. As the children of Israel journeyed in the wilderness they came across a spring called Marah, but when they tried to drink they could not because the waters were bitter. Isn't that just like this old world that we live in? People are wandering everywhere searching for something to quench their thirst and what they find is cool to the lips but bitter to the stomach. Friend, I'm glad to tell you there is a remedy for the bitter wells of life. Moses asked the Lord what to do and in Exodus 15:25 the Bible says, “...the LORD shewed him a tree, *which* when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet...” God can fix your bitter waters too. You just need to pause and allow Him to reveal Himself to you. It could very well be that God allowed you to become parched in your desert so that you would “pant” after Him. I once saw a picture taken during a forest fire in Montana. In the picture you can see the trees and mountains engulfed in flames but at the bottom of the picture there are two deer standing in the stream sheltered from the fire. My soul! Isn't that just the picture of this verse? In a world that scorches everything it touches there is a place of protection and provision found in the cool water of His presence. How long has it been since we, as the hart, panted after God? How long has it been since we ran to His presence? Instead of tasting everything else let God quench your thirst with His life giving water! ~ C.D.

### ***Today's Reading: 2 Sam 22-23, Ps 57***

**Today's Reflection:** 2 Samuel 23:12 *But he stood in the midst of the ground, and defended it, and slew the Philistines: and the LORD wrought a great victory.*

That which God has given us is worth fighting for to keep! He certainly didn't give it to us for us to just sit idly by and watch the enemy take it over! I think of our beautiful country and its freedoms, our families, and our faith in the God who blessed us with it all! Friends, we are under siege, and we had best start defending what has been given to us, lest it be taken from us! Where is the godly man who will stand for faith, family and freedom even at the expense of his own life? I want to join ranks with THAT man! One of the common mistakes made after that of attaining sweet victory and blessings from the Lord, is this tendency of letting our guards down and forgetting that we still have an enemy who wishes to destroy everything God has done in our lives up to this point! Let us always remember that though we've won many battles along the way, the war is not over until we see Jesus' blessed face. We therefore should always be ready to defend what God has given us; else it (or they) will slip right out of our hands while we drift asleep. On this note, it should be said that in our text, Shammah was outnumbered one to an entire troop of Philistines! Child of God, never make your decisions in battle based solely upon numbers which can only be counted with the natural eye. Sometimes it may look like we're outnumbered, and indeed we may be in terms of the natural, but if the Lord were to open our eyes like He did one time for Elisha's servant, we too would see our mountain full of horses and chariots of fire round about us, readily positioned to intervene at just a prayer's notice! Even as Elisha said to his servant that day, I say to you, "Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them." The truth is, somebody must at the very least be willing to stand for what is right! And if we stand and defend, fighting the good fight of faith, it will also be said one day of our battle, "The LORD wrought a great victory!" Wherever God has placed you, drive the flag pole deep in the ground, fly the blood-stained banner of the Lord Jesus Christ proudly, defend His Word and that which He has blessed you with, and in His name you will secure it for future generations!

## Day 142

### *Today's Reading: Psalm 95, 97-99*

**Today's Reflection:** Psalm 97:1 *The LORD reigneth; let the earth rejoice...*

What a truth! It seems that in the modern day we live in that society and many Christians have forgotten this. We want to try to figure God out and sadly that's what we end up doing...we figure Him right out of the picture. Where are the Moody's of today? Where are the Mueller's? It seems that the modern day Christian wants to see everything in black & white in a fancy budget spreadsheet before they are willing to give themselves over to God's will. What if the widow woman would have acted on what her accountant told her? God would have taken care of Elijah but she and her son would have died. Instead of trying to figure God out why don't you try to figure God in? Now I'm not telling you to quit your job and go off on some expedition. Lord knows we need people that are faithful in their giving to allow God to use their gifts for His glory. What I am saying is that "where God guides, He always provides!" As we continue our look at this text I'm reminded of words of wisdom gleaned at the feet of some great men of God. One preacher once said, "One text has many applications but only one interpretation." Another said it like this, "The Word of God is like a multi-faceted diamond, it sparkles any way you turn it!" The psalmist reminds us that the LORD, Jehovah God, is in control, so we can be glad and rejoice. Why do you think the Holy Spirit moved on him to write that? Because we like to worry about things, don't we? We'll sit up late at night going through every problem we know of then start figuring out problems that aren't even here yet. God is on the throne child of God! He has never taken a day off, called in sick or even taken a lunch break. Furthermore, the Bible says that Christ "ever liveth to make intercession for us." Jesus told Peter, "...Satan hath desired *to have* you, they he may sift *you* as wheat: But I have prayed for thee..." Jesus is talking to God about you...and your problems! A man was worried about some things going on in his life and couldn't sleep. He began to read his Bible and came across Psalm 121:3 where God said, "...he that keepeth thee will not slumber." He closed his Bible and said, "There ain't no use in both of us staying up all night, I'm going to bed." Sleep on that!

### ***Today's Reading: 2 Sam 24, 1 Chr 21-22, Ps 30***

**Today's Reflection: 1 Chronicles 22:16b** *Arise therefore, and be doing, and the LORD be with thee.*

Three things are required of us if we are to fulfill God's purpose for us in the ministry. First, we are to arise. To arise is to change our position from that of comfort and ease to that of preparedness and alertness. Many do not serve the Lord because they simply are not in the right position to do so! Service might cost them inconvenience or discomfort, both of which are not preferred, and thus ill-prepared for and unexpected. We are to be in position, that is, ready at all times for anything that comes our way so as to minimize the chances of becoming blind-sided by our enemy. One who does his job well is one who is in the right position to do so. So it is with the servant of God; if we are to serve well, then we must rise to the occasion, having our feet shod with the preparation of peace! Change your position, and you'll change your direction! Change your direction, and you'll change your destiny! Then, once you've changed your position, then you must go and do! Do what, you say? Do whatever! That is, whatever the Lord would have you do. My emphasis is not on what we should be doing, as much as it is the fact that we *should* be doing! I cannot tell you what you need to do, and neither can you tell me what I need to be doing, but we should both be doing the will of God for each of our lives! I understand there are seasons of rest, but I assure you that there are more who are guilty of getting too much rest, than those who do not rest enough! You start with what you have, and the Lord will enable you to make much of Jesus with what little you have! Finally, once you change your position and your activity, then last but not least, allow Jesus to influence your every move! "The Lord be with thee." Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it. It is imperative that we ensure the Lord's welcome in our everyday lives if we are to be biblically successful! This means we must be sensitive to His plan, and obedient to His Word! When we obey Him, not doing our own will or pleasure, then and only then do we realize just how fulfilling God intended for our lives to be! The pleasures of sin are no match for the perfect will of God! Arise therefore, and be doing, and the LORD be with thee.

## Day 144

### *Today's Reading: Psalm 108-110*

**Today's Reflection: Psalm 109:4a** *For my love they are my adversaries...*

Perhaps the most misunderstood subject of them all is the subject of love. In a lust-craved society where “love” is defined with certain expectations and various levels of satisfying performance and emotional highs, many only associate it with “feel-good” experiences. Should they ever become confronted by truth about themselves which produces negative feelings of guilt or shame, then they associate the same as “hate” speech. However, love is no more based upon emotions, as truth is lies! Love can produce good emotions, but good emotions will never produce, nor should they become a foundation for true love. If your understanding of love is based entirely on feelings, then what will happen to your love when the feelings are gone? Some would say, “Well, I know I don’t love her because I just don’t feel the same way about her anymore!” If this is the case, then love was never in the picture to start with! True love is enduring! It is a resolve to remain committed through the good times and the bad! It is a decision. It is true to principle before passion. That’s why those who really love you are willing to get in your face to confront issues, regardless of how the confrontation makes you feel! That’s why God gets in our face about our sin; not because He hates us, but because He loves us too much to see us destroy ourselves in sin. I’m glad for the day I experienced a very painful, yet liberating “intervention”, when at last I was made to face myself in the mirror for who I really was, a sinner headed for Hell without Christ! It was the best day of my life! Why? Because it was that truth that set me free. I was finally free from the deceptive lies of religion and the devil, who both told me I was ok the way I was. I was finally given an “opt-out” of sin and condemnation! I finally realized for the first time in my life just how special I was in the eyes of God; for if He did not care for me, He would have left me alone in my sins, and would not have come by my way to show me where I was wrong, and how I could be made right through His redemptive plan. Yes, He loves me! Friend, understand today that God loves you just the same. Please do not become His adversary because of truth which confronts, convicts, and requires repentance in your life!

## ***Today's Reading: 1 Chronicles 23-25***

**Today's Reflection:** 1 Chronicles 23:4 ...*twenty and four thousand were to set forward the work of the house of the LORD...*

As we read these chapters one thing that strikes me is the attention to detail and careful accounting that God does toward His work. As David turns the reigns of his kingdom over to his son Solomon he makes special mention of what needs to be done in the work of the Lord. He even sets aside 24,000 to “set forward” the work of the house of the LORD. How many people do you know that are set aside to “set forward” the work of the house of the LORD? How many churches have you saw sitting dormant, vacant and lifeless? Vines and grass have grown up around many a gospel lighthouse from years gone by. It seems that people would rather “set forward” their own work than the work of the Lord. Is there a greater ambition or more noble conquest than the work of the Lord? An evangelist went to a church in a small town years ago and a real move of God began in the church. The meeting was extended for weeks; many were saved, called into the ministry and encouraged in the faith. During the meeting someone hung stained wooden letters above the choir loft that spelled out the verse, “Where there is no vision, the people perish...” That verse seemed to be a catalyst for the work and mission of the church in the community. Eventually the revival ended, the evangelist left to go to another meeting in another town and the church and community returned to life as usual. A few years later the evangelist was traveling through the area and drove by the church only to find the lawn unkept, building in disrepair and boards over the windows. He got out of his car and walked around the building shaking his head in unbelief. As he approached one of the windows he saw the plywood pulled back enough to look inside. The ceiling tiles were falling, the walls were covered in mildew and the pews were now rotten. As he looked he remembered that verse. On the front wall those letters still hung as years ago except one had fallen off. Now the once inspiring verse had been transformed to a sad commentary of the church. It now read, “here there is no vision, the people perish...” Dear friend, people are dying and going to Hell every second of every day. Will you “set forward” the work of the house of the LORD? ~ C.D.

## Day 146

### ***Today's Reading: Ps 131, 138-139, 143-145***

**Today's Reflection: 138:7-8a** *Though I walk in the midst of trouble, thou wilt revive me: thou shalt stretch forth thine hand against the wrath of mine enemies, and thy right hand shall save me. The LORD will perfect that which concerneth me...*

Talk about a loaded passage of scripture! Since when has trouble ever stopped God from sending a refreshing wave of revival? If there's anything I've learned, it's that God not only sends revival in the midst of trouble, but in His sovereignty He chooses to use that trouble like a puppet to ultimately fulfill His will! Not convinced? Just consider Calvary! The devil thought he destroyed the promised seed once and for all, but little did he know that he was only being used as a puppet in God's plan of salvation, which was laid out before the foundation of the world! If the devil knew that Calvary was God's redemption plan, then he would not have been so ready to nail Him to the cross. However, in God's wisdom, he uses even those things that the devil has devised against us to turn around and be a blessing to us instead! Are you in the midst of trouble today? Rest assured that God is not at all shaken or out of control, but to the contrary, He is setting your troubles up for a great defeat whereby they will usher in the deliverance you have yet to receive! It is always amazing to me to see just how God is going to get me out of this situation or that one, because it's always different than what I wish for and expect, and it is always so much better! So when you're in the midst of trouble, go to expecting a revival, because one is coming for those who will ask for it and expect it. When are we ever going to stop asking God to explain all the why's of life? Don't get me wrong, because I do it too! But then I realize that my little mind could not comprehend His great master plan even if He tried to explain it to me, so I'm just better off trusting and obeying. The Psalmist said, "The LORD will perfect that which concerneth me." To be perfect is to be excellent or complete beyond practical or theoretical improvement. To know that the Lord is going to perfect that which concerns me is reassuring to say the least. Nothing, not even the worst of trouble, will stop Him from completing what He has started in my life! God will always make the best of every situation in your life if you will let Him!

**Today's Reading: 1 Chron 26-29, Ps 127**

**Today's Reflection:** 1 Chron 26:32 *And his brethren, men of valour, were two thousand and seven hundred chief fathers, whom king David made rulers over the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half tribe of Manasseh, for every matter pertaining to God, and affairs of the king.*

Notice here that David made these men of valour rulers over every matter pertaining to God, and affairs of the king. These men were not only familiar with the work of God, but also with the work of the king. It wouldn't hurt for our churches to have a balanced mix of the same! We need men and women who are both business-smart AND ministry-smart. Actually, these men in our text weren't in just any business, but in the king's business! In other words, they were involved heavily in politics. It would serve our country well for God-fearing people to get more involved both in business and in politics, as we need these Godly influences in the decision-making process at these levels in our society! I'm afraid that we've segregated ourselves from every sector of our culture all in the name of separation, so much to the point that we can no longer be the salt of the earth in many cases. Jesus told his disciples that they were in the world, but not of the world! As a matter of fact, He prayed that they would not be taken out of the world, but that they would be delivered from the evil thereof! This tells me that the only way we're going to influence this culture for the cause of Christ in an impactful way is for us to be integrated in it without its evil corrupting and influencing us! We need full-time Christian workers for all sorts of various ministries, but we also need sold-out Christians as factory workers, school teachers, business owners, politicians, and so on! We need to have representation for Christ at every level and in most every profession in our society if we are going to penetrate the darkness with the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ as effectively as He would have us to. It does not hurt even for the pastor, missionary, or evangelist to be bi-vocational, just as Paul the Apostle who was not only the greatest missionary of all time, but was also a tent maker! Do not think that just because you are punching a clock, that you're not being as effective with the ministry as others who are in "full-time" ministry. Could it be that in many ways you could be more effective with that field of influence than others?

## Day 148

### *Today's Reading: Psalm 111-118*

**Today's Reflection:** Psalm 112:7 *He shall not be afraid of evil tidings: his heart is fixed, trusting in the LORD.*

We have a firm foundation on which to stand! The Lord is faithful and trustworthy, ever present through the changes and seasons of our lives. One who learns to trust the Lord is wise to do so consistently through it all, even when he can't see how the Lord is going to come through one time more than another! I love this verse because it is very timely for a country which has gone into panic mode over all the bad news we've seen in the headlines. For those of you who fear tomorrow because of the evil tidings you have received today, take a good long look at this verse again! When we fix our heart on the Lord, we have nothing to fear. The truth is, though others may fall, yet the Lord will take care of His own! Our hearts just need to be fixed! This word "fix" means "to make stable; to set or establish immovably". You see, when we trust the Lord in our situations, our heart is stabilized because faith runs off the fear! It's good to know Who knows what we don't know! As I once heard it said, "I don't know what tomorrow holds, but I know who holds tomorrow!" So, it doesn't matter how big or small the problem is, because God has never come up to a challenge bigger than Himself, nor will He! It's when we try to fix it ourselves, relying and trusting in our own strength and ability to fix it, that we get ourselves in more trouble that we're already in. We should just acknowledge the fact that without Jesus, we can do nothing! The sooner we learn to just trust the Lord, the better off we'll be, and the sooner He can work on our behalf and deliver us, because all He's waiting on is faith! Do not think of people of faith as unrealistically optimistic, for it is their faith in the Lord which brings into reality that which is yet to be! Faith IS the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen. If we therefore trust the Lord as the verse teaches, then that which others fear will have no effect on us, for we are living and walking in the supernatural at that point, knowing that if the Lord doesn't handle it, it will never be taken care of in the first place! What bad news have you received lately? Don't be afraid of the bad news, but rather just trust the Lord, and He WILL see you through, regardless of what you have heard!

### ***Today's Reading: 1 Kings 1-2, Ps 37, 71, 94***

**Today's Reflection:** *1 Kings 1:45 And Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet have anointed him king in Gihon: and they are come up from thence rejoicing, so that the city rang again. This is the noise that ye have heard.*

“And they are come up from thence rejoicing, so that the city rang again.” King David had his share of both victories and hardships throughout his reign. Though some of his troubles were self-inflicted because of sin, yet others just came with the territory. However, regardless of the hardships, there were always seasons of rejoicing that came with the victories. We thus learn to live from victory unto victory, even as King David and his kingdom! Ecc 3:4b teaches that there is a time to mourn, and a time to dance! Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning (Psalm 30:5)! Today, when I read that “the city rang again”, my heart yearns for the day in which the house of God would ring again with rejoicing. It seems today as if the rejoicing church (that is, those churches who worship the Lord in spirit and in truth) is a thing of the past. Don't get me wrong, for I am aware that there are still some places where the name of the Lord is lifted high, and the saints of God are not ashamed to lift up their voices in praise to His name; however, the sad truth is that they have become few and far between. This city in our text was heard afar off because of the noise they made in their rejoicing. In like manner, we need a revival of real, genuine praise and worship in our churches today more than ever! We need to make some noise for Jesus! I realize that some are capable of making a whole lot of noise, but are only as sounding brass and tinkling symbol, but yet we cannot for fear of being labeled negate our responsibility to praise the Lord with a loud voice, and to let the redeemed of the Lord say so! We need not become mechanical in our worship, but neither do we need to become mute. Many have hanged their harps upon the willow trees, asking “How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?” Yet, if you will sing again, then He will bring you back out of the land of captivity with rejoicing, and you can ring again! If there is a lesson we can learn from saints of old, it's this: when we praise Jesus, He shows up and revives the hearts of His people!

## Day 150

### *Today's Reading: Psalm 119:1-88*

**Today's Reflection:** Psalm 119:49 *Remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope.*

The Lord does not fill our lives with lying words and empty promises. That which He has promised, and that which He has caused us to hope in, SHALL come to pass! Remember this; promises delayed are not denied! How many times have we had this attitude, "But God, you said..." As if! Do we really think that our Lord forgets? We do not declare His Word before His presence to remind Him as if He is going senile and losing His mind! If anything, we do so for our own benefit, to encourage ourselves in the Lord, and to build up our own faith and confidence in the One in whom we should trust! Psalm 111:5 says, "He hath given meat unto them that fear him: he will ever be mindful of his covenant." Never forget that it's not God that needs help remembering, but it is us! One of the reasons we have such a difficult time trusting that the Lord will remember His promises is because we are so forgetful ourselves. Case in point, we even forget that He doesn't! Friend, God is not frail like we are, nor is He tainted by the curse of sin. God is perfect and sound in every way imaginable! He is therefore reliable. When I think about the times in my life when it seems the Lord is tarrying with His answer to my prayers, two things come to mind which helps me understand why He chooses to do so: trust and timing. Trusting the Lord is most essential, but if doubt is present, then the answer cannot be granted because without faith it is impossible to please Him! We need to be sure that we pray in faith, nothing doubting! Then, if we have done so, then it's just a matter of timing. We must continue to wait patiently for our blessed Lord to answer in the time frame He feels is best suited to bring Him maximum glory! That's why we are admonished to "keep" the faith, because it would be very easy for us to lose heart in the wait, convincing ourselves that because it has not already come, then it must not be coming at all. Could it be that when we doubt during the process of waiting, we only bring more delay to the situation because of our unbelief? I think so! We must not only believe now, but we must keep on believing until victory is wrought! Faith is not a one-time incident, but a life-time commitment! Therefore, keep the faith, and be blessed!

### ***Today's Reading: 1 Kings 3-4, 2 Chr 1, Ps 72***

**Today's Reflection:** *1 Kings 3:3a And Solomon loved the LORD, walking in the statutes of David his father...*

As the old adage goes, "Like father, like son!" It is not always the case that children follow in the footsteps of their parents, but statistically speaking it is very likely. While many people think of this as a bad thing, it doesn't have to be bad at all! Although we here it said all too often, "I just don't want my children turning out like I did!" we can turn the tide by changing ourselves as parents! With the help of the Lord, we can live such a Godly example before our children, that if they turn out like us, it won't be so bad after all! Such is the case with Solomon. I once heard it said that what parents do in moderation, children do in excess. In our text, I believe this can be said of Solomon. His father, a man after God's own heart, was so passionate for his God that Solomon not only took note, but desired and decided to serve the same God. Dear parent, what is it you are passionate about? Is it your spouse, your career, your children, your toys, your buddies, your Savior? Whatever it is, you cannot hide it from your kids, for they know what you'll work the hardest and even die for. Here's the thing; if we know our children are most likely going to follow in our footsteps at least to some degree, then why not walk in the paths of righteousness? Though it is not always the case, I do believe that the more passionate we as parents are about Christ, the more passionate our children will be about Him as well! They generally care about what we care about. Unfortunately, this can play against them if we are cold and indifferent towards the things of God. They know what we care about and what we don't care about, regardless of whether or not we are "putting on". That is why it is imperative that we sell out to Jesus and give Him our all, teaching our children by example that there is no higher calling or greater honor bestowed upon us than to bear His name and serve His will! I cannot speak for others, but the single-most impactful influence in my walk with the Lord, and what peaked my interest in following hard after God was undoubtedly my father's zeal for the Lord! I can only trust the Lord that if I exhibit the same passion for Christ as my father did, then my five sons will do the same! May we today become parents after God's own heart!

## Day 152

### ***Today's Reading: Psalm 119:89-176***

**Today's Reflection:** Psalm 119:98 *Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies: for they are ever with me.*

Though victory is imminent for the child of God, there will always be another enemy to fight. We therefore should not be ignorant of our enemy's devices (see 2 Cor. 2:11). If we are to continually overcome our ever-present enemies, then we are to stay a step ahead of them, beating them at their own game! How are we to do that? We do so by equipping ourselves with the knowledge and understanding of the Word of God. Our text says, "Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies..." Think of the Bible as a code book. It is written to a people who only understand it once they have received its Author (Jesus Christ) as their Savior and Lord! Even the devil can quote scripture, but he cannot understand the Word, because its mysteries have been hidden from him. 1 Cor. 2:9-10 says, "But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God." The Word is a book that can only be understood once the Holy Spirit enlightens the understanding! Isn't it good to know that our Commander in Chief has given us a Book full of codes, just to keep our enemies in the dark on what He's up to in our lives? The devil has been trying to break the code from the beginning, all to no avail! Understand, dear reader, that if you have been born again, then the Holy Spirit lives inside of you, and He shall be your teacher and guide, giving you the understanding of the Word that you need when you need it the most! He will lead and guide you into all truth. He will give you the wisdom you need from the Word to outsmart your enemies! Does it feel as if you've been backed into the corner? Ask God for wisdom, then seek it within the pages of His Word, and you'll find what you need to do in order to bring yourself out from under the stronghold the enemy has you in! There is not a battle we face that we cannot win with the aid of the Spirit and the wisdom of our Heavenly Father. Seek His wisdom today, and you shall find it!

***Today's Reading: Song of Solomon 1-8***

**Today's Reflection:** Song of Solomon 5:6 *I opened to my beloved; but my beloved had withdrawn himself, and was gone: my soul failed when he spake: I sought him, but I could not find him; I called him, but he gave me no answer.*

We have heard that absence makes the heart grow fonder. The same is true of our Lord whom we serve. Although He has promised that He will never leave us nor forsake us, yet at times it seems as if He has withdrawn Himself. There is a difference between His concealed presence and His revealed presence. Even in human relationships, at times we can be in the same room with others, yet feel a million miles away. The distance we feel between us and the Lord is not actual measurable space, but a distance which is only perceived in the heart and mind. As in our text, we can even hear His voice through His Word, but yet our souls fail for the feelings of distance with which they are flooded. We hear Him, but we don't see Him. However, we desire more than His voice; we desire His person! We want to feel His warm embrace and know that we are close to Him. Yet, in His wisdom, He knows we must learn to discern and trust His voice and His Word before we can truly know Him, and so He leaves us from time to time, without really leaving us at all! He's there in His Word, even when His presence is not revealed! However, one who is truly a man after God's own heart desires to grow closer and closer to Him! We have His Word, but we desire to see that Word become alive to us. We desire to see His Word made flesh, if you will! We need to go beyond "precept upon precept, line upon line" into another realm, where we say as Paul the Apostle, "that I may know HIM!" Friend, I believe sometimes God plays "hard to get" in order to build up our appetite for Him! If there's anyone reading this that's hungry for God, then you know what I'm talking about. People who are hungry and thirsty for God don't just want to know more ABOUT Him; they want to know HIM! We don't want just to memorize another verse, but we want the verse to totally mesmerize us! We don't want to just read about the miracles God did for others; we want to experience His power personally in our own lives and in the lives of those around us! I just wonder who else is hungry for God.

## Day 154

### *Today's Reading: Proverbs 1-3*

**Today's Reflection:** Proverbs 3:6 *In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.*

There is not one small decision you will make that our Lord does not care about. We would do well to learn the significance of seeking the Lord in every thing we do. It is when we do not inquire of the Lord that we get ourselves in trouble! We never seem to notice the impact of any one small decision, until at last it has been thrown into the mix of a compilation of other small decisions which were made just as carelessly as the first. Only then do we look back and realize how important it is to pay attention to every detail of our lives, because what we do today, no matter how big or small, is building our future, no matter how good or bad! We do not want to wake up three years down the road with a long string of small bad decisions which all mount up to a big disaster! This is why the Word tells us to acknowledge the Lord in ALL our ways. The truth is, He will guide us every step of the way if we will give Him the chance. I realize, especially in America, that life is very fast-paced and filled with spur-of-the-moment decisions for sake of time management; however, we need not be in such a hurry that we cannot wait upon the Lord's direction in our lives. That would be about like trying to take a road trip from the east coast to the west coast without any prior knowledge of the highway, without a map, compass, GPS system, or even hand-written directions. We might as well admit it guys...it's best to ask for directions, especially when it comes to the Lord's will for our lives! Many of us have no trouble knowing where we ought to be, or at least knowing where we ought to end up, but it's the getting there that's the challenge! How do we get from here to there? That is the question of the day! To be honest, the Christian journey is anything but a cookie-cut systematic list of perfectly timed do's and don'ts that works in exactly the same sequence and at exactly the same growth rate for every believer! We all have our own journey, our own experiences, our own unique challenges, and our own growth rates! We should all be headed to the same destination, but not all of us come from the same starting point! That's why it is imperative that we seek the Lord for every move!

## ***Today's Reading: Proverbs 4-6***

**Today's Reflection:** Proverbs 4:7 *Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding.*

You gotta start somewhere! The lad in John 6 started his journey of faith with five loaves and two fishes; the widow lady in 1 Kings 17 had only a little cake left; all Moses had was a rod; Peter had nothing but a big mouth; we could go on and on, but the point I'm trying to make is that God can take what little you do have, give you some wisdom, and make it into something you don't have! Check this out: **A WHOLE LOT – WISDOM = NOTHING, BUT NOTHING + WISDOM = A WHOLE LOT!** The truth is, you don't need a whole lot for God to use you! As a matter of fact, you don't need any thing at all as long as you have wisdom from above. Our text says that wisdom is the principal thing. The word principal is often used in the banking industry. If you are an investor, the amount of interest you earn is in direct correlation to how much principle you have to work with; the bigger the investment, the bigger the return. Then we have what we call compound interest. That's when we take the interest earned and reinvest it, adding it to the principle. We have then enabled ourselves to take our first investment to the next level, allowing it to produce its own growth. When this happens, we have a compounded effect. For example, at twelve percent interest, you can use this principle and double your money in six years. So it is with wisdom; if we do not have wisdom, we have no principle to invest at all! James said, "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God!" You may feel like you have nothing to offer the Lord, but according to the Word of God, if you will ask for wisdom, then God will give you enough to build upon what little you do have, then empower it to grow exponentially! Too many Christians worry about what they do not have, instead of utilizing what they do have! Remember this; except for God, nothing great ever started out that way. Do not despise the day of small beginnings, for small beginnings are necessary for you to reach your goals. Do not think that the success of others came over night! It didn't do so for them, and neither will it do so for you. Therefore, may it never be said of any of God's children that we have no wisdom. Wisdom is the principle thing, so without principle there is no growth.

## Day 156

### ***Today's Reading: Proverbs 7-9***

**Today's Reflection:** Proverbs 8:31b ...*my delights were with the sons of men.*

The wisdom of God is so vast, it was with this wisdom that He created everything that exists; yet wisdom speaks a profound statement when she says, "My delights were with the sons of men." Think about it; as vast as the universe is, and as wonderful as all other creations are, God's wisdom delights itself more with the sons of men than any other part of creation. I believe these delights to be two-fold; allow me to explain. The first delight is that of the wonder of the creation of mankind. Even the psalmist said, "I am fearfully and wonderfully made." God's greatest creation is mankind, for there is no other creation where it was said that they were made after the image of God! Though the heavens declare His glory, yet we mirror His very image. What an amazing privilege and responsibility we have to exalt Him before every creature! This leads to the second delight wisdom has with the sons of men; that of imparting unto us such a measure of God's wisdom as is needed to fulfill His purpose for our lives. The Lord has pleasure in the prosperity of His servants (see Ps 35:27). He therefore enables us to prosper with a portion of the same wisdom with which He created the universe! He made us in His image in that He made us to create as well. Even as yesterday's devotion showed us, all we need to become successful is wisdom from God! With His Word, His wisdom, and His favor, we can create a life for ourselves and those around us that exclaims the beauty and majesty of our Heavenly Father. I fear that many Christians are more equipped to walk into their destiny than they have the knowledge to understand. It is when God reveals to us the endless possibilities at our disposal through Him that we are able to make real progress for the cause of Christ. Remember that where no vision is, the people perish. Vision only comes when one's understanding has been enlightened by God's great wisdom. When we transform our minds through the Word of God to think like Jesus, then and only then will we begin to see clearly the path that is set before us. Let us therefore allow the Holy Spirit to teach us the Word of God in such an impactful way that His great wisdom will flow through our minds, mouths, hands and feet!

## ***Today's Reading: Proverbs 10-12***

**Today's Reflection:** Proverbs 10:11 *The mouth of a righteous man is a well of life: but violence covereth the mouth of the wicked.*

More is either created or destroyed by what is spoken than what is done, for what is done is only spawned by what is spoken. Words dictate thought; thoughts dictate attitudes; attitudes dictate action. It all starts with what influences the thought process, so be careful what you say to others as well as what you allow others to say to you! Our most powerfully creative tool given to us is our ability to communicate. However, James said that the tongue is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. We know then that the tongue can be as equally destructive as it can be constructive. We must learn that words shape events, which ultimately shapes history! What kind of history are you making for yourself and your family? Today's text tells us that the mouth of a righteous man is a well of life. This tells me that with the guidance of God's Spirit and His great wisdom, our words can create life! Much is said in Proverbs about the tongue, and rightfully so! Your life will be made or broken by its effect. If your speech is destructive, then your attitude needs to be adjusted with the Word of God. God's Word is the only thing that can take a depraved heart of sin and death, and make it alive unto God! The psalmist said, "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee." It is imperative that we correct our actions by correcting our attitudes by shaping our thoughts with the Word of God! When we do this, then we are able to share the waters of that well of life with all others around us! Today, determine to speak only that which is true and constructive, for it will create a positive, lively atmosphere in which God can move. Proverbs 12:18 also says, "There is that speaketh like the piercings of a sword: but the tongue of the wise is health." Even when we speak a truth to others that may at first be somewhat painful for them, if our attitude is right, we can be even as Jesus told his disciples to be; wise as serpents, and harmless as doves. What we say to others should only be healthy for them. A proper mix of truth, compassion, and encouragement is the most productive form of speech we have to offer! Change your world today for the better by what you say. You'll be surprised what a difference you'll make!

## Day 158

### *Today's Reading: Proverbs 13-15*

**Today's Reflection:** Proverbs 13:19a *The desire accomplished is sweet to the soul...*

Nothing is like achieving a goal. When you accomplish your objective, you rejoice in your work! However, it is the desire itself that motivates us to keep pressing on. As sweet as it is to accomplish something important, and as important as it is to savor that moment, yet we must seek to move on to the next level. We cannot settle down at the first sign of victory as if the battle is over, for there is yet much to be accomplished for Christ! I think sometimes we're guilty of prolonging the celebration of past victories when we should be regaining our focus to move into the next challenge that is ahead. Perhaps for some, your salvation experience is as far as you've gone with Christ. Rejoice you should, but regress you should not! If there is no progress, then there is only regress; there is no in-between for the child of God. We must grow in grace if we are to live out our fullest potential as soldiers of the cross. We should therefore find motivation in the desire that we have to reach that next level of faith. Passion drives us to our destination, so we must only be passionate about the things that matter most! I believe that each one of us has an inner drive that will not rest until the last mile has been run. However, we need not get out the party hats too soon! We must not confuse milestones with the destination, for though they are earmarks of advancement and achievement, the race is not yet won. Until Jesus calls us home either by rapture or by death, we still have something more to contribute to the advancement of the Gospel. We must learn then to constantly adjust and readjust as we progress and achieve our goals so as to keep pressing toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus! Do not settle down and graze too long at the plateau where you're at, else you'll miss what lies ahead, which is better than where you are. Set new goals for yourself and for the cause of Christ before what He's enabled you to accomplish thus far becomes average and ordinary to you. Loss of desire and passion is the number one enemy of growth. We cannot become satisfied with where we are today; we must set our eyes upon the next horizon and begin our next phase in the journey; otherwise we will become lethargic. Don't let it happen!

## ***Today's Reading: Proverbs 16-18***

**Today's Reflection:** Proverbs 16:1 *The preparations of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue, is from the Lord.*

This is an amazing verse! Have you ever been in a situation where you knew you made a bad decision, and yet when you look back at the situation, you realize that the Lord turned it around for good? If you're like me, it's times like these when you ask yourself, "How does God do that?" As a matter of fact, it would seem as if He planned it that way to begin with! Our text seems to indicate that, doesn't it? This boggles the mind of even the greatest theologian, for one can only wonder where the balance is between the sovereignty of God and the free will of man. I think we'd be best to simply admit that we do not completely understand this blending of equally present truths. One thing we must agree to regardless of our limited understanding is the fact that God is in control, even and especially when we're out of control! We tell our children that they can do anything if they set their minds to it. If we allow this much power to mere humans, then why is it so difficult for us to grasp that God our Creator can do the same? Don't you think that if God sets His mind to something, then He will accomplish His purpose thoroughly? Do you really think that your bad decisions will ruin God's master plan for your life? Don't get me wrong here; I believe that God has a plan for everyone, but at the same time I think we need to be careful not to discredit His ability to salvage even the worst of mistakes. Indeed, godlier choices yield more of a Christ-honoring life, and we should settle for no less than God's best for our lives, yet at the same time the unfaithfulness of man cannot ultimately destroy God's master plan! My purpose here is not to indicate that you can make any decision you want with an attitude that God will bail you out; to the contrary, we ought to strive our best to please the Lord! This should be a no-brainer for any serious Christian. I only wish to point out the truth that there is great comfort in knowing that our Lord is able to finish what He has started in our lives, even if that means He will even use our blunders to compliment His purposes in our lives! In its truest context, our verse today is actually neutral in terms of good choice/bad choice, as it doesn't specifically say. This tells me that regardless, God is always in control!

## Day 160

### *Today's Reading: Proverbs 19-21*

**Today's Reflection:** Proverbs 19:11 *The discretion of a man deferreth his anger; and it is his glory to pass over a transgression.*

How often do we feel some sort of righteous satisfaction in “exposing” someone in their sins? It is by default a very natural instinct for religious people to become the spiritual police over someone else’s mistakes. One of our greatest enemies is religion itself. If you’re like me, you enjoy that “ole’ time religion”, but the truth is, “religion” by its truest definition has caused way more damage than good! When I say religion, I mean the spirit of religion. It is a law-like critical spirit that can’t get past someone’s faults to see their needs. Our text teaches us that it is a man’s glory to pass over a transgression! This speaks of conducting one’s self with a graceful disposition. The phrase “pass over” reminds me of the great Pass Over, where the Lord said in Exodus 12:13, “...when I see the blood, I will pass over you...” When we preach Christ, we must not condemn others in their sins, but rather we must introduce them to Christ, the remedy for their sins! The emphasis is placed not upon the sin, but upon the Savior. Jesus did not say, “And sin, if sin be lifted up, all men will be drawn unto me.” However, He did say, “And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.” See John 12:32. Do not read this and think that I am indicating we should never preach and teach against sin! To the contrary, we must warn everyone including ourselves of the pitfalls of sin. What I am saying is that we must not forget in our preaching against sin that where sin abounded, grace did much more abound (see Romans 5:20). Preaching against sin without any grace is no different than offering a fatal verdict with no remedy. When sin must be addressed, do so not with a judgmental spirit, but with compassion and grace. Is it better to say, “Thou sinner!” or to say, “Oh, what a Savior!?” When we exalt Christ, the subject of sin is addressed immediately, for why would we even need a Savior if we had nothing to be saved from? Therefore both statements are declared in one message! The issue here isn’t whether or not we should address sin, but the issue is the spirit and attitude in which we do so, namely whether or not we do so with grace. Sin must be addressed, but it can only be successfully addressed by Calvary’s divine flow!

### *Today's Reading: Proverbs 22-24*

**Today's Reflection:** Proverbs 22:9 *He that hath a bountiful eye shall be blessed; for he giveth of his bread to the poor.*

Do you have a bountiful eye? If so, this would mean that you have eyes that look for opportunities in which to give generously to the needs of others. I find that many times people avoid those opportunities rather than searching for them. However, the Bible is clear that if we bless others in need with what God has given us, then we shall be blessed! When we are blessed of God, we are favored by Him and given the kind of success that only He can give. His blessings never run out, and they are never less than sufficient. If you want your barns to be filled with plenty, then help fill someone else's barn that is empty! If you need some cash, how about giving out of your want to someone else, then sit back and watch what God does to meet your needs. I have come to the conclusion that God will only bless us as much as we are willing to give. In Luke 6:38, Christ says, "Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again." God will pay you back for what you give (see Pro 19:17)! Remember the widow lady that gave her last cake to the prophet Elijah? It was out of her need that she gave, and because she done so, from that day forward there was always enough blessings at the bottom of her barrel to sustain her and her son through the famine! Why is giving so important? Furthermore, why does it seem we are always instructed to give when we are most in need ourselves? It is because of the faith factor! In Mark 12:43-44, Jesus was comparing the large gifts of the rich with the meager gift of the poor widow. He said, "Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury: For all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living." It's not how much money you give, but how much heart you give! Do not talk yourself out of giving because you don't have much to offer, because God measures the gift by your level of faith, not in dollars and cents! What has God impressed upon your heart to give today? Go ahead and obey, and a blessing shall come your way!

## Day 162

### *Today's Reading: 1 Kings 5-6, 2 Chron 2-3*

**Today's Reflection:** 2 Chronicles 2:6 *But who is able to build him an house, seeing the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain him? who am I then, that I should build him an house, save only to burn sacrifice before him?*

You read it right! God is so big, that even the heaven of heavens cannot contain Him. That's huge! Indeed brick and mortar cannot contain Him, and yet Psalm 22:3 says of Him, "But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel." Wow! In other words, when we praise Him, room enough is made for Him to dwell. Has it ever occurred to you that praise is that big a deal? Praise then is bigger than the universe! Want to "scratch off" a place for the Lord to reside? Just go to praising Him! In His presence, sinners are converted, mountains are leveled, giants are slain, the sick receive healing, and the dead are brought back to life! There is therefore power in praise. The devil knows that! That's why he continually fights us with negative thoughts of doubt, worry, criticism and confusion. As long as he can distract us from fulfilling our divine purpose of praising the Lord, then he has us in a stronghold. However, just let the redeemed of the Lord say so, and watch the devils tuck tail and run from God's presence! It takes courage, faith and inner strength to praise the Lord, so if we're lacking in any of these areas, we must seek the Lord's intervention so that we might be able to give Him the praise that's due His name! What we need to do is identify every enemy of praise in our lives, and then pull them down in the power of His might one at a time. Is it fear of criticism? Then face criticism head on by praising the Lord anyway! Is it personal hypocrisy? Then repent and get it under the blood immediately, for you have no time to waste! Is it dead religion mixed with traditions of men? The junk your religion and go with Jesus! Whatever it is standing in our way, keeping us from praising the Lord, we can no longer afford to keep it around. We MUST praise the Lord, or we will die! If you do not believe me, then show me one vibrant, thriving new testament church or even one on-fire Christian that does not praise the Lord. You will not find one! God's breath of life follows praise, so if you want to keep from spiritual suffocation, then you had better get to praising Him every day for the rest of your life!

***Today's Reading: 1 Kings 7, 2 Chron. 4***

**Today's Reflection:** 1 Kings 7:45-46 *And the pots, and the shovels, and the basons: and all these vessels, which Hiram made to king Solomon for the house of the LORD, were of bright brass. In the plain of Jordan did the king cast them, in the clay ground between Succoth and Zarthan.*

King Solomon spared no expense in order to complete the building of the tabernacle of the Lord. He definitely did it justice! However, what I would like to point out is how significant and beautiful all of the vessels of the house of the Lord were! Their significance is obvious, for they would be used in the service of the house of the Lord, which is no small thing. Then it is said of their beauty that they “were of bright brass”! These vessels were, as the writer of Timothy would say, vessels unto honor (see 2 Tim. 2:20) to say the least! They were significant, and they were beautiful. Now, notice with me their origin! Our text says that they were cast “in the clay ground”. Needless to say, there is nothing significant or beautiful about clay in its original state. However, when someone as significant as a King has need of something, all of the sudden its level of significance changes dramatically! And, when the King invests his energy and recurses into making it become the finished product, all of a sudden its beauty is unmatched! Friend, I remember a day when the King of Kings, the Lord Jesus, came and found me “in the clay ground”. I was insignificant and ugly in my sin; practically useless, until He showed up! But then He said He had use of me, so He saved me from my sins and put me in His service, and so I may not look like much to some, but if you knew where He brought me from and where I am today, you’d have to say that His work in my life is nothing short of significant and beautiful! Only Jesus could take a worthless wretch and make him a child of the King! The Psalmist said in Ps. 40:2, “He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings.” Oh wretched sinner, know assuredly that Christ sees you not for who you are, but for what He can make you to become! Isaiah 1:18 says, “Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” His blood will make you significant and beautiful, so call on Him today!

## Day 164

### *Today's Reading: 1 Kings 8, 2 Chron. 5*

**Today's Reflection:** 1 Kings 18b ...*thou didst well that it was in thine heart...*

The heart is the birthing room for dreams. Here, we were reminded that it was David who had in his heart a burning desire to build a house unto the Lord, and yet it was his son whom the Lord chose to carry out that dream. Often we give up on those dreams we feel are too much for ourselves personally to accomplish, not realizing that God wants to inspire others to help make it a reality! Although David did not accomplish it himself, yet the Lord said, "...thou didst well that it was in thine heart..." And, because it was in his heart, the Lord promised him that it would come to pass! What good deed or noble cause is upon your heart today? What kind of ministry is it that you have been thinking, dreaming and praying about? What kind of Christ-honoring career are you pursuing? Let me remind you of Psalm 37:4, where it says, "Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart." Dreams are in their original form a bit foggy and distant to us, because we know more about the "what" than we do the "how". That is often the biggest hurdle for us...the "how"! However, be encouraged, child of God, for there is purpose behind your God-given dreams, and because there is purpose there shall be divine influence and guidance involved in getting you from where you are today to where you need to be tomorrow! Proverbs 16:9 says, "A man's heart deviseth his way: but the LORD directeth his steps." Isn't that an amazing verse? In other words, we may know the general direction in which we need to go, but it is the Lord that is going to help navigate each step of the way! Never under-estimate the significance of even the smallest step, for it is the steps that are directed by the Lord. We cross miles through a succession of much smaller steps, and when the Lord is directing those steps, one day we'll look back and declare, "Only God could have figured this out!" That's why the Word is a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path. It only reveals to us as much path as we need to see today. We need not worry about tomorrow's big decisions until today's small decisions have been properly made. Know this; you do not need everything it's going to take to make it all happen today. You just need to keep the dream alive!

**Today's Reading: 2 Chron. 6-7, Ps. 136**

**Today's Reflection:** 2 Chronicles 7:11 *Thus Solomon finished the house of the LORD, and the king's house: and all that came into Solomon's heart to make in the house of the LORD, and in his own house, he prosperously effected.*

King Solomon had the blessing bestowed upon him of being able to thoroughly complete what he had started. It is the desire of every leader to be able one day to put the finishing touches upon that which they have worked so hard to achieve. It is said that "he prosperously effected" all that was in his heart concerning the house of the Lord, and his own house! At this moment in his life, King Solomon definitely had his priorities in order. There are no two greater institutions on earth which justifiably necessitate our utmost attention and allegiance than the church and the home! If the body of Christ is to impact this world with the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the capacity that God has called us, then we had better pay attention to this truth. It is when the home is forsaken that the church suffers most, and when the church suffers, every other facet in society suffers from the darkness in which they are left. I have heard it said, "So goes the home – so goes the church. So goes the church – so goes society." We need not forget that our country is no greater than its foundation! These great United States of America were founded upon biblical principles which were taught at the very core of our greatness – the home. Is it any wonder that so many churches have lost their effectiveness, causing nothing short of cultural suicide? This epidemic is caused primarily by the breakdown of the family unit. Satan knows that, and hence the reason for his all-out attack against God-fearing homes and churches across our land. If our foundation is weakened, then our society as a whole is placed in jeopardy. I'm afraid to say it, but that's where we're at as a nation today. Ps. 11:3 asks, "If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?" The answer to this question is very simple; we must rebuild the foundations again! If you will set your heart upon doing your part to make your home and church a place where Christ is first and foremost, then you too can experience prosperity and effectiveness in both areas! You do not have to suffer any longer from loss or ineffectiveness, as long as you keep your priorities in order!

## Day 166

### *Today's Reading: Ps 134, 146-150*

**Today's Reflection:** Psalm 147:3 *He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds.*

Our Lord is ever so merciful! His heart is tender towards the broken-hearted. It has been said of our Lord that He died of a broken heart on the cross for you and me...I can't argue with that! He is touched with the feelings of our infirmities! He feels our pain! Consider the following verses: John 1:11 tells us that "He came unto his own, and his own received him not." Isaiah 53:3 says, "He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not." Jesus said in John 10:30, "I and my Father are one." Then, in verse 31, "...the Jews took up stones again to stone him." It doesn't take long after studying the life of Jesus to find that He spent a lot of lonely hours during His earthly ministry! He was despised, rejected, mocked, and threatened on every hand. Even his very best friends on earth (his disciples) forsook him, except for John. Yet, we are reminded of the purpose behind it all when we find our Lord in the synagogue reading, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord." Luke 4:18. No one can better minister to those that are crushed, bruised, battered and broken by the billows of life than one who has himself been through the same. Our Lord's infinite wisdom alone, without any personal experience, would have been sufficient, but He chose the path of suffering so that His mercies would be all the more tender for us! Oh, bless the name of the Lord for His goodness! It is amazing how the Lord is able with exact precision to find the most torn and damaged part of our heart, and make it whole again! Dear reader, is your heart broken and in need of healing? Take it to Jesus, and He will apply the balm of Gilead to your aching soul! No one else may even look your way, but He stands there with anticipation, just waiting for your heart's cry for His healing touch. Tell it to Jesus, and He will meet the deepest longing of your heart with tender love and care!

## ***Today's Reading: 1 Kings 9, 2 Chron. 8***

**Today's Reflection:** 2 Chronicles 8:16 *Now all the work of Solomon was prepared unto the day of the foundation of the house of the LORD, and until it was finished. So the house of the LORD was perfected.*

I once heard it said that preparation is half the work. However, if nothing gets done without it, doesn't it deserve a little more than half the credit? It is often that we desire to see the end results without having to look upon the stages of development, growth, struggle and maturity one must go through beforehand. Notice in our text that perfection only comes after preparation has its proper place! In order for one to make preparations, there must first be a sense of direction defining what it is we're preparing for! In other words, wherever you find preparation, you first find vision. Since it is without vision that we perish, we must ensure that our vision remains clear and concise at all time. This enables us to adjust to the constantly ever-changing terrain through which we must travel in order to get to our destination. Much of what we must face is unpredictable, hence the need for faith; we trust God to get us through whatever stands between our today and our tomorrow!

However, this does not negate our responsibility to plan and prepare for the predictable, all-the-while trusting Him with the unpredictable. I think here of the five foolish virgins. I can just hear them spiritualizing their situation now; "Well, let's just trust God that when we need oil on our journey, He'll put it in our lamps for us, or lay it upon someone else's heart to give us some!" Yet, they knew the entire time that they would eventually need oil! Why is it that we expect God to bail us out of self-inflicted, completely avoidable dilemmas we so often place ourselves in due to lack of preparation? At some point, we must learn that God has given us brains to think with, hands to work with, and a heart to stay in tune to Him with for a reason! It is not that we become independent, as in not influenced or controlled by Him, but rather that we become interdependent, which means that we rely upon one another! You may find this hard to believe, but God is counting on you as a free moral agent to willfully prepare for His will and His plan for your life! That is His sovereign will for you! We must therefore continually prepare ourselves with His wisdom and direction for the steps that are yet to be taken!

## Day 168

### *Today's Reading: Proverbs 25-26*

**Today's Reflection:** Proverbs 26:20 *Where no wood is, there the fire goeth out: so where there is no talebearer, the strife ceaseth.*

Where there is strife, there is ALWAYS a problem with the tongue. It is what we say to each other, in what tone of voice, and with what attitude we speak that determines the outcome of every conversation. The truth is, we can choose how we want the conversation to end by how carefully we choose and speak our words! It is too easy to get in trouble in this area, is it not? We might as well admit that all too often we contribute more negativity into a conversation many times than we should. Words are like seeds, because what is planted will be harvested. Please notice that strife and talebearing are compared to fire and wood. Just as wood is fuel for the fire, so talebearing is fuel for strife! I honestly believe that some people just live for drama. If they're not stirring something up, they're not happy. They're just looking for a spark or a flame they can throw a little fuel on just to see how high they can get the flames to rise! A good lesson to learn here is this...when someone attempts to throw fuel on your fire, just put them on ignore! It won't take long for them to shut up, because they're not getting what they want, which is a bigger fire! They'll eventually find someone else to fire up if you'll ignore them long enough. It's when we give them what they want, which is drama, that we get in trouble and take it way too far. Often this happens before we take time to think, leaving only permanent damage in the aftermath of it all. Want to know what would fix most problems in our churches today? If only there were no talebearers! Talebearers not only bear the tales, but they also bear the strife that goes along with them. Some tales are factually truthful, and some are flat out lies; either way, they should have never been uttered by the talebearer, because their intentions are not to build up but to tear down. Since when was it o.k. to tell all you know about someone as long as it's the truth? Prov. 25:2a says, "It is the glory of God to conceal a thing..." Could it be that the glory of the Lord has departed from many a church because too many things were openly discussed rather than concealed? Prov. 10:12 says, "Hatred stirreth up strifes: but love covereth all sins." Too bad so many are more anxious to spread the gossip than the Gospel. Think about it!

## *Today's Reading: Proverbs 27-29*

**Today's Reflection:** Proverbs 27:7 *The full soul loatheth an honeycomb; but to the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet.*

If you get hungry enough, you'll eat just about anything! The same is true not only in the natural realm, but the spiritual realm as well. Is it any wonder that so many people feast spiritually off of such a buffet of variety as they do? They're looking everywhere for something good for the soul. Unfortunately, many in pursuit of happiness are looking for fulfillment in all the wrong places. That's why it's imperative that we, the church of the living God, have them something good to offer if and when they come our way! However, one of the biggest crisis' a church could ever experience is that of losing influence in the life of one seeking truth. There are many things that may contribute to this type of loss: a misrepresentation of truth, a cold heart, a pharisaical attitude, traditions of men, legalism, and dead religion, just to name a few. I also realize that some, in pursuit of their own ideas of "happiness" will reject the truth of the Word of God, as it is not always appealing to the unbeliever. However, I will say this; if we fail to impact an individual with the truth of the Gospel while they are exposed to our ministry, then we had better make sure we've done everything possible to win them to Christ. If they reject the message, it should be because of their own unwillingness to accept Christ, and not because of their disgust for any of the above-mentioned possibilities on our end. I can't help but wonder how many more would be in our churches today, feasting off the Manna of the Word of God, had we expressed more compassion, more zeal for the Lord, and had we been more real with them. All too often people are turned off to church altogether because of the fake and façade we put on. We often pretend that we have it all together, but the reality is, even church folk have problems! We should never claim immunity to problems; rather, we should offer solutions as found in the Word of God for all of us! I really believe that if we would be real with people, and drop our pious religious garb, we could be much more effective in winning the lost to Christ! We should seek to be so effective in properly representing Christ to this world, that when one comes into our circle of influence, they become permanent fixtures, and trophies of God's grace!

## Day 170

### *Today's Reading: Ecc. 1-6*

**Today's Reflection:** Ecc. 3:11 *He hath made every thing beautiful in his time: also he hath set the world in their heart, so that no man can find out the work that God maketh from the beginning to the end.*

I once heard a story of a very wealthy business man who, in an effort to find true love, masked his identity. He felt that if someone were to love him, it should be for who he was, and not what he had. His plan was to begin working at a factory making minimum wage, where he might finally meet someone who may indeed fall in love with him, and not his money. His plan worked! After several months of working at the factory, he met a young lady who was also looking for true love, and before long, they were making wedding plans. As they began planning their wedding, the young bride-to-be was instructed by her fiancé that his love for her was so great, that she was to spare no expense while planning the wedding, reception and honeymoon. He also told her that he had a special surprise for her, but that she'd have to wait until after their honeymoon to learn what it was. Puzzled, yet even more excited, the lady gladly agreed. However, having been used to a low income, she had to be reassured by her new-found love, with each purchasing decision, that he had it covered! Needless to say, the wedding was beautiful! The groom spared no expense to make it a dream wedding for his lovely bride! Though she did not understand how he was going to pay the bill, yet her love for him was so deep that her trust was stronger than her doubts. Then, the honeymoon! Everything a princess would ever hope to experience came true for her that week! However, at this point she became very concerned about the amount of debt that might await them once they got back to the "real world!" On their way back home from the honeymoon, the husband informed his bride that it was time to travel to a special destination where he could show her the surprise she had long been waiting for. The limo ride alone was dazzling, but all the while, she kept thinking, "We can't afford this!" Finally, they arrived! He opened the door for his bride to step out of the limo, and as she looked up to the most beautiful mansion she had ever seen, he spoke these words, "My dearest love, welcome to your new home!" I now remind the Bride of Christ that the best is yet to come!

## *Today's Reading: Ecc. 7-12*

**Today's Reflection:** Ecc 7:8 *Better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof: and the patient in spirit is better than the proud in spirit.*

I think here of the words of the song writer who once said, "It is better farther on!" For the child of God, though we will never become completely immune to troubles and heartaches, yet we should go from strength to strength, from victory to victory, from mountain top to mountain top, from grace to grace. It does indeed get better the farther down the journey we travel with our Lord! It is amazing with every battle we face, to watch and know that as the battles get more challenging, even so our Lord shows Himself all the mightier! What gets better is not necessarily the level of comfort or the lack of opposition, but that sweet fellowship we share with our Lord Jesus! We may indeed grow weaker, yet in our weakness, He gets stronger. Your beginnings may have started off a bit rough and rocky, yet rest assured that as long as you learn to depend upon Christ, your end shall be better than your beginning! Job 8:7 says, "Though thy beginning was small, yet thy latter end should greatly increase." I find such comfort in these words, knowing that our present pain shall be traded for future gain! It is through struggle, pain, agony and travail that life begins. This pattern continues through the developmental stages of life, until at last years of awkwardness, embarrassment, and immaturity are traded for years of maturity, productiveness, and honor. Never forget that there is always a process involved in moving from infancy to adulthood, be it your career, your ministry, your marriage, or whatever the case may be. Zec 4:10 asks, "For who hath despised the day of small things?" Nothing great ever started out that way! Don't give up, for your breakthrough could be just around the bend! What God has spoken in your life SHALL come to pass, and not one devil in Hell can stop it! You may have to fight for it, but you shall overcome through the power of Christ! What God starts in our lives, He also finishes, so even when we feel like giving up, He is always there cheering us on, encouraging and strengthening us to go another mile. Let us endeavor to run this race with patience, until the day that things are at last better than they have ever been!

## Day 172

### *Today's Reading: 1 Kings 10-11, 1 Chron. 9*

**Today's Reflection:** 1 Kings 11:14a *And the Lord stirred up an adversary unto Solomon...*

Be careful what you blame the devil for, because it just could be the hand of the Lord! Proverbs 20:24 says, "Man's goings are of the Lord; how can a man then understand his own way?" It is difficult to think that the Lord could initiate strife in our lives, isn't it? However, before we question His judgment, we must first consider His reasoning. King Solomon had begun to worship false gods and take unto himself strange wives, even after the Lord God appeared to him twice, specifically warning him not to do so. We then conclude that it was Solomon's own choosing to initiate strife in his life. It is the principle of reaping and sowing, for no seed shall be sown which will not produce a harvest after its own kind. In this case, The Lord had spoken that Solomon's kingdom would be taken from his son, and so to ensure that His Word came to pass, He began the process of stirring up the enemies of Solomon. I wish to draw a couple of truths from this text. First, we need to notice that even though Solomon had more wisdom than anyone else in the earth, yet he fell for some of the most common pitfalls of man due to the subtlety of sin and temptation. Even though Solomon knew better, yet he was caught up in the moment, and allowed his wisdom to take a back seat just long enough to have devastating consequences for generations to come. Let this be a lesson to all of us that no matter where we are in our walk with the Lord, we will always have the capability of making bad choices, and should therefore always keep our guards up! The second truth I wish to draw is simply that it didn't have to go this way! Solomon had a good thing going because of his initial zeal for the Lord coupled with the Lord's favor on his life. The same thing it took for Solomon to get to where he was is all it would have taken for him to be sustained at that level of blessings and favor. No matter what level we're at in our walk with the Lord, there are basically three things that should never change, and that will always enable us to maintain what God has blessed us with: trust, obedience, and humility! When we falter in either of these areas, we threaten our own "kingdom". Therefore, we must keep the faith, stay humble, and always obey the Lord!

## *Today's Reading: Proverbs 30-31*

**Today's Reflection:** Proverbs 30:5 *Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him.*

In a world where words seem only to be used as cosmetics in an effort to hide the truth, it is refreshing to know that we have a more sure word (2 Peter 1:19)! It would serve us well to learn early on how devastating it is to trust in vanity. Some live with this attitude, "I know what I believe, so please don't confuse me with the truth!" However, Jesus taught us that when we know the truth, it's truth that will make us free (John 8:32)! The Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ is not only good news, but it's the best news ever! Why? Because it first identifies the problem of sin, revealing to all of us the simple truth that we need a Saviour, lest we perish in Hell for all of eternity. However, it doesn't stop there! It offers the remedy for our sins, the cross of Calvary! Jesus said again in John 12:32, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." This was prophetic of His purpose for going to Calvary, to pay the ultimate sacrifice for sins once for all! Because of what Jesus did for us on the cross some 2,000 years ago, and because of the fact that He arose from the grave, victorious over death, hell and the grave three days afterwards, we have this good news in Romans 10:13, "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." I remember well the day that God in essence said to me, "I've got some good news and some bad news. The bad news is, you're lost in your sins and headed for Hell. The good news is you don't have to go there! You're special, and I love you and want to save you!" That day, after hearing the voice of God for the first time in my life, and after hearing the Word of God taught and preached to me, I turned to Christ in repentance of my sins, and He saved me immediately! I am now a child of the King of kings, and the Lord of lords, made possible only by His precious blood He shed for me! Now, there are a whole lot of lies and deceit floating around today, but any time you need truth and clarity, just pick up an old KJ Bible, and you'll have pure, cool, refreshing truth straight from the mouth of God! EVERY word of God is pure, which means that if God said it, we can take it to the bank and cash in on it! Be not afraid, only believe (Mark 5:36)!

## Day 174

### *Today's Reading: 1 Kings 12-14*

**Today's Reflection:** 1 Kings 13:18 *He said unto him, I am a prophet also as thou art; and an angel spake unto me by the word of the LORD, saying, Bring him back with thee into thine house, that he may eat bread and drink water. But he lied unto him.*

All that glitters is not gold! The most important thing in your journey with Christ is hearing His voice. We live from word to word. I am living today on the last word I received from Him. Until I get new direction, I shall continue to walk in the path that His last set of instructions sent me down. It is imperative that we hear from God, so that we may walk in the greatest confidence of our calling. Nothing casts more doubt into a situation than that of not knowing the mind of God. We can get in trouble real quickly when we do not learn to discern the voice of God from other voices. There will be lots of opportunities to take advice from well-intended or not-so-well intended people who frankly have no clue about God's will for your life. Just listen to what God has spoken! What matters most is not what others are saying to you, no matter how highly you esteem them, but what God has said or is still saying. As always, the biggest test of all is the scripture test. If what is being said to you or what you think God is speaking to you is not consistent with the Bible, then you should not listen to that voice! The Word of God will never lead you wrong. Make it a habit each and every day to read your Bible, asking the Holy Spirit to speak to your heart through its pages. If you do this, you'll find that God's voice will become clearer and clearer to you, drowning out the voices of doubt and deception. There is nothing like getting a fresh Word from God, but we're not going to hear that voice clearly if we disregard the Bible and what it has to say! I have noticed that when I'm consistently in the Word, I'm also consistently hearing from God! On the other hand, when I'm consistently too busy to read the Word, I'm also consistently distracted in my walk with Christ. The Bible is like a gold mine...if you keep digging, you'll eventually strike gold! Do not get discouraged through the tougher times when it seems like you're not getting anything, because at any moment, you could hit the spot you've been needing! Keep digging in the Word, and His voice will never lead you wrong!

## *Today's Reading: 2 Chronicles 10-12*

**Today's Reflection:** 2 Chronicles 11:11-12 *And he fortified the strong holds, and put captains in them, and store of victual, and of oil and wine. And in every several city he put shields and spears, and made them exceeding strong, having Judah and Benjamin on his side.*

When we are given the proper recourses, our strength can be maximized! In our text, the right people, the right provisions, and the right weapons were all in place, and therefore it is said that the cities were made exceeding strong. I can't help but wonder how many of us are surrounded by good people, plenty of provisions, and all the necessary tools we need to succeed, while still failing to maximize our potential! It is not what we don't have that defines who we are and where we're going; rather, it's what we do with what we have that defines us! It's not simply good enough to be in the right place at the right time in order for success to happen. The right environment with the wrong attitude is just as ineffective as the wrong environment with the wrong attitude! Do you really think that these cities were made strong because they had all the right stuff? May I suggest that it wasn't the stuff, but it was what the people did with the stuff! We must be engaging, pro-active, and involved with every opportunity that comes our way if we are to realize God's best for our lives! We cannot relax simply because we're surrounded by so much stuff and people! The swords are not going to engage the enemy all by themselves and neither are the provisions simply going to drop out of heaven into your lap. Your friends are not going to simply take it upon themselves to aid you in your cause, without both your initiation and encouragement! If we want things to move in the Kingdom of God, then we're going to have to MAKE them move! We can no longer whine and complain about all others who are more successful than us, assuming that if we had it as good as they did, we'd be blessed too! NO! We must realize that somewhere along the way, they're blessed because there was blood, sweat and tears which paid the price for that success, and unless we are willing to do the same, we will not be the victors we dream to become. I'm asking each of you to join with me in a renewed determination to give it all you got, and then some, to overcome every obstacle that hinders you from God's best in your life!

## Day 176

### *Today's Reading: 1 Kings 15:1-24, 2 Chr. 13-16*

**Today's Reflection:** 2 Chronicles 14:11 *And Asa cried unto the LORD his God, and said, LORD, it is nothing with thee to help, whether with many, or with them that have no power: help us, O LORD our God; for we rest on thee, and in thy name we go against this multitude. O LORD, thou art our God; let no man prevail against thee.*

Faith transfers ownership of your problems! When faith is employed, all of the sudden what used to be yours now belongs to the Lord. Did you see this transition in our text? Asa was in a dilemma, as he was clearly outnumbered. However, when he closed his prayer by saying to the Lord, "...let no man prevail against thee.", in essence he was saying, "Lord, they're not fighting me, they're fighting You! Don't let them win!" It is only when we make that transition in our own hearts and minds that we truly activate the power of faith in our lives. 1 Sam 17:47b declares that the battle is the LORD's! 1 Peter 5:7 says, "Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you." Jesus also said in Matthew 11:28 & 30, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. ...For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." The truth is, in order for God to really move in on our behalf, we must shift the weight of our burdens on to His shoulders. As long as we keep trying to bear the burden and fix it ourselves, He not only will not help, but He can't, because whatsoever is not of faith is sin (Rom. 14:23b). To better illustrate, later on in today's reading, found in 2 Chronicles 16:12b, it is said of Asa after he got a disease in his feet in his old age, "...yet in his disease he sought not to the LORD, but to the physicians." God wants to be all-sufficient to us, but as long as we continue to seek every other alternative solution before seeking Him, we'll never tap into the real, consistent, manifested, practical, penetrating power of God on a daily basis in our lives. Our attitude seems to say all too often, "Who needs God when I have \_\_\_\_\_!" Just fill in the blank! God help us to always remember, and not only remember, but live our lives on this simple truth Jesus spoke in John 15:5b, "...for without me ye can do nothing." God should always be our first resort, not our last! It is when He gets the preeminence in our lives that He gets maximum glory out of us. Let's just trust the Lord, how about it?

***Today's Reading: 1 Kings 15:25-16:34, 2 Chr. 17***

**Today's Reflection: 2 Chronicles 17:16 a** *And next him was Amasiah the son of Zichri, who willingly offered himself unto the LORD; ...*

The next best thing to offering one's self willingly unto the Lord is standing with someone else in battle who has done so! There is nothing like being in company with mighty men of valor, especially when you feel inadequate and out of place. Yet, as awkward as it can feel, when we are privileged to be around others who have given so sacrificially of themselves to the service of the Lord, we should draw strength, courage and motivation from them! It seems that it's in my weakest moments that my Heavenly Father places someone in my life stronger than I am from whom I receive encouragement. It is with great astonishment and wonder that I only dream to become like some of those heroes of the faith I have been privileged to join ranks with! Never think that you're alone in this battle, for if you look next to you, God has someone standing with you for a divine purpose! What God has done with them, for them, and through them has been at least in part for the very purpose of encouraging you to keep pressing on, knowing that the prize is worth the fight. It isn't the young and inexperienced that we learn the most from (though their zeal is admirable), but the seasoned veterans of the faith that we have as our greatest examples, ever testifying to us that if God did it for them, He can also do it for us! It is a good thing to remember, especially when you feel alone in the battle, the great cloud of witnesses whom the Lord has surrounded you with, offering you inspiration, vision, clarity and purpose in the cause of Christ. It is also in those lonely times that you then begin to really appreciate those who are next to you in the battle; because it's then that you realize that there are more with you than with the adversary. I bless the Lord today for all those in my life whom the Lord has strategically used (and still using today) to make me the man I am today. I'm not perfect, but I'm a whole lot better off than I would have been without the Lord's careful selection of all those individuals whom He felt I needed to mold and make me into the servant He wants me to be. Even now I hope and pray that the finished product will be someone that not only my predecessors will be proud of, but most importantly, that my Lord will be pleased with.

## Day 178

### *Today's Reading: 1 Kings 17-19*

**Today's Reflection:** 1 Kings 19:7b ...*the journey is too great for thee...*

I have learned that if my problems are small enough for me to handle, it doesn't take long for them to handle me! When I am dependent of the Lord, I am at my strongest, but when I am independent of the Lord, I am at my weakest. It is when we are called to a God-sized task that we are faced with God-sized problems. God therefore will share His glory with no man. He wants to go beyond you and me, so that if and when anything significant is accomplished in us or through us, He is the one who gets the praise and glory! Oh sure, we start out with baby steps, but as we put away childish things and become more responsible and mature, we ought to find ourselves being stretched to the point where our strength steps aside to make room for God's unfailing strength. It is in that place of dependency that we realize what walking by faith is truly all about. Many of us, however, are guilty of never growing past that place of fighting our equals. We never take on more than what we are comfortable with, so we never grow. However, if we have one hundred wins, then discover that our 100<sup>th</sup> opponent is the same as our 1<sup>st</sup>, have we anything to boast in? It is imperative that we move on to more challenging opponents who will push us to grow in our faith, thereby bringing out the best in us! Too many Christians never step out in faith, for fear of the challenges they will be forced to face head on. We like to keep our problems personally manageable, don't we? Just remember this; as long as you and I can still manage our problems, we have no need for God's power in our lives, and that's a scary place to be! What we must learn is that our biggest enemy is not the unknown, but the familiar. It is the familiar that builds up prison walls about us, and that never permits us to get to the next level of faith. We can become satisfied with where we're at, even if it's a place of perpetual failure, as long as we can predict what happens next. I hope I never get to that place in my walk with the Lord! I'd rather take a few risks while placing my faith in Christ, than to be in the same place twenty years from now as I am today, all in the name of predictability or familiarity! I say, "God, even though the journey is too great for us, we know that it's not too great for Thee! Bring it on, Lord, for we depend on Thee!"

## *Today's Reading: 1 Kings 20-21*

**Today's Reflection:** 1 Kings 20:28 *And there came a man of God, and spake unto the king of Israel, and said, Thus saith the LORD, Because the Syrians have said, The LORD is God of the hills, but he is not God of the valleys, therefore will I deliver all this great multitude into thine hand, and ye shall know that I am the LORD.*

Never say God can't or God won't, because just as sure as you say so, God will intentionally do what you said He couldn't, for no other reason than to prove you wrong! "Because the Syrians have said..." What has your enemy said about you? What kind of lies has the devil been whispering in your ears? What kind of evil reports have the doubting brethren or sisters declared over you? It has been said even of The Way of the Cross Baptist Church (the church I'm presently privileged to pastor) by the nay-sayers of our community that "God will never do anything there!" Oh, but He has, He is, and He shall, if for no other reason than to prove the enemy to be a liar, and for all to know that He is the LORD! When I hear these kinds of evil reports, it stirs my soul, because I know that no one shall say of God that He is not a God of the valley, as He is the mountain top, and get by with it. I'll go so far as to say that your enemies in cursing you and your God have in essence brought about the favor of God upon you, as what they say shall backfire! No weapon that is formed against us shall prosper. What the devil meant for evil shall be turned around for our good and God's glory! So, when the enemy comes in like a flood, just remember that the Spirit of the Lord shall raise up a standard against him, doing battle for you and me! The Lord is our defence, that is for sure! Some may prefer mountain-top views in the height of their lofty estate, but those who dwell in the valley know all too well that the green pastures and still waters of God's Grace are abundant only in the valleys! Too many times we underestimate the significance of the valley experiences we have in our Christian journey. We look too often at the valleys as burdens and dreaded obstacles, but yet the Lord uses them to strengthen, develop, nourish, and mature our faith in Him. When trouble comes, it is a prime opportunity for God to show up and show out! Therefore, don't forget that God is a God of the mountain, but also a God of the valley!

## Day 180

### *Today's Reading: 1 Kings 22, 2 Chronicles 18*

**Today's Reflection:** 1 Kings 22:34a *And a certain man drew a bow at a venture, and smote the king of Israel between the joints of the harness...*

Perhaps the greatest risk of all is that of taking none! It is said of this archer that he drew a bow “at a venture”. The word venture means an undertaking involving uncertainty as to the outcome, especially a risky or dangerous one. We might as well admit it...serving God is risky business! I can't help but think of all the “risks” I've taken over the years for my Lord. Most of our journey with Him is just as our definition states, involving uncertainty as to the outcome! But, isn't that how walking in faith supposed to be? I'll have to be honest that there are times that the uncertainties of tomorrow are too overwhelming for me to ponder due to the direction in which it seems my present day circumstances are taking me. However, I am reminded that my life is in His hands, and that no threat is too great for Him! We go as far as we can see, and then we see to go farther. We have our ups and our downs, but through it all, Jesus is faithful! Life fluctuates with changing seasons and circumstances, but there is one constant in it all...God's unchanging character! No matter what tomorrow holds, Jesus truly does hold tomorrow, and therein lays our security! I remember several years ago when I worked for a company in Yadkinville, NC, that one of my co-workers used to pick on me whenever I would say something she thought was funny. She'd always tell me, “Gary, you're just not wrapped tight!” As humorous as that is (and probably truthful), no matter how loosely others may think we're wrapped, we're still wrapped tight in Jesus! It is often the waiting that allows doubt to slip in, is it not? From the time we release that arrow at a venture, to the time it hits the target God intended for it to, there is at times a long wait for the outcome in which Satan desires to cause us to doubt whether or not we made the right decision. Here's the thing that helps me with that. What is the greater sin; releasing in faith and trusting God for the best outcome, or holding back in fear, doubting whether or not it would be worth taking the shot? At the end of the day, if your decisions are wrought in faith, the uncertainties will take care of themselves as they are released into God's control and supervision! Go ahead and take your shot of faith today!

## *Today's Reading: 2 Chronicles 19-23*

**Today's Reflection:** 2 Chr. 20:17 *Ye shall not need to fight in this battle: set yourselves, stand ye still, and see the salvation of the LORD with you, O Judah and Jerusalem: fear not, nor be dismayed; to morrow go out against them: for the LORD will be with you.*

I have often wondered how to discern when it's time to engage, or when it's time to stand still. Let's just face it, even when we have no other option but to stand still, we still find ourselves scratching around for a quick do-it-yourself fix! Part of me wants to engage my God-given brain to think through my problems and offer solutions, and another part of me says to simply trust the Lord. Where is the balance? I admit that this is a challenge I face almost daily in my own personal life. Yet, in light of our text, there is some light shed on the subject. When we're faced with these two choices, more important than anything else is to find the mind of God on the matter! If we don't know, ask! When we truly give Him a chance, He always gives us a word right on time. Often, our human nature isn't patient enough to wait upon the Lord. We're afraid we'll miss our opportunity to make it work if we wait too long, so we pretend like we're giving God time to work, and yet when He doesn't do it quick enough for our hasty spirits, often we take matters into our own hands. We must learn that when God says to "Stand still", it is because it is our uneasy, hasty, anxious spirits He wishes to subdue and tame to be controlled and led by His Spirit. God's timing is impeccable. Even when we think He's too late, He's right on time! At times, He waits years before answering our prayers, and yet at other times He answers immediately. Regardless of when He answers, the truth is that He does, and for that we should be grateful. Always remember that when we faithfully and willingly wait for Him, He is working everything for our good. How often do our children try to rush their birthday presents, for example? Yet, in the great wisdom of we the parents, we make them patiently await their birthday so as to make the moment more memorable and special. So it is with our Heavenly Father! He is simply awaiting the day in which the presentation of His gift is most memorable, special, and meaningful to us! Keep waiting and trusting, and one day the Lord will reward your patience.

## Day 182

### *Today's Reading: Obadiah 1, Psalm 82-83*

**Today's Reflection:** Psalm 83:12 *Who said, Let us take to ourselves the houses of God in possession.*

The enemy of the church is still saying that today! He who owns the church controls the church, and I'm afraid that many churches have sold out to the man-made religions of compliance, complacency, and compromise. Jesus said in Matt 11:12, "And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." During the transitional period where the days of the law were coming to an end, and where the days of grace were beginning, there was great "violence" in the kingdom...a power struggle, if you will. Much of the world is deceived today as a result of this violence, caused by the prince of the power of the air, who has offered every imaginable counterfeit religion known to man in an effort to try to prohibit the message of grace from being heard. Satan knows that if he can just keep people from crossing over into grace, he's got them! He doesn't mind if you have the Ten Commandments memorized by heart, nor does he mind if you try to abide by them all. What he does mind is when you place your faith in Jesus Christ for salvation, plus nothing and minus nothing! Jesus also said in Matt 16:18, "...upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Never forget that the true church belongs to Jesus! When we realize that it's not the pulpit committee, the deacon board, Aunt Susie in the grave, the one with the most tenure, the one with seniority, the one with a perfect Sunday School attendance, or the most generous donor that owns the church, but Jesus Christ Himself, then we are able to move with Heaven's authority, bombarding the gates of hell! Do not allow anyone besides Christ to take your church into possession, for it's no one's right but His! It is amazing to me as a pastor to observe just how easy it is to feel like you're being pressured to say and do certain things, even when no one has really said or done anything that would indicate they were expecting you to do so. I have come to realize that it's none other than the enemy, who realizes the power of influence yields a certain measure of control. Pastors, we MUST keep our guards up at all times to ensure that the only influence we respond to is that of the Word and the Spirit!

## *Today's Reading: 2 Kings 1-4*

**Today's Reflection:** 2 Kings 2:13-14 *He took up also the mantle of Elijah that fell from him, and went back, and stood by the bank of Jordan. And he took the mantle of Elijah that fell from him, and smote the waters, and said, Where is the LORD God of Elijah? and when he also had smitten the waters, they parted hither and thither: and Elisha went over.*

After crossing the Jordan, His miracle-performing mentor had left him. Now with a crowd of skeptics gathering, how was Elisha going to cross back over that Jordan River without his mentor? The pressure was on. Many times, we find ourselves in situations where no one can rescue us. We can be surrounded by skeptics who are quick to see if we will fall. In fact, all who serve God will occasionally find themselves in these situations. What should be our response? A casual reading of the remainder of the passage will show that Elisha cried out, walked to Elijah's mantle, picked it up, walked to the river bank, and then before the skeptics, cried out to God, slapped the water with it, and walked across, gaining the full respect of the formerly skeptical crowd! But if we dig deeper, we realize this "mantle" was more than just a leather belt. It also represented "authority" and all that Elisha had been taught by his mentor. We then learn that, in times of testing, we are to (1) Go to the Word for comfort, (2) Walk with the Word for direction, and (3) Trust in the Word for deliverance. When we turn to God's Word in times of crises, it can lead us to the river bank, where God will make a way for us to demonstrate His power in our lives. Had Elisha not bent down (humility) to pick up the mantle (God's Word), and walked with it, he would have never returned to that bank where God was ready to perform His miracle. And had he not trusted it (at the risk of looking foolish if the waters didn't part) he would have never enjoyed the power of God. As a missionary to the Philippines, I have been through many trials. But every time I trusted His Word, the path opened up for me. And when I walked across, God's power was displayed and those who witnessed it had their faith increased. Feel alone? Going through a trial? See no way out? Let's not get ourselves overwhelmed with circumstances, but overwhelmed with His Word. ~ Mike Mislan

## Day 184

### *Today's Reading: 2 Kings 5-8*

**Today's Reflection:** 2 Kings 5:14 *Then went he down, and dipped himself seven times in Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God: and his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean.*

At first, Naaman was not willing to do what the man of God said! He was actually angry about it, thinking that there were better, cleaner rivers in which he could dip himself besides the river Jordan. It's amazing to me to see the parallel between Naaman's initial response to the Word of God and the average response we see today when the Word of God convicts sinners of their sins. Conviction often makes men angry at first. People generally do not like to hear that the **ONLY** way for them to be cleansed of their sins is to go to the Living Water, the Lord Jesus Christ, in repentance of their sins. Men are always looking for alternative ways to get to God, attempting to by-pass Calvary's crimson flow. However, Jesus taught that He was **THE** way, **THE** truth, and **THE** life, and that no man could come to the Father, but by Him! Naaman's servants pointed out to him that if something hard were required of him, he would have gladly done so, and that he might as well do what the man of God said! The same is true for many today, for it is human nature to feel that you have to do something bigger than life in order to gain the favor of God. This is where all man-made religions come from. Men try to fix their own sin problems by doing good works, and by attempting to help God out with their salvation, thinking that they can somehow attain to the height of God if they try hard enough. Friend, do not attempt to add to or take away from God's salvation plan, for in doing so you'll come up short every time! It is often that God requires things of us that logically make no sense to our natural man, yet when obeyed in faith, brings about the results that God said they would. To the sinner I say, trust Christ and Christ alone to save you. There is nothing we can contribute to the work of salvation, for it is purely a work of Grace. Stop trying, and start trusting! Turn from your sins to Christ, and He shall cleanse you of your spiritual leprosy with His own blood, and wash your sins away, making you white as snow in His site! Look nowhere else for redemption but the blood of Christ, and you're thirsty soul shall never thirst again!

***Today's Reading: 2 Kings 9-11***

**Today's Reflection:** 2 Kings 9:3 *Then take the box of oil, and pour it on his head, and say, Thus saith the LORD, I have anointed thee king over Israel. Then open the door, and flee, and tarry not.*

Often our Lord will deposit His Word into our hearts with such swiftness and urgency that it demands immediate action, with no time to spare! It leaves us no time to think through it, plan it out, or second-guess what we heard. It is necessary for Him to do so in order that we might depend solely and entirely upon what He said, and not what we did. Jesus walked up to Matthew, and simply said, "Follow me." And the Bible says that "...he arose, and followed him." No time for recourse whatsoever, just a sudden swift move that changed his life forever! Always remember that it doesn't take but just one moment for God to walk into your life with a new assignment and a fresh anointing for your whole world to be turned upside down, and for your divine destiny to be revealed! It is very important for us, when we hear His Word, to respond immediately by walking in the anointing that He has given us for the task that is at hand. In our text, as soon as Jehu had spoken to his men of what just happened, they "hasted, and took every man his garment, and put it under him on the top of the stairs, and blew with trumpets, saying, Jehu is king." It is interesting to note that Jehu was already captain of the host, and so he had already experienced some degree of fulfillment in realizing his purpose. Yet, even as our Lord would have us do, Jehu had gotten to a place where he desperately needed to go to the next level in his calling, for he was found "sitting" instead of fighting. You know you're ready to go to the next level in your walk with Christ and your purpose for being here, when you max out in your potential and effectiveness where you are! If you feel like you're in that place, look out, because at any moment God can come with a swift Word and that fresh anointing that will catapult you into your next level of faith and service for Him! For some, it may change only your heart, thereby yielding more impact than ever before, and yet for others it may require a complete change of location in service. Regardless of the outcome, when the Word comes, be as hasty to respond, as it was to come to you! You'll never go wrong operating in the anointing God has placed on you!

## Day 186

### ***Today's Reading: 2 Kings 12-13, 2 Chron. 24***

**Today's Reflection:** 2 Kings 12:6 *But it was so, that in the three and twentieth year of king Jehoash the priests had not repaired the breaches of the house.*

Much of the problem we see in our churches today is as it relates to the pastor, and his failure to repair the breaches of the house of God. A breach is a state of being broken. Unfortunately, there are many pastors who do not see themselves as the biggest reason for this state of brokenness in the church, and yet the truth still remains that as goes the leadership, so goes the congregation. Pastors, we can point the blame at others all we want, but it is our duty first to evaluate ourselves! Could it be that in this generation where everyone seems to want to shift the blame on someone else, and where no one wants to assume personal responsibility for their mistakes, that this philosophy has started creeping into our pulpits across America and around the world, and has trickled down into the pews from there? 1 Peter 4:17a says, "For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God..." If it begins with the house of God, then it must start at the head first! We must be careful not to blame a cold-hearted congregation for their complacency, when in fact we ourselves have become cold and callused! We must not badger the bleeding sheep when we have been the ones who have inflicted their wounds, failing rather to nurse them as a shepherd should. We must not conclude their estate to be hopeless and without life, when we ourselves have failed to beg God for personal revival, thus effecting our preaching with His divine Holy Ghost fire! May I submit to you that if the pulpit is not on fire, then the pews surely won't be! If we as pastors do not get hungry and thirsty for God's power in our preaching, then our churches will not get better, but worse. Let us remember that we are not to be lords over God's heritage, but we are to be ensamples (a pattern or model for imitation) to the flock, as found in 1 Peter 5:3! Pastors, we **MUST** repair the breaches of our churches, starting with the breaches of our own hearts! If we do not start here, then our greatest need in America to date, the need for genuine revival, will never be realized! We are therefore called to practice and preach the Word of God, so as to challenge the people by example not to remain in their state of spiritual brokenness!

***Today's Reading: 2 Kings 14, 2 Chron. 25***

**Today's Reflection:** 2 Chronicles 25:2 *And he did that which was right in the sight of the LORD, but not with a perfect heart.*

Doing right with your actions is one thing, but being right in your heart is another story! Often is the case that we flaunt our good deeds around as if we have achieved something for the Lord, but the true test of character is not what we do for the Lord, but with what attitude we do it! Anyone can go through the motions, making good moral choices which are notable and honorable, but show me someone who does so with a perfect heart towards God, and I'll show you a rarity in our day. We must go to the next level of service, where we shift from that of obligation to that of homage! It always comes back down to the heart, doesn't it? What's in your heart? Are you willing to go all the way for Jesus? Col. 3:23 says, "And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men;" Our attitude gauges our level of commitment as well as our level of performance. Although we are saved by grace through faith, it should still be our desire to be at peak performance for our Lord, and this comes only at the altar of a surrendered heart! We should strive for excellence when we serve Him, not going half way, but all the way! Prov. 17:27b says, "...a man of understanding is of an excellent spirit." When we have the right attitude about serving God, then we come to a whole new realm of understanding and wisdom we knew nothing of beforehand. It is also said of Daniel in Dan. 6:3, "Then this Daniel was preferred above the presidents and princes, because an excellent spirit was in him; and the king thought to set him over the whole realm." Always remember this; performance does not determine attitude, but attitude determines performance. One may argue, "Serve God long enough, and you'll begin to like it!" but I say, "Like God long enough, and you'll begin to serve Him!" If we do not keep our spirits in check, we can allow our attitudes to take a nose dive, thus causing a crash and burn when it comes to our service for Christ! David said in Ps. 51:10, "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me." David knew that a right spirit could pull him out of any situation! Don't allow a bad attitude about circumstances to cause you to lose your competitive edge over the enemy! As long as your attitude is right, your heart will be right, and as your heart goes, so goes your quality of service to your Lord!

## Day 188

### *Today's Reading: Jonah 1-4*

**Today's Reflection:** *Jonah 1:3a But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD, and went down to Joppa; and he found a ship going to Tarshish: so he paid the fare thereof....*

Any time you go against the Lord's leadership in your life, you WILL pay the fare! Could it be that many are in a place of their own choosing, and consequently are only as impactful as their own means and limitations will allow them to be? In essence, God says, "If you want it your way, then you'll have to pay for it yourself! But, if you do it My way, I'll personally foot the bill!" You see, what we must realize is that when we are obedient to the Lord, we let go of the reins, thus allowing Him to work the impossible in our lives, reaching far beyond our personal limitations! Are you in a place where it is your own limitations that keep you bound, hindering you from realizing your potential as a surrendered vessel to His divine purpose? If so, then seek the Lord, and begin your journey towards your Nineveh (the place that God is calling you), and you will be amazed at how He will start picking up the tabs for the journey, thus enabling you to serve Him to the fullest capacity! However, all too often we witness shipwreck after shipwreck of people who refused to listen and obey the Lord's direction for their lives. Good thing Jonah had enough since to bail out before shipwreck in his life! I imagine his 3 day journey back to shore in the whale's belly was a sobering moment in his life, don't you? We ought each to search our hearts today to be sure that we're on the path that is conducive with God's ultimate plan and purpose for our lives, and be willing at any moment to make the necessary adjustments, as dramatic as they may seem, to get on course with Him! Someone may be reading this today, and at this moment realize that you need to make a 180 degree turn in your own life from your own will to His. I strongly urge you to follow the prompting of the Holy Spirit if that is the case, because when you follow the Lord, you will NEVER go wrong! If you've gotten off course, you can take the Word of God as your compass, make some adjustments, and be headed back in the right direction again. God is a God of second chances, and He has not given up on you! Just remember though; if you do not heed His voice, you will personally pay the fare, and it will not be pretty!

**Today's Reading: 2 Kings 15, 2 Chron. 26**

**Today's Reflection:** 2 Chron. 26:5 *And he sought God in the days of Zechariah, who had understanding in the visions of God: and as long as he sought the LORD, God made him to prosper.*

It is obvious in our text that there is a direct correlation between seeking the Lord, and in prospering at His hand! When God makes one prosper, He touches everything they touch. It will not be limited to just one area of your life, but it will include the whole spectrum...your travels, your career, your checking and savings accounts, your health, your family, your geographical location, your battles, everything (see Deut 28:1-8)! I am not saying that there will not be challenges during certain seasons of testing and trials that we must go through to make us stronger in our faith, but what I am saying is that when God prospers someone, He goes all the way with it! However, the most important thing to remember is that you get there by seeking the Lord. Many are only interested in God for His stuff, but God is looking for those who are interested in His heart! Matthew 6:33 says, "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." What things? All the things you need to survive and thrive for the welfare of your family and ministry! The question, though, is this; what are you looking for? Another car? More money? Another relationship? A different job? A healing? Not that our Lord is not concerned about any of the above, for He cares about every minute detail in our lives, and He even instructs us to pray and ask Him to provide our needs. However, let it be noted that what we should be seeking above all else is the Lord Himself, not just His stuff! It is a matter of priority in the heart. God knows when He is simply being used, and when He is being adored! Let each of us therefore endeavor to love first, and ask later! One lesson we can surely learn from our text is that if we need things to pick up around the home front, around the work place, and around the church house, all we need is a good old-fashioned soul searching, and then begin seeking the Lord with all our hearts! When we do this, He delights in coming through for us and blessing us in our relationship with Him! The key to sustained prosperity is an intentionally continual searching of Him! As long as we seek the Lord, He will continue to make us prosper, just as He did for king Uzziah.

## Day 190

### *Today's Reading: Isaiah 1-4*

**Today's Reflection:** Isaiah 1:21 *How is the faithful city become an harlot! It was full of judgment; righteousness lodged in it; but now murderers.*

I see in our text a striking parallel between what happened to the nation of Israel, and what is happening to America today! Sadly, what used to be known as a shining city on a hill is quickly and surely losing her glory and her honor! When we begin to forsake our Godly heritage for the almighty dollar, when we trade in purity for popularity, when we replace the house of God with our favorite hobbies, and when we shamelessly glamorize sin on a national scale on all of our major media outlets, then we should not be surprised with the increased crime rate, the ever-increasing epidemic of STD's amongst our youth, and the highest divorce rate this world has ever known! The very fabric of our society has been ripped to shreds by unfaithfulness to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who made us the great nation that we were in the first place. How does this happen? How does a nation so quickly and so rapidly decline from where she used to be just a few decades ago to where she is today? The answer is found in Proverbs 14:34, where the Bible says, "Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people." The truth is, no matter how big, bad and tough we may become, we are never immune to the law of reaping and sowing as it pertains to our sins. As the songwriter once said, Sin will take you farther than you want to go! Even as this is true on a personal level, it is also true on a national level. Isaiah 2:4 warns that God will judge among the nations! Our leaders had best get back to God, before we lose America as we know it today! More than we need political reformation, more than we need fiscal responsibility, and more than we need religious rhetoric, we need a national sin killing, Savior exalting, Spirit filled revival to shake our country! I admonish each of you to get down on your hands and knees today, and beg God for revival! 2 Chronicles 7:14 still says, "If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land." People of God, if each of us will do our part, we can make history as the generation that brought America back to God! Will you do your part?

## *Today's Reading: Isaiah 5-8*

**Today's Reflection:** Isaiah 5:4, 7:9 *What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? Wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?*

Today, I would like to pull from this text certain principles which can be applied to the church. One of my greatest concerns is the increasing number of churches throughout our land which have either reached a plateau, or who are in a decline, due to a desperate need for genuine revival! It is sad but true that many, if not most, churches in America today have more than any generation prior to us, and yet still do less for God than the same! I think of 2 Timothy 4:3-4, which says, "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables." The word I'd like to emphasize is the word "heap". It is as if we've heaped to ourselves not only teachers of our personal preference, but we've also heaped to ourselves all of the modern bells and whistles which supposed to help a church most effectively impact her community like never before! Please do not take me wrong, as I am not against using modern tools and equipment to further the cause of Christ! If you want an effective radio ministry, internet ministry, or some other type of media ministry, that's totally ok! If you want nicer buildings and padded pews, then by all means make it happen! Just don't make the mistake of depending upon all of your stuff to replace what only the power of God can do! I believe God would ask the church what He asked Israel so many years ago, "What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it?" Child of God, what are you waiting on? I'm convinced that God has already given us everything we need to succeed in fulfilling the great commission, but what I'm also convinced of is that many are still waiting on something else or someone else to come along before they get engaged in the fight! Church, we have no excuses! We have more tools and recourses at our disposal than any generation in history, but what good are they if we have no passion for Christ? When we get passionate about Jesus again, that's when we can turn the world upside down for Him, with or without our stuff! We don't need money or buildings or people near as much as we need Him!

## Day 192

### *Today's Reading: Amos 1-5*

**Today's Reflection:** Amos 5:8a *Seek him that maketh the seven stars and Orion, and turneth the shadow of death into the morning...*

Is it any wonder that David wrote in Psalm 23:4, “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.” Only the Lord can make such a claim as is found in our text! To turn the shadow of death into the morning is to manifest Himself in all of His splendor. Is that not what He did on resurrection morn? What is near death in your life today? What has already died? Seek the Lord, who can turn *your* shadow of death into the morning as well! When it feels like all hope is gone, and when we feel as if we’re finished, He is just getting started! It is when we come to the end of ourselves that He begins a new work in us. Do not look at this death that is upon you as if it has taken God by surprise! Do not think that death’s grip can hold Him down. We serve a risen Savior! He’s in the world TODAY! We need not look at our impossibilities at all once we look into His fiery eyes, but we should only see endless possibilities in the light of His glorious face. He pleads with His people to seek Him in our time of need. It is up to us to do that! If we could ever get past this taunting shadow of death, we could learn what it is to walk in resurrection power. When we get tired of bearing the burden of walking with our back to the Son, causing us to constantly face our shadows, that’s when we’ll be ready to turn our eyes upon Jesus! Then and only then will we put our shadows behind us once and for all! Keep walking into the Son, and you’ll never see those shadows again! Perhaps that is why we are warned in several passages of scripture never to look back. We are to fix our eyes upon Christ and learn that He is all-sufficient. The Lord IS my shepherd, I shall NOT want! He who made the seven stars, and Orion, shall He not dissolve your doubts in the splendor of His bright countenance? Whatever you are facing today cannot face Him without dissipating! Seek His face!

## *Today's Reading: Amos 6-9*

**Today's Reflection:** Amos 6:1a *Woe to them that are at ease in Zion, and trust in the mountain of Samaria...*

I do not think that there is a single statement found in the Old Testament which better illustrates the slumbering state of today's church than what is found here! Woe to them that are at ease in Zion! Can I bring it to where we live? Woe to them who are comfortable with church as usual! Woe to them who are satisfied with status quo! Woe to them who would never step outside of their comfort zone for the cause of Christ! Woe to them who prefer self-improvement seminars over convicting, challenging, confrontational preaching! Woe to them who'd rather have it their way than God's way! Woe to them who despise anyone who would rock their religious boat! Woe to them who are more concerned with being politically correct and non-offensive than they are declaring the truth of God's Word! Need I say more? To be at ease in Zion is to be at rest, as if to be in an undisturbed state. Sadly, in an age where we should be more disturbed about the spiritual crisis our country faces than ever before, we are instead living as if everything is hunky-dory, a-ok! I'm sure that I do not speak for every church when I say this, for there are some that are still ablaze for Christ, no doubt! However, there seems to be many more churches that are spiritually dead or asleep, than that are vibrantly growing and thriving! What happened to our churches? May I suggest that a huge part of the problem is that we trust too much in our "mountain of Samaria"! That is, we trust too much in our religious man-made systems than we do the power of God! Until we get to the point to where we're willing to trade in our broken down man-made religious systems for a touch from the Master, then I'm afraid that we shall remain in a state of ease until we are suddenly awakened by the enemy's swift attack! Somebody needs to get so hungry for God that it matters not if they breathe their next breath, so long as the power of Christ rests upon them! Will you be that somebody?

## Day 194

### *Today's Reading: 2 Chronicles 27, Isaiah 9-12*

**Today's Reflection:** 2 Chronicles 27:6 *So Jotham became mighty, because he prepared his ways before the LORD his God.*

What is the key to becoming mighty in God's kingdom? The answer is found in our text! To be prepared, by definition, is to be fitted, or to have adapted, or to have been made suitable, or to have been made ready, or to have made provisions for that which is about to take place! In other words, to do what Jotham did before the presence of the Lord is to allow Proverbs 3:6 have it's perfect work! "In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." It is the idea of never taking the next step without first getting a green light from Heaven! Unfortunately, many today are guilty of making no provisions in their life for Divine persuasion! Either they do not feel they need God's input, or else they don't really want to know what He would have to say because they already know He would disapprove. However, Jotham was not like that! In essence, he said, "God, I don't just want to make plans and hope you can find a place to fit in, but I give you my life as a blank template upon which you can draw your master plan for me!" We need mighty men like Jotham who will not take another step without Jesus! This not only requires submission, but it also requires a level of faith that few possess! We know it requires faith, because it is dealing with preparation rather than fulfillment. To prepare is to envision the future, having certain strategies in place which enable you to get from where you are today to where you need to be tomorrow. We cannot live the Christian experience "by the seat of our pants", just taking things as they come! We must plan and strategize with our Lord so as to secure our Divine destiny in Him! We are to take council of the Lord in everything we do! We are to seek HIM with every fiber of our being! When we do this, He will begin to put all the pieces together in such a way that when others see His mighty works in our lives, we then know what it is to walk among the mighty in the kingdom of God!

### *Today's Reading: Micah 1-7*

**Today's Reflection:** Micah 6:3 *O my people, what have I done unto thee? And wherein have I wearied thee? Testify against me.*

What a convicting verse of scripture! The Lord has challenged His people with two questions and a command, which are answered more precisely by the deafening silence which followed than ten thousand words could have expressed! The truth is, if we were to attempt to give an answer to our Lord in response to our text, we would be rendered speechless! There is absolutely nothing we can say to prove that our Lord has ever mistreated us or done us wrong. As a matter of fact, to the contrary, we have Romans 8:28 which says, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose." So, even the "hard times" of our Christian experience are used by God to propel us into a more fruitful season of our lives! Never forget that even though your situation has an advantage over you today, if you will believe God and trust Him, He will turn the tide and give you the advantage over your situation! Sometimes we are given the impression by false teaching that if we live for God, nothing bad will ever happen to us, but that is simply not the case. It's no wonder that many charge God foolishly when things go wrong, for they have been taught to think that way! However, I am living proof that just because you live for God does not mean that hardships will not come. What we have is not immunity to the storms of life, but rather shelter in the storms! God may not always remove the enemy from your life, but He will prepare a table before you in the presence of your enemies! He may not spare you from suffering, but He will give you Grace sufficient enough to enable you to endure! Paul said in 2 Co. 4:8-9, "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed;" Child of God, the enemy may cause you much trouble, but he cannot destroy you, because you have the protection of your Father!

## Day 196

### *Today's Reading: 2 Chr. 28, 2 Kings 16-17*

**Today's Reflection:** 2 Kings 17:41 *So these nations feared the LORD, and served their graven images, both their children, and their children's children: as did their fathers, so did they unto this day.*

Oh how familiar this paradox is to those who are able to discern the spiritual climate of our day! To fear the Lord AND do your own thing seems to be the trend in many of today's religious circles around the world. It is nothing today to find people at church Sunday morning and "God only knows where!" every other day of the week! I speak this to the shame of modern Christendom, for did not our Lord teach us to abstain from all appearance of evil (1 Th 5:22)? Did He not teach us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world (Tit 2:12)? Did not Jesus teach us that no man can serve two masters (Mat 6:24)? Did He not rebuke Satan in Mat 4:10 when He said, "Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve."? Is not "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." one of the Ten Commandments which we so proudly display for the world to see (Exo 20:3)? Why then do we have such a spiritual backsliding on our hands? How then can we justifiably continue as the body of Christ to simply ignore this cancer of compromise which has all but destroyed our effectiveness by our own hypocrisy? It is time for us, even as Joshua, to declare what side we are on! We ought to be able, with unfeigned words, to pronounce his decree as our own, "As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD [Jos 24:15]." Even as Joshua challenged Israel, I challenge the people of God to "choose you THIS DAY whom ye will serve"! The prophet Elijah spoke in his day, saying "...if the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him [1 Ki 18:21]." Child of God, we cannot "have the best of both worlds", if that means loving Jesus AND loving this present world! There is a dividing line which has been divinely drawn; the question is, whose side are you on? Allow the Holy Spirit to work repentance of double-mindedness TODAY!

### *Today's Reading: Isaiah 13-17*

**Today's Reflection:** Isaiah 13:12 *I will make a man more precious than fine gold; even a man than the golden wedge of Ophir.*

Knowing that we came from the dust of the earth, isn't it nice to know that God can make us worth more than that from which we have come? God is a God that can change your value from that of worthlessness to that which is priceless. We need always remember that God isn't as concerned about where we came from as He is where we are going! You may have started out on the wrong foot, and you may have indeed come from a rough neighborhood, and there may be some history in your past which you are ashamed of, but know that God is able to take you past your past so that your future is steadfast and sure! It is often difficult for those who have always perceived themselves as worthless to realize that once they accept Christ, they are new creatures, made spotless and white as snow, and therefore valuable to God their creator. Friend, do not make the mistake of doubting what God's Word speaks over your life in Christ! "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new [2 Co 5:17]." It is an awesome thing to watch as the Lord takes away from us those old things which only brought us pain, shame, loss and heartache. It is even more awesome when He replaces those things with joy, faith, hope and gain! One may wonder how God can take a worthless sinner and make him more precious than gold, but I believe our answer can be found in 1 Peter 1:18-19, which says, "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." Friend, if you are in Christ, you are precious because of His precious blood which has been applied to your life! Don't let others degrade you to that which you were before Christ. Stand in the confidence of His grace and walk in the newness of one who's valuable in the eyes of God!

## Day 198

### *Today's Reading: Isaiah 18-22*

**Today's Reflection:** Isaiah 21:6 *For thus hath the LORD said unto me, Go, set a watchman, let him declare what he seeth.*

It is an unfortunate thing when the watchman declares not what he sees, but what others want him to see! It seems as if we're living in a land of spiritual make-believe, as we have heaped to ourselves teachers, having itching ears. We have shut our ears from the truth of the watchman warning us of the dangers ahead, and have instead hired entertainers who will occupy us long enough for us to forget the trouble that is ahead until at last it comes upon us so swiftly that we have no time to repent. But I say, "God, give us a watchman, a preacher who will tell it like it is!" Our text says that the watchman is to "declare what he seeth." Why do we resent those in our lives, who, at the risk of being resented and rejected themselves, care more to tell us the truth than to tickle our lustful ears? Paul asked, "Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth [Gal 4:16]?" Jesus also said, "And because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not [John 8:45]." Even in a world where truth is known, people still choose not to believe because truth is often too hard for them to accept. It's one thing to be deceived, but it's another thing to have known the truth, and willingly walk away from it! We need Christians like Dumah in our text, who will say, "Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night [Isa 21:11]?" Or, "Preacher, don't tell me what I want to hear, but tell me what I need to hear!" It is funny as a pastor to observe how others think it's a light thing for a preacher to be the bearer of a warning from the Word of God! To the contrary, our text indicates in Isa 22:1, "The burden of the valley of vision..." The truth is, to bear the burden of the vision of the watchman is almost unbearable at times, were it not for the Lord's anointing to enable us to sound the alarm! But oh how sweet it is when at last someone heeds the warning and is spared from sudden destruction! Friends, let us sound the alarm and uphold truth at all costs!

### *Today's Reading: Isaiah 23-27*

**Today's Reflection:** Isaiah 26:12 *LORD, thou wilt ordain peace for us: for thou also hast wrought all our works in us.*

We see here what God HAS done, and what God WILL do. The significance, however, of what God WILL do is based upon what He has ALREADY done! Since He is very strategic, there is nothing He has done which will not eventually bring about its purpose. When we speak of what God WILL do, we are speaking of His plan, His purpose, and His intent. What is God's intent for His people? Is it that we live restless, anxious, stressed, worried and defeated? Contraire! We may indeed suffer weakness from time to time, but just because we're weak does not mean that we can't be happy! Just because we're in a storm doesn't mean we can't have peace! Looking at our text, it is obvious that God's goal...that which He has purposed to complete in us, is that we may have peace! "Thou wilt ordain peace for us:" To ordain means to establish in a particular office or order. There is a particular place of service for every child of God that He wishes to bring us, which can be best described by Isa 26:3, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee." If you have learned to live in this state of mind and heart, then you have found God's perfect will for your life! Our verse also says, "For thou also hast wrought all our works in us." It did not say AROUND us, but it said IN us! The word wrought means worked; formed by work or labor! God has been working on us! It is a glorious thing to behold God's handy-work as He turns the hearts of men, for not even all of creation is as beautiful as a work of Grace! What God has done in your life up to this point is only to be instrumental in bringing you to your days of peace! God is not out to hurt you...He came to bless you! Of all His beautiful creation, nothing compares to what you will be when He's got you where He wants you! Let God have your journey from now on, and your future will be brighter than your yesterday, all because of Christ!

## Day 200

*Today's Reading: 2 Kings 18:1-8, 2 Chr 29-31, Ps 48*

**Today's Reflection:** 2 Chr 29:36 *And Hezekiah rejoiced, and all the people, that God had prepared the people: for the thing was done suddenly.*

And who said there's no such thing as overnight success! From a human's perspective, many times what needs fixing appears as if it will take many years, hard labor, and the patience of Job. We always see things as if we're just beginning to address the problem and that IF it ever gets fixed, that it will take longer than we have the time or resources to endure. This is especially true if the problem has mounted and reached its breaking point, and that's when we realize that we don't even have the time or the power to fix it ourselves! For example, when Peter began to sink after walking on the water with Jesus, he didn't have time to strategize and plan and pray about it for a while and wait patiently for the Lord; he needed a rush order from Heaven! All he had time to do was pray, "Lord, save me [Mat 14:30]." Take also for example the children of Israel, who, when pinned against the wall with the Red Sea on one side and the mountains on the other and Pharaoh's army in hot pursuit, did not have the time or power to help themselves! That's when Moses, filled with the Holy Ghost, said unto the people, "Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD...[Exo 14:13]" You see, when we're in this kind of predicament, what we need is nothing short of a miracle from God Himself, and that's where it gets interesting! Our text says, "God had prepared the people: for the thing was done suddenly." Isn't it amazing that what problems we are worrying about today because we don't know how to fix; God has been working on all the while! He has been preparing people's hearts and setting the stage behind the scenes, so that when it looks impossible, He will with sovereign authority, strategy, and accuracy step on the scene and "suddenly" turn things around! Perhaps all He's waiting on now is for you to simply pray, "Lord, save me." And then stand still and see His salvation work suddenly in your life! Trust Him and you will see!

### *Today's Reading: Hosea 1-7*

**Today's Reflection:** Hosea 2:15 *And I will give her her vineyards from thence, and the valley of Achor for a door of hope: and she shall sing there, as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt.*

Israel had backslidden in that she had turned from the true and living God over to many false gods. Yet, the Lord loved her! Even when she would not be faithful to Him, He was faithful to her! Our text even says of our Lord that He will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her (v. 14). Isn't it amazing that when we deserve wrath, God so often remembers mercy! When we should have been scolded and rebuked, instead He speaks unto us in a still, small voice of hope. His unconditional love for His people is manifested ever so graciously by His tender care for us. There are times when God should have taken from us even that which we had, but instead He gave us vineyards, and opened unto us a door of hope. God shall yet again make a way in the wilderness! Even as the psalmist said, He shall compass us about with songs of deliverance (Ps. 32:7)! He has too much invested in us to simply walk away, for He has purchased us with His own blood. I am so thankful that we have a God of second chances, who offers hope to us when there seems to be no hope. It's easy to believe that God can make a way when the situation we're in is not of our own demise, but even when it's *our* mess, He still loves us, and still provides a way to escape if we will yet follow Him into the wilderness as He lures us in His direction! Dear backslider, if you will look for Him, you will find that He is also looking for you. Embrace Him with repented heart, and He shall save you out of your self-inflicted dilemma for His own name's sake, and restore unto you the joy of your salvation. Then, you shall be even as you were the day He first showed up in your life to save you! You shall sing again! God wants to restore you and enable you to put on the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness so you can go back to your first love, and take back what the enemy stole from you!

## Day 202

### *Today's Reading: Hosea 8-14*

**Today's Reflection:** Hosea 13:5 *I did know thee in the wilderness, in the land of great drought.*

It is in the dry seasons of our lives, not just that we get to know the Lord, but more importantly that He gets to know us. It is right to say that when we're in a trial, that it's all about the Lord, and what kind of glory He can get out of the situation. However, it is better to say that from His perspective, it is all about us! Let me explain; it is when it seems as if the Lord is distant from our situation that He is doing the most effective work on our hearts, for it is times like these when our faith is tried and tested, and like Job, in the end we come forth as gold. When we thought He had forgotten about us, His thoughts toward us were abundant and perfect. When it looked like He was looking the other way, He was actually more involved in the details of our lives than what we were able to see during the confusion of the storm. When we thought He had better things to do than tend to us, all the while the entire situation was brought about *only* for our benefit. In fact, if it would not have benefited us in the end to our progress and His praise, He would not have selected this path for us to travel. Never think even once that He has lost control, for He has purposed in this situation to bring you out! Yes, He wants to bring you out of your dry wilderness experience, but when He does, He wants you never to forget that it was HIM that did it, and that you can trust Him, no matter what comes your way! The psalmist wrote in Ps 119:67, "Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept thy word." You see, our storms build in us qualities which will enable us to endure hardship as good soldiers of Jesus Christ; qualities such as humility, character, faith, and adoration for the One whom we grew to know during the darkest days of our lives! Ps 119: 71 goes on to say, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes." Child of God, whatever you're going through today will be well worth it tomorrow, when at last you look back and God shows you the gold!

*Today's Reading: Isaiah 28-30*

**Today's Reflection:** Isaiah 30:20-21 *And though the Lord give you the bread of adversity, and the water of affliction, yet shall not thy teachers be removed into a corner any more, but thine eyes shall see thy teachers: 21 And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left.*

Adversity and affliction create a need for direction in our lives. It is easy to know what to do when everything is going well, but when hard times come, it's a different story! It is also amazing how much better we listen to our teachers when we are in a position of weakness and humility and could use a hand up! "Yet shall not thy teachers be removed into a corner any more..." At first glance, I wondered why the Lord would have removed the teachers into a corner to start with, but then it occurred to me that it was not the Lord who had removed them! Often is the case that when we are skipping upon the mountain tops of our success, we feel as if we have no need for His teachers, and so we push them to a corner and put them on ignore because we don't have time to listen. But, just wait until the Lord gives us the bread of adversity, and the water of affliction, and then we will get hungry for a Word from God! I am amazed at the extreme measures our Lord will take in order that His people might hear and receive His Word! I will have to admit that I have learned more about the Word of God and the God of the Word in the valleys of affliction than I ever did upon the mountains of affirmation! Oh blessed be the name of the Lord for His marvelous wisdom! It's not that He wants to afflict us, but that He wants us to learn the value of hearing and heeding His Word; but how can we learn if we are not in a position to do so? So God, through adversity and affliction, gets us so close to Him, that we finally see the teachers He has placed in our lives for the first time, and we finally hear His voice whispering divine direction into our lives for the first time, and we discover the treasure of the valley! He wants to take us from ignoring Him, to hearing His every Word! Man shall not live by bread alone, but by EVERY word of God!

## Day 204

### *Today's Reading: Isaiah 31-34*

**Today's Reflection:** Isaiah 31:1 *Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help; and stay on horses, and trust in chariots, because they are many; and in horsemen, because they are very strong; but they look not unto the Holy One of Israel, neither seek the LORD!*

“Woe to them that go down...” Have you ever been set up for a let down? That’s what it is when we place our trust in anything or anyone but the Holy One of Israel! It is not our strength He seeks to use to bring us out, but His own. God knows what we are made of, and given the options, I can’t say that I blame Him for wanting to do it Himself! After all, if we were honest, most of us have a pretty poor track record when it comes to this! Just because we see potential in some source for power, provisions, and deliverance, does not necessarily mean that what we’re looking at is God’s choice plan of the day. Often is the case that we assume we know the way we should take based upon what limited understanding we have of the situation. However, until we seek the Lord, we are really making an educated guess at the very best. The only thing educational about “educated guessing” is what we learn that we didn’t know to start with! We had better seek the Lord in everything! Psa 20:7 says, “Some trust in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the LORD our God.” I think here of when David was just a shepherd boy who stood up against Goliath, while the rest of the Israelites were shaking in their boots! Goliath made a terrible mistake that day when he sized the situation up by what he could see in the natural realm. The mistake he made was that he should have never been looking at what David had in his hands; he should have been looking at what David had in his heart! Had Goliath known that God’s favor was on young David because of his pure heart, he would not have done so foolishly as he did when he made a mockery of God and His people! You, too, may not have much to look at externally, but God is not looking at what’s in your hands; He’s looking at what’s in your heart! Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith!

### *Today's Reading: Isaiah 35-36*

**Today's Reflection:** Isaiah 35:10 *And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.*

The best is yet to come for the children of God! Our verse speaks of everlasting joy, or in other words, a joy that will never end! I am so thankful for the hope that we have in Christ, for this everlasting joy starts at the point of salvation, when our Lord imputes unto us His righteousness through the shed blood of Christ and the free pardon of sin! We do not have to wait until we get to Heaven to obtain this joy! With everlasting life comes everlasting joy. 1 Peter 1:7-8, speaking of Christ, tells us, "That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory:" I remember how dark my soul was before Christ, and I remember the joy that flooded my soul the day I accepted Him as my Saviour! I've not always been happy with the circumstances of this life, but I have always had a deep settled peace that passes all understanding, and that deep abiding joy to pull me through even in the darkest of hours! You too can have this joy starting today if you will but put your trust in Jesus Christ, the one who gave His life for you! And for those of you who have already discovered this joy in Christ, rejoice with me today for His goodness and mercy! This joy starts at Calvary's divine flow, and takes us all the way to Heaven, where it is said that "sorrow and sighing shall flee away"! Today, joy is the undercurrent that pulls us through the troubles of this life, but, glory be to God, there's coming a day when we shall lay those burdens down once and for all, when at last we see Him face to face in that bright and noble day! Be encouraged, dear saints of God, for this rocky journey shall end on a high note!

## Day 206

### *Today's Reading: Isaiah 37-39, Psalm 76*

**Today's Reflection:** Is. 38:14b ...*mine eyes fail with looking upward*..

“Mine eyes fail with looking upward...” What do you do when the thing you’re supposed to be doing is also the very thing that causes you the most trouble? King Hezekiah was doing the right thing by looking up. Even our Lord instructs us in Luke 21:28 to look up! To look up is to expect something significant to happen by the hand of God; it is to live so as to materialize that which *shall be* into that which *is* through the venue of faith. To look up is to have a vision and a purpose; to find your destiny and pursue your God-inspired dreams! Yet, it is the looking upward that has the potential to cause the eyes to fail. It is so easy for us to become weary in the wait. If we’re not careful, we too shall say “mine eyes fail with looking upward”. There is a reason Gal. 6:9 is in the Bible, which says, “And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.” You see, God knows the propensity we have of becoming exasperated as we pursue that which Hell harasses and which Heaven heralds! It is the calling itself, noble as it may be, which brings about such struggle as we push through the very gates of Hell to become that which God has called us to be! God knew it would be a fight, and He also knew that we would be tempted to give up just before our deliverance, so He reminds us through King Hezekiah that if we avail ourselves in faith and prayer, we too shall gain advantage over the death sentence! God not only added 15 years onto his life, but as a sign he turned back the sun dial 10 degrees. You may feel you’re out of time, but God can turn back your clock to make up for lost time and secure your future so as to help you seize your moment! You might be ready to just lie down and die, but God is not through with you yet! In due season you shall reap, if you faint not! Child of God, your season is coming! Only, do not allow your obstacles to outlast your vision; make sure that your vision outlasts your obstacles! If you can see through it, then God will see you through!

### *Today's Reading: Isaiah 40-43*

**Today's Reflection:** Isaiah 41:21 *Produce your cause, saith the LORD; bring forth your strong reasons, saith the King of Jacob.*

God wants us to present our case before Him with heart! Too many times we are too timid to speak with our Lord about what is truly on our mind, as if He doesn't already know! We rationalize until we talk ourselves out of talking to God about our greatest needs. The Hebrew writer said that we are to come boldly before His throne (Heb. 4:16). Often, we treat God much like we treat our earthly father. We only come to him for our needs when we feel that our situation warrants a petition. We treat God as if we will bother Him if we ask Him for something. Friend, God is not bothered by your petitions, for He is not limited in His supply! Now, if He only had enough to go around one time, it would be different, but our Father in Heaven owns the cattle on a thousand hills! He paves His streets with gold! He builds His gates with pearl! His riches are endless! Don't be shy when you ask of Him! Produce your cause! To produce is to bring forth evidence, as in court! We are, with evidence, to convince God of our need. If we're not careful, we won't ask because we already know that He knows; yet, He wants us to bring up all the evidence, even as if it's His first time hearing of it! Of course He already knows, but that's not the point! He wants us to be so close to Him that we can ask without hesitation and expect without shame! He instructs us to bring forth our strong reasons before Him. Pour out your heart before Him, who is the King of Jacob! You remember Jacob! He's the one who wrestled with the angel of the Lord all night, and said, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me.", and then got his blessing! God said of Jacob in Gen. 32:28b, "...as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed." Even from birth, it was said of him in Hos 12:3 that "He took his brother by the heel in the womb, and by his strength he had power with God:" The stronger your case before the Lord, the stronger He'll respond in your favor! Ask, then ask again!

## Day 208

### *Today's Reading: Isaiah 44-48*

**Today's Reflection:** Isaiah 48:10 *Behold, I have refined thee, but not with silver; I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction.*

Affliction is that which the Lord uses to bring out the best in us! We ought to be grateful that the Lord thinks so much of us that He takes the time to refine us. If it were not for the sin nature, we would have no need for refinery; however, we DO have the old sin nature to contend with in the flesh, so our Lord puts us through a series of tests to work out the impurities in our hearts. To refine is to purify. As applied to metals, it is to separate the metallic substance from all other matter, whether another metal or alloy, or any earthly substance! Oh, the beauty of the Child of God who has been refined, and who has been separated from any earthly substance. Friends, we are in the world, but those who are saved are no longer of the world. Salvation pulls you out of the pit, but sanctification pulls the pit out of you! God wants us to shine like gold, so as to reflect His image to a lost and dying world that so desperately needs Him. However, the only way we can most clearly reflect His image to this world is when we are not mingled with the same elements that blind their minds to the truth! It is difficult to see the gold in a pile of dirt, rocks and roots. It is when the sifting occurs that our best is extracted from our worst; that our trashy elements are washed away under the cleansing current of the Word of God! Oh, the process of refinery we must go through! We are pulled out of the rubble, filtered from the earthly elements, washed with the water of the Word, and then put through the fiery furnace of affliction which is to burn out any remaining impurities which would hinder us from accurately reflecting the image of Christ! 1 Peter 4:12-13 says, "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy." At the end of your trial, you'll shine for Jesus!

### *Today's Reading: 2 Kings 18:9-19:37, Ps 46, 80, 135*

**Today's Reflection:** 2 Kings 19:6b ...*Thus saith the LORD, Be not afraid of the words which thou hast heard....*

Any time you receive a word from the Lord, the enemy will always counteract that word with his own. Marvel not that, after having received encouragement from the Word of God pertaining to your situation, the devil begins to try to rob you of that seed of faith which was planted! This fight of faith we are in is nothing but a battle of words, if you really think about it! We are always affecting and being affected both by that which we say, and that which we choose to hear. Many voices seek to clutter our thoughts in such a fashion that we are not able to hear the voice of God amidst all the opposing words of doubt and fear in our lives. At times, the threats of the enemy can be very surreal to us. However, the question is, what voice will you respond to? The voice of God's Word, or the voice of the enemy? We have this battle of words exemplified for us in the wilderness, when our Lord Jesus responded to Satan's temptations only with what had already been written in the Word of God! You see, the word that wins is the word that is truth! Any time the enemy speaks, he speaks only lies and deceit, because he doesn't have one leg to stand on. However, when God speaks, He speaks only truth, for He cannot lie! So the true test of words is the strength of its foundation. Once the lies of the enemy are held up to the truth of God's Word, there is no comparison, nor is there any competition! That's why it is important that you fight fire with fire! When the enemy comes in like a flood with words of doubt, fear and confusion into your life, you simply combat him with what the Lord has already spoken! When you do this, you decree that which is based upon a solid foundation, thus cancelling out what the enemy has threatened! Friend, you can take God's Word over the devil's word ANY day! Do not try to reason with the enemy concerning God's promises! Simply identify who it is the enemy is speaking through, tune them out, and give them no power!

## Day 210

### *Today's Reading: Isaiah 49-53*

**Today's Reflection:** Isaiah 51:2 *Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bare you: for I called him alone, and blessed him, and increased him.*

God has given us a goodly heritage from which to draw inspiration, courage, strength and hope! Abraham, the friend of God, and the father of faith, was called out all by himself, and God blessed him regardless of his surroundings! Isn't it good to know that God doesn't need anyone's help to bless His children? All He needs is one seed! That's why He told Abraham in Gen. 22:18, "And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice." In essence, He was saying, "I don't need your family, your friends, your background, or your place of upbringing in order to bless you!" What we must realize is that what God wants to bless us with is already in us, trying to get out! Do not be looking for everyone else to fulfill the promise, because the promise will only come through your own loins. He said of Abraham, "I called him alone." Sometimes the calling will isolate us from everything and everyone we thought we would need in order to reach our fullest potential. However, God is not limited to those we feel He should have used in order to bless us! As a matter of fact, He will use others we thought could never be used just to prove that He is God, and He can do whatsoever He wills! This is why we shouldn't get upset when we're abandoned by those we thought would be instrumental in helping us fulfill our calling. If you are God's child, then God will bless you all by Himself! As a matter of fact, He will purposefully pull some people out of your life that you thought you needed, in order to show you that He can do it with or without them! He wants our dependency to be upon Him, and Him alone! God, like He did with Abraham, can put you in an isolated situation, open the floodgates of Heaven upon you, and begin to bless and increase you out in the middle of nothing so that when others see you, they see the God that you serve! Bless Him for what He is doing in your life today, for He has a purpose in you being there!

### *Today's Reading: Isaiah 54-58*

**Today's Reflection:** Isaiah 58:12 *And they that shall be of thee shall build the old waste places: thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations; and thou shalt be called, The repairer of the breach, The restorer of paths to dwell in.*

Who will work the dreaded trenches of sinful society for the glory of God? There is a desperate need for the children of God to rise to the occasion, and to repair, restore and rebuild the old waste places. Instead, many seek their own! Many with disgust for the rubble and the waste would rather start afresh and anew somewhere else, where there is no trash from the past to have to deal with. I call this selective breeding in the church. However, God is looking for some, who with His vision and His heartbeat will go back into those places where the vision was lost, and begin again to offer hope to those who had lost hope years ago! How can we call ourselves servants of Christ, if we are not servants to the sinner? Often is the case that the Lord must save someone out of the waste place, who will in turn give back to the Lord by showing compassion for others in the same shape as they were before Christ. Pious and pride have caused many with a message of hope to walk on the other side of many a ditch with many a sinner left to bleed to death. However, may God give us some sinner-loving saints of God who will work the ditches so as to repair the breaches and offer hope to the hopeless! A breach is something that has been broken or ruptured. Could it be that many will not go to these places to minister because of a breach in their own heart? May I submit to you that once our Savior heals OUR broken heart, then we will be able to love on His level, and reach even unto the vilest of sinners with the message of the Grace of God! No one said it would be easy, or even humanly possible; yet, what is impossible with men is possible with God! Let us be challenged then not to criticize those on the "other" side, but rather cross over to them so as to show them the Love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord! Bridge the gap in your heart that stands between you and them TODAY!

## Day 212

### *Today's Reading: Isaiah 59-63*

**Today's Reflection:** Isaiah 60:13b ...*I will make the place of my feet glorious.*

#### **The Place Where Jesus Walked**

Were troubled times, as shores in glass,  
Put on display, one's site to grasp;  
And were dreary days, with dandelions,  
Decked yellow gold in silver lines;  
"What", might one ask, "did happen here?"  
"What shook this scene from death's cold drear?"  
There's just one thing that can be said  
One Word, one Hope, which need be spread.  
It's not "What" happened we need discuss  
Nor is it the "When" of the storm's stopped gust.  
It's only the "Who" we need revere,  
"Who was it that conquered such dreaded fear?"  
The answer is found in no small talk,  
For this is the place *where Jesus walked!*

~Gary Caudill~

### *Today's Reading: Isaiah 64-66*

**Today's Reflection:** Isaiah 64:8 *But now, O LORD, thou art our father; we are the clay, and thou our potter; and we all are the work of thy hand.*

It is an amazing thing to me that, in spite of all the chaos that life seems to throw at us, yet our Heavenly Father still maintains sovereign control! From our perspective, many times things feel like they're spinning out of control. We may even be tempted to think that everything is random, and that there is no since of order or purpose for us being here. We especially feel this way when we make mistakes or when we displease our Lord by allowing sin to have its way in our lives. When we sin, and we know it, we ask ourselves, "How could God get any good out of my life any more?" We often feel that if we ever "blow it", then it's blown for good! Many reading this may feel as if you started out on the right foot, but now that you've made a few mistakes, you'll no longer be used of God in a significant way; however, allow me to remind you that the devil is a liar! Faithful is He that calleth you, who also will do it (1 Th 5:24). What the enemy seeks to use to shame you and bring you to a halt, God wants to turn around and use for His glory in your life! Yes, even if you've blown it really badly, THERE IS HOPE! As a matter of fact, it is your own blunders that will enable you, after having received forgiveness and shown repentance, to serve in a capacity that will more effectively reach others with the Grace of God! How shall we communicate God's Grace if we ourselves have not sipped from its cool flowing streams! Isaiah said it well when he said, "...we all are the work of thy hand." It doesn't matter who you are or where you came from, the fact still remains that God's fingerprints are all over you because He has a reason for you being here! Only be strong in the faith, and do not allow the enemy to hold you back from going for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus! A just man falls seven times, and rises up again (see Prov. 24:16). Get back up, and go for God!

## Day 214

### *Today's Reading: 2 Kings 20-21*

**Today's Reflection:** 2 Kings 20:20 *And the rest of the acts of Hezekiah, and all his might, and how he made a pool, and a conduit, and brought water into the city, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah?*

At the end of your journey, will your life yield a notable record? Here, we are told of the acts of Hezekiah, specifically how he made a pool, and a conduit, and brought water into the city. Before we move too quickly past this seemingly trivial information, let us consider the significance of this achievement! It is no small thing to bring water to an otherwise thirsty people, especially in Hezekiah's day, when running water was not your standard commodity! Lots of creativity, blood, sweat and tears were invested in this accomplishment, so much so that it was recorded in the chronicles of the kings of Judah! As it was in Hezekiah's day, so it is in ours; it still takes a lot of sacrifice in order that we might deliver the Water of Life to those around us dying of thirst. It was easy for Hezekiah to obtain water when he needed it, for he was the king, which meant he was in a position of advantage! Likewise, we as believers in Christ are at an advantage because out of our own bellies flow rivers of living water through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit! Yet, there are others to whom the water doesn't flow so easily. It is therefore our obligation to become that conduit through which the Water of Life can flow in order to reach those around us who would never drink if we would never bring the drink to them. We must be willing at all times to stir up and to exercise our gifts for the Glory of God, because we will never truly know the impact we are having, and cannot afford the risk of not making some kind of difference! Somewhere in the world, somebody is waiting for your service to the King to be exercised, and as a result for water to be brought to them! Whatever doors the Lord opens for you, only be sure to walk through them, for His doors lead from one destination to the next of a people desperately needing a fresh pool! It is when we become the conduit that they are introduced to Jesus Christ!

### *Today's Reading: 2 Chronicles 32-33*

**Today's Reflection:** 2 Chronicles 32:8 *With him is an arm of flesh; but with us is the LORD our God to help us, and to fight our battles. And the people rested themselves upon the words of Hezekiah king of Judah.*

We do not always understand the significance and the power of words until at last we are in a place where a word is all we have to bank on! It is particularly important for leaders to understand this concept; never underestimate the weight of your words in the lives of those who are following your lead! I willingly admit that, even as a pastor, I am sometimes tempted by the enemy to wonder whether or not my words are having any effect. Yet, it is likely that someone somewhere in my life has rested themselves upon the words which I have spoken. This is a very humbling, yet sobering thought! It is therefore imperative that we as leaders speak only that which is founded upon the truth. The Word of God should be the source from which we offer guidance. Proverbs 18:21 says, "Death and life are in the power of the tongue: and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof." We know then that our words shape our future and the future of those around us. Words plant seeds, seeds produce ideas, ideas form thoughts, thoughts form actions, and actions make history! Therefore be careful what you speak, for it has the potential to bring life, or death, to any situation. What about those around you? Do you speak truth to their benefit? It is no wonder that churches are closing their doors at an alarming rate, for there seems to be a lack of vision amongst the leaders of our churches today. If we feed people only negativity, pessimism and doubt, then do not be surprised when they become negative, pessimistic, and doubtful about every proposition you make. You remedy this by offering hope and encouragement from the Word of God, thereby focusing on the solutions rather than focusing only upon the problems that persist. If you speak as if there is no use trying, then the people will not try; but if you speak as if much can be accomplished, then people will rise to the occasion! Speak then according to the vision God has given you, and expect great things!

## Day 216

### *Today's Reading: Nahum 1-3*

**Today's Reflection:** Nahum 1:9b ...*affliction shall not rise up the second time.*

I think here of Ps 34:19, where it is written, “Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the LORD delivereth him out of them all.” When our selected text says that “affliction shall not rise up the second time”, understand that it is not implying that we will never have affliction again, but rather that each affliction in its own particular uniqueness and identity, once overcome, shall never rise again! For example, once David cut off the head of Goliath, he never had to worry about HIM again! For sure there’s always going to be some enemy, some affliction, or some trial of sorts that is to keep us humble and trusting. However, we can rejoice in each victory along the journey, as our Lord conquers our enemies one at a time! Each slain giant behind us gives us that much more boldness and faith in our Lord to face the next one. We ought to thank God for the past victories in our lives, which have made us all the wiser to do battle for our Lord today! I wish to emphasize here that what God has brought you through thus far, you should never have to revisit again! You may face another season in your life that reminds you of where you’ve already been, but rest assured that what God has laid to rest in your past is to stay there. Only look this time for what new lesson the Lord wishes to teach you through your present-day circumstances. Something is wrong if you find yourself revisiting the same old enemy time and time again, after Christ has already given you the power to overcome him long ago! This Christian journey should not be lived out in circles, but should rather make progress as we gain ground in God day by day! Dear reader, if God has delivered you from certain afflictions in your life which have haunted you in the past, learn to walk in the victory He has given, knowing assuredly that THAT affliction shall never have power over you again! Keep moving forward, and refuse to allow the voices of past afflictions and enemies to ever threaten you again!

### *Today's Reading: 2 Kings 22-23, 2 Chr. 34-35*

**Today's Reflection:** 2 Chr. 35:22 *Nevertheless Josiah would not turn his face from him, but disguised himself, that he might fight with him, and hearkened not unto the words of Necho from the mouth of God, and came to fight in the valley of Megiddo.*

I wish to point out the tragedy of this text. God had already spoken to King Josiah through Huldath the prophetess (see ch. 34:22-28), declaring that he would be gathered to his grave in peace, and that his eyes would not see all the evil that God would bring upon the people of the land for their disobedience. However, though the prophesy did come true in that he did not see the judgment fall in his days, yet he personally did not go to his grave in peace. Is this a contradiction of God's Word, or is there a deeper meaning we can learn here? First, let us consider that God had through prophesy proclaimed this season to be a season of peace for King Josiah, not a season of war. The question which should be asked is this; did God instruct King Josiah to go to war? The answer is a resounding NO! As a matter of fact, God even spoke through he whom Josiah thought was his enemy, saying, "Forbear thee from meddling with God, who is with me, that he destroy thee not." Here is the problem; King Josiah allowed fear to cloud his judgment to a point where he believed he was at war even though God had declared peace over his house and reign! If you will notice, our text does not even indicate a great slaughter that day; the only death it mentions is the death of King Josiah. Did the prophesy fail? NO! Here, a man with a promise for peace died in a time of peace, simply because he doubted the Word of God! The tragedy is this; he did not have to die that day! How many times do the people of God worry and fret and fight and war, when all we need to do is rest in the power of God's Word? I'm afraid that we fight WAY too many battles! MOST of the fights within the religious world can and should be settled, and even avoided, by simply trusting the Lord and His Word! God has declared peace to His house, yet we want war! God forbid that we fight even one more battle that's not worth fighting!

## Day 218

### *Today's Reading: Zephaniah 1-3*

**Today's Reflection:** Zephaniah 3:12 *I will also leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people, and they shall trust in the name of the LORD.*

Psalm 119:71 says, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes." Also, Matthew 5:3 says, "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Through these verses of scripture, we learn that the two most despised things amongst the sons of men (affliction and poverty) are yet in God's equation the most valuable! Because we know that His ways are not our ways, neither are our thoughts His thoughts, we then also know that most every way in which we perceive and understand our world is completely opposite God's point of view! How can we humanly declare either affliction or poverty as conditions which are good? We must first understand that these words can be defined both in a literal sense, and in a spiritual sense. It is possible, for example, to be physically and literally in a state of ease, and yet be afflicted in the spirit or in the mind. Moreover, it is possible to be monetarily and literally in a state of wealth, and yet in your spirit and attitude become poor and needy. The direct opposite is also true of each statement. Furthermore, we shouldn't look for the gains we can obtain from being in a state of affliction or poverty, but rather in the process itself. There is a difference; for to be in a state is to speak only of what now is, but to be in a process is to speak of that which is yet to come! Therefore, we learn that through seasons of literal, physical, and monetary afflictions and lack we become broken and dependent upon God in our inner man. The beauty here is that the Word of God can seal this lesson of truth in our inner man in such a fashion that whether we're up or down, whether we're abased or abound, and whether it's sunshine or rain, our soul rests in the unchanging, tried and tested truths of the Word of God above all else! God uses the literal to teach us the spiritual, so that if we learn the spiritual, then our literal can also change! Then and only then can we be broken, and yet strong; poor, and yet rich!

### *Today's Reading: Jeremiah 1-3*

**Today's Reflection:** Jeremiah 3:15 *And I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding.*

It is wonderful to know that our Lord does not leave us without a man of God who will bear His heart and feed His people! I do understand that in today's world, it may not be as easy to find a pastor that matches this description; however, God does not leave his children without a shepherd to lead them! If you are in a place where you need a pastor, a man after God's own heart, then I encourage you to seek, ask, and knock until the Lord leads you to the right place! Do not settle for that which you know is neither Christ-honoring or anointed. Too many Christians allow themselves to settle for less than God's will for their lives, even when it comes to their place of worship. It is imperative that we make sure that we are in a place where Christ is lifted up, and where the pastor feeds us with knowledge and understanding. Do not make your decision based solely upon convenience, personal preference, traditions, fear of rejection, or manipulation. You want to be sure that you are under the care of the pastor which God has given you, and no one else! What we must understand is that if God approves of him, then so should we! So, some good questions you should ask yourself when deciding where to worship is 1) Is the pastor a man after God's own heart? 2) Does the pastor feed the flock with knowledge and understanding? 3) Does the pastor have the anointing of God on his preaching? If the answer to any of these three questions is "no", then keep looking until God leads you to the right place! You may find a place where they have a program for everything from youth to retiree; you may find a place where they sing the kind of music that suits your personal preference; you may find a place where you get a warm and fuzzy feeling every time you attend; but the most important thing about a place of worship is whether or not you get good anointed preaching by the man of God from the Word of God! I can do without everything else at a church, but I MUST have the Word!

## Day 220

### *Today's Reading: Jeremiah 4-6*

**Today's Reflection:** Jeremiah 6:16 *Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein.*

There are some things which need no improvement, and the old paths are no exception! But wait! What are the “old paths”? Are they referring to some period in time where people in general lived up to higher moral standards? Can it be defined only in terms of religious traditions which either approve or disapprove of certain fads, trends, dress codes, and common activities? Do we think only of a list of do's and don'ts which today's society seems to have forgotten or rejected? If it's a time period, then what time period do we look at, and just how far back do we go? If it's religious tradition, then who is to say which set of traditions it should be? If it's a list, then whose list shall it be, for there are many even amongst every Christian denomination known to man which has done nothing but add confusion to our understanding of what the Bible actually says. No doubt there was a time even in our own country where perhaps the average person's way of life better depicted what the Scriptures refer to as the old paths than what we have today. Perhaps there are certain traditions which we should hold on to in our churches, which have become traditional only because of their Biblical foundation. And, sure, we can even create a list from the Word of God which tells us things we should do and things we shouldn't do! However, let us remember that the old paths are not about people, places, and things, for all those will change with the times. The old paths are about that which was laid out as God's blueprint for success for people, places, and things way before we ever came along! What could it be? In the beginning was the Word! Who was the Word? The Word was God! John tells us that the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us. In other words, if you want to walk the old paths, simply enter into a relationship with Jesus Christ by faith, walk hand in hand with Him, and there you'll be!

### *Today's Reading: Jeremiah 7-9*

**Today's Reflection:** Jeremiah 8:22 *Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no physician there? why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?*

Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no comfort at church? Is there no hope or healing at the house of God? Be it far from us that it would ever be said that more leave wounded from our fellowship than were ever healed, that they leave more abused than they came, or that they suffered many things of many people, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse! Church supposed to be a spiritual hospital, but all too many are the sad stories of those who have at last given up on themselves because of the way they were slaughtered with careless slander at such places we like to call church. It is the self-righteousness in us which, if not crucified, will both permit and applaud our verbal exploitations of other's sins and weaknesses. After all, in order for religious people to feel better about themselves, they must first find someone else whom they perceive to be worse off than they are! Then, all they must do is make them look bad by blabbing all their business, not knowing that they themselves have become the fool! So what really happens then is we have this big "Better-than-thou Pageant", comparing ourselves one with another, rather than comparing ourselves with Jesus! And we call this church? We say we're winning sinners, when in fact we are only pushing them further from the Grace of God! God help us! Gal. 5:15 says, "But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another." If your religious system really works, then I ask what our text asks, "...*why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?*" I'm afraid that what many have been referring to as "balm" should really be called "bashing". After all, "A good scolding will do 'em some good!" Oh really? Where's the balm in that? Is it just me, or do we need Jesus back in our churches? The truth is, Jesus does not reject sinners as man-made religion does; Jesus grants them space to repent! Don't be guilty of stopping the sinner before he gets to the cross!

## Day 222

### *Today's Reading: Jeremiah 10-13*

**Today's Reflection:** Jeremiah 12:5a *If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses?...*

God is not interested in raising an army that can only face petty little small stuff; He is looking to raise an exceeding great and mighty army, filled with giant slayers! Why is it, oh child of God, that you find yourself continually being stretched to the max in every area of your life? It could very well be that He is putting within you a strength that's greater than yourself, to make you one that can contend not only with footmen, but with horses and chariots! Proverbs 24:10 says, "If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is small." God knows our breaking point, and so He continually brings us to that point so that at last we become capable of placing our fullest faith and confidence in Him and Him alone! You may be in obscurity today, but the day can come when people will know you, not for who you are, but for what you have allowed God to do in your life! He can become your identity!

When I personally observe those whom I know to be giant slayers for Christ, it is not the human spirit with which I am so impressed, but the sheer might and power of God that flows through such individuals! And so it ought to be! Men ought to be able to look at us and see God working in us, resting upon us, and flowing through us. Our enemy is not afraid of us, but it is He who is in us that our enemy fears the most, because greater is He that is in us, than he that is in the world! This is why the enemy fights you so hard in your mind and in your spirit, trying to keep you doubting, worried, troubled, and paralyzed with fear. He knows if he can just keep you wrapped up in your fears, then you will never tap into that faith which can ultimately become his ruin through the power of Christ living in you! Next time you feel like you're under attack, count it all joy, for it is a test which has been allowed by God to strengthen your faith and to help you become a mighty man of valor for Christ! He has a job for you, and He is training you for your future!

### *Today's Reading: Jeremiah 14-17*

**Today's Reflection:** Jeremiah 15:17 *I sat not in the assembly of the mockers, nor rejoiced; I sat alone because of thy hand: for thou has filled me with indignation.*

Few know the road less traveled as well as a man of the cloth. I'm not speaking of just any man, but one who has truly been called of God! Such a man who has been called by God has also been called to a place of few companions. It is not that we have no friends, but it is that they are few in number, and mostly separated either by time, distance, or distinction of service in particular. Let's just face it; we cannot all serve under one roof, for we are called to go out! And, often in our goings out we find ourselves feeling lonely as we are placed apart from those whom we've grown to love as we've served the Lord together. However, every Timothy must leave his Paul at some point to take up his own cross and bear his own burden. Therefore, it is possible to be able to minister to thousands, and still feel all alone. I write this because there will be someone reading this who will need to hear that even though you feel all alone, you are still as yet surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses! It is during those times, like Elijah, when we feel as if we're standing alone in the battle, that we need a Heavenly reminder that God has thousands of others who are standing with us, be they far or near! It is only a matter of timing and Heavenly purpose which determines the connections we need when we need them. This cross we must bear, though an honor and a privilege, does indeed take its toll on us, so we must learn to find death to self in the fellowship of His sufferings, and life and hope in the power of His resurrection. Though it is the message that we carry which causes us to be separated from the crowd, and which causes others to become our enemies because we tell them the truth, yet it is the same message which can at last convert the same soul which before despised us! When a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him! Your cross may indeed be heavy, but always remember that HIS burden is light! When you feel lonely, Jesus IS ever so near!

## Day 224

### *Today's Reading: Jeremiah 18-22*

**Today's Reflection:** Jeremiah 18:18 *Then said they, Come and let us devise devices against Jeremiah; for the law shall not perish from the priest, nor counsel from the wise, nor the word from the prophet. **Come, and let us smite him with the tongue, and let us not give heed to any of his words.***

I wish today to point out that which I feel has played the biggest role in the demoralization of America, and which, as a result, is swiftly bringing upon our nation the judgment of God. First of all, we must realize that a nation will be judged primarily for the following five things: 1) What we do with Jesus who is called the Christ, 2) how we treat His messenger, 3) how we treat the fatherless and widow, 4) how we treat the innocent and defenseless, and 5) how we treat the poor. Needless to say, the first two determine the outcome of the last three mentioned. 1 Peter 4:17 says, "For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?" The truth is, we cannot bypass the cross and get by with it! However, I'm afraid that our culture has become infiltrated with Jesus haters who intentionally and deliberately scoff and mock the house of God and the man of God on a consistent basis. The worst thing about it is that our nation will not be judged for the way the wicked have rejected the truth; our nation will be judged for how the people of God have rejected the truth! We should expect opposition amongst those who are not professed believers, but to receive rejection within our own ranks is something that should never happen, though it does on a daily and a weekly basis. Many are the religious which have in essence spoken these words concerning the man of God in their hearts, "***Come, and let us smite him with the tongue, and let us not give heed to any of his words.***" Many have turned away from the truth, and have turned unto fables! Many would rather hear a pleasant lie than a penetrating truth. Many a preacher of the gospel has been crucified upon the altar of the wicked tongue of their very own congregations. Many have decided that they will not hear the truth. When this happens, we bring a curse upon ourselves and our nation. "God, grant us space to repent for the way we have abused, misused, and falsely accused your preachers, and give us wisdom to take heed to the truth, lest we perish in our own demise!"

### *Today's Reading: Jeremiah 23-25*

**Today's Reflection:** Jeremiah 23:36 *And the burden of the LORD shall ye mention no more: for every man's word shall be his burden; for ye have perverted the words of the living God, of the LORD of hosts our God.*

The words of Proverbs 18:21 indeed speak the truth; “Death and life are in the power of the tongue: and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof.” Our words carry way more weight that we are often ready to admit. This is especially true when people, as the false prophets in Jeremiah’s day, “put words” in God’s mouth. All too often someone will say, “The Lord said this...” or “The Lord said that...” when in fact the Lord never spoke a word of it. This is not to say that the Lord does not speak to His children, for indeed He does! The point I wish to make is simply this; be careful what you attribute to the Lord’s doings. Many have publicly declared something to be of the Lord, when in fact time proved that what was said was not of the Lord at all, for if it truly was, it would have passed the test of time! How then do we discern that which is of the Lord, and that which is of man? Simply put, our words must pass the Scripture test. If what is declared holds up to the scrutiny of the pure Word of God, then all is well! If, on the other hand, what is being declared is anti-biblical and inconsistent with the Scriptures at best, then it is to be discarded as irrelevant. When we falsely discern a situation and attribute a “word” as coming from the Lord, and it turns out we’re wrong, we must acknowledge, confess, and repent! God is not obligated to do one single thing simply because we declared Him to be in something that He never signed up for. In such cases, even as our text says, “every man’s word shall be his burden.” Be careful what you speak, for it can either become your greatest deliverance, or your heaviest burden! I think that one of the greatest tragedies of our day as it pertains to leadership in our churches is a common unwillingness to admit when they made a bad call or when they misjudged a situation! We must learn not to speak in the Lord’s stead, but rather speak what He actually said, from the Bible! One thing is for sure, when you give pure Bible for council, you will never go wrong! So, what about you? Are you misrepresenting God by putting words in His mouth, or are you speaking only the truths as found in the Word of God? Think about it!

## Day 226

### *Today's Reading: Jeremiah 26-29*

**Today's Reflection:** Jeremiah 26:2b ...*And all the people were gathered against Jeremiah in the house of the LORD.*

Isn't it just absolutely astonishing at what all goes down in the house of the LORD? The house of the Lord is supposed to be a place of peace, and yet here we see division; it should be a place of order, and yet we see disorder; a place of unity, and yet disharmony; a place where the man of God should be honored, and yet we see the uprising of rebellion. Perhaps I am being too honest for some, but doesn't this happen all too often even in our generation as well? Perhaps not at your church; if not, thank God! Nevertheless, it does happen from time to time, and from place to place. The reality is, the first place the devil will fight is at the house of the Lord! We should not be surprised when we see opposition there, for we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but we war a spiritual warfare against the very gates of hell! And even though we should not be surprised, I think many times we are guilty of being caught off guard. The devil is real good at getting Christians to fight one another; as long as he can keep us doing that, we'll be too busy to fight the good fight of faith on our knees! It is up to each and every individual child of God to do his or her part to ensure that we give no place to the devil, especially at the house of the Lord where we can hear just one Word from God that could change our lives forever, if we're able to hear His voice! Can't you see what's going on? If there is trouble in your place of worship as described above, then I encourage you to pray, pray, pray! If you have a pastor that is willing to speak the truth in love, no matter how hard it is to swallow, thank God for him, let him know it, and stand with him and not against him! It looks like the only thing Jeremiah was guilty of was the "crime" of speaking the truth! Why is it that truth is so resisted even in our day? Why can not we, as mature adults, receive not only that truth which ministers grace to the soul, but also that truth which ministers correction to our actions and attitudes? Christ Himself taught that it is truth that makes us free! Why then do we prefer bondage over freedom by not agreeing with God about the truth of our condition? The truth is, we need unity in our churches! However, a house divided against itself cannot stand. Repentance then must first start with each individual, and with each home! Only then can unity be restored at the church house!

*Today's Reading: Jeremiah 30-31*

**Today's Reflection:** Jeremiah 31:14b *...and my people shall be satisfied with my goodness, saith the LORD.*

Imagine with me, if you will, of a day when the people of God are indeed satisfied with God's goodness. Too many are the restless and weary saints, who for lack of gratefulness for God's goodness, ask for dainties other than that Manna from Heaven which is sent to satisfy their souls in drought! It is only when we get to a place where we are satisfied with the Bread of Life alone that we are no longer distracted, persuaded, and owned by the temporal. God's goodness is sufficient! We do not need anything else! Why then are we often discontent with that of which we are blessed? I am not discouraging you from seeking more from God; I am only discouraging you from approaching God with an attitude that treats Him as if He has not provided sufficient grace! Godliness with contentment is indeed great gain, for it is when we are most thankful for what we have already been given that our Lord gives us increase. On the other hand, it is when we become bitter and full of complaint that He sends leanness to our souls! When this happens, we may get what we want outwardly, but we cannot enjoy it inwardly. That's when we find out that those things which we feel we need the most in life often leave us sadly disappointed for the lack of satisfaction they bring. The sooner we learn that when we have Jesus, we have enough, the better off we'll be! When our Christian experience is based upon a love relationship with our Heavenly Father, and not just a punishment and reward system, we truly learn that the deepest needs of our heart and soul are met only in the presence of Christ! The psalmist said it well when he said, "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want." No greater truth can be found written in fewer words concerning the all-sufficiency of Christ than is found in that phrase! After Christ, what is there left to want? One might ask, "Where is God's goodness?" Look to the cross, and you will find Him there! God looked to the cross, and was satisfied (Isaiah 53:11); if then the God of the universe was satisfied with the cross, how much more shall we who are but mortal men become thoroughly satisfied with His fount of many blessings flowing from that old rugged cross! Look to Christ, and be satisfied, both now and forever! Many a sinner has taken a drink! Will you?

## Day 228

*Today's Reading: Jeremiah 32-34*

**Today's Reflection:** Jeremiah 32:27 *Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh: is there any thing too hard for me?*

ENOUGH  
SAID!

### *Today's Reading: Jeremiah 35-37*

**Today's Reflection:** Jeremiah 36:16 *Now it came to pass, when they had heard all the words, they were afraid both one and other, and said unto Baruch, We will surely tell the king of all these words.*

Much is to be said of our necessity to fear the words of the Lord. Proverbs 9:10a says, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom,," The Hebrew word for 'fear' in our text is the word *yir-aw'*, which implies moral reverence. This manifests as fear mingled with respect and esteem. Even this reverential fear for the Lord which we must exhibit has a certain measure of dreadfulness or exceeding fearfulness in it, for the writer of Hebrews admits that it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God (see Heb 10:31). However, what we must understand is that such a fear of God is only the beginning of wisdom. Indeed, before we begin our journey with God in a personal relationship with Christ, there is the dreaded fear of Judgment and Hell fire that awaits all who are found outside of Christ and His grace. It is this fear which drives many with humble knees bowed to the foot of the cross for redemption and forgiveness of sins. It is not the character of God which we fear, but His role as Judge of the Universe! But, when one trusts Christ and His shed blood for salvation, then we enter into a new relationship with God! Before Christ, we faced Him as a Judge, but now, after Christ, we face Him as Savior and Lord! Now then, after having received salvation by grace through faith, we are told in Heb. 4:16 to come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need! No more fear of condemnation, for there is none for all found in Christ! Hallelujah! There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus (see Rom 8:1)! We are also told in 2 Tim. 1:7 that God hath not given us (the children of God) the spirit of fear. Now, this fear comes from the Greek word *dilee-ah*, which means timidity. In other words, God has not given us a spirit which causes us to be timid and suffer from a lack of courage or boldness to face danger. Once we understand who we are and Whose we are, we CAN do all things through Christ who strengthens us (Phil. 4:13), and we can live with the motto "No Fear"! No fear of the past, no fear of the present, and no fear of the future, for Christ has forgotten my yesterdays, strengthened my todays, and secured my tomorrows!

## Day 230

### *Today's Reading: Jeremiah 38-40, Ps. 74, 79*

**Today's Reflection:** Jeremiah 38:6 *Then took they Jeremiah, and cast him into the dungeon of Malchia the son of Hammelech, that was in the court of the prison: and they let down Jeremiah with cords. **And in the dungeon there was no water, but mire: so Jeremiah sunk in the mire.***

Who will bring water to the man of God? It is often the case that, while ministering to others who are thirsty and in need of the Water of Life, the man of God suffers from thirst himself. It is not uncommon at all for the very Word of God that he carries to minister to some, will at the same time offend others, who will in turn put him in the dungeons of their own creation. Have you not noticed? Just think about it; how many have, like Jeremiah, done nothing but fulfill his call of delivering the Word of God, and all he gets from those who would otherwise benefit from his ministry is a slanderous remark and a rebellious spirit? Here is the most dreadful part of this scenario; those who have put the preacher in the pit where there is no water, and where there is only mire, will at the same time scoff at him and make sport of him as though the mire is his own doings! Many have been the preachers through the years, which have at last sunken into the mire devised by his enemies, and at the same time ridiculed for his being in that mire! Remember this; preachers are human too! We cannot expect them to be Superman! We cannot expect to lash at him with our tongues while expecting him to just bounce back and walk on water! Many carnal congregations have sapped the very life out of their pastors by their tongue lashings, and then wonder why their preacher resigns the pastorate, retires early, or worst yet, quits the ministry altogether! I know of only one that was able to survive the beatings of the religious with the ability to minister to them without flaw unto His death; Jesus Christ! Even though He hung on an old rugged cross, thirsting for a drink, yet He gave Himself there on Calvary to become Living Water, even for those who nailed Him there! And though we often expect our preachers to be much like Christ, we must remember that they are not Christ! If you want to get the most out of your pastor's ministry, and benefit most from his preaching, then do not with tongue or attitude lower him down into the mire of mockery and expect him to "make do"! Thank him for his ministry! Bless him with your support! Be loyal to him! Defend him! Pray for him! Give him some water!!

### *Today's Reading: 2 Kings 24-25, 2 Chronicles 36*

**Today's Reflection:** 2 Kings 25:9 *And he burnt the house of the LORD, and the king's house, and all the houses of Jerusalem, and every great man's house burnt he with fire.*

You know when society ceases to be, by when great men cease to be! So it was in these days of loss and captivity for Jerusalem. Here, a nation who had at once received Heaven's advantage, now stares judgment in the face as they turned from the God of Israel whom they once served. How does a nation who received such favor from God so quickly lose that same favor? It is when greatness can no longer be found amongst its men! Our text reads "every great man's house burnt he with fire". They lost their stuff, because they first lost their greatness! However, **real** great men may lose their positions and possessions, but they should never lose their character; they should never lose that which made them great! It is not that they can't, but it is that they should refuse to do so! Genuine champions for Christ value the price of their testimony and the significance of their influence too much to just give it all away in the heat of a moment. As I parallel what happened to Jerusalem in our text with what I see in America today, I am convinced more than ever that our society is crumbling beneath our feet for the lack of enough great men who are willing to pay the price needed to procure a future of freedom and prosperity for themselves and their families! Perhaps where our society has gone wrong is in re-defining "greatness". When greatness should be defined as **godliness, strength, nobility, character, honesty, humility and integrity**, it seems that our generation defines it as **popularity, power, wealth, pride and fame**. However, true greatness only comes when we humble ourselves before Almighty God, admitting that without Him, we can do nothing (see John 15:5), but that in Him we live, and move, and have our being (see Acts 17:28)! Indeed the only way up with God is down. What we need are some mighty men of valor, who will rise to the occasion and become mighty champions for God by dying to self and living in the power of Christ's resurrection! When we learn to live unselfishly, giving our own lives for the enrichment and embetterment of others, only then do we really learn how to live and leave a legacy that points others to the secret of our success, our Great example, the Lord Jesus Christ!

## Day 232

### *Today's Reading: Habakkuk 1-3*

**Today's Reflection:** Habakkuk 3:17 *Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: 18 **Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation.** 19 The LORD God is **my** strength, and he will make **my** feet like hinds' feet, and he will make **me** to walk upon **mine** high places...*

I love the resolve of this minor prophet! After delivering a very disturbing prophetic message of judgment concerning Israel, he then concludes that he is still going to rejoice in the Lord, and enjoy **his** journey! Notice the words “my” and “me” in the text; “**my** strength”, “**my** feet”, and “he will make **me** to walk...” In other words, Habakkuk was determined to experience God’s best for **his** life, even in light of the judgment that was coming to the nation of Israel! He was determined to have a personal revival, regardless of whether or not anyone else cared to join him! You see, Habakkuk knew something about God that many religious people seem to miss; even in God’s wrath, He remembers mercy! God always has a remnant of people that love Him, regardless of how dire the circumstances, and He **will** take care of them! Friends, we must have the same resolve even in this day of apostasy in which we live. I could very well read the headlines day in and day out for the next six months, buy into the ‘gloom and despair’ propaganda of the secular media, and listen to the average preacher who concludes revival to be a hopeless cause in America anymore, OR I can choose rather to rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of my salvation! Now, I’m not denying that things are bad in our world today; indeed they are! I am simply refusing to let the destruction around me destroy the hope I still have in my heart. In Jesus’ name, I will not let it into my spirit! A thousand shall fall at my side, and ten thousand at my right hand; but it shall not come nigh me (see Ps 91:7)! This is the day which the LORD hath made; I **WILL** rejoice and be glad in it (see Ps 118:24)! We cannot allow a spirit of intimidation and fear creep into our hearts, because if we do, we will sink into the mire of hopelessness. God as called **us** to glory and virtue, whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises (see 2 Peter 1:4)! So, live for God, win the lost, and enjoy the journey!

## *Today's Reading: Jeremiah 41-45*

**Today's Reflection:** Jeremiah 41:6a *And Ishmael the son of Nethania went forth from Mizpah to meet them, weeping all along as he went...*

Victory isn't always sweet, because war is never pretty! Here, although Ishmael had risen against his enemies and slain them, yet the Bible says that he was "weeping all along as he went". Many are the bitter-sweet experiences that we have throughout our journey with the Lord this side of Heaven. Many are the personal battles that, though won with great victory, will yet lead us down a trail of tears. There are many things that we weep for. Some weep for those who were not as fortunate as they. Some weep for the changing landscape that the war left behind. Some weep for the friends that were lost due to the war. Some, if for nothing else, weep only for their wounds. Regardless of the reasons, we often find ourselves weeping at times that we should be rejoicing. The reason is simple; true victory does not come without a price. I'm concerned that many of us do not consider the spoils of war to be worth the pain we must go through to get there. However, we must realize this truth; we still have a cross to bear. Many of us forget about the life that can be found just past the cross! The Bible says of Christ in Heb. 12:2b, "...who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross..." Jesus wasn't just looking TO the cross; He was looking THROUGH the cross! He knew that Resurrection morn would soon follow, along with all of its implications! He knew that what was beyond the cross would be worth the price of the cross! Child of God, though this journey we're on may indeed be a trail of tears, yet there is life after death for each believer! I'm not just speaking of the physical death, but of the dying of self. Once we are dead to self, we are alive in Christ! "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me..." (Gal. 2:20). If there were but a dozen believers in this world today that learned and practiced the true meaning of this text, the world could once again be turned up-side down for the cause of Christ! The question is, who will be willing to walk down the trail of tears for the anointing that awaits? "He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him." (Ps. 126:6). Beyond this veil of tears is a place with God that will indeed be worth the miles and heartaches it will take to get there. Will you go?

## Day 234

### *Today's Reading: Jeremiah 46-48*

**Today's Reflection:** Jeremiah 46:17 *They did cry there, Pharaoh king of Egypt is but a noise; he hath passed the time appointed.*

Opportunities come and go according to God's divine time table. However, it is up to us to make the most of every opportunity that comes our way! Ephesians 5:16 admonishes us to redeem the time, "because the days are evil." The word "redeeming" in this verse means figuratively to rescue from loss, so as to improve opportunity! In other words, we are to cease every moment that we have so as to maximize its influence! The reason is simple; that moment may never come again. It should be our prayer today that we would not be found having passed our time appointed without so much as one thing to show for it. Many are the wasted opportunities which have come and gone, but yet if you're still breathing today, I believe God would say to you even as was said to His church in Rev. 3:2, "Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain..." The truth is, yesterday is gone and tomorrow is not here yet, so all we have is right now. What are we doing in this moment of time to make it count for Christ? It is not the Lord's will for us to end our days wondering what could have been had we ceased every moment. Perhaps the greatest thieves of what could have been and what is yet to be are doubt and fear. First, we doubt that our efforts would really make that much of a difference, and secondly we fear that the risk of failure is too great for the taking. However, we must realize that God calls us to a life of faith! He propels us into the unknown, requiring only that we trust Him for the best outcome! We must understand that the only real risk is that of taking none. When we do, that is the very moment we can begin to realize to power of ceasing each moment! Too many Christians are paralyzed, and thereby rendered powerless, because of the fear of the unknown and the doubts that permeate their minds. We **MUST** overcome our fears and doubts with the promises of the Word of God, and begin to believe and trust Him to make our way prosperous as we begin to take action in pursuing our destiny! What is it that God has called you to do? What then are you waiting on? If you are waiting for your friends to applaud you or your enemies to surrender, then you will never get it done! Today I say, Go for it! Take advantage of the time you are given. Do what you can today, and God will do the rest!

## *Today's Reading: Jeremiah 49-50*

**Today's Reflection:** Jeremiah 50:4 *In those days, and in that time, saith the LORD, the children of Israel shall come, they and the children of Judah together, **going and weeping**: they shall go, and seek the LORD their God.*

The way in which we approach our Lord is vitally important! The spirit and attitude that we must maintain is that of humility and reverence to our Savior. It is sad, however, to understand what it took for the children of Israel to get to this point in our text. This is after much famine, war, exile, and persecution that they come back to the Lord, seeking His face. Why? Disobedience! They had finally discovered the great price of disobedience to their God. Some might wrongfully argue that God must put His children in situations of hardship in order to teach them to learn to trust Him...even I have said it so myself in times past. However, I have since learned that it is not the Lord who places us in situations which bring us to our knees and which causes us to lose everything we have, and which strips us of all pride. No! It is our own choosing that does this to us! Study the scriptures, and you will find for yourself at length and in a consistent pattern throughout the entire Word of God, an open invitation to all who will believe and trust God at His Word, to avoid many of the trials which we bring upon ourselves, by simple trust and obedience! And, not only can we avoid many pitfalls, but we can enjoy many blessings that are readily available in God's storehouse of love! The key here is timing. It is **WHEN** we approach God with humility and reverence that makes all the difference in the world. We can do so early in our days, so as to procure His favor, protection and blessings, **OR** we can do so later in our days, so as to repent of previous disobedience and to undergo damage control which could have been easily avoided! It's really up to us, but know one thing, the sooner we come to Him like the children of Israel, "going and weeping", seeking the Lord our God, the better off we'll be! Why is it that the prodigal son must spend all he has before coming to himself? Why is it that the natural man tries so hard to 'go it alone', absent of God's guidance, until he begins to self-destruct? When we choose to have it our way, we place ourselves outside the parameters in which God wills to protect us with His covenant! Do not do so! Seek Him early! Do it now!

## Day 236

### *Today's Reading: Jeremiah 51-52*

**Today's Reflection:** Jeremiah 51:39 *In their heat I will make their feasts, and I will make them drunken, that they may rejoice, and sleep a perpetual sleep, and not wake, saith the LORD.*

It is very interesting to note the Lord's strategy as it relates to bringing about the judgment of Babylon. His plan is to "make them drunken, that they may rejoice, and sleep a perpetual sleep, and not wake...". The Lord in righteousness would judge the Babylonian empire, and one of the things He would do is cause them to be vulnerable to the attacks of their enemies. What better state of vulnerability could a nation be found, than in a state of drunkenness and sleep? This is where I wish to draw application for the church; what better state of vulnerability could the church be found, than in a state of perpetual sleep? It is as if our enemy has learned a battle tactic from our Lord, and is using it against us. The church seems to be in a deep sleep from which she cannot be awakened. It is not that she cannot be awakened, but I question if it is her will to be awakened! There is a battle cry in the streets of the nations of the world, and yet the church hits the snooze button one more time for a little more sleep! I believe the Lord is saying to His church even today what He said in Isaiah 52:1, "Awake, awake; put on thy strength, O Zion..." Indeed it says in Romans 13:11, "And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed." God is sending us a wake-up call, the likes of which we have never seen before! Much is at stake for those who sleep through this one. Many have already lost more than they could possibly regain because of this dreaded sleep that has come over them; do not become a statistic yourself! Your children are at stake! Your home is at stake! Your freedom is at stake! Your health is at stake! Your testimony is at stake! Everything you hold dear and precious is at stake! It is the devil's intention to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. Awake, Awake! Pay attention, and give no place to the devil! Christ will come to your aid if you will wake up! He can counter-act every wicked device the devil forms against you! Christ came that you might have life, and that you might have it more abundantly! Set Him upon the seat of the throng of your heart today, and let Him do battle for you! Wake up, and be saved from the destruction that is sweeping across the land to those who sleep!

### *Today's Reading: Lamentations 1:1-3:36*

**Today's Reflection:** Lamentations 1: 16b ...*my children are desolate, because the enemy prevailed.*

It is always the children that suffer the most as a result of sin and rebellion! The prophet Jeremiah weeps for the nation of Israel, who has been placed under severe judgment for their rebellion. It is a time when the children cry out to their mothers, "Where is corn and wine?" (see Lam. 2:12). Imagine the hungry cries of those dear precious children..."Mama, I'm hungry! Mama, do you have anything to eat? Mama, my tummy hurts!" What happened? Mama and Daddy failed to put God first in their home! For Israel, this was a literal historical fact that had occurred, but for many today, it is a spiritual occurrence, if not literal as well. For example, many children are desolate even in America, the land of the free and the home of the brave! To be desolate, in essence, is to be homeless! It is not that the average child in America does not have a house to live in, but it is that many do not have a real home to go to! They cry out of their hunger pains for a little comfort, a little compassion, a little affection and reassuring love from a broken family which has none to offer! And so it is no wonder why so many look for affection in all the wrong places....they didn't have a Godly home from which to get it! So, the first dope dealer that entices little Johnny, or the first prince charming that catches little Suzie's attention, and they're off in a flash! Why? They were homeless! They were looking for a place where they felt needed and loved, and so they took the first chance available. As misguided as they may be, they are desperate, and will take great risks to get from others what they can't get from home. No, it's not right! But, who is the guiltier party, the children who needed love and affection, or the parents who cared too little to offer any? Again, our text says, "...my children are desolate, because the enemy prevailed." May every mom and dad reading this today determine in their heart and soul to never let the enemy triumph over them or their family! If not for yourself, do so for your children! They are our future! Let us solemnly swear that the devil cannot and will not have any power over what God has given us! Let us get filled with the Spirit of God, and then pour our very souls into our children, so that they do not suffer from desolation and deprivation of love and guidance!

## Day 238

### *Today's Reading: Lamentations 3:37-5:22*

**Today's Reflection:** Lamentations 4:1 *How is the gold become dim! how is the most fine gold changed! the stones of the sanctuary are poured out in the top of every street.*

The church, having been made pure and spotless by the blood of the Lamb of God, is to be the “gold standard” for the world to see. However, when sin is allowed to go unchecked in the church, the gold loses its shine, and thus the church loses its witness and its power with God and man. We know we have lost our shine when we are no longer a reflection of the image of Christ. When all the world can see is the rubble of the church, it is no wonder that they do not receive our message. This problem is not just a surface issue; otherwise, cosmetic repair would be all that's needed to fix the problem. However, the root problem lies much deeper than the superficial religious attire with which we try so hard to cover our sins. Our text says, “...how is the most fine gold changed!” That is the problem. The gold has changed. A simple external “buffing” will never make you shine like gold! You see, the church has thrown her self into the melting pot of worldly affairs, and thus her metal has changed. The only remedy is for the church to allow Christ to purge her of her impurities once again. The church must go through the fire in order for the impure metals to rise to the surface to be skimmed away. Job said, “...when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.” Let us also consider 1 Peter 4:12-13, which says, “Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.” Herein lies the problem; very few Christians are willing to be partakers of Christ's sufferings. However, for those willing to do so, there comes a time in which His glory shall be revealed! Then will it be concluded that the glory of Christ shining through was well worth the sufferings that got us there. The question is, who shall be partaker of His sufferings? Be not as others who want only the shine without the heat, for it will never come that way. You may get a temporary shine, but the best fool's gold in the world will not stand the test of time. Only the real stuff will last. Let Christ purge you today of all impurities so He can shine through you!

### *Today's Reading: Ezekiel 1-4*

**Today's Reflection:** Ezekiel 2:5 *And they, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear, (for they are a rebellious house,) yet shall know that there hath been a prophet among them.*

Not always is the case where men turn at the reproof, rebuke, and exhortation of the man of God. Many are they which rebel against the message which he carries. Furthermore, many are the men of God, whom, if not careful, will allow a lack of response to deter them from finishing their course strong to the end. We must remember that it is God and God alone that “giveth the increase”! Oh sure, we like to get “results”, embellish the numbers, and keep record of the ones we’ve led to Christ. But what of those who have preach the Word just as powerfully, just as faithfully, and just as purely, with a totally different response? Can we assume that just because a positive response is not generated, that the message is wrong or the preacher isn’t as talented, anointed, favored, or what have you? May I submit that such assumptions are not only arrogant, but foolish as well! Have you not heard of the prophet Ezekiel whom we take our text from? A major prophet of God, and God says in essence, “Whether they listen or not, the only thing that matters, and the only thing I’m worried about, is that they know that a prophet walked among them!” May God deliver His men today from becoming so result-oriented that we become someone we are not, in order to try to make someone else become something they are not. Ultimately, we are not responsible for their response to the message, but simply the delivery of the message. Why is it that we categorize those who seemingly get the most results as the greatest among us? I do not read where the prophet Jeremiah had one convert in his day. In our day, by our measures, he would have never been invited to any of our conventions. But God raised him up, and he was God’s anointed none-the-less. If the emphasis gets back to the content of the message, then the conversions will take care of themselves. We are good at getting temporary emotional stirs, but God wants to produce fruit that remains. Simply put, we need some old-time pure Gospel preaching like that of John the Baptist, who faithfully preached regardless of whether he was with Christ in the Jordan River, or on death row for preaching the truth!

## Day 240

### *Today's Reading: Ezekiel 5-8*

**Today's Reflection:** Ezekiel 5:11 *Wherefore, as I live, saith the Lord GOD; Surely, because thou hast defiled my sanctuary with all thy detestable things, and with all thine abominations, therefore will I also diminish thee; neither shall mine eye spare, neither will I have any pity.*

Much can be said of the defiling of the sanctuary! This problem didn't just stop with Ezekiel's generation either. It has been a continual problem through every age, bringing us all the way to where we are today. It is ashamed that so little respect is shown in our generation for the sanctuary of the Lord. It is not so much about a building made of brick and mortar; it is about what the sanctuary represents. The house of the Lord represents all that is pure, holy, honest and true. It is when we begin to disregard and deem as insignificant those things which should be held as sacred, that we begin to lose favor with the Lord our God. Our Beloved Lord's stern warning in our text shows us that at what level we revere the sanctuary, is the same level by which God will measure His dealings with us. Is it any wonder that when we choose to live a Godless existence, a Godless existence is what we get? It is staggering to think of those who have chosen both to live without Christ, AND to expect Him to come to their rescue when in need, all at the same time. While it is true that our Lord "hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities" (see Psa 103:10), yet at the same time we learn this about God in Rom. 9:18, "Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth." I ask you, is God unjust when we are punished in our own destructive, rebellious behavior? Can prideful man truly blame God for that which not only is his own fault, but which Christ has made a remedy for, if we would but repent and turn to Him? Can the ill patient truly blame the physician for his illness, when he has refused all-the-while to take the prescribed medication? No! Neither should we falsely accuse God of being unfair, unjust, or insensitive to our needs, especially if we have chosen to live our lives without His input! America then should not be surprised that our Lord has all but lifted His shield of protection, when we have for the last several decades forsaken the assembling of ourselves together at the house of God that we might be held accountable to His Divine Word. Today, America can only stay the wrath of God by true repentance.

### *Today's Reading: Ezekiel 9-12*

**Today's Reflection:** Ezekiel 11:16 *Therefore say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Although I have cast them far off among the heathen, and although I have scattered them among the countries, yet will I be to them as a little sanctuary in the countries where they shall come.*

It is amazing to see that even in our Lord's sore displeasure for the way His people were living, and even in the midst of chastisement, He still made room for mercy and grace! This truly shows us a close-up of His heart for His people. Do not think, oh backslider, that you have been separated from His love; to the contrary, whom the Lord loves He chastens (see Heb. 12:6). Any decent parent would readily agree that there are times when we must discipline our children for their own good, and that regardless of their limited points of view we have their best interest at heart. So it is with God. Often, He will let the prodigal son take his journey into that far country, but only to anticipate the day that he comes back home with not a stitch of that far country in his heart any longer. You see, the Father knew that the only way for his son to know just how good he had it at home was to let him experience life away from home. Often, when we choose to be disobedient to our Heavenly Father, He permits us to go on down the journey of our choosing without stopping us, because He knows that this is the best way to teach us of our need for Him. We must understand that the alternative never works. So, in great wisdom He allows us to make mistakes so that we can learn from them and learn to call upon Him. Isn't it nice to know that He is just a prayer away? He said that he would be a little sanctuary in the places that we go, meaning that even in our isolation, even in our hog pen (like the prodigal son), even in our rebellion, and even in our chastisement, if we will but call upon the name of the Lord with repented heart, He will show up on the scene! There is nothing like being on the receiving end of His grace and mercy, especially after you have gone astray, and come back in disgrace expecting scorn, but receiving forgiveness. You then learn that Rom. 8:35-39 is true, which teaches us that there is absolutely no thing, no circumstance, or no one that can separate us from the love of Christ. Let us give Him praise for giving us such sweet assurance that no distance whatsoever will keep us from His love!

## Day 242

### *Today's Reading: Ezekiel 13-15*

**Today's Reflection:** Ezekiel 13:4-5 *<sup>4</sup>O Israel, thy prophets are like the foxes in the deserts. <sup>5</sup>Ye have not gone up into the gaps, neither made up the hedge for the house of Israel to stand in the battle in the day of the LORD.*

This is a stern rebuke against the false prophets of Ezekiel's day. Before we just skip over this text as if it is not relevant to today's world, let us remember that God is the same yesterday, today, and forever. If He did not tolerate false prophets back in Ezekiel's day, then He will be no less tolerant today. Compared to foxes in deserts, these so-called prophets were preying on sheep and hiding in holes. How many men in our world do the same today, while posed as trusted clergymen? How many are in "ministry" only for what they can get out of it? How many choose such a position only for the perks; a parsonage, a paycheck, and a pension plan? And how many are no where to be found when it comes down to fighting the good fight of faith? Oh man of God, please do not be as one who doesn't mind getting their hands full as long as they do not have to get their hands dirty! Our generation needs great men of God, mighty men of valor, who will stand up and declare what thus saith the Word of the Lord, despite how unpopular or politically incorrect it may be. We need men who will get down in the trenches with sinners who have fallen among thieves, and who otherwise have no hope. We need men of character who will not think of themselves more highly than they ought to think, but who will be able to esteem others better than themselves. We need men who will be faithful to the cause of Christ regardless of whether or not it fattens the wallet to do so. What ever happened to the spirit of Elijah? Did his mantle fall to the ground? No, but it was placed upon Elisha, who received the double portion! Did it stop there? No, but it rose again in a man we know as John the Baptist, who preferred to be called the voice of one crying in the wilderness, saying, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord!" Did it stop there? If not, where is that mantle in our generation? Who will take up the mantle and care only that his Lord be magnified above all else? Who will take this gospel trumpet and sound the alarm? Who will go up into the gaps, make up the hedges for this generation, and stand in the battle in the day of the Lord?

## *Today's Reading: Ezekiel 16-17*

**Today's Reflection:** Ezekiel 16:6 *And when I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live; yea, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live.*

I do thank God for the day in which he found me, and spoke life into me. I, too, was dying of polluted blood, poisoned by sin. What was the remedy? Calvary's Divine flow! It was when I responded to the voice of God speaking life into me through the hope of the Gospel that a blood transfusion took place. I placed my faith in Christ, and He did the rest, just as He said He would. Today, there are yet many who have never heard that they were even sick of this blood disease, much less that there is a Heavenly remedy. Let us be sure to speak the Word of God into their lives, bringing hope to the hopeless. Let us declare not only that their sin will bring them to eternal death in a place called Hell, but also that there is a way of escape; there is hope in Christ. Romans 10:17 says, "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." When God speaks, things happen. That's why it is imperative that we share with this world what God has said, and not what we have to say. We must understand that every time we speak the Word of God, we speak life. Do you know of someone in your realm of influence that is facing a "death" of some sort? Maybe they are suicidal; maybe their marriage is falling apart; maybe they just lost everything they owned; maybe they are literally dying of a dreaded disease; or, maybe they are simply lost without Christ, and need come to Him. No matter the situation, we must know this truth as found in Proverbs 18:21, "Death and life are in the power of the tongue." We need only share the Word of God with others in order to give and to cultivate life in their situation. It should be every Christian's creed to determine to be known as a giver of life. When we become Christ-like, then we will truly have a compassionate heart which will be willing to speak life and not death into other people's lives. Question: Do you give life with your tongue, or do you drain life with it? The answer to that question alone will tell you whether or not you exhibit the character of Christ in your journey with God. God help us today and forevermore to speak Words of life!

## Day 244

### *Today's Reading: Ezekiel 18-19*

**Today's Reflection:** Ezekiel 19:9b ...*they brought him into holds, that his voice should no more be heard upon the mountains of Israel.*

Never under-estimate the power of words! It is no wonder that our adversary the devil walks about just trying to shut us up. Words portray ideas, ideas project vision, vision promotes hope, and hope prompts action. We must never let the devil get us shut up in a strong hold. We must loudly, clearly, boldly and consistently declare God's truth to all generations in order for God's Kingdom to advance as it should. What is it about our words that is so important that our enemy would go through all measures just to stop us from speaking? It is because we have been created in the image and in the likeness of our Creator, who spoke the worlds into existence. The devil knows that if we can speak it out of pure faith, then we can create it! You see, our Lord taught us that out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. This means that whatever is in your heart will eventually manifest itself in your words. Therefore, if you are an individual who is full of faith, then your words will become full of faith. However, if your words are not of faith, this would indicate that there is a shortage of faith deep down inside of you. Now, there is nothing more dangerous to the devil than someone who has been saved, sanctified, filled with the Holy Ghost, and overflowing with faith, who will dare speak life into an otherwise hopeless situation! That's why Jesus teaches us to speak to the mountain; if you cannot speak to your mountain, perhaps it is because you have not enough faith to do so. It is only when we get crazy and fanatical enough in our faith that we open our mouth to declare the Word of God that we are able to remove the chain of mountains in our way. We have to get past caring what others think, and we have to get past what traditions and religion have taught us. We must boldly declare the Word of the Lord, taking charge over the adversary whom the Lord has already given us power to tread upon. Let us take hold of the promises of God and wait patiently for His deliverance as we proclaim His Word. It takes faith to speak of things that are not as though they were; it takes the kind of faith that is willing to test God's promises. Will you take this faith initiative?

*Today's Reading: Ezekiel 20-21*

**Today's Reflection:** Ezekiel 21:14b *...it is the sword of the great men that are slain...*

“I have been told of our rich heritage as a nation even from childhood. I remember the stories of men of old who lived unselfishly, sacrificing all including life itself so that I could be free. I have heard of our founding fathers and their unwavering faith in God Almighty; men like Abraham Lincoln, George Washington, and Thomas Jefferson. I have been taught that their leadership was forged in honesty, integrity, and justice. I have been told that to follow in their footsteps would be to live to as high a standard as one could have. I have been told that God's sovereign plan birthed our great nation through hardship, adversity, and a thirst for freedom from some of history's most courageous and daring men of all times. I was taught that America is the land of the free, and the home of the brave. I was told that all true Americans love freedom, and that most are still willing to fight to keep those freedoms alive. I was raised to believe that what truly made America great was found at the grass roots level; men and women in general who had a certain reverential fear of God and respect for their fellow man. I heard that if America's people ever stop being great, then America itself will cease to be great. Today, I am disturbed that it is difficult to find the kind of leadership in modern-day America that she once enjoyed. Quite frankly, I am concerned for our future as a nation, as it appears that by large our leadership has dropped all decent standards of morality whatsoever, all in the name of political correctness. Is it me, or has something changed? The 'ideal' America that I was raised and taught to love and defend is not the America I know today. Don't get me wrong; I'll still fight for her and defend her if need be, but I'd like to know that by the time I'm finished sacrificing my life, that America will not simply be sold to the highest bidder, and that my sacrifice is in vain. Does anyone else ever ask the question, 'Where are today's great leaders?' I pray that America will one day become again what I was led to believe that she was when I was a child. Who am I, you ask? Just another X-Generation child wondering about the future of my children and grand children, wondering if anyone will rise to the occasion and lead us back home again...Maybe you can.”

## Day 246

### *Today's Reading: Ezekiel 22-23*

**Today's Reflection:** Ezekiel 22:28a *And her prophets have daubed them with untempered mortar...*

As I read this text, I am reminded of a time in my childhood when a close friend of mine was building a new basement under his existing home. As he began to lay the block down for the west wall, he began to express concerns that the mortar he was using on the first run might have been a bit too weak. He thought about undoing his work and starting over, but had already laid about three or four rows of block. Though reluctant, he decided to be sure and mix the remaining batches at a stronger mix than the first batch, and continue with the project, rather than starting over; after all, it was too much work to have to re-do! So, the decision was made. The block wall went all the way up to the top, and all appeared great. However, just before my friend had a chance to lower the jacks and rest the house upon the new foundation, a hard rain came in, created great pressure upon the new wall, and then it happened; the weak mortar caved under pressure, and the entire wall collapsed! Thankfully, the house was still resting upon temporary bracing; else the house would have come down with the wall. Here is the moral of the story; untempered mortar never holds under pressure! So it is with the preaching of the Word of God. We cannot water down truth simply because it is more convenient for us, or because it pacifies others. We must either declare the truth of God's Word in its entirety, or declare it not at all. To soften the message to appease the crowds will not hold up in the Day of Judgment, either for the preacher or for his congregation. Furthermore, to re-define God's Word in order to appeal to the masses, entertain the spectators, justify unrighteousness, or to be politically correct is to defeat the whole purpose of preaching altogether. To put it plainly, every pastor must decide whether he wants to be a politician or a preacher, but he cannot be both. It amazes me that so many today are laying upon the foundation of Christ wood, hay and stubble, all of which will burn as chaff. What good have we done as pastors if we never have the courage to stand up and preach against sin while promoting righteous living? Are we not trusted to preach the Scripture with strength from God? Then let us preach His pure, unadulterated Word with no regrets!

### *Today's Reading: Ezekiel 24-27*

**Today's Reflection:** Ezekiel 24:18 *So I spake unto the people in the morning: and at even my wife died; and I did in the morning as I was commanded.*

All of us have heard the expression in times of crisis, “Life moves on!” Oh, how true it is! No doubt all of us can relate to this inconvenient truth at least to some degree. The worker knows all too well how that even when he is no longer able to work, the bills keep coming in just the same. Parents understand that even when they are inadequate to provide for their children, the demands of doing so never stop. The grieving widow, who prefers time to grieve before going back into the “real” world, understands that this IS the real world, and that she must pull herself together and keep moving regardless of the emotional trauma she just experienced. We could go on and on, but you get the idea. Having said all of this, may I suggest to you that there is one who is never more vulnerable to this kind of reality, and sometimes with little or no consideration of the same, and that is the pastor! You see, the pastor is one who not only lives in a real world with real problems, just like everyone else, but who also helps bear the burdens of those whom he pastors. I think our selected text illustrates this reality in the ministry as well as any passage in the Word of God. Here, Ezekiel having lost his wife, never skips a beat to continue to do as he has been instructed by his Heavenly Father, who called him into the ministry. It is not that he is super-human, or that he is immune to the emotional toll such an event would have on anyone else; he simply goes on anyway. Amidst the pain, the doubts, the confusion, the stress, the anxiety, and the loss, he simply has no choice but to continue in his calling. Unfortunately, many are under the impression that their pastors never have a problem. Let me assure you that nothing could be further from the truth! Pastors have problems; they simply do not have the luxury of sharing most of them with their congregations. Today, I salute every pastor reading this for your deep level of commitment and admiration for our Lord and Savior, as demonstrated by your faithful service to Him, in season and out of season! May the Lord snuggle up close to you today, bottle up your tears, and whisper in your ear that He will hold you through once again!

## Day 248

### *Today's Reading: Ezekiel 28-31*

**Today's Reflection:** Ezekiel 29:20 *I have given him the land of Egypt for his labour wherewith he served against it, because they wrought for me, saith the Lord GOD.*

It pays to serve God! Here, God gave the land of Egypt (then the superpower of the World) unto Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon, simply because he fought on His behalf. 2 Tim. 2:3 says, "Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ." This war we are in is very intense, and the things we must endure at times would be simply unbearable if it were not for the Lord who is on our side. However, we as soldiers of the Cross should find comfort in knowing that our Lord does not employ whom He does not pay. Make no mistake about it; God is keeping tabs. Heb. 6:10 says, "For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister." God keeps his promises, so keep serving Him and He will take care of you! Heb. 6:15 goes on to say, "And so, after he [Abraham] had patiently endured, he obtained the promise." Question: Do you have the kind of diligence, faith, and patience it takes to inherit the promises? Many of us miss the promise for lack of patience. We get short on our breath, and so we stop just a little before the finish line. The hardest thing to learn in the ministry is to be diligent, have faith, and practice patience, especially when it appears at times that our vision is getting further away from us rather than getting closer to us. However, we MUST press on! 2 Tim. 2:6 says, "The husbandman that laboureth must be first partaker of the fruits." Will you hang around long enough to taste the grapes that you have planted? If you do, you will get the first cluster! James 5:7-8 also says, "Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh." In other words, the only time we can stop is when the Lord returns for us. Until then, let us "stablish" or settle our hearts on our place of service, and then work our field of labor with diligence, faith, and patience until at last we receive the former and latter rain!

### *Today's Reading: Ezekiel 32-34*

**Today's Reflection:** Ezekiel 34:2b ...*Woe be to the shepherds... 4b ...with force and with cruelty have ye ruled them.*

These are stout words of rebuke which our Lord had spoken against the shepherds of Israel in Ezekiel's day. Though this is an historical event which happened a long time ago, I see a striking resemblance between our selected text, and what goes on in the religious world today, specifically in camps of legalism. I dare say that verses 1-4 are as clear a description of legalism as any text in scripture. Read verse 4 alone: "The diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have ye bound up that which was broken, neither have ye brought again that which was driven away, neither have ye sought that which was lost; but with force and with cruelty have ye ruled them." I personally do not know of a more forceful and cruel religious philosophy than that of legalism. It is propagated in the spirit of the letter, which only brings death. I am sad to admit that many of God's sheep are bleeding to death because they have been scorned when they should have been comforted, x-communicated from the fellowship when they should have been restored, or condemned when they should have been forgiven. My heart goes out to those who have fallen victim to this type of spiritual tyranny. Legalism goes against everything that the grace of God stands for. Legalism and Grace can not co-exist. To truly understand Grace is to know that there is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus (see Rom 8:1). Grace obviously does not give you a license to sin, but it does loose you from sin's grip and its condemnation. For one to continue to live as if he has been sentenced to death even though he has been liberated and set free is to miss the whole point of Calvary. Rom. 8:33 says, "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth." Friend, if you have been saved by God's grace, do not allow yourself, the devil, the brethren, or anyone else place condemnation upon you any more. You are FREE! Free to overcome, free to live, and free to serve God. You are accepted in the beloved because of Christ's righteousness and His righteousness alone. It is not of works, lest any man should boast. We now serve God, not to gain approval, but simply to praise His name. Enjoy your freedom!

## Day 250

### *Today's Reading: Ezekiel 35-37*

**Today's Reflection:** Ezekiel 36:36b ...*I the LORD build the ruined places...*

Now isn't that just like God? I mean, out of all the places in the earth He could be building, He decides to build the ruined places. That is great news; however, the greater news is that He is still doing so today! The Lord specializes in taking ruin and turning it into rain. He can take the direst of circumstances, put His touch on it, and then transform it from a desert-like lifeless situation into that of a well-watered garden. All we need is God's touch and His breath on our lives, and all will be well. God not only CAN do this, but He WANTS to do so; better than that, He delights in doing so! That's why we should shout if we're in an impossible situation, because we have a prime opportunity for God to show Himself mighty in our lives. What kind of dilemma are you facing today? Nothing is too hard for God! For a moment, allow me to minister to that one who feels like they have ruined everything. Perhaps you have ruined a relationship, or at least damaged it; perhaps a career has been lost because of a mistake you made; maybe when you look around in the rubble of your life, all you see is ruin and waste. I've got good news for you! What looks like ruin in our eyes, looks like a construction zone in God's eyes! God wants to mend your broken heart, save your marriage, bless your career, bring healing to your body, or whatever the case may be. Will you grant Him the building permit? I know it is difficult to understand exactly how God can get glory out of any situation, but He can and He does. One of the reasons that we do not grant God a building permit is because we cannot see what He sees. All we see is a mess, but He sees a messenger; all we see is a trouble-maker, but God sees a problem-solver; all we see is a sinner, but God sees a saint; all we see is our sins and mistakes, but God sees the blood! It is when we catch His vision for our lives that we then begin to see what He has seen in us truly come to pass. It is not that He places confidence in us, but He knows that after He gets through working on us, we will be a Masterpiece of His Handy-work. Can you see what God sees? From now on, determine to look at yourself not as a ruined and wasted life, but as a miracle in the making. Give your life to God; He will build it up!

### *Today's Reading: Ezekiel 38-39*

**Today's Reflection:** Ezekiel 38:7a *Be thou prepared....* 8a *After many days thou shalt be visited...*

Just as the Lord had given Gog fair warning of His visitation to come, so He prepares us for the same in Matthew 24:44, where Jesus said, "Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh." I have heard it said that there are two things which man must do in a life time; pay taxes, and die! As true as that is, I'd like to add a third one; every man, woman, boy and girl WILL be visited by God their Creator. Have you made your preparations to meet Him? Oh, surely you haven't been deceived by the length of time which has already passed, of which there has not yet been a visitation? Surely you have not said in your heart, "My lord delayeth his coming!" Jesus warned against such thinking, specifically stating that "The lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of." See Matt. 24:50. You see, although it hasn't happened yet has no bearing on the fact that it shall happen! Rom. 14:12 says, "So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God." You may not want to be visited by God in your life time, but regardless, He will pay you a visit sooner or later. We had best be prepared for the visit, for the simple fact that we do not know when He's coming; we just know that He is. It is important for all reading this to understand that no one, and I mean NO ONE, will be able to skip out on this meeting. The only way to be genuinely prepared to meet God is to accept Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord; trust me when I say, you do not want to stand before God without Christ representing your case. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God (Heb. 10:31). The good news is that God the Father looks at Jesus' sacrifice He made for you on the cross, and is satisfied! No wrath shall come to those who have believed on the Lord Jesus Christ to save them from their sins. One day, I was minding my own business, when all of a sudden I heard the voice of Jesus beckoning me to come to Him for forgiveness, redemption and grace. Since that day, I have been prepared to meet God, as I trust solely in the righteousness of Jesus Christ to spare me from the wrath which is to come. I have made my preparations; what about you?

## Day 252

### *Today's Reading: Ezekiel 40-41*

**Today's Reflection:** Ezekiel 40:2a *In the visions of God brought he me....and set me upon a very high mountain...*

Do you see what God sees? Indeed we begin our journey with God doing so, but few follow the same rule after conversion. Think, for example, on how easy it was for our Lord to convince and convict us of our sins before we accepted Christ! We already knew we were guilty, so the most difficult part was admitting it to God. In order for one to confess his sins and truly repent, he must agree with God, or in other words, see himself as God sees him, a sinner in need of salvation. Anyone who has ever truly been born again has experienced this, and has no problem relating. However, what happens to us at salvation changes the way God sees us, but all too often does not change the way we still see ourselves. It is difficult for a slave who has been legally freed from bondage to also be free in his mind. That is why we are instructed to "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:" (Php. 2:5). Once our soul has been purchased by His blood and our spirit has been quickened or made alive, we must then ensure that our mind follows suit! Once we become a child of the King, we can no longer see ourselves as slaves to sin and corruption. We can no longer think of ourselves as victims and remain defeated in our minds. We must raise our thinking to God's level; we must be willing to see what He sees in us! Did not Christ teach that "He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father.?" Friend, if we could ever see in ourselves what Christ sees in us, we could literally turn the world upside down for Him. Now, to set the record straight, it wasn't what He saw in us alone, but what He saw He could make out of us; because greater is he that is in me, than he that is in the world (see 1 Jn 4:4)! I understand that we are "just 'ole sinners saved by grace", but do not let that attitude keep you from rising to new heights in your journey with God! In order for God to bring Ezekiel into His visions, He first had to change his elevation. Can I be honest? Most Christians suffer from what is commonly referred to as "stinkin' thinkin'". However, if we are to truly overcome, then once we are saved we are to see ourselves as God sees us, and not as we see ourselves.

### *Today's Reading: Ezekiel 42-43*

**Today's Reflection:** Ezekiel 42:15 *Now when he had made an end of measuring the inner house, he brought me forth toward the gate whose prospect is toward the east, and measured it round about.*

God does not measure us from head to toe; He measures us from the inside out. If we are not careful, we will put too much emphasis on the externals and not enough emphasis on the internals. Both areas matter, but first things must come first. Let us consider what Jesus said in Matthew 23:23; “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye pay tithes of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.” Jesus is obviously not teaching us to neglect the lighter issues, but rather to keep them in their place. What is most important is what is on the inside. If we are measuring up on the inside, then the outside will take care of itself. We all know that what *appears* to be, and what *is*, can be two totally different things. That’s why it is important to understand the necessity of majoring on the major in our walk with God. Otherwise, we can become deceived by our own man-made religion. Question: If we did not have our religious routine to practice ever so often, would we still have our faith intact? It is sad but true that for some, if you took their church away, then you’d also take away their faith. It is not near as important for us to be in church, as it is for Christ to be in us! Do not take me wrong; church is essential for our spiritual growth and development. I’m simply saying that our faith should rest, not on the machinery of religion, but upon Christ Himself. This would explain why some think they will go to Hell if they don’t dress a certain way, or attend a certain church, or forget to read their Bible twice a day, or the list could go on and on. Friend, did not Christ become our total, complete, and perfect sacrifice? Did He not take care of the curse, the chains, and the condemnation of sin when He shed His precious blood on our behalf? Then quit measuring yourself in the wrong way! What matters most is whether or not your sins have been washed away by the blood of Christ. Without the blood, we would never measure up. Now, how do you measure up?

## Day 254

### *Today's Reading: Ezekiel 44-45*

**Today's Reflection:** Ezekiel 44:30 *And the first of all the firstfruits of all things....shall be the priest's: ye shall also give unto the priest the first of your dough, that he may cause the blessing to rest in thine house.*

Be careful to do your part to aid and assist God's man, for if you do so, the blessing will rest in your house! I've always heard it said that if you take care of God's man, then God will take care of you; this is as true a statement as it gets. I wish to point out that God's willingness to either hold back or release the blessing can actually be determined by the man He has called. Think, for example, of when Abraham's wife was taken from him by Pharaoh. The scriptures say that the LORD plagued Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai Abram's wife (see Gen 12:17). It wasn't long until Pharaoh returned her un-harmed, because he'd rather have a blessing than a plague! I also think of where Jesus told Peter in Mat 16:19, "I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." God gives His called men power to bind, and power to loose; power to hold back, and power to release! Therefore, it is imperative that we honor God by honoring His men. It is safe to say that if you do not have the blessing of the man of God, then you do not have God's blessing either. Unfortunately, many people still think that they can circumvent honoring God's man, while simultaneously obtaining God's favor and blessings. Let me assure you that this cannot happen! We then learn through the principles of the Bible (such as the verses already shared and many more which time would not permit) that God is saying in essence, "If you won't honor my man, then I won't honor you!" The quickest way to bring a curse upon your house is for you to curse God's man, be it verbally, psychologically, emotionally, financially, or any other creative way you can think of. If I were you, I'd just be sure that I was ON God's side by standing alongside the man of His choosing, the one upon whom He has placed His call! If you do, then surely in blessing God will bless you, and in multiplying He will multiply you! Need a blessing? Then go bless the man of God!

*Today's Reading: Ezekiel 46-48*

**Today's Reflection:** Ezekiel 46:9 *...he that entereth in by the way of the north gate to worship shall go out by the way of the south gate....he shall not return by the way of the gate whereby he came in...*

When we meet with the Lord, we should never go back out the same way we came in! Perhaps the biggest tragedy of this generation is the countless millions of people who attend church every week, but always go out the same way they came in. If our day is ever going to see a great revival, then something has got to change! We cannot continue as we are and expect things to get better. We have got to stare truth in the eyes and begin doing right no matter what. Repentance is a word which desperately needs to be revived in these times. The trouble is, there is a generation which has come up who does not know the Lord or His ways. It is difficult to repent of something that you don't think needs repenting of. Sadly, this is not only true of unbelievers, but it is also true for the church by large. What about the Laodicean church in Rev. chapter 3? They said, "I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing;" Then Jesus said that they knew not that they were "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked". The entire problem was their lack of knowing. They were totally ignorant of a need for change. They were happy just the way they were, because they were enjoying themselves. I'm afraid that too many of us are more worried about being comfortable than we are being conformable. Paul said in Php. 3:10-11, "That I may know him [Jesus], and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead." Here's the thing; to be comfortable in your present state is to die in your present state, but to be conformable unto the death of self is to be resurrected with Christ in newness of life! Why is it that we only think of the costs of dying to self, without thinking of the rewards? For the Christian, life does not end at the cross; it only begins! Let us therefore determine that from this day forward, when we come before the presence of the Lord, that we will allow Him to speak to us of the changes we must make, so that we can say of a surety that we left a different way than we came!

## Day 256

### *Today's Reading: Joel 1-3*

**Today's Reflection:** Joel 2:21 *Fear not, O land; be glad and rejoice: for the LORD will do great things.*

It's not over until God says it's over! Here, the prophet Joel, while in the midst of his prophetic warning of the great and terrible day of the Lord, also speaks of the Lord's plans to do great things. You see, although God's wrath and judgment are imminent for those who have rejected Him, and although His chastisement is sure to come for His rebellious children, this does not mean that He is through doing great things. Hab. 3:2 says, "O LORD, I have heard thy speech, and was afraid: O LORD, revive thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember mercy." The fact is, God is still doing a great work in the land! It may be true that a majority of churches have grown dead and cold, but it is also true that God has a remnant of people throughout the earth who love Him, who hunger and thirst for Him, and who are experiencing a great move of God in their lives. Do not buy into the lie that "America is too far gone to have revival again!" She is only "too far gone" when the church loses her vision. However, 2 Chronicles 7:14 is still in the Bible! "If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land." America is only as far gone as the church of the living God will allow her to be. We MUST keep our vision strong of seeing God send a great awakening to our generation! America's only hope is a great revival; a turning back to God! Furthermore, America's only hope has always been God; that should have never changed! It is my passion to see God do great things in our day that will not only turn this great nation back to Him, but that will also save this great country from total collapse. Children of God, do not despair! God is still interested in doing a great work in our land, regardless of all the chaos of the day. Can He not work in the midst of chaos? Is that not His specialty? Then let's rise to the occasion by humbling ourselves before Almighty God, pray fervently, seek His face, and repent of our sins so that He will have the room He needs to work in our lives. We the church should be the leaders of the land; let's lead by example starting today!

*Today's Reading: Daniel 1-3*

**Today's Reflection:** Dan. 3: 27 *And the princes, governors, and captains, and the king's counselors, being gathered together, saw these men, upon whose bodies the fire had no power...*

This world needs to see some heat-resistant Christians! It is no wonder that our Lord in great wisdom allows us to pass through the fires of adversity in this life; it is so that when we come out on the other side shining like gold, we can testify of His goodness! 1 Peter 4:12-13 says, "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy." God wants to shine through us, but the only way for Him to truly do so is to put us through the fire. Painful as it may be, the elimination of impurities makes it worth the while when at last we reflect the image of our King in the way we live, act, and think. Steel which has been tempered in the fire has been hardened by the flame so as to withstand much greater pressure; and so we who have been exposed to hardships which required long endurance for survival have also been strengthened in our faith. The child of God needs not forget that he is in a battle which requires extensive and exhaustive training to prepare him for what is ahead. Our Lord is gracious to prepare us for our future! We do not need to think of our present-day battle as an unnecessary evil; rather, we should look at it as a stepping stone to victory! I cannot speak for anyone else, but I must admit that there have been many trials I have come through over the years that I would never want to relive, but that I also wouldn't trade for the world! Why? I am stronger because of them, and perhaps a little wiser. Oh, if only I knew then what I know now! Perhaps now I do know what I'll need to know tomorrow; only time will tell. One thing is certain; my Lord has proven His faithfulness to me, and I know that He will continue to hold my hand no matter what, because He has never once left my side. Certainly if this generation were to witness first-hand an army of believers upon whom the fire has no power, then Christ would truly be lifted up, and would draw all men unto Himself! I wonder how many "flame-walkers" are being tempered right now?

## Day 258

### *Today's Reading: Daniel 4-6*

**Today's Reflection:** Dan. 6:23b *...So Daniel was taken up out of the [lions'] den, and no manner of hurt was found upon him, because he believed in his God.*

Oh, to have that kind of faith! I am reminded of 1 Tim. 6:12, where we are told to “Fight the good fight of faith...” Plainly put, to exercise our faith is to fight for survival; otherwise, we would have no hope. Jesus said in Mark 9:23, “If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.” Again, our text says that there was no manner of hurt found upon Daniel, “...because he believed in his God.” Daniel knew all too well that God would deliver him, and so because he knew God would, God did! Notice it didn't say, “because Daniel out-smarted the lions”, or “because the lions just weren't hungry that day”, or any other crazy something! It was simply because he believed God. Faith is a powerful thing when it is placed in Jesus Christ our Lord. Since He is the author and the finisher of our faith (see Heb. 12:2), then to put our trust in any other person or thing would be powerless, but to put our faith in Him would yield unlimited power with God. Faith is such a simple thing, but what makes it challenging is all of the opposing forces which fight so hard to keep us from believing. According to 2 Cor. 10, we are in a spiritual war, which implores us to cast down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and to bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ. Why? Because it's all in your head! If you can win the battle against doubt in your mind, then you've won the battle, period. Daniel's faith was great because he didn't know any better than to believe God. Why does our Lord teach us that “Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein.”(Mark 10:15)? It is because a child-like faith has not been tainted and soiled by this world's system and philosophies. For a child, there is no other option, because there has been none given! In other words, we should believe God without taking into consideration any opposing information whatsoever. Pretend like those other voices don't even exist. Ignore them! If you'll drown out the devil's voice long enough, you'll hear God's voice louder and clearer as the days go by. Fight to believe God, and rest by your sleeping lions!

### *Today's Reading: Daniel 7-9*

**Today's Reflection:** Dan. 9:18b ...*we do not present our supplications before thee for our righteousnesses, but for thy great mercies.*

We need to be sure to stay humble at all times; especially when we approach God's throne in prayer. In essence, Daniel is praying, "God, we are asking for your help, not because we deserve it, but because we need it, and because we know that you care for us." Could there be a place in the Christian's journey where he or she begins to think that God should do this or that for them because they have done this or that for Him? I am a firm believer that God has a rewards program that's out of this world, but I also believe that maintaining humility by remembering where God brought us from is truly the only way to either obtain or enjoy those rewards. Before one might come to the conclusion that God "owes" him something, he should consider that God has already given us His Son! From that perspective, what more could we possibly expect of God? I mean, after He has given us everything, there is nothing else left to give. It is sad that this world's system avoids God like the plague, and when referencing His Holy name, it's usually done so in vain. It is as if this world thinks that God is the worst thing that could happen to them. Furthermore, for a world that hates God so much, they sure do place a lot of selfish demands and expectations on Him! Sadly, I witness first hand a good number of people who will curse God in one breath, and then ask Him for a favor in the next. If anyone should have leverage and place expectations, it should be God! God doesn't 'owe' us anything! Furthermore, were it not for His goodness and grace, we would all be in the eternal flames of Hell right now. It is therefore necessary to resist the religious notions that somehow we deserve special treatment from our Heavenly Father. God is looking for a broken and a contrite spirit; a man or a woman who knows how unworthy they are, and how worthy the Lamb of God is! We might be praying, "God, don't you remember all the sacrifices I've made for you." When we should be praying, "God, be merciful to me a sinner!" If we will stay humble, then the sky is the limit to what God can do for us.

## Day 260

### *Today's Reading: Daniel 10-12*

**Today's Reflection:** Dan. 10:1b ...*and the thing was true, but the time appointed was long...*

Vision never comes without the wait! In a world where we want everything right now, it is difficult for us to grasp the idea that good things truly do come to those who wait. The Bible clearly teaches us to let patience have her perfect work (see James 1:4). Perfection implies maturity, or the coming of age. We do not harvest a crop before it is the proper time to do so; neither should we try to rush what is taking God some considerable amount of time to fulfill in our lives. Before one takes things upon himself that God has not prepared him for, he had better ask himself, "Do I really want to assume this kind of responsibility?" Certainly if the Lord does not think we're ready, then we had better listen to Him. Those of us who are in ministry will often feel rushed into this or that, all in the name of "redeeming the time because the days are evil", while never once stopping to ask ourselves, "Is this the Lord's doings, or is this my own doings?" We need be careful to allow the Lord to do His work in His time, else it will not endure the storms. I have often thought about how Joseph or Moses would have felt as young men who no doubt were full of dreams, ambitions, and fervor for God; and then the waiting! Both of these great men of God went through years and years of training and character building before God entrusted them with the ministry. But, when God did do it, it was done right on time, and had His desired effects that we all benefit from still today. Too often it has been proven that the more premature the baby is, the less likely it is to survive. Therefore, it is imperative that we allow God to work on His timetable in our lives; to move when He says move, to stop when He says stop, to speak when He says speak, and to be still when He says be still. God's timing is everything! God works in seasons, and your time will come, but do not become weary in the waiting. Hab. 2:3 says, "For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie; though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry." I ask you today to hold on to the vision God has given you, until it surely comes to pass. God says, "Wait for it!" Will you be ready for your time when it comes?

## *Today's Reading: Ezra 1-3*

**Today's Reflection:** Ezra 3:11b *And all the people shouted with a great shout, when they praised the LORD, because the foundation of the house of the LORD was laid.*

Oh how great it is to see the rebuilding of that which has been lost to previous generations. Here, a people who had been in captivity, and who had lost their freedom to worship their God, had all at once been given the opportunity to restore, repair and rebuild the house of the Lord. All hope seemed lost. After all, Psalm 11:3 asks, "If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?" There **MUST** be a foundation upon which to build, and it cannot be the shifting sands of sin and corruption. Today, there is now a generation that knows not the Lord. However, I wish to speak to those who remember what it was like to see real revival fire in the church house long ago. Where is the fire today? What happened? Can this new generation really be blamed for the loss of the flame? Verse 12 says, "But many of the...ancient men, that had seen the first house, when the foundation of this house was laid before their eyes, wept with a loud voice..." All of a sudden, the flame that they thought was long lost inside of them became re-ignited when they **SAW** the new foundation laid! I ask the leaders who have paved the way for my generation, and who have seen better days in America than I have seen, to open your eyes again and catch a vision of a new foundation for future generations. Yes, the old landmarks have been removed; and yes, things may not be looking so great any more, but my generation needs to see a spirit of revival fire rise back up in those who have gone before us, who can tell us with certainty that hope still exists, and who can inspire us to lead future generations to that hope. Perhaps the greatest threat to our hope for the future is our dwelling on past losses. I imagine if I were one of those "ancient" men, I would have thought to myself, "Could it be true? Is this really happening? I had lost all hope of ever seeing this day come to pass again, but yet here it is before my very eyes!" Question: why should it take seeing to believe, when faith requires us to believe before we see? We **MUST** lay out this new foundation before our eyes of faith, before we will ever see it come to pass. Perhaps then we will begin to see a great awakening in our generation like in times of old!

## Day 262

### *Today's Reading: Ezra 4-6, Ps. 137*

**Today's Reflection:** Psalm 137:1-2 *By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion. We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof.*

Today's sleeping giant called the church has, in essence, done the same thing! We have been taken into captivity by our own greed, lusts, selfish ambitions, and our love for this present world. We have said to ourselves, "I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing!" when in fact we are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked (see Rev. 3:17)! We have given up the old ship of Zion to a multitude of religious pirates who have taken siege with force to manipulate us like puppets. The kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent have taken it by force (see Matt. 11:12). We have given up on the cause of righteousness. We have bought into the lies of this present age, which say that it can never be as it used to be. Our vision of future hope has been lost due to our willingness to just hang it up! We have hanged our harps in the weeping willows, pulled out the old photo albums, and reminisced of yesteryear, as if the golden days are long gone and can never be restored. **STOP!!! WAKE UP!!! SNAP OUT OF IT!!! REPENT!!! GET YOUR HARP BACK DOWN, AND GET YOUR SONG BACK!!!** The church of the living God is still alive, and we must realize that all hope is NOT lost. Somebody somewhere is too hungry for God to let this happen to yet another generation. Whoever you are, rise to the occasion, find a solitary place somewhere where it is just you and God, pray like never before, and hold on to the horns of the altar until God fills you with the blessed Holy Ghost, giving you a power that's not your own to lead this generation back to Christ! Let us return to the old paths so that we can restore, repair, and rebuild them for our children's sakes. Let us sing the Lord's song, even in this strange land, and let us watch the God of Heaven invade our space as we worship Him in Spirit and in truth. May our generation become known as the generation that **TOOK IT BACK!!** We will no longer be put to sleep by the lullabies of this modern age which have all but destroyed the Godly foundation upon which this country has been built. Some may sleep on, but as for me and my house, we **WILL** serve the Lord! What about you?

### *Today's Reading: Haggai 1-2*

**Today's Reflection:** Haggai 2:19 *Is the seed yet in the barn? Yea, as yet the vine, and the fig tree, and the pomegranate, and the olive tree, hath not brought forth: from this day will I bless you.*

God says, "From this day will I bless you." It is only from seeds sown that God will bless us; He cannot bless what is not sown! A good brother of mine once said, "When you get to Heaven, will there be any seeds left in your pocket?" This is a good question. Today everyone wants the blessings of God without doing the work of God, but you cannot have the one without the other. Again, the blessing does not come from seed stored, but from seed sown! Furthermore, we cannot expect a harvest overnight, but we also cannot expect a harvest at all if we do not sow! Let us sow, and then let us wait patiently for a harvest. The scriptures teach us that some sow and some water, but God gives the increase. We also learn that we have entered into other men's labors. Think of this; if some sow, and some water, and God gives the increase, then there also must be harvesters. Many are the seeds planted by one that yet another receives the harvest upon. Whether you're planting, or watering, or harvesting, what is important is that you find your place in the vineyard of the Lord and complete your assignments in your seasons. Do not be alarmed if our Lord moves you into another vineyard, as your work will not be in vain. The seeds you have sown in fields gone by will not be unaccounted for; you may not personally see the harvest until you get to Heaven, but what matters most is that you were obedient and operating within your divine season. God may even allow you to receive of the harvest of seeds sown by others. If so, that is His business! It is important to understand that your harvest may not come from where you are today. The harvest is not bound to geography, but to obedience. If you have been serving God, your harvest may in fact come from another place and another time! Do not question the Lord of the harvest when He gives orders; just do your job, whatever it may be, and along the way, provisions will be made. God owes no man anything. He pays on time every time. Heb. 6:10 says, "For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister."

## Day 264

### *Today's Reading: Zechariah 1-7*

**Today's Reflection:** Zech. 4:10a *For who hath despised the day of small things? For they shall rejoice...*

Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning! There was a day that I despised my humble beginnings, but looking back, it was those isolated, lonely, seemingly insignificant days that made me who I am today. I am not saying that I have “arrived”, but I am saying that I have made progress in ways that could never have happened, had I not gone through some of those dark, dreary valleys. I know more now than ever what Job meant when he said, “The LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD.” I feel in some ways like Joseph may have felt when he said, “God hath caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction.” God has certainly taken me down paths that I would have personally never picked for myself, but here I stand today rejoicing at His great wisdom and how He has taught me things that I would have never learned anywhere else on the planet! There is no greater testimony of God’s goodness than when He turns your midnight into melody. If you are reading this, and you are in a land of affliction, feeling lonely, weak, hurt, and weary, here is a word for you; hold on! One day, your baby will be delivered, and the pains of birth shall be forgotten for the joy of what is ahead in your life! You might not see it now, but there is a method to the madness in your life. God has not forgotten you. You may not know where He is, and at one point neither did Job. However, Job said, “But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.” Zech. 6:12b says, “...he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the LORD:” Perhaps you too feel out of place. You are in a place that just doesn’t feel comfortable to you. You are hungry for more. So far, things haven’t turned out as you thought they would. Don’t worry, because God has a plan! Many times when we feel out of place is when God has us right where He wants us, in order that He might develop us into the men and women of God He wants us to be. At some point, things will shift and the house of the Lord will be built! In other words, God will manifest Himself to you as you continue to trust Him. Don’t question the path He has chosen; only question your progress!

*Today's Reading: Zechariah 8-14*

**Today's Reflection:** Zech. 13:1 *In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness.*

There is a fountain filled with blood, drawn from Emanuel's veins, and sinners plunged beneath that flood lose all their guilty stains! Oh, what a glorious day when this sinner plunged beneath that flood! Calvary's divine flow has made a difference not only in my own life, but in the lives of many friends and loved ones around me. The Bible clearly teaches us that "without shedding of blood" is no remission for sins (see Heb. 9:22). The blood is vital to the life of the believer, for without it there would be no life at all. The scriptures teach us that the life is in the blood (see Lev. 17:11). Why then is there very little (if any) mentioning of the blood that Christ shed on the cross for our sins anymore in the average church today? It is because our enemy the devil knows that it is the blood that has the power to cleanse us from our sins, and which enables us to serve God. If the devil desires to win the battle, all he needs to do is get the blood out of our churches, our sermons, our songs, our prayers, and our "bibles". Sadly, he has already won the battle in many "churches" today. However, I have an old truth for this modern world, which is as ever true as it was before; IT'S STILL THE BLOOD that saves mankind from their sins! On the night of the Passover, the Lord said, "When I see the blood, I will pass over you." (See Ex. 12:13). That night, many lives were spared from the death angel; why? Because the blood was applied to the door posts of their houses, as the Lord had commanded. This was nothing but a fore-shadowing of the blood of Christ which would be applied to the door posts of the heart of every believer who put their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, thereby escaping the wrath of God which is sure to come upon unbelievers of every age. Oh, hallelujah! Thank God for the blood which He shed on our behalf; for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul. Sinner friend, you do not want to face God on judgment day without having been washed in the blood of the Lamb. Has atonement been made for your soul? Call upon the Lord Jesus Christ in full repentance of your sins, and He will wash you in His blood, and spare you from the wrath to come!

## Day 266

### *Today's Reading: Esther 1-5*

**Today's Reflection:** Esther 1:7b ...*the vessels being diverse one from another...*

May God deliver us from cookie-cutter, man-made religion! Many talk about their own unique personalities on an individual level, but then they criticize those who serve God and/or worship Him differently than they do. Excuse me for saying so, but there are simply too many churches trying to do exactly what the church down the road does. As a matter of fact, this creates clicks and camps in different denominational circles, where people are encouraged to find their camp and try to fit in somewhere. Question: How can we encourage diversity on one hand and discourage it on the other? Some preach to their people, "Be who God called YOU to be!", and then discourage them from doing anything differently than what has already been done. The truth is, what they end up saying by their disapproval is what they should have been honest in saying to start with. If you do not want someone to allow God to use them in their unique areas of gifting, then you should not encourage them on one day, and then discourage them on the next. When this happens, what you are really saying is, "Now, God can only use you if you....." Just fill in the blank! Never put God in a box, because the moment you do, He will intentionally step outside of your box, if for no other reason than to prove to you that He can and will use anybody He wants, any way He wants, whenever and wherever He wants! Oh, how we limit God when we limit His people. Surely you do not really believe that God is going to do all of His work all by Himself? We all know that He is fully capable, but we also know that He has chosen to use the human vessel through which to work. Since that is the case, and since humans are as diverse in personality, experience, background, education, upbringing, gifting and interests as they are, that means there is no limit to who, where, how, and when God will work. The most important thing the church can do today is for every believer to offer God their fullest service through the gifts He has blessed them with. No matter how foolish it may seem to some, whatever your gift is, use it for God's glory and He will bless you abundantly! Don't try to march to the beat of some dead religious drum; follow the leading of the Spirit of God!

### *Today's Reading: Esther 6-10*

**Today's Reflection:** Esther 9:1b *...the enemies of the Jews hoped to have power over them, (though it was turned to the contrary, that the Jews had rule over them that hated them;)*

It always amazes me to watch the Lord turn the plans of the enemy upon their own destruction. Here, the Jews were hated by a people bent on their destruction, but instead God turned the tables, and made His people to have rule over their haters! If there is anything I have learned in ministry, it is this; the more our enemies hate us, the more God blesses us. Isn't it nice to know that the pit that was dug for us was the same device God used to stop the one who dug it? I have seen God do this time and again to those who dare lay anything to the charge of God's elect. O man of God, do you have haters on every side of your ministry who would rejoice to see you fall? Just remember that you do not need their approval in order for you to proceed and for God to bless you. As a matter of fact, God will use the same measure of their hatred to determine the measure in which He will bless your ministry. After all, who can resist the Lord's hand? Often, the enemy is blind to the fact that God is allowing them to curse you so that He can bless you all-the-more. I do not believe that there is one thing God enjoys more than showing the enemy who's boss! So, if you're surrounded by the enemy, rejoice, because God is fixing to bring a great victory in your life! He has your back! Trust Him, and He will give you the advantage over your enemy. Things may look dreary right now. It may appear as if the enemy has full advantage over you. You may feel overwhelmed at the onslaught of the devil's attacks. You may see no way out any time soon, but rest assured that Heavenly reinforcements are on their way! God will often wait until it looks totally hopeless before He comes to the rescue, so that when He does, His name will be magnified in the Earth! Let us go ahead and start praising Him now for the victory just around the bend! I know that what the enemy meant for evil, God meant for good. Pastor, the plot against your life and ministry did not work. God has preserved you for such a time as this, and there is nothing the enemy can do about it. We like Paul may get cast down, but we will not be destroyed! Thank God for the notice He has served to the devil today that it's not over yet!

## Day 268

### *Today's Reading: Ezra 7-10*

**Today's Reflection:** Ezra 10:2b *...yet now there is hope...*

As we read our text today, we find the children of Israel weeping over their backslidden condition. The Levitical priesthood, while in captivity, had broken God's commandment by taking to themselves strange wives. They were explicitly forbidden to do so by God Himself, for they were a chosen people, set aside to do the work of the Lord. The tragedy was that even the leaders of the house of God had given in to the temptations of their day, and had not preserved themselves against the day of hope that was soon to come. Oh men of God, we must maintain our spiritual integrity with the aid of Almighty God, even in the midst of a wicked and perverse generation! The truth is, many may not listen now, but one day sooner or later, they will need God, but who will they turn to for answers if we do not stay the course? If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do? If the supposed leaders of the very work of God have fallen, then where does that put the rest of the world? May God grant us the strength to be faithful and true to the God who has called us and set us apart for His service. We must be ready and prepared at all times to give others the hope that yet exists in the dark world in which we live! We have no business wallowing in the mire of sin with the rest, when we should be leading them away from such sin. Sadly, when we should have been leading others to the cross, we have instead led them away by our own hypocrisies. According to chapter 7 and verse 6, Ezra was a "ready scribe". He was not caught off guard nor off duty; neither should God's man be! It is required in stewards that a man be found faithful! We have no other options! We should not wince about our God-given responsibilities; rather, we should rejoice in that He hath counted us faithful, putting us into the ministry. And, since that is the case, we should strive to never disappoint our Lord! Will we make mistakes? Yes. Will we fail at times? Sure. Will we even sin on occasion? Absolutely. However, we are called to a higher calling, and therefore we are to be quick to confess, repent, and forsake our sins so as not to hinder the work that God is doing in us and through us. Let us therefore rise to the height of our calling, and proclaim loudly and clearly to a world and to a church lost in sin, "yet now there is hope"!

### *Today's Reading: Nehemiah 1-5*

**Today's Reflection:** Neh. 4:19b ...*The work is great and large...*

If you're like I am, sometimes I say to myself, "Who am I among so many?" Even Jesus taught that the harvest is plenteous, but that the laborers are few. He taught us to pray that the Lord would send forth laborers into His harvest. Even as Nehemiah had a great and large work on his hand, so also do we the church of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Question: how do you see the work the Lord has you in? Do you see it as small or great? Let's just be honest; we call it as we see it! May I suggest that there are ministries which never grow because the people have little or no vision for the work? Do not think that just because you have a small congregation, this means that your work is small. Sometimes it seems that we are making only a small difference when we compare the results to the size of the task at hand. Sometimes we feel like we're making so little progress, that we lose momentum due to discouragement along the way. I need to say something; in the natural, what is bigger is not always better, and what is better is not always bigger! Furthermore, in the Kingdom of God, there are no big I's and little You's. Never measure the success of your ministry only by the results which are visible to you; if you do this, you will often get discouraged. Rather, measure your success by the opportunities you have responded to in order that you might sow the seed of the Word of God! God said that His Word would not return void unto Him, but that it would accomplish that which He sent it to accomplish! We sow, and others water, but God gives the increase. Therefore, whether your ministry is well known or virtually unheard of in most parts of the world, if you are sowing God's Word, then your work is great and large! I used to say of my church, "I pastor a small work." Not anymore! What matters most is not the number of people sitting on the pews, but whether or not the Word of God is being spread abroad. I wonder how many of you can join with me tonight in thanking God for the opportunity He has given us of participating in this great and large work which we call ministry? What a privilege and honor it is to be a part of something bigger than any of us combined! Let us therefore continue to be as diligent to 10 as we would to 10,000, understanding that the work is great and large, no matter the size!

## Day 270

### *Today's Reading: Nehemiah 6-7*

**Today's Reflection:** Neh. 6:9 *For they all made us afraid, saying, Their hands shall be weakened from the work, that it be not done. Now therefore, O God, strengthen my hands.*

When one sets out to do a work for God, he is automatically confronted by the opposition of others who seek not his success, but only his failure. Therefore, in an effort to thwart what God is doing, men who oppose such works wrought by God through His servants shall begin spewing their venomous remarks of hatred, disapproval, and doubt. Those who do this in most cases are not even aware that they have become nothing more than the mouthpiece of the devil himself. And, since they are the devil's mouthpieces, and since the devil is a liar, then nothing that is ever said by the enemy about God's plans for our life should ever be taken into consideration whatsoever. If the Christian could just learn how to put the devil and his mouthpieces on ignore, his journey with God would become so much clearer! But, we wrestle with a multiplicity of voices every day of our life which oppose everything we stand for when it comes to serving God and fulfilling His purpose for our life. The devil (aka "the accuser of the brethren") is real good about bringing up "evidence" which, if allowed, could persuade the believer that he is chasing meaningless dreams and empty promises. However, let us always remember that once we are under the blood of Christ, the only thing the devil can bring against us has already been settled out of court! The blood of Christ has cleansed us, allowed us to be able to be indwelt with the person of the Holy Spirit, and has empowered us to overcome the world and the powers thereof. We should therefore learn that the only voice that we should be listening to is the voice of truth, which speaks to our future through the promises of God. The next time the devil starts talking to you, just stop and say, "Do I hear chatter in the background? Oh wait, that's just the devil. Never mind him!" And go on about your business of believing God for great things in your life. The enemy may have said that you would never succeed, but the enemy is blind and foolish. Make this your prayer today, "Now therefore, O God, strengthen my hands." Though you may be weak, weary, and worn, know assuredly that the Lord shall renew your strength even now!

### *Today's Reading: Nehemiah 8-10*

**Today's Reflection:** Neh. 8:3b *...and the ears of all the people were attentive unto the book of the law.*

Oh my, what have we here; an attentive people? Hmmmm, that's strange. You don't see that much anymore! As a matter of fact, Amos 8:11 prophesies, "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord GOD, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD:" Trust me when I tell you that it is a rare thing to find a Christian totally dedicated to HEARING the Word of God. To hear is not just to bounce sound waves off of your ear drums. It is to receive the message into your heart and spirit, and to allow the Spirit of God to quicken your spirit through God's Word! How many people listen to the Word of God being preached or taught every Sunday, but very seldom HEAR what was said. Dear children of God, it is imperative that we not only listen to, but that we hear and receive God's Word. Titus 1:14 spoke of a people that would "turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables." That is why it is so important for you to THANK GOD if you have a man of God in your life that will speak truth to you regardless of whether or not it is popular or politically correct. Jesus said that truth is so powerful that when we KNOW the truth, it shall make us free. Why then do we run from truth? I assure you that bondage to a pack of lies cannot, nor ever will be, better than freedom from those lies. However, being as it may, still many choose rather to live in darkness than to be illuminated in the light of God's glorious Word. Paul asked the church of Galatia, "Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?" Every pastor with any back-bone whatsoever understands this question all too well. It is crazy how wildly people will fight the very ones trying to loose them and let them go. Here's a word of advice for new born babes in Christ; be attentive, be willing to listen more than you speak, and be able to receive truth-based constructive criticism from your peers. If you can come to this kind of maturity, then you will be able to grow as tall and strong as God wants you to. It is when we get stubborn and rebellious that pride swells us up so badly that we are rendered useless for God's Kingdom and glory. Do not be so; listen to God's Word, HEAR it, and live!

## Day 272

### *Today's Reading: Nehemiah 11-13*

**Today's Reflection:** Neh. 13:10-11a *And I perceived that the portions of the Levites had not been given them: for the Levites and the singers, that did the work, were fled every one to his field. Then contended I with the rulers, and said, Why is the house of God forsaken?...*

There are many today that do not feel as if a Minister should be well taken care of from a financial stand point. However, the principle of taking care of God's men can be found throughout the Word of God, and here is no exception. Here was a time when the finances of the house of God were forsaken so badly that the Levites and the singers (God's ministers of His Word and of music) had to go back to their fields of occupation in order to provide for their families. Why? Because the portions of the Levites had not been given them! What was their portion? The tithe. The first thing Nehemiah did was to have all Judah bring their tithes unto the treasury for distribution to the men of God in order that they might be able to do the work of the Lord. Make no mistake about it; I am a strong advocate of New Testament tithing, as it was given to us by the Old Testament as a foreshadowing of things to come. Furthermore, those who do not believe that tithing is even a New Testament doctrine need to read what Jesus said in Matthew 23:23. That being said, when we take a look at Malachi 3:10, we are instructed to "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it." Now, most people think that the tithe itself is the main issue. However, the issue is not the tithe itself, but what it is used for. The tithe is used to provide meat for the house of God. In other words, to make provisions for the Ministers of God who do the work of the Lord. So, when we do not tithe, we bring a curse upon ourselves, because we are not blessing God's man. If however we do obey and tithe, we bless God's house by blessing God's man, therefore bringing a blessing upon ourselves. The truth is, if you don't tithe, God knows exactly how much His house and His man lacks as a result of your disobedience. Therefore, tithe and God will bless!

*Today's Reading: Malachi 1-4*

**Today's Reflection:** Mal. 3:16 *Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name.*

Just when you thought that the Lord was not paying attention, not only was He paying attention, but He had your conversations about Him written in a book of remembrance! God keeps good records, and He honors those who Honor His name. That's why just the mentioning of His name is so powerful. He delights in our worship and adoration of Him. So my friend, the next time the devil lies to you and tells you that God has forgotten about you, just remind him that God has a book of remembrance with your name in it! Think of this, fellow laborers in the Lord; when you went through all of those lonely seasons in your ministry when it felt like few if any really cared about, paid attention to, or even knew about you serving God with all of your heart, soul, mind and strength, angels were making records of it. Remember Heb. 6:10? For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister. Oh hallelujah, pay day is coming some day after a while! The rewards are out of this world!! Dear children of God, keep your chins up and keep listening for the trumpet, because one of these days we're going to trade this old cross for a crown, and shall forever be with Jesus our Savior! Until then, know assuredly that He is with you. He is fully aware of your situation, and in due time will help and sustain you through it all. One of the things we will get to do in Heaven is read the archives of all those listed in God's book of remembrance, along with their stories and their dedication to the Lord. All of those grandmas whom nobody in the world paid that much attention to, but whose prayers held the world together! All of those preachers who never got to "preach with the big boys" or who never had their names put up in lights! All of those who felt that their work was so small that it seemed insignificant to them; God has them all recorded, and will have them all published in the galleries of Heaven's Herald one day for all to see! Glory be to God for His faithful acknowledgement of our service to Him!

## Day 274

### *Today's Reading: Luke 1, John 1:1-14*

**Today's Reflection:** Luke 1:79a *To give light to them that sit in darkness...*

Oh how dark my life was before Christ came into the picture. However, I am glad that God didn't just leave me in the dark! Matthew said it this way, "The people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up." (Mat 4:16). Dear sinner friend, you do not have to remain in the darkness of your life. God shines His glorious light into your direction that He might deliver you completely from the dark. The light of the Gospel sheds light on the path which leads to Calvary, where Christ hang on an old rugged cross, and where the earth went black as God closed Heaven's blinds so as not to reveal the ugliness of the sin which Christ became for us on that day. The sin which Christ came to save us from was so wicked and so vile that mankind could not behold nor grasp the total depth of that pit which Christ pulled us up out of with His redeeming blood! O what a Savior is He! Ephesians 2:13 says, "But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ." You see, the devil (aka the god of this world) has blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them (see 2 Cor. 4:4). However, when the Spirit of God begins to convict and convince the lost person of his or her need of a Savior, and when that sinner accepts Christ into their heart, it is as if scales fall from their eyes so that they are able to see for the first time in their lives. I wonder how many people never get delivered from the 'dark ages' of their lives? If only they knew what they were missing. It is therefore our job as followers of Christ to spread this light where ever we go. Jesus said, "Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid." (Mat. 5:14). We who were sometimes far off ought to be the first ones to testify of God's ability to bring anyone out of darkness and into light. Do not be surprised, however, should you come across those who are hostile towards the light. Jesus said in John 3:19, "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." Regardless, let us tell all people about Jesus!

### *Today's Reading: Matthew 1, Luke 2:1-38*

**Today's Reflection:** Luke 2:6 *And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered.*

“And so it was...” Today, I want to write about when “it shall be” becomes “and so it was”! I wonder if Mary completely understood the significance of this moment. I’m sure she did in the natural sense, but what about the spiritual? This is the moment for all eternity to stand at attention as the Promised Seed is delivered into this world; where the Word becomes flesh so as to dwell among us. This is what all the prophets foretold, and what many saints died hoping they’d see in their life time. This is the promise that, though it tarried, it came none the less! The text ever so gracefully announces this transition by simply saying, “And so it was...” There is such a breath of fresh air in that statement alone! After all the prophesying, after all the foretelling, after all the promises, after all the waiting, after all the hoping, after all the blood, sweat and tears that brought us up to this point in history, and we finally hear “And so it was!” What a glorious fulfillment of the blessed promises of God! Just as God kept His promise in our text today, so shall He also keep His promise in your life as well. You may be tired and weary, still waiting for your deliverance, but rest assured that one day your “shall be” will be turned into “and so it was”! Once you arrive at that point, you will be able to look back and glorify God that you made it, knowing that it was worth the entire struggle it took to get there! Don’t give up; deliverance is on its way. The text then says, “...while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered.” Some of you don’t know it, but the place you think is a stand-still in your journey with God is nothing but a birthing place “while you are there”! You see, every deliverance must have its place of origination. It is a place of privacy, a place of obscurity, a place of humility, a place of rejection, and a place of pain. But, it is also a place of birth! Be encouraged that you are closer to your deliverance than you could imagine, because while you are there, your days will be accomplished that you should be delivered! This season shall bring forth the birthing of new and great things in your life; only keep trusting God!

## Day 276

### *Today's Reading: Matthew 2, Luke 2:39-52*

#### **Today's Reflection:** Matt 2:19a *But when Herod was dead...*

There is such rejoicing when we see the day that we outlive our enemies! It is not that we rejoice in another man's fall, but we do rejoice that no weapon formed against us was able to prosper. Psalm 41:11 says, "By this I know that thou favourest me, because mine enemy doth not triumph over me." So it was with the Christ child. What God had planned from before the foundations of the world was not to be deterred by a tyrant king fearful of losing his throne. By the way, jealousy will create more enemies than anything else, so do not be surprised if the people you thought would celebrate your successes in fact turn on you in jealousy and become your arch enemies. However, no matter what kind of conspiracy against the righteous can be dreamed up, when Divine purpose is at work, devilish propaganda is brought to naught. We must never forget the invincibility that we are granted when we walk in our Divine purpose. The truth is, no harm shall come our way so long as God has anything to do with it (read Ps. 91)! The plot against Joseph's testimony did not destroy his influence as planned by the enemy; rather, it only made him stronger in character. The armies of Pharaoh who set out to destroy God's people were all destroyed in the same day by the Almighty hand of God. The lion's den which should have been the end of Daniel became a Comfort Inn while he slept like a baby by the lions meant for his destruction. The three Hebrew boys, who were cast into the fire, should have been consumed along with those who threw them into the furnace, but they came out on the other side without so much as a smell of smoke on their garments. Paul, bitten by a snake, shook it off into the fire, and felt no harm! By now, surely you get the idea; there is absolutely nothing that the devil can do to stop God's sovereign will for your life. Though the enemy rages, we cannot be defeated! Psalm 118:6 says, "The LORD is on my side; I will not fear: what can man do unto me?" The thing we must remember as the Lord teaches us to war is that He is the one acting, and the devil is the one reacting, not the other way around. God is the one in control; He is the one calling the shots. Therefore, since God is so much further ahead of the enemy in battle strategy, He always wins! He has, nor ever will, be defeated!

### *Today's Reading: Matthew 3, Mark 1, Luke 3*

**Today's Reflection:** Luke 3:5b ...*the rough ways shall be made smooth;*

In essence, God says that what might be rough today will be smoothed out on down the way. The best is certainly yet to come for the child of God. Oh, my brother, are you weary of the roughness of the way? Does your strength begin to fail you and your vigor to decay? Farther on, still go farther; count the mile-stones one by one. Jesus will forsake you never. It is better farther on! Each step you take towards the finish line is another step behind you. I know that sometimes it feels as if you will not be able to take another step, but if you will just keep pressing on, God will strengthen you and enable you to complete your course. This text not only speaks to distance traveled and to progress made, but it also speaks to the reconciliation of past pains, failures, and disappointments. If the truth be known, all of us have at some point experienced some kind of hardship which, to this day, is difficult for us to reconcile. Although we know that Romans 8:28 is in the Bible, sometimes we still struggle with the “why” of it all, do we not? Let’s be honest; at times we simply cannot see how it all will work together for our good. We read of the goodness of God; we read of His majesty, His provisions, His power, His anointing, His compassion, His mercy, His gentleness, and His greatness. Yet, we experience things which, in our weakness, leave us bewildered and confused, wondering why it has to be this way. We sometimes think to ourselves, “If God is who the Bible says He is, then why do His people have to go through all the things we go through?” Perhaps you have never thought that, but I know that somebody somewhere in the world reading this today must agree that moments like that do occur. Occasionally, our faith in God gets challenged. However, be that as it may, we find great comfort in our text! Just to know that God is able to reconcile all the wrongs in our lives, and that He is able to make all the crooked paths straight, and that He is able to make the rough ways smooth, gives us hope and meaning and purpose for the madness in life. Farther along, we’ll know all about it. Farther along, we’ll understand why. Cheer up, my brother, live in the sun shine. We’ll understand it all by and by! Friend, lift up your head, for your redemption draweth nigh!

## Day 278

*Today's Reading: Matt. 4, Luke 4-5, John 1:15-51*

**Today's Reflection:** Luke 5:26 *And they were all amazed, and they glorified God, and were filled with fear, saying, We have seen strange things to day.*

When Jesus steps on the scene, things take on a strange new look to most people! Something that is strange is something that is different from the norm, or something that is unfamiliar to its surroundings. When Jesus came in healing the sick, casting out devils, and preaching with Holy Ghost power, he had the whole city standing in amazement. Yet, why is it today that the average church would be just as amazed, should the Spirit of God begin such a revival of this nature? We who have been given the full canon of Scripture ought not to be so surprised when God works a miracle, and yet we are still amazed. It ought not to be such a surprise to us when God does what is only His nature to do! Howbeit, many who are skeptical of the supernatural do not believe in miracles, and thereby nullify their eligibility of receiving the same. After all, if the only requirement for a miracle is faith itself, then how can those who don't believe ever experience a miracle of their own, seeing how they don't believe. I say to the unbeliever, "How should you know? The very fact that you don't believe disqualifies you from receiving the benefits of faith in Christ!" You have to believe to receive! Perhaps if we had greater faith, we wouldn't be so surprised to hear that God still can and does work miracles in the world today. Question: When God moves mightily, does it look like a strange thing to you? I'm afraid that more Christians than not would barely recognize a true move of God even when they did see it, simply because of unbelief. Often, people do not understand what they have never seen or experienced, and therefore criticize what they do not understand. God forbid that we see Him moving in "strange" ways and automatically reject what we see simply because we've never seen it done that way before. We must realize that God works in ways too numerous for us to count. Perhaps God's greatest works in the world today are those which have gone ignored, unrecognized, and even criticized by organized religion and traditions of men. Perhaps the most powerful ministries are those considered by main stream Christianity as "strange" or "different". Think about it!

*Today's Reading: John 2-4*

**Today's Reflection:** John 4:4 *And he must needs go through Samaria.*

When the Divine call of God is upon your life, it creates a hunger and a thirst which can be satisfied only by the fulfillment of that call. Here, Christ needed to go to Samaria because of the outbreak of revival which was awaiting him. God the Father knew that many would believe as a result of the salvation of the woman at the well. Therefore, He sent Jesus to Samaria to ensure that this revival would occur. We do not often think of God as a being with needs, do we? We certainly know that He truly doesn't "need" anything, because He is God! However, may I suggest that this need He has to save sinners speaks not of dependency, but of passion? The truth is, Christ is passionate about you and me. He is passionate about saving the lost. That is why He came and did what He did on the cross and in the resurrection. He was driven by His holy passion to love and save sinners. That's why in our text, when Jesus was offered meat to eat by his disciples, He turned them down, saying "I have meat to eat that ye know not of." Of course we learn that Jesus was speaking of doing the will of His Father. This shows us that even though Jesus was wearied with His journey, and even though He should have been physically as hungry as His disciples, yet His spiritual appetite of allowing the will of His Father to be done was much greater than His physical appetites. Dear reader, as Disciples of Christ, there should be a hunger and a thirst in us which cannot be satisfied by anything short of fulfilling God's call upon our lives to be a witness to this lost world of His passionate love for them! Jesus used this situation as an opportunity to thrust His Disciples into their Divine mission by saying what He did in verses 35-36, "Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? Behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest. And he that reapeth receiveth wages..." In other words, the call is waiting on you! There is no time to procrastinate. There is, as it were, a woman in her Samaria desperately needing to here of Christ's love for her. Why wait? Why put it off? Why miss the opportunity? Go for it! Do not hold back on what God has called you to do. God will pay you good, so do it now!

## Day 280

### *Today's Reading: Mark 2*

**Today's Reflection:** Mark 2:1b *...and it was noised that he was in the house.*

When Jesus shows up on the scene, there is no doubt about it! Word travels fast when the sick get healed, the dead are raised, devils are cast out, and to the poor the Gospel is preached. I am convinced that what people long for in our generation is a genuine move of God; not a man-made show. There are people today who have seen fake long enough, and who are determined not to do fake a moment longer. We either want the real deal, or we do not want it at all! The problem we have on our hands is that it is seldom heard anymore that Jesus is in His house. Oh, we make much of our guest speakers, singers, and yes, even entertainers, but who is interested in Jesus showing up? We must get back to lifting Jesus up in our worship services, else we will become another statistic of another dead church which has closed her doors due to lack of interest. Do we want to be intellectually stimulated, or do we want to be spiritually changed by the power of God? I'll be honest; if church does not challenge you, then something is wrong! Furthermore, if church does not motivate you to serve Christ yet the more, and if church does not place Jesus as the center of its attention, then church is a waste of time. Forgive me for being so blunt, but I wonder just how many radical Christians are reading this today that are hungry for more than just another average church service. I don't just want to be in church; I want church to get in me! I don't want to have the best talent a church could ask for; I want the touch of the Master's hand on my ministry! What we need more than any thing else is for the presence of Jesus to be made manifest in our places of worship, where He is worshipped in Spirit and in truth, and where the Spirit of God has the liberty to move hearts towards the Christ of the Cross. Oh, I long for the day that it is noised abroad that Jesus is in my house of worship; what about you? Is Jesus welcome at your church? Or, is He too radical to fit in with the religious norm of the day? Jesus always had a way of pushing people past the limitations of their limited and narrow-minded religious ideologies. We must get so hungry for the power of God that we get past ourselves! Then it can finally be noised abroad that Jesus is in the house!

*Today's Reading: John 5*

**Today's Reflection:** John 5:10 *The Jews therefore said unto him that was cured, It is the Sabbath day: it is not lawful for thee to carry thy bed.*

Talk about missing the whole point! These Jews were more caught up in their legalistic, super-spiritual “standards” than they were in the miracle of the moment. Friend, do not get caught in the trap of majoring on the minors. There are more important things to worry about than trying to keep the brethren convinced that you are abiding by their rules. It is one thing to live by the Bible; yet it is another thing to be bound down by a list of do’s and don’ts which have no Biblical backing whatsoever. These guys in our text were literally so wrapped up in their twisted views of the Bible that they could not see the forest for the trees, so to speak. Here, a man was completely healed of his illness, which was reason to celebrate, and all they were worried about was that he wait until the next morning to pick up and carry his bed. Isn’t that just like legalism today? I mean, no sooner than a new convert trusts Christ as their Savior, before we even have time to celebrate his liberty, the religious bind him down with their list of expectations which he must follow if he is to be as spiritual as they are! Come on! Get real! I am a minister of the Gospel myself, but I must say, give them some breathing room! We try to cram twenty years of religious rules and regulations into a one week crash course, and then criticize the new convert for crashing the course! First, let us not assume that everything we know is everything they need to know. It could be that we have some bad ideas that we do not need to pass on to them! Secondly, we need to give them time; after all, God is still working on us as well; we haven’t arrived yet, either! It always amazes me at how quickly we can forget what we are made of when we compare ourselves to others. Let us not forget what our frame is made of; flesh! Oh yes, you have it too! That’s why he that is spiritual is to restore others who have made mistakes and sinned, considering himself, lest he also be tempted (see Gal. 6:1). Here is a word to the legalist; chill out! Seriously, to live Holy is not to live miserably. A proper understanding of the liberties we have in Christ will not mislead us into more temptation; rather, it will motivate us to please Him all the more!

## Day 282

*Today's Reading: Matthew 12:1-21, Mark 3, Luke 6*

**Today's Reflection:** Luke 6:11 *And they were filled with madness; and communed one with another what they might do to Jesus.*

All you have to do to create enemies is the right thing! You see, it is their perspective that causes them to so hate you for being anointed. Their problem with you is this; they think that either you are doing the right thing the wrong way, or you are doing the wrong thing altogether. It is understood that there is a right way and a wrong way to do things; however, the 'how' of ministry should be dictated by the Word of God and the Spirit of God, and not by opinions and traditions of men. Furthermore, what really upsets them is when you are doing something they think God would disapprove of, and yet God still blesses and anoints you and lays it on so thick that it is obvious that His hand is on you. That is the place at which these scribes and Pharisees were when they got fighting mad with Jesus. Not only did He speak convicting truth to their hypocritical hearts, but He also walked in an anointing that proved that He was right and that God's favor was upon Him and not them. There is a thing called pride that causes a man who is so convinced he is right that he will fight God Himself to try to prove it. I have seen people who were convinced that they were so right for so long that for fear of losing their support among the brethren, they would never admit they've been wrong the whole time. Rather, they choose to live out the rest of their days under a mask which yields no power with God to save their ministry. Some people are so bent on their own set of rules, regulations, opinions, experiences, and traditions that they would rather go to the grave wrong than to admit that they were. I pray that God will give us some leaders today who will make the necessary adjustments along the way which will prohibit them from rising to this level of pride. Perhaps if we all learned to admit when we were wrong, even if it hurt our pride, we would learn that far less damage is done that way than is done when we try to save face. You may save your face, but you will lose your power with God. Do not fight and resist what the Holy Spirit is teaching you, even if it goes against everything you've been taught. Do not become like one of those in our text. Be a person of the Book!

*Today's Reading: Matthew 5-7*

**Today's Reflection:** Matt. 5:17 *Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.*

“God... hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.” (See 2 Cor. 3:5-6). Anyone with experience should know that an intimate relationship cannot be complete or fulfilling by letter alone. How many marriages are in existence today only on paper, but not in reality? Sad, isn't it? And yet, to try and have a relationship with God only by letter is no different. There is a difference between reading about God, and knowing Him personally and intimately. When a believer becomes accustomed to a regimen of religious do's and don'ts, and only knows of the God of the Old Testament who gave the Ten Commandments at Mt. Sinai, he has at best a very limited understanding about God. The Old Testament was a school master, or an introductory course if you will, bringing us to Christ, who was and is the fulfillment of the law! The question we need to ask ourselves is this, “Do we know about God's law, or do we know Him personally?” You see, there is no life in the letter; only death. As already mentioned, the letter “killeth”. However, for the Bible and your Christianity to come alive, you must meet the One who embodies the righteousness of God in Himself, the Lord Jesus Christ! Jesus IS the Word made flesh. He is not the law; He is the law FULFILLED! He is the law SATISFIED! In other words, when we trust in Him, then and only then can we say that there is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus (see Rom. 8:1)! Why? Because in Christ we are made righteous, because He fulfilled the law for us. Oh Glory to His blessed name! When I tried to do right, I could not. Every time I fell short, I was that much further from God, or so I thought. Then one day Jesus stepped into my life, introduced Himself to me through the person of the Holy Spirit, and saved me by His Grace. Only then was I able to make peace with God, because only then was I good enough for God to accept, when at last I was purchased and purged by His precious blood. Do you know Jesus, or do you just read about Him? Trust Christ, and all will be well!

## Day 284

### *Today's Reading: Matthew 8:1-13, Luke 7*

**Today's Reflection:** Matt. 8:13 *And Jesus said...as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee...*

Our reward is in direct proportion to our faith in Christ. You may be tempted to think that God is going to do what God is going to do, regardless of how you pray. That is contrary to every lesson Jesus ever taught about prayer and faith. Do not think that God's Sovereignty has no place for man's free will and persuasive faith. It is the marriage of both that yields God's ultimate plan. In God's sovereign master plan, He willed for His purposes to be forged through the faith of His creation. No doubt it all starts with God and it all finishes with Him, but somewhere in the middle He desires for us to play a part in His will being done here on Earth. Could He do it without us? Yes. Will He do it without us? No! It is therefore important to understand that we must get involved in His plan in order for His ultimate will to be accomplished in our lives. That is why we forfeit the ultimate blessing when we yield to doubt instead of faith. Imagine all of the "what could have beens" in our lives to date. How then do we get involved? By simple faith and obedience. To trust and obey Christ is our duty. You cannot have trust without obedience, and you cannot have obedience without trust. Your whole Christian experience will be filled with moments in which you have the opportunity to either exercise your faith, or else diminish it. Each time you choose to believe, you build up your most holy faith. God will test you in small things to prepare you for greater things. Only let Him lead you, do what He says, and trust Him, and you'll never go wrong. It is a valuable lesson to me to learn in our text that MY faith matters to Jesus. My faith is very specific to my needs. My faith is very specific to my location. My faith is very specific to my mountains. My faith is very specific to my circumstance. My faith is very specific to the situations that I face each and every day of my life. So, when Jesus says, "As thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee!" That tells me that Jesus is not just answering generic, vague, general prayers which apply to any situation; He is answering my prayers according to my faith for my unique, specific situation. Hallelujah, what a Savior! He tailor-cuts His blessings to fit with utmost precision and accuracy any need that I have!

*Today's Reading: Matthew 11*

**Today's Reflection:** Matt. 11:25 *At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.*

Can it be true? Will God indeed hold back on some, while letting others in on great truths? Oh yes He will! Some might argue that God would not be just in doing so, but who could blame Him? Are there not certain people you can trust with certain information, while there are others you cannot trust? So it is with God. There are certain truths which lie dormant and never come to life in the hearts and minds of some, while others are saturated with such truths. What is the difference? First, look at our text again. It says that our Father hid certain things from the “wise and prudent”, while revealing them unto “babes”. To better understand this passage, let us consider what Proverbs 3:7 says; “Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the LORD, and depart from evil.” I believe what Jesus is saying is this; Those who are wise in their own eyes consider themselves to be full of revelation, thus having no room for more understanding than what they consider themselves to already have. On the other hand, those who are not wise in their own eyes, who are still hungry and thirsty for more, and who do not consider themselves full of knowledge, are the ones He will reveal Himself to, because they still have enough room to receive and accept His teachings! 1 Cor. 1:26 says, “For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called:” The reason is because God is not going to touch and anoint someone just for some man to get the credit, honor, or glory. More often than not, God will choose someone whom men have said are not qualified enough, not educated enough, not talented enough, or not popular enough to get the job done. Many are the pulpits with pastors so full of their man-made credentials that they would have no room for Jesus to teach them something different than they have already been taught. It is all in who you listen to which determines whether or not you are a good disciple of Christ. Is man your primary teacher, or is the Holy Spirit? Open your eyes to the Word of God, and allow His Spirit to lead and guide you into all truth!

## Day 286

### *Today's Reading: Matthew 12:22-50, Luke 11*

**Today's Reflection:** Luke 11:42 *But woe unto you, Pharisees! For ye tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs, and pass over judgment and the love of God: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.*

Jesus came to do for man what the law could not; He came to fix the heart of the matter! God said in Heb. 10:16, "This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them;" I would like to compare the law like unto a skeleton; there is structure, but there is no life. Jesus came to "flesh out" the law, or in other words, to put flesh on those bones, and to put within that body a beating heart, "...for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life." In essence, that's what Jesus came to address with this group of Pharisees. They had all the external, visible issues worked out, but they lacked the heart to comprehend what it was really all about. They were making a religion out of what they perceived to be fruit, when there was no vine attached. Matthew said it this way, "...ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cumin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith..." They were not living for God; they were merely being a copy cat of just a few of the external evidences which should follow those who truly worship Him. They were careful to do the things which were easy, and the things which were measurable by other men, so as to make themselves appear righteous. You may fool man, but you will never fool God! To omit the weightier matters is to ignore or completely disregard the most important issues, which are judgment, mercy, faith, and the love of God. These are all matters of the heart. You see, some are "doing" Christianity like an external exercise; others are "being" Christians from the inside out because their hearts have been touched and changed by the Gospel. Which are you? If the best you can offer God is feeble attempts to act like a Christian supposed to act, but your heart has never been converted, then your religion is vain. If God ever touches your heart, living for Him will no longer be a chore; it will come naturally (or should I say supernaturally) with the new nature He puts within you. Do not miss the whole point like these Pharisees did; check your heart for a pulse today!

*Today's Reading: Matthew 13, Luke 8*

**Today's Reflection:** Luke 8:18 *Take heed therefore how ye hear: for whosoever hath, to him shall be given; and whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have.*

“Take heed therefore how ye hear...” Jesus points out that there are different ways in which we can hear. So the question is, how do we hear truth? Do we listen with an eagerness to learn, or do we listen with a critical attitude? Do we listen as if we already know, or do we listen as if we have much to learn? Do we give our undivided attention, or do we wish it to be over even before it begins? What matters more than *what* you hear, is *how* you hear what you hear. In Matt. 13:16, Jesus said, “But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear.” In other words, if you are able with a willing heart and a ready mind to receive the Word of God and keep it, then you are a blessed individual! It is to this end that Jesus thus teaches in our text that “whosoever hath, to him shall be given; and whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have.” In other words, for those who have good hearing, to them He shall give more understanding. However, to those who do not have good hearing, from them shall He take even that understanding which they thought they had. That is why folly leads only to more folly. Those who do not listen because they do not see the need to listen shall eventually get to a place where they lose it all. Have you not witnessed those who reject the truth deteriorate over time? If you will open your eyes, you will see it for yourself. Perhaps some reading this need not look any further than the person in the mirror. Sin will rob you of all reasoning. However, God says in Isaiah 1:18, “Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” The good news of the Gospel is that even when we as sinners become deafened by our sin, yet our Lord speaks the Word of God onto an otherwise deaf ear, causing that which is dead to come to life, and that which could not hear to hear. God reasons with a sinner who cannot reason for himself. God wants you to respond to His quickening Word so that you can receive cleansing through His blood!

## Day 288

### *Today's Reading: Matthew 8:14-34, Mark 4-5*

**Today's Reflection:** Mark 5:1a *And they came over unto the other side....*

The very fact that they made it to the other side testifies of God's faithfulness. Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it (1 Th. 5:24). There is coming a day that you will be on the other side of your trouble. This side may be rough, dark, and cold, but just wait until you get on the other side! However, until you get there, there are some things we can learn from our reading today. First, Jesus said in Mark 4:35, "And the same day, when the even was come, he saith unto them, Let us pass over unto the other side." I wish to point out three things; the commencement, the company, and the confidence which Christ exhibited. The commencement was "when the even was come". Have you ever noticed that God often calls us into a season of transition in what seems to be the most awkward times? One would think that since it was evening, it would be a time of settling in for the day, but not for Jesus. If you will notice in your journey with God, His timing doesn't always coincide with what is convenient to us. This is a faith-building strategy that God uses to teach us discernment and trust in His ultimate plan. Secondly, notice the company in v. 36, "And there were also with him other little ships." This tells me that we're not alone. One of the things that helps us get through the night seasons is to know that we're not alone in the journey, even though we may feel like we are at times. We should learn to draw strength from one another, rather than drawing back our hand of fellowship and isolating ourselves in our own personal problems. We need each other to survive. Let's not make the mistake of abandoning all the other little ships, for we may need them as much as they need us! Furthermore, it is nice to know that you don't have to be a big ship for Jesus to care! Then, notice that Jesus was confident of the future success of this mission. Again, He said "let us pass over". He would not have said so if He did not plan on making it to the other side! Friend, whatever God has spoken SHALL come to pass. Do not worry about the storms that come, for they are only to strengthen your faith in the Calmer of the storm! In the end, when you come out on the other side, you will be shouting the victory along with all the other little ships!

*Today's Reading: Matthew 9-10*

**Today's Reflection:** Matt. 9:36 *But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd.*

Let us look closely at the first few words of this verse, “But when he saw the multitudes...” In order to minister to the multitudes, we must first SEE the multitudes. What I mean is, we cannot minister to people if they are invisible to us. The reason Jesus had compassion on them was first because he actually SAW them! Jesus, unlike any hireling today, noticed the people around Him who needed help. He did not ignore, look over, or look right through anyone. He always had time to stop and minister to anyone in the crowd. He wasn't too lofty, too high and mighty, too proud, or too significant to take time out of His busy schedule to stop right in the middle of what He was doing to meet someone's need. Jesus didn't just love the crowds; He loved the people of the crowds! Every minister of the Gospel should desire to be like Christ in this respect. We should never look *through* what God wants us to look *at*. It is the pastor who pays close attention to detail that is most effective in ministry. Why? Because every person matters, no matter their age, background, history, race, financial portfolio, or social class. Here is a word of caution; if you *look* right through others, know assuredly that they also *see* right through you! People know when you don't really care. This generation doesn't want to be told another lie; they have been lied to enough. What people need is proof in action. It would be far better to simply prove our love by what we do for others, rather than filling their heads with empty phrases suggesting that we love them, even though we don't have time for them. Now, I do understand the limitations of humanity; we can only physically spend so much time and energy in others before we are exhausted and there is no more to go around. However, if we will have the heart that Jesus had, that love will be realized by even those whom we may never be able to connect with on a personal level. After Jesus SAW the multitude, He then told His disciples to pray that the Lord would send forth labourers into his harvest, due to the fact that the harvest is plenteous, but the labourers are few. The question is, can we SEE the need as Christ did?

## Day 290

*Today's Reading: Matt. 14, Mark 6, Luke 9:1-17*

**Today's Reflection:** Matt. 14:16 *But Jesus said unto them, They need not depart; give ye them to eat.*

They need not depart...a truth which must be revived in our generation. There is enough bread in the house, but it must first be blessed, broken, and then passed around by the Master. How many will visit a church this coming Sunday and then leave just as spiritually hungry as they came? One could argue that they were simply not willing to eat; I cannot deny that this is a legitimate argument. However, what about those who leave hungry because the Bread of Life was not blessed, broken and shared? It takes the worship of our Savior (so as to bless Him), the identifying of ourselves with Him in His death (so as to be broken), and then our sharing the Gospel (the death, burial, and resurrection) with others in order for them to become satisfied with that Bread of Life! It would be a sad reality for someone to leave our realm of influence without having been filled with the goodness of God. What tragic mentality would prohibit anyone from feeding a hungry soul? It is the mentality that we do not have what they need. Furthermore, it is the idea that someone else can do a better job feeding them than we can; worse yet, it is the idea that we think they can feed themselves without our help. However, Jesus said, "They need not depart; give ye them to eat." Question: Are you ready to give an answer to any man who asks of the hope of Christ which is in you? Do not look for your colleagues of the faith to do all the soul-winning for you. There are certain people in your life which will never receive the Gospel unless YOU tell them! Do not send them away empty-handed. It doesn't matter if the time seems inconvenient. If you notice, Jesus had a habit of doing things during the strangest times of the day; that way, He could teach us that the only thing that really matters is faith and obedience. Do not allow external circumstances to out-weigh the eternal significance of any providential moment. If we will but give Jesus what little bit we have, be it a small amount of time, a small amount of money, a small amount of talent, a small amount of prayer, or anything else which feels insignificant to us, Jesus will do more with our little bits than we ever dreamed possible. Just remember one thing; with His touch, there's enough to go around!

### *Today's Reading: John 6*

**Today's Reflection:** John 6:10a *And Jesus said, Make the men sit down....*

Just before Jesus did what perhaps was one of His most memorable miracles (feeding 5,000 men besides women and children), He did something else first that was very necessary in order to get the job done. He made the men to sit down. Here is the application; if God is to do a mighty work in our day, then man is to take a seat to His leadership. Typically, when something great is to be accomplished, all the mighty men are called upon for assistance; not this time! God's greatest works are those which do not involve man power at all. Think for a moment about His grace! Since men could not save themselves no matter how hard they tried, God stooped down in grace to pick us up. Think again of the work of God as it pertains to His church. Two verses come to mind. First, Ps. 127:1, which says, "Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain." God allows us to be participants in His handy-work; however, He does not allow us to be master minds behind it all. Secondly, Jesus said in Matt. 16:18, "...upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Notice who is doing the building in both verses. I think now of when Moses and the children of Israel were at the Red Sea. When it was time to cross over, God told Moses to stand still and see the salvation of the Lord! Oh sure, Moses "went along for the ride" if you will, but at the end of the day, it was God and God alone that did the work. Not only is this so in God's work of salvation and in His work of building the church, but it is also true in His calling upon the life of the believer. "Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it." 1 Th. 5:24. After considering all of these verses, one is left with the question, "Exactly how much credit can man take for the works of God?" I'll leave that up to the reader to decide. Honestly, however, this is such a complex truth that it is my opinion that only God knows where the balance is. The truth is, Jesus said "without me ye can do nothing", and Paul said, "I can do all things through Christ". So then we learn that if man is to accomplish anything of eternal significance, it is ONLY because God purposed it to be so!

## Day 292

### *Today's Reading: Matthew 15, Mark 7*

**Today's Reflection:** Mark 7:37 *And were beyond measure astonished, saying, He hath done all things well: he maketh both the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak.*

My Jesus has always had my best interest in mind. Oh sure, things come into my life that leave me asking why. The natural mind which has not been touched by the hope of the Gospel is left to try to figure things out on its own. That is why most unbelievers do not understand the lives that we lead as Christians. They can't understand why we keep serving God even when things go bad in our lives. The unbelieving world is much like Job's wife, wondering why we don't just curse God. Their logic is based upon the assumption that if God is who we say He is, then why don't He answer all our prayers and put a stop to all the evil that comes our way. I'll have to be honest; from a natural point of view, this is a fair question. However, when you begin to understand the character, nature, and purpose of God, you also begin to understand that He does all things so that they may ultimately work together for our good. To put it plainly, God makes the best of every situation for the long haul. God doesn't just think in terms of right here and right now (though He is a very present help in times of trouble), but instead He continues to work a much bigger plan which He began from before the foundation of the world, and will continue to work until His Word is completely fulfilled! The truth is, the reason mankind is in the mess we are in is due to sin. We live in a fallen world full of fallen people. We also live in a world full of fallen angels (aka demons or devils). Between man's self-destructive sinful nature and the influences of the demonic realm, it is no wonder this world is so chaotic. Sinner friend, do not blame God for what the devil or self is doing! Jesus even said that the thief comes only to steal, kill, and destroy. Jesus also said that HE came that we might have life, and have it more abundantly. This tells me that Jesus is working against the forces which are trying to kill us. Therefore, through the cross, Jesus came to put the brakes on the enemy's plan to destroy the promised seed. Imagine life without Jesus and His message of hope. It would sure enough be a much more dreadful place that we could imagine. Today, thank God that Jesus HATH done all things well!

### *Today's Reading: Matt. 16, Mark 8, Luke 9:18-27*

**Today's Reflection:** Matt. 16:19 *And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.*

Keys are significant in many ways. They imply action because they are rendered useless if not employed. They imply authority because of their ability to permit or deny passage. They imply access because of the level of trust given to the one holding the keys. In our text, Peter was given the keys to the kingdom of heaven. This level of empowerment was given to him because of his ability to perceive and receive the revelation that was given unto him by God the Father of who Jesus was. It was based upon the truth that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the living God, that Jesus then handed over the keys to Peter. As long as Peter knew by what authority he operated, he would be able to fulfill God's purpose for his life. So it is with us. We must understand by what authority we operate. Having done so, we too can fulfill God's ultimate purpose for our lives. The question is, are we operating under and in the authority of Jesus Christ, or are we just under the spell of man-made religion? God not only gives us access directly to the throng of Grace, but he also gives us full access to bombard the gates of hell and to intrude into enemy's territory with the Gospel of Christ. To me, one of the saddest things in the church today is the reality that most Christians never tap into the fullest authority and access given them by the Gospel, because we have become a people of little or no action. What good are a set of keys if you never use them? How many prayers have we prayed that God would open doors and shut doors, all-the-while listening to the keys as they jangle from our side? We've had the keys the entire time; we've just never used them. Notice in our text that action must be taken upon earth before it is supported in Heaven. Whatsoever we bind or loose first on earth then shall be bound or loosed in Heaven. Dear believer, exercise your God-given right to lock what needs locking and unlock what needs unlocking in your life. If you will operate in the authority vested in you by Jesus Christ, He will back you up! Never forget who you are and whose you are. Stand for Jesus, and He will stand with you!

## Day 294

*Today's Reading: Matt. 17, Mark 9, Luke 9:28-62*

**Today's Reflection:** Matt. 17: 9 *And as they came down from the mountain, Jesus charged them, saying, Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of man be risen again from the dead.*

There are those among us who are pregnant with vision. Perhaps you are carrying a child within your spirit that was conceived upon a mountaintop experience you had with God. The trouble is, no one else would believe you if you told them what God had shown you. So, you came back down from your mountain, and have been bearing that seed for a very long season now. Understand that there is a reason Jesus instructed his disciples not to tell the vision to any man until after the resurrection. Perhaps it was because they would not be able to receive the vision until they had witnessed the power of God in the resurrection themselves. On the same token, while you are carrying your vision alone, God is preparing a people on down the road who will be able to receive your ministry and your message once the timing is right. Even as the disciples were charged to wait until the Son of man was risen again from the dead, so must we wait until that resurrection power which brings life begins to cause things which are dead to come to life. It is the power of God and that alone which births effective ministry. Without God's power we are wasting our time. 1 Cor. 1:18 says, "For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God." In other words, the message of the Gospel would not only be powerless, but it would be non-existent without the cross and the resurrection which soon followed. God does not give us a ministry of the Word without the power to go with it. Therefore, He will wait as long as He must until at last we are in the place where Paul was when he expressed his desire in Philippians 3:10a, "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings..." It is when we are ready to die to self and to live to Christ that He manifests Himself to us and gives us a platform from which to declare His glory to the nations of the earth. He will share His glory with no man. We must decrease that He might increase in our lives and in our ministries. Only then will we witness the full-term deliverance of the vision which God planted in our hearts early in our walk with Him. Let's have a baby!

*Today's Reading: Matthew 18*

**Today's Reflection:** Matt. 18:4 *Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.*

A couple of things come to mind when I read this text. We can learn some lessons about true humility by considering this child. The first thing we notice is that the child's name is not mentioned. This implies that what matters more than a name is the character behind the name. John the Baptist, when asked who he was, simply replied, "I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias." (see John 1:23). As a result we find that Jesus said of that same John in Matt. 11:11, "Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he." What made John so great was that he made no big fuss about himself; he only made a fuss about Jesus! He said in John 3:30, "He must increase, but I must decrease." It is human nature to wonder what the name of the child was of whom Jesus made reference in our text, but Jesus purposefully didn't mention his name so that we might learn the importance of knowing that any greatness comes only when we exalt the name of Christ. When we think of great people, we identify them by their names; however, it is not the name itself, but it is the person behind the name that made the name so powerful. People who come into notoriety generally do not do so over night, nor do they generally do so intentionally. As a matter of fact, the more a man tries to promote himself, generally the farther away he pushes himself from any significant recognition. Jesus said in Luke 14:11, "For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." So it should be our goal in life not to become popular so far as the world is concerned, but simply to exalt Christ among the nations. Even Christ "made himself of no reputation" as seen in Php. 2:7. However, if you read on, his reward was in v. 9, where "God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name:" The second lesson: Let another man praise thee, and not thine own mouth (see Prov. 27:2)! Humble yourself, and God will exalt you.

## Day 296

### *Today's Reading: John 7-8*

**Today's Reflection:** John 8:28a *Then said Jesus unto them, When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he...*

The time in which Jesus chose to fully reveal Himself as the Savior of the world was not a minute shy of the cross of Calvary. It would not be until the sacrifice of the lovely Lamb of God was made that it would occur to the world whom they had slain. It would only be after Christ cried "It is finished" and gave up the ghost, and only after the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom, and only after the simultaneous earthquake that occurred, that the centurion and they that were with him would fearfully declare, "Truly this was the Son of God." Calvary itself is the centerpiece of history, as all before Christ looked forward to Him, and all after Christ look back to Him. The Christ of Calvary impacts the universe in such a way that without Him, nothing would even exist, much less be in harmony. Take Christ out of history, and there would be no history at all! Calvary was God's master plan to redeem fallen man, and it was there on the cross that He displayed all of His glory, love and grace to us. Try to imagine with me how they must have felt when it occurred to them after they had nailed Him to the cross that He was the chosen one; the promised Messiah; the Lamb of God; very God and very man. Oh the horror that must have smitten their hearts. Ah, but I too experienced that horror in my own heart when at last it was revealed to me by the precious Holy Spirit that it was my sins that put Him on the cross. I too was as guilty as the ones who were there literally driving the nails in His hands and feet. You cannot fully see Christ in all of His splendor until after you understand yourself to be the guilty one who crucified Him there on Calvary. Jesus said, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." (John 12:32). The message of the cross is one of redemption, but in order to grasp redemption, one must understand the price that was paid for such redemption. So, once you have seen yourself guilty before a Holy God, then and only then can you fully see Christ as a valid substitute for your sins; until then, you have no need of a Savior, or so you think. Look to Calvary today, call upon the name of the Lord, and you shall be saved!

*Today's Reading: John 9:1-10:21*

**Today's Reflection:** John 10:12 *But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep.*

It ought to be our prayer that God would give us once again an abundance of genuine God-called pastors who are in ministry for the people they minister to more than for themselves. One cannot call himself a true pastor who flees the scene at the first sign of trouble. A good shepherd will stay until the fight is over, the wolf is gone, and peace and security are restored to the flock. The greatest men of God are not those polished and refined by our educational systems and man-built colleges, but those tried in the fires of adversity who have come out on the other side as pure as gold. We as pastors do not often willingly or readily sign up for trouble, but it certainly does come with the territory. God needs some men who will protect His sheep from the wolves. No one ever said that it would be easy. There is certainly nothing fun about standing up to a big, bad, ugly, snarling, growling, hungry, mean, fowl, wolf-like spirit or personality, but someone must take that stand for the sake of the sheep. I cannot speak for anyone else, but as a pastor, one question that always assures me that I need to continue where I serve when things get rough is this one; what about the sheep? You see, God knew that you had the kind of heart that would not just desert the sheep for your own benefit. That's why he called you! Those other guys who are always looking for lusher and greener pasture and bigger pay checks may get what they want, but they will never have the power of God that comes to those who will pay the price for the anointing. The anointing comes to those only who genuinely tend to the flock of God with a pure heart. Oh sure, you could possibly find another place of service with seemingly more favorable circumstances, but the true question is, what about the flock you will be leaving behind? God can move you if He wants, but be sure that it is Him, and not someone else moving you. Today I thank God for the men He has placed in my life who truly care for my soul more than they care for my financial contributions to their ministries. I say, "God, replace our hirelings with real pastors!"

## Day 298

### *Today's Reading: Luke 10-11, John 10:22-42*

**Today's Reflection:** Luke 11:9 *And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.*

Here, Christ gives us a three-fold approach to ensuring answered prayer. He even gives us in our reading an example of one who approached a friend at midnight for a specific need, and encourages us to do the same with our Heavenly Father. This man needed bread, and so he sought out his friend, knocked on his door, and asked for his help; he would not have succeeded had he not sought, had he not knocked, and had he not asked. Christ said ask, seek, and knock. This man sought, knocked, and asked. The order in which it is done is not as important as is the doing itself; it is only important that we cover all the bases. Each situation that you are in may require one before the other depending upon the circumstances, but do not abort your petition prematurely; be sure and do all three! To ask is to use your voice to express your petition, to seek is to use your eyes to find the answer, and to knock is to use your hands to raise awareness of the need until it is finally met. Have you been simultaneously verbalizing your request, looking for the answer, and consistently engaging yourself with a hands-on approach? If not, then begin so today. Christ teaches us to keep pressing the issue until at last our petitions are granted by our Heavenly Father. The text seems to suggest that if we fall short of the asking, seeking, and knocking, that we will also fall short of the blessing. God responds to faith that is tried, tested, tempered, and proven true. The best way for our faith to be proven true is for it to undergo a waiting season. During this time, our faith is certainly put to the test when we have asked and received no response, when we have sought and found nothing, and when we have knocked and no door has been opened. The question is, will your faith outlast the waiting season? If your faith can outlast the waiting season, you will find that what Christ said is true, "For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened." I heard it once said that blessings delayed are not blessings denied. Simply keep the faith! I have only one question to ask; through the troubles, timing, and testing, will your faith keep?

### *Today's Reading: Luke 12-13*

**Today's Reflection:** Luke 12:29 *And seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind.*

It is one thing to believe; yet it is another thing to not doubt. One might assume that if he believes, then there should be no doubt. However, there is the reality of believing and yet doubting at the same time. Consider what the father said to Christ in Mark 9 whose son was in need of a miracle. He said with tears, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief." Where does our doubtful mind come from? May I suggest that in many cases it comes from nothing more than past and present realities which seem to never improve? This man's boy had this problem since he was a child, and no matter what his father did, it never seemed to help. He even took him to Christ's disciples, who also could not help. The problem had escalated to massive proportions. After having exasperated himself with every effort to help his son, he heard that if there was anyone in town that could make a difference, it would be Jesus. However, his mind, soul and spirit had been let down and disappointed so many times, that most all hope was lost of ever seeing any significant and real change in his boy's life. He had to muster up enough faith against all odds to take the risk of bringing him to Jesus. What risk might you ask? The risk of another let-down; the risk of another seemingly un-answered prayer; the risk that God might not really care, and that He might not even pay attention. Thank God all it takes is a little bit of faith! Just enough faith to be equal to the size of a grain of mustard seed can remove mountains. That's exactly where this man was. He had just enough faith, but he was willing to admit to our Lord that there was still doubt present when he asked the Master to help him with his unbelief! When this happened, his faith was blessed by Jesus to grow and overtake his doubt, and at that point his son was delivered of his demons. What will it take for us to get to a place where we too are no longer of doubtful mind? It will take us addressing the doubt head-on like this man did. Pray even as he did, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief." When we get honest with Him, He is then able to work a miracle in our lives! Whatever your need is today, rest assured that your aged realities do not have to shape your tomorrows. Jesus still delivers!

## Day 300

### *Today's Reading: Luke 14-15*

**Today's Reflection:** Luke 14:12 *Then said he also to him that bade him, When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen, nor thy rich neighbours; lest they also bid thee again, and a recompense be made thee.*

At first, when I read this verse, I thought, “What would be wrong with receiving a returned favor?” Then, it occurred to me; Jesus is warning us that if the only people we minister to are those whom we know will repay us for what we have done, then we have received our temporal reward. However, He goes on to teach in verses 13-14 that if we will minister to those whom we know will not be able to repay us, then and only then are we truly blessed! Jesus said, “And thou shalt be blessed.” The word blessed literally means supremely blessed, fortunate, well off, and happy. In other words, when we do this, the blessing we will receive is from God and not from man, and therefore eternal and not temporal. He clarifies by saying, “...for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.” (see verse 14). To put it simply, you can get a temporary, man-bestowed blessing, or you can get an eternal, God-bestowed blessing, depending upon your motive in service, and depending upon whom you are willing to serve. Jesus knew the temptations that we as humans would face when serving others. He knew that we would be tempted to provide for others with strings attached. Therefore, He teaches us to serve in places where that will not be an option. This will then discipline us to rely totally upon the Lord to bless us and reward us in His good timing! Also, do not mistake His temporal provisions for His eternal rewards. I'm not saying that He does not reward us in the here and now; however, I am saying that the real reward is what shall await us in Heaven. The preacher is told in 1 Peter 5:4, “And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.” Let us then be satisfied to wait for our reward in Heaven. If all we do is pat each other on the back, then what have we really gained? May God give us the types of ministries that will reach those who cannot boost our egos or promote our agendas! Let us minister not where men take note, but where God takes note.

### *Today's Reading: Luke 16-17:10*

**Today's Reflection:** Luke 16:11 *If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?*

Nothing speaks of the condition of one's ability to be trusted better than the way he manages or mismanages his money. This text is very intriguing to me because of the emphasis it places on our need to be able to manage our money properly. It goes so far as to put a direct connection between the materialistic and the spiritual. This is one of those verses that, when I read it, I thought to myself, "Now, why didn't I ever hear one sermon or Sunday school lesson on this verse?" As a matter of fact, one would get the impression by many teachers today that money has little to no direct correlation with the spiritual at all, except of course when it comes to tithes and offerings. However, Jesus teaches that our Lord will base His decision to trust you with the true riches (which we might refer to as Kingdom affairs) based upon how faithful you are with your own personal money. It is very important for those of us in leadership in the church world today to understand the necessity of walking with integrity as it pertains to fiscal responsibility. The mismanagement of money can pull a ministry and its effectiveness down just as quickly as any other issue. It ought to be our prayer today that God would teach us and help us to learn and practice these principles even at the most elementary levels of our personal lives so that nothing can bleed over into our ministries to jeopardize what God has entrusted us with. If the truth were known, God would open up new doors of ministry and opportunity for us if we would only prove ourselves to be faithful with what He has already given us. Too often it is the case that we are not content to maximize our potential where we are; we are always looking for promotion to the next level without being willing to earn that promotion. However, in God's economy, it does not work that way. God wants to grow us into our next level. Could it be that the reason we are not at our next level is the fact that we have stunted our own growth by an unwillingness to become more responsible with what God has already given us? Our character is defined by our stewardship practices; let us then be found faithful and trustworthy for our Lord.

## Day 302

### *Today's Reading: John 11*

**Today's Reflection:** John 11:15 *And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe; nevertheless let us go unto him.*

Let us focus on the first part of our selected verse, where Christ said, "And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there..." Having read what Christ had spoken, let us now consider what to do when God is not there for us! Have you ever been in a situation where it felt like God had let you down? I know that it is a horrible thing for some to admit that they have had such crazy thoughts, but the truth is, there are many today who have allowed what they have not understood about God to discredit what they should have known about Him. For instance, most Christians will readily agree that God is all-powerful, until a prayer goes seemingly unanswered in their own personal world. All of a sudden, when God didn't do for them what was expected and when it was expected, the doubts about what He is truly willing and capable of doing seem to flood their souls. Unfortunately for some, the gap between their ideal god and the true God of the Bible bankrupts them of what is left of their faith, as they begin to lose hope rather than seeking God's face for a better understanding of His purposes. Having said that, why would God distance Himself, as it were, from any of our problems at all? The answer is found in our text, where Christ goes on to say, "...to the intent ye may believe..." God knows that true faith is not based upon site, feelings, or emotions. The question is, can we trust God even when we can't see or feel a thing? When we pray, and it seems like our prayers hit the ceiling; when we cry all night long, and yet our sorrow is not lifted; when we have asked God to heal our loved one, and yet instead we attend their funeral. True faith is tried faith. It is when our faith is purified through adversity that it begins to bring resurrection power into our lives. Jesus intentionally waited until Lazarus was completely dead before He asked Martha, "Believest thou this?" Can we still trust God, even after the funeral? As we know, Christ resurrects Lazarus from the dead, proving to all that true faith in Him will never be timed out or conquered by temporary setbacks. If we will trust Him whole-heartedly, we will see resurrection power working in our lives!

### *Today's Reading: Luke 17:11-18:14*

**Today's Reflection:** John 17:21 *Neither shall they say, Lo here! Or, lo there! For, behold, the kingdom of God is within you.*

The things which cannot be seen with the naked eye are the most powerful and influential of all. Here, Christ addressed a people looking for an earthly kingdom with eminent domain, with castles made of brick and mortar, with armies forged in stealth and strength, and with kings brave and strong. Most importantly, they wanted something tangible. However, Christ always had a way of bringing things back into perspective. He reminded them that it is not what goes on around us that matters; it's what goes on inside of us that counts the most! Nothing on this planet ever came into position or prominence without first a thought followed by an action. It is out of the abundance of the heart that the mouth speaketh so as to reveal its intentions and motives and plan of action. We catapult ourselves into our futures by what we do, which is preceded by what we think, which is preceded by what has been planted into our spirits. That's why it is important to understand what Christ is teaching us; that at the very core of our being is found either the essence or the absence of what it takes to be a part of God's kingdom on this earth. To put it plainly, is Christ in you, or not? Honestly, without Christ, our soul is empty, hopeless, without purpose, and headed for Hell. However, with Christ, our life is filled with purpose and meaning, and our home will be Heaven above. It is Christ in us who is the hope of our glory (Col. 1:27)! 1 Jn 4:4b says, "...greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world." The key is that He must be IN us! This is done by a simple child-like faith in trusting Christ as Lord and Savior. When this happens, immediately the Holy Spirit indwells the believe, thus installing in him or her the very kingdom of God! A kingdom is more than a domain or a philosophy or an army, but a kingdom is a spirit. Thus, when Christ indwells the believer through the person of the Holy Spirit, then His Spirit begins to lead and guide us into all truth, shaping our thoughts, attitudes, appetites, and actions to be consistent with His agenda! We're then to allow the mind of Christ to renew our own minds (see Php. 2:5). Once this happens, we are unstoppable! No wonder it is said in Luke 1:33b, "...and of his kingdom there shall be no end."

## Day 304

### *Today's Reading: Matthew 19, Mark 10*

**Today's Reflection:** Mark 10:21a *Then Jesus beholding him loved him...*

Oh that men would praise the Lord for His unconditional love for us! I am so thankful that our text did not read, “The Jesus beholding him rejected him...” He could have! To truly grasp the ‘why’ of His love is humanly impossible, for we will never be able to comprehend this side of Heaven why He loved us when as yet we were so unlovable. He loves us with an everlasting love. He loved us when as yet we were sinners. Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God (see 1 Jn 3:1)! I bless His holy name today that when He beheld me, He did not see me where I was, nor did He see me for who I was, but He saw me for who He could make me to be, and where He could take me! Had He seen me for who I was and where I was, surely He would have left me in the ditch, but He didn't. As the song writer said, He looked beyond my fault and saw my need. It is reassuring to know that when your own heart condemns you, and when others with self-righteous pious gaze on with judgmental attitudes, Christ looks on with oh such tender care and mercy. It is good to know that when others forsake me, Christ takes me up. Though the trend of a fallen world is to lust, take, abuse, and hate, let it be known by all that no matter what I may receive at the hands of wicked men, one thing I will never lack in this lifetime is unconditional love. Christ hath secured me in the beloved, and there is nothing that can take that away from me. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Rom. 8:38-39 says, “For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” If there is one thing I would wish to convince the unbeliever of today, it's the fact that he or she is loved by God! It is indeed the goodness of God which leads men to repentance, and so when men at last understand that Christ truly does love them unconditionally, it is then that they are drawn with surrendered heart to the Christ of Calvary who so loved them that He gave His life for them. Today, let us tell the world once again of God's love for them!

### *Today's Reading: Matthew 20-21*

**Today's Reflection:** Matthew 20:26 *But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister;*

Our Lord makes it clear that we are not to exercise dominion over those to whom we are called to minister. When we with intentional effort make ourselves the authoritative figure over others, we exalt ourselves in such a way that we set ourselves up for a lesson of humility from the Lord. It is pride which goeth before the fall! And yet, how quickly do we forget this important truth when we are blinded by our own conceit! However, we are expected by our Lord to keep our hearts in check so as to keep this from happening. As a matter of fact, we are given the roadmap to greatness in our text. Christ says plainly, "...but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister;" It is amazing how difficult it becomes for one who has been promoted by God to receive the glory for such a promotion. God set it up that way! With God, our way up is really down. If we really want to know what it is to be great in the Kingdom of God, then we are to do as Christ; to make ourselves of no reputation. We are to take time out of our busy schedules to minister to those who would never be able to return the favor. We are to help those who will never advance our causes or promote our agendas. We are to give to those who will never be able to declare to the entire world our level of commitment to Christ and His bride. If we're not careful, we as ministers will spend more of our time promoting ourselves than we will promoting Christ. I am not trying to be critical; I'm simply stating the truth. I truly believe that when a leader in the church has a need to be recognized as the authority, it is because of a fear to appear weak. However, when we function in the spirit of humility with a meek and gentle spirit, we are then functioning at the highest level of being controlled by the Spirit of God. To think that humility is a sign of weakness is only half true; the other half of the story is that when we are made weak, then Christ is made strong on our behalf! It is truly at our weakest that He is at His strongest in our lives. Therefore, we must learn to operate as servants of the Most High God, making ourselves available to the body of Christ as they have great need for those who will serve.

## Day 306

### *Today's Reading: Luke 18:15-19:48*

**Today's Reflection:** Luke 19:43-44 *For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall ....keep thee in on every side, And shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee... because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.*

Oh that God would open our eyes to our time of visitation in this generation! Jesus said that it is a wicked and adulterous generation who seeks after signs. I believe that is the downfall of our generation today. We have on our hands a people who do not pay attention to the obvious clues around them; rather, they listen for a voice in the sky, or a sign from Heaven, or something of that nature. The problem with that frame of mind is this; the just shall live by faith, not by sight! To always be looking for a sign is to say in essence, "I'll believe it when I see it!" This cannot please God, because it is not of faith. Today, God is looking for those who will worship Him in spirit and in truth, and who will simply take Him at His Word! When will His Word be good enough? I heard a great man of God say long ago, "Many are still listening for a voice when they already have a verse." It will be a sad day when many stand before God accusing Him of not being there for them, or for not speaking to them, just to find out He was there the whole time, but that they were too pre-occupied to notice. Furthermore, there is a cancer eating the church alive today; it is the cancer of procrastination. Jesus spoke of it in John 4:35, when He said, "Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? Behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest." Too many are still waiting for the "right" time to surrender to God. Too many are still thinking that "one day" they will get around to serving God. Sadly, for many, that "one day" will never come. Seriously, what if we miss our time? What if this generation becomes so pre-occupied with the notion that it will all get better one day that we fail to take any action to ensure that it does? Are we not called to action? I dare say we are! God is moving, and God is still speaking, but are we listening and obeying? I hope this will not be the final words of our generation as found in Jeremiah 8:20, which says, "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved." Friend, if not now, when?

*Today's Reading: Mark 11, John 12*

**Today's Reflection:** Mark 11:23 *For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith.*<sup>1</sup>

There is something very powerful about verbalizing your faith. Even Jesus taught that it is out of the abundance of the heart that the mouth speaks. People say what they believe. If you want to know what they really think, just listen to them talk for a little while, and you will have it figured out! In our text verse, it is apparent that Jesus is putting emphasis on the verbalization of our faith, for He says "...whosoever shall say unto this mountain..." and again "...he shall have whatsoever he saith." Why then is it important to speak to our mountains? It is because God knows that if we really believed, we would not hesitate to say so. God help us to stop pretending to believe Him, when in fact we are of such doubt that we hesitate to say it just in case it doesn't happen. Do you "pray it safe"? God is looking for some bold, tenacious, full-of-the-Holy-Ghost prayer warriors that will believe Him so much that they would not be afraid to verbalize what they are believing God for! Now, when you vocalize your faith, the text only suggests that there are two parties within listening distance; your mountain, and yourself. I ask you this question; who needs the convincing, the mountain, or the one speaking to the mountain? Allow me to suggest that the biggest mountains that we face are not those standing in front of us, but those standing inside of us! If we can get our faith to roll off of our lips, then our faith is genuinely authenticated. For instance, "But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth... That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." (Rom. 10:8-9). Again, "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." (Rom. 10:17). Sometimes you have to talk to the mountain loud enough to hear yourself in order to rebuke the doubt inside of you! Today, speak to the mountain inside of you, and the mountain in front of you will go away!

## Day 308

### *Today's Reading: Matthew 22, Mark 12*

**Today's Reflection:** Matt. 22:5 *But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise:*

Nothing can be of more importance than being attentive to that which God has set in order. Here, many made light of the wedding which their king had arranged, and decided that they had better things to do. In like manner, I wonder how guilty this generation is of doing the same. We are living in the dispensation of grace, whereby the church has been commissioned to go out into the highways and hedges to compel those which are lost to come in; yet, many are too tied up in the affairs of this life to participate in the effort. We can get so involved in temporal things that we neglect what is most important. I think the key phrase in our text which shows us where they went wrong is this, "...and went their ways..." It is when we go our own way and do our own thing that we miss out on what God is doing. You see, if we will acknowledge God in all of our ways, then He will surely direct our paths (see Prov. 3:5-6). That means that He will enable us not only to make provisions for our families, but also to accomplish the work of the ministry at the same time. There needs to be a balance. If we get so caught up in "making provisions" that we turn our attention to business alone, then God's will is neglected. We need to be able to seek the Lord and allow Him to show us HIS will for our lives, so that our business does not interfere nor hinder His from being accomplished. Do we have to be SO busy that we can't even attend the wedding? Really, sometimes we act as if God expects too much of us, do we not? 1 Jn 5:3 says, "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous." In other words, God is not going to ask us to do something that, with His help, we cannot do. Considering all our Lord has done for us, we are taught in Rom. 12:1, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." What God asks of us is neither grievous nor unreasonable! We can live balanced lives, ensuring that not only our personal affairs are taken care of so far as tangibles are concerned, but also ensuring that we live out God's will and purpose for our lives. Go not your own way!

### *Today's Reading: Matthew 23, Luke 20-21*

**Today's Reflection:** *Matt. 23:15 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves.*

My, my, look at what kind of preaching our Lord Jesus delivered! The most challenging messages Jesus ever preached during His earthly ministry were those addressed to the religious people of his day. Here, he specifically deals with those who seek to make to themselves clones. He mentions that their disciples are twofold more the child of hell than themselves. This is very strong language, intended to make a very strong point. The point is this; when a religious system of beliefs based upon man-made traditions is propagated as Gospel truth when in fact it is not, what happens with each new generation of followers is that they get worse and worse. Have you ever noticed in our day just how vicious a newly-trained legalistic person can be? When someone has only been exposed to graceless, heartless, legalistic personalities, they generally end up doing one of two things. Either they forsake those teachings altogether when they have had their fill of them, or else they so adopt that mentality that they do in excess what their teachers did in moderation. Any time the grace of God is misconstrued, nothing is left but mean-spirited, man-made dogma. The truth is, God's grace needs no improvement. It is when we decide that God needs our help that His grace is misconstrued. That is why with each new convert of legalism comes a double-portion of hell. Why does Jesus teach this so strongly? Here's why; the grace of God, bought and paid for by His own blood, shall not afford to be tainted by another pointless effort made by fallen man. We shall be saved by grace alone, or we shall not be saved at all. If it could have been done without grace, then Christ will have died in vain. God will share His glory with no one, especially a self-righteous fake glory mustered up by sinful man. God's glory is fully revealed through the complete work of Calvary. It is there and there alone that we receive His grace, as there is absolutely nothing we can do to either earn or keep ourselves saved. Any other Gospel is not the Gospel at all. Friend, be sure that you have fully trusted in Christ and Him alone!

## Day 310

### *Today's Reading: Mark 13*

**Today's Reflection:** Mark 13:34 *For the Son of Man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch.*

We are reminded of the responsibilities which have been entrusted unto us by our Lord. He has indeed given us authority to operate in the gifts and callings of our work here on earth. Unfortunately, too many Christians sit around and wait for a light from Heaven and a voice out of the clouds to move them to action, when we have already been commissioned by the Holy Scriptures. God has given us everything we need to do His blessed will; let us not be found neglecting the work of our Lord when He comes in power and great glory. What gifts has our Lord bestowed upon you? What is the Spirit of God urging you to do for the cause of Christ? What is it that He has placed upon this writer's heart to urge you with even more confirmation to do? Do it! Do not waste another moment! The fields are already ripe unto harvest; our Lord is just looking for workers to go bring in the harvest now! It matters not at what season of your life you enter into the work of the Lord; what matters is that you do so without further hesitation. Every minute passing by is one minute closer to the end of the harvest, and what is done will be done. May God help us to finish our course. May God help us to keep the faith. May God help us to win every soul which we could have won to Christ in our lifetime from this point on. We do not have time to waste. Our Lord expressed urgency in our text when in verse 33 He said, "Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is." Do not assume that you have plenty of time simply because our Lord has not returned yet. The truth is, He could come at any moment! Are you doing your part in the work of the Lord? Again, our selected verse says, "...the Son of man...gave...to every man his work..." What is your work? Do you even know it? If not, what is hindering you from finding out? If you lack wisdom, ask God, and He will give it to you. Seek Him, and you shall find Him! Our prayer today should be, "Lord, what would thou have me to do?" Our actions then should follow when at once He reveals His will. Do something for God!

### *Today's Reading: Matthew 24*

**Today's Reflection:** Matthew 24:45 *Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season?*

It is important for those of us who are ministers of the Gospel to be ready at all times to give meat to the household of faith. When Christ asked Peter, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?", Peter answered, "Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee.", then Jesus said in response, "Feed my lambs." (see John 21:15). Jesus wasn't referencing literal food here, but was referring to the meat of the Word of God. In Matt. 4:4, Jesus said, "It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." He also said in John 4:34, "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work." And what was the work of Christ? He was to become the broken bread of life which was to be passed around for all who would partake of Him. He even taught us in John 6:55, "For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed." This, of course, was in reference to the spiritual significance of the cross and what it would provide for fallen man. Therefore, since it is Christ who is in fact the very bread of life, and since Christ was the Word which was made flesh and dwelt among us, it goes without saying that the meat which we are to offer to the household of faith is the pure, undefiled Word of God. When we make much of Jesus through His Word, then we are truly giving God's little lambs something that will surely nourish them and strengthen them for the journey. It is when we get away from Christ and His Word that we begin to starve out the sheep. I want to point out that although a shepherd is involved in protecting, guiding, comforting, and even rescuing the sheep, the one thing he does for the sheep above all else is feed them. Every aspect of the relationship between a shepherd and his sheep is essential, but if we do not feed the sheep enough, nothing else we do for them will matter, as they will not live very long under such neglect. We can love, protect, guide, comfort, rescue, and even shear the sheep, but if we do not feed them, they will die. Jesus says then in Matt. 24:46, "Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing." Let's be caught feeding the flock of God when He returns!

## Day 312

### *Today's Reading: Matthew 25*

**Today's Reflection:** Matthew 25:8-9 *And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out. But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves.*

There is great wisdom for the giving heart in this text. Often we are taught when TO give, but seldom are we taught when NOT to give; there needs to be balance. Some guidelines can be drawn which will help us to know when to give and when not to give. First, let us consider the fact that the ones asking for assistance were foolish. We know that they were foolish because they set out on a journey, and didn't even think about the fact that when they got down the road, they would eventually run out of oil and need more. We then conclude that they had absolutely no plans whatsoever. Secondly, let us consider how quickly and easily it was for them to ask others to give of their own much-needed oil to help compensate for their own ignorance. We know then that these foolish virgins were selfish and inconsiderate, assuming that others would just fix their mistakes. I once heard it said, "Your lack of planning is not my emergency." I say, "Amen!" The third thing I wish to point out is that they under-estimated what it was going to take to make the journey. Thinking that the wise would have enough to go around for everyone, they were startled when the wise answered thus, "Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you." In life, and especially in ministry, we will come across those who make no plans, who are selfish, who are inconsiderate, and who have no clue how much it would actually take to go around. If the giving heart is not careful, he will give until he has nothing left, and the one he gave will still be empty-handed because of their foolishness, and the fact that they never learn. Therefore, it is imperative that we properly manage the resources that God has blessed us with, using wisdom every step of the way. If not, what God has blessed us with will run out, and then we'll be trying to blame God for not supplying, when in fact we were the guilty party, not using the wisdom He gave us to do things right. So, before you give, make sure that it is not going into a bag with holes in it!

### *Today's Reading: Matthew 26, Mark 14*

**Today's Reflection:** Mark 14:11b *And he sought how he might conveniently betray him.*

Betrayal always comes when it is most convenient for the one doing the betraying. As a matter of fact, it has been my observation over the years that true betrayers are the best cons; they are able to play the part as long as they must until they feel like there is nothing else in it for them. Often is the case that when others betray you to go elsewhere, they will cunningly attempt to play out what they have been wanting to do for a long time, but they will do so in such a way that will make it look like they are doing the right thing. Sadly, in some cases they are so deceived that they really do feel like they are doing the right thing, but in most cases they know exactly what they are doing. Do not be fooled by the fool! The enemy is real good at talking someone into deserting you, and then attacking you as if it is your own fault they did so. Do not believe the lies, for the enemy is only interested in one thing...self-preservation! Betrayers (a.k.a. haters) will always try to rationalize what they are doing to ease their conscience, but at the end of the day what matters most to them is that they were personally advantaged in some kind of way. In our text, Judas' motivation was money. No wonder the Bible teaches that the love of money is the root of all evil; it was the love of money that drove Judas to betray the Lamb of God. I wish now to focus not on how Jesus responded to the betrayal, but how He did not respond. Notice that there were three things He didn't do. First, He didn't try to stop him from betraying Him. As a matter of fact, he encouraged him to do it quickly! Lesson: we might as well stop trying to prevent others from going further down the path of betrayal. If it is in their heart, they cannot be trusted, and only God can fix or stop them. Secondly, Christ did not waste His time defending himself; as a matter of fact, He opened not His mouth! Lesson: no matter how hard we try to defend ourselves, it will never make any difference whatsoever in the eyes of the betrayers or their followers. Let it go! Let God worry with it! Lastly, Christ was not thrown off course, as He fully expected opposition. Lesson: when we are betrayed, do not allow it to slow us down one bit. Just keep on!

## Day 314

### *Today's Reading: Luke 22, John 13*

**Today's Reflection:** John 13:35 *By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.*

Are you a disciple of Christ, or a disciple of someone else? Jesus clearly teaches that those who are truly His disciples will be easily identified by the fact that they have love one to the other. If you ever find yourself in the midst of a company of professed believers who seem to have very little if any love for others, rest assured that they are not true Disciples of Christ. The church should never underestimate the necessity of operating in and sharing the love and compassion of Christ. Believe it or not, there are some who feel as if too much love is a sign of weakness. May this kind of thinking be far from us! How can we who have received God's love so freely ever act as if others are less deserving of the same? If you are cold, hard, and callused towards wretched sinners, perhaps you have never truly experienced God's love, or else you have forgotten where He brought you from. What is worse is when one who has been saved loses his or her love for their fellow brothers and sisters in Christ. Let us consider what 1 John 4:20 teaches, "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" In light of this text, one should ask himself if he is even a believer at all if he has hatred in his heart for his brother. Furthermore, if an unbelieving world gets the impression that the church world can't even get along with one another, what makes us think that they will be persuaded to join ranks? I have at times witnessed more love amongst lost people than I have supposed members of the body of Christ. Gal. 5:15 says, "But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another." Dear sinner, if you have had the unfortunate experience of being exposed to an environment of self-righteous so-called Christians who can't seem to do anything but fight one another to the point of hatred, I assure you that their behavior doesn't indicate that God Himself is like that. The fact is, the love of God is so pure that even the best of man doesn't even hold a candle. Therefore, I beg you, before writing off the church world because of human beings who are far less than perfect, first look at the perfect example of love, Jesus Christ! He loves you!

### *Today's Reading: John 14-17*

**Today's Reflection:** John 15:16 *Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.*

Just the thought of being chosen and ordained by God for the specific purpose of bearing fruit is exciting to say the least. We should be glad that He has chosen us! However, it gets even better. Not only has He chosen us, and not only has He ordained us to bear fruit, but He has also guaranteed us answered prayer when we operate in our calling to the fullest extent; "...that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you." God wants to get us to a point to where we are so abiding in Him, and where His word is so abiding in us, that we are not only fruitful in our ministry endeavors, but we are also fruitful in our prayer lives. Today, He is training us in our kingdom assignments to get us to a level of wisdom, understanding, productiveness, and maturity to where He knows He can trust us to do the right thing once He does bless us with what we have asked. Many times we do not understand the full extent of what it is we are asking God for. We pray for blessings, but God desires to know that if He were to bless us, that we wouldn't squander it away and become unthankful or forgetful of where our blessings come from. So, He begins the process of teaching us to be thankful, of teaching us to be responsible with what He blesses us with, and so on. He conditions us to be able to receive the blessings. Too often we think of answered prayer as something that God does or should do instantly, but God does not always do it that way. In great wisdom, He begins the process by which He can answer our prayers according to His will and Divine purpose. Furthermore, He will not even answer a prayer that is not consistent with His will, His word, or His purpose. Part of growing up as a Christian is learning what to pray for and what not to pray for. The more we learn of His word, the better we learn His will, and the better we pray. As we pray and receive more maturely and responsibly, we will begin to see more answered prayers come our way. Child of God, be encouraged to know that your prayers are either already answered, or in the process of being answered at this very moment!

## Day 316

### *Today's Reading: Matthew 27, Mark 15*

**Today's Reflection:** *Matt. 27:22 Pilate saith unto them, What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ? They all say unto him, Let him be crucified.*

Never place your eternal fate into the hands of others. Of all people, Pilate, a leader in his day, should have known full well the pitfalls associated with putting too much confidence in others when making important decisions. Sadly, he was too blinded by his own political ambitions to recognize who he was really consulting. At first glance, it may appear as if he was getting his answers directly from those of whom he asked the question. However, after further investigation we find that those whom he thought was his constituents were only a small part of a much bigger scheme. As it turned out, the chief priests (the religious elite) of that day were actually the ones instructing the people how to answer Pilate's inquiries. What makes matters even worse is the fact that the chief priests were too blinded to realize that they were also misguided by the prince of the power of the air, the devil himself. So, by the time the answer got to Pilate, it had been handed down from Satan, to the chief priests, to the multitudes, and then to Pilate. A genuine lesson can be learned here; always check your sources before buying into a pack of lies that could bring to you swift destruction. I imagine if Pilate knew that indirectly he was doing the devil's bidding, he might have reconsidered what he would have done to Jesus. It is always good to know where you get your information from! As a Christian, it needs to be your desire to get straight to the source of the Word of God, so as to keep everything in check with truth. Otherwise, you might also find yourself in a state of being misled by others who are also being misled. It is probably safe to assume that about 95% of what you hear from others is at least second-hand information. If not, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> or even 10<sup>th</sup> hand information. We would probably be disturbed to find out exactly where most of the stuff we expose ourselves to actually originates in this sin-cursed world. The devil is a liar, and he will pass lies through as many hands as he must, as long as you believe it by the time it reaches your ears. It is possible for a lie to be started by a devil, and then propelled by a well-intended saint. Who are you listening to?

### *Today's Reading: Luke 23, John 18-19*

**Today's Reflection:** Luke 23:51b ...*who also himself waited for the kingdom of God.*

It is with great anticipation and utmost priority that we are to seek first the Kingdom of God. Since both Jesus and John the Baptist preached that “the kingdom of God is at hand”, we then understand that what we are waiting for today is not its arrival in the earth, but rather its growth and influence in the earth, by which we are to win others to Christ. The church has been given the keys to the kingdom; the question is, are we using them? We have been promised that whatsoever we bind or loose on earth shall also be bound or loosed in Heaven. The words “bind” and “loose” literally mean to lock or to unlock. So then it could be said this way, “Whatsoever ye shall lock on earth shall be locked in Heaven, and whatsoever ye shall unlock on earth shall be unlocked in Heaven.” This really comes to light when we start talking about gates. Did not Jesus tell Peter in the same text, “...the gates of Hell shall not prevail...”? In other words, the gates of Hell shall not continue to be a hindrance to the furtherance of the Gospel. How so? God has given us the keys by which to unlock Hell’s gates and open them wide for a clear passageway. We are to march right into enemy territory and declare openly and boldly the truth of God’s Word to a lost and lonely world. God will open doors that no man can shut, and He will shut doors that no man can open.

However, God may lead us up to those doors, put the keys in our hands, and grant us the authority to open some and shut others. In fact, He does so quite often. The powers that be ARE ordained of God! To some God has entrusted more access and authority than others. Why? Some are more faithful than others. He will make those who are faithful over a few things, rulers over many. That’s why we are told, “Seek, and ye shall find.” Seeking requires time, patience, and faithfulness. And for those who will “seek” their share, shall the kingdom of God appear unto them. In other words, the kingdom of God shall expand into their world to bring about change through great influence. Why? Because they were faithful to seek God’s kingdom first. If you will wait for, or seek, God’s kingdom, it will come to you, and you shall be trusted with great influence and domain by which to lead many to our Lord Jesus Christ!

## Day 318

### *Today's Reading: Matthew 28, Mark 16*

**Today's Reflection:** Mark 16:20 *And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen.*

Are you partnered up with God in your ministry, or do you work very little with Him in your endeavors? It is my belief that the reason there are so many ineffective ministries in the world today, is because of their lack of partnership with God. Did you know that it is possible with good intent to generate a whole lot of activity on God's behalf, even without God's consent or acknowledgement? For example, consider what Christ said in Matthew 7:22-23, "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? And in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." Many mistake their religious activities for a relationship with God; obviously, they are two entirely different things. Although I do believe that a rightful relationship with God will yield activities of worship and service, I do not believe that activities of worship and service necessarily imply a rightful relationship with God. Jesus said it well when he told the woman at the well, "...ye worship ye know not what..." Still today, many worship "they know not what". There is a whole lot of religious activity going around, but very little worshipping God in spirit and in truth. That's why it is imperative to know that you serve God because you are already accepted in the beloved; not because you are still trying to gain acceptance through your own works. It is when we place our trust in the Lord's work and not our own that He is able to do exceeding and abundantly above all that we could ask or think, according to the power that works in us! The Lord will work with you in ministry as long as you do it His way, and not your own. Furthermore, He will let others know through confirmation that you are His servant, and that you are a deliverer of truth. Each of us ought to seek the face of God once again on behalf of our children, our communities, and our country. We need Him to partner with us as we seek to exalt His name among the heathen. However, the only way to get the Lord to work with us, is for us to work with Him! Is the Lord working with you today?

### *Today's Reading: Luke 24, John 20-21*

**Today's Reflection:** Luke 24:8 *And they remembered his words...*

How rare is it today for the average person to remember the words of Christ before he or she remembers the words of another person? It is paramount that the leaders of the body of Christ especially pay attention to which words we choose to remember; after all, it is usually a choice. Every day, we choose which set of words we will live by. Unfortunately, too many are still hung up in what others have said, instead of what Christ has said. There should never be a voice in any of our lives as professed followers of Christ that is any louder than the words of Christ. His words are enlightening, engaging, challenging, inspiring, and life changing to say the least. When we remember what it is HE has said, all other voices dim in comparison. If there is anything I have become fanatical about, it is our need as the body of Christ to become so saturated and driven by the words of Christ, that we literally live with the mind and the spirit of Christ. If you ever have a close encounter with Christ (a "road to Damascus" experience so to speak), then no other word will suffice. When the scorner, the sinner, self, the misguided saint, or even Satan himself speaks words of ill intent into your world, after having heard the words of Christ beforehand, they find no real welcoming into your life anymore. That's why Jesus taught us that it is when we know the truth that the truth sets us free. We are set free from lies and counterfeits. Thankfully, those of us who have put our faith in Christ also have the aid of the Holy Spirit to bring those things to remembrance which we have heard before. So, my challenge to you today is to saturate yourself with the Word of God as much as possible. That way, when the day comes that you are surrounded by circumstances of confusion and doubt, you will have filed away in the recesses of your heart and mind those seeds of truth which the Holy Spirit will then be able to water and cultivate to bring you through even the darkest of times. One thing is for sure; it is difficult to remember something which you have never been exposed to in the first place! Get the Word in your heart even if you do not understand it today. One day, when you least expect it, you'll be just as the disciples were in our text today, remembering his words with fresh revelation and understanding!

## Day 320

### *Today's Reading: Acts 1-3*

**Today's Reflection:** Acts 3:19 *Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord.*

Are you ready to be refreshed? The Lord is speaking to His people here in our text of a day when times of refreshing shall come from His presence. Oh, to see the day of revival that the church is desperately needing in our day. Not just another consecutive series of meetings, but a holy visitation! We need revival! And, the good news is, we are promised in the Word that in the last days the Lord shall pour out His Spirit upon all flesh. There is coming a great revival before the return of Christ to catch His bride away. However, we are given specific instructions; repent ye therefore, and be converted! Why? That your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord. In other words, ready or not, He is coming to bring times of refreshing, so it is up to us to be ready with repented hearts to be able to receive revival when it comes. It is possible for Jesus to visit a town, a church, a community, or a country, and many never even notice the significance of the times. Friend, do not let Jesus pass you by! It may very well be that a time of refreshing is already lined up to show up within the parameters of your own personal world, but you had better be repenting now, confessing now, and forsaking now, so that the full impact of the Lord's holy visitation can be realized! It would be a crying shame for us to be visited by God, and yet be so hindered by an unrepented heart that the Holy Spirit would not always strive with us. Oh that men would rid themselves of any pride that might cause them to become stubborn in the Lord's convicting presence. We must at once repent of our sins, and be ready at all times for that day when He might pass by in an unusual way. Many pray for revival, but do very little to prepare for it. Many will readily admit that revival is desperately needed, but will do very little in terms of paying the price that it takes to experience such a move of God. I've got a question for you, dear reader; are you ready for a move of God in your life? If you had agreed to let Jesus come by your house at a certain appointed time, would you not have been better prepared than you are right now? Let's hit our knees!

### *Today's Reading: Acts 4-6*

**Today's Reflection:** Acts 4:12 *Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.*

I wish to focus today on this portion of our selected text, "...there is none other name under heaven given among men..." Many names, in fact, countless billions throughout human history, have been given among men. However, THIS name is different! Philippians 2:9-11 says, "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." The name of Jesus is powerful because of the fact that it is God's gift to fallen man. This name speaks of eternal life which is the gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord (see Rom. 6:23). Romans 10:9 says, "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." It can then be concluded that no human figure, past, present, or future, has been able, nor ever will be able to offer such a gift. This name also speaks of power; power over sin, power over sickness, power over Satan, and power over self! John 1:12 says, "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:" To be a son of God is a gift to say the least! There is absolutely nothing man can do to contribute to his becoming a son of God, other than that of placing his faith in Jesus Christ. That's why it is a gift. You do not purchase gifts, nor do you deserve them; you only receive them. The very fact that God has even taken the time to give us something at all speaks of His heart of compassion for us. But it didn't just stop there! This wasn't just any gift; it was the giving of the best of Heaven for the worst of man. The very son of God, having shed his own blood on the cross to pay for the sins of the world, qualifies him to bear the honor of having the greatest name in all of history. Dear reader, the name of Jesus Christ is not someone you should only read about, acknowledge the historical existence of, or even speak. It is one you should trust with your life!

## Day 322

### *Today's Reading: Acts 7-8*

**Today's Reflection:** Acts 7:25 *For he supposed his brethren would have understood how that God by his hand would deliver them: but they understood not.*

Perhaps one of the biggest disappointments one will face who has a call of God on his or her life is that of being totally misunderstood by the brethren. For, you see, misunderstanding typically leads to skepticism, which leads to criticism, and then ultimately ends in rejection. It's not easy doing what God has called you to do, while at the same time being rejected by those whom you thought would aid you in your cause and be happy for your success. However, you learn very quickly that most people are not near as excited about the path God is leading you down as you are! As a matter of fact, some may even get downright angry. Understand this; they are not angry because they see you succeed, but they are angry because they do not see themselves succeed. Do not allow the perception of others to knock you out of focus from what you know God has called you to do. Do not be surprised when you stop what you're doing, look around, and notice that no one that was there before has even cared enough to remain loyal to you. It is in these times of isolation that God instills in His leaders the greatest qualities needed to perform His divine purposes in their lives. We must be taught to be totally dependent upon God and God alone, because it is only He that will be able to perform that good work which He has begun in us to start with. If the brethren had started the work, then we might have reason for concern when they misunderstand us; however, the brethren did not start this work, and neither will they finish it. Jesus is the author and the finisher of our faith, so let us look unto Him, because He is faithful! Moses was just as surprised as anybody when he figured out that his brethren completely overlooked his surrendered heart and concluded rather that he was just wanting to lord over them. The good news is, in the end, the Lord still delivered the brethren by the hand of Moses, regardless of their misconception of what was going down. The brethren do not have to understand or support you in order for God's will to come to pass in your life. All you have to have is a relentless faith and a clear vision of God's divine purpose, and He shall make it come to pass!

### *Today's Reading: Acts 9-10*

**Today's Reflection:** Acts 9:31 *Then had the churches rest throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied.*

Great things happen when churches are able to experience rest instead of strife; the church is edified, the fear of the Lord is increased, the ministry of the Holy Ghost is welcomed, and the church is multiplied. What a power-packed verse this is! Within this single verse is found the nucleus for what it takes for the church to experience explosive growth. What is the key ingredient needed? An absence of contention and strife! Within the context of our selected passage, the contention was primarily coming from the outside; Saul was persecuting the church. However, when Christ saved Saul, changed his name to Paul, and called him into the ministry, he who was before the arch enemy of the church is soon to become their greatest ally. Could you imagine the sigh of relief the church felt in that region when God made even their enemy to be at peace with them! Furthermore, imagine what it would be like today if there were no strife in the church. No contention. No fighting. I understand that I am shifting my focus from external sources of strife to internal sources of strife. However, is this not a real problem in modern Christendom which needs to be addressed? Today, although we still suffer persecution from outside, still our greatest form of persecution come from within in the form of contention and division within the body of Christ. There are yet many churches that are full of division, and yet still wonder why there is no growth in their ministries. It ought to be our prayer today that the Holy Spirit would begin again to revive the church of the living God back to a state of unity, peace, and harmony within our own ranks. Jesus himself taught us that a house divided against itself cannot stand; how much more is this true of a church! Many today seem to enjoy living for the fight, but let it not be so among the children of God. We are to be more concerned with edifying, or building up, our brothers and sisters, than we are tearing them down. If you are in a peaceful environment in your church, then you had better thank God for it, cherish it, and guard against an enemy who would seek to destroy it.

## Day 324

### *Today's Reading: Acts 11-12*

**Today's Reflection:** Acts 11:2-3 *And when Peter was come up to Jerusalem, they that were of the circumcision contended with him, Saying, Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them.*

Some things never change! Unfortunately, there are still those “of the circumcision” (those who do not understand the true freedoms of grace) who still contend (or fight) with the brethren over who it is that they meet with in ministry. I hope that for most of our readers, this non-sense is a foreign concept to you. I hope that even the thought of fighting or arguing over who we “should” reach and who we “shouldn’t” reach is as repulsive to you as it is me. However, I am sad to admit that there will probably be a good number reading this very devotion who not only recognize this kind of thinking in today’s world, but who perhaps are surrounded by it or who even willfully participate in it. Oh sure, the issue today isn’t technically circumcision or uncircumcision, but it’s still the age-old issue of legalism and grace. It is sad to think that one sector of the body of Christ can feel like they are so spiritual and doctrinally correct that they will not even consider worshiping with and ministering to another sector (a.k.a. denomination), but it happens every day, in many denominations! Before you write me off as a heretic, let me first declare that I do in fact understand the necessity of rightly dividing the Word of truth, but to date, I have yet to see anyone, and I mean ANYONE, who is able to “rightly” divide the believers! When divisions brew in the body of Christ, there is always a wrong done somewhere by somebody. It is not our job to encourage division in the body of Christ, but to encourage unity. Furthermore, we cannot be selective in who we are willing to minister to, nor from whom we are to receive ministering, so long as God has sent them into our lives. I know pastors and preachers who have been friends for years, who would no longer fellowship with one another if they gave each other full disclosure of their itineraries. Dear brethren, we must be willing and able, without fear of the brethren, to be able to share the Word wherever there is an open door, regardless of whether they are “circumcised” or “uncircumcised”. May God bring back unity in the camp lest we die!

### *Today's Reading: Acts 13-14*

**Today's Reflection:** Acts 14:2 *But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles, and made their minds evil affected against the brethren.*

This verse reveals to us the number one tactic of the devil; to make our minds “evil affected” against the brethren. Ironically, it seems to be the religious elite that are so readily available to do the devil’s bidding concerning this matter! Oh yes, this is the crowd which has a form of godliness, but who denies the power thereof. This is the crowd that is always of doubtful disposition. This is the same crowd that is always looking for the flaw in the messenger, rather than the flawlessness of the message. In other words, it does not matter to this crowd that what is being preached is absolute, undeniable truth. The only thing that matters to this crowd is that they remain “king of the hill” in the religious realm. Consider chapter thirteen, verse forty-five, which says of this same crowd, “But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming.” There are two things I wish to point out that these religious-but-lost Jews were concerned about. First, Paul was preaching grace, which was apparently too much for them to handle! Secondly, Paul’s ministry was exploding with multitudes being converted, and so the violent resorted to attempting to take the Kingdom of God back by force. Their jealousy and their ego were more important to them than was the salvation of their own souls. Today, we still have the same kinds of battles going on within the church world. If you will notice, most ministries who predominately preach on the grace of God, and who are exploding with growth, are still being spoke against and contradicted. Furthermore, most of such criticism is still coming from “unbelievers” who profess Christ, but who haven’t any actual facts to substantiate their gripes! Dear friend, has God placed someone in your life who is able to minister to you in such a powerful way that you are able to grow in the grace and the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ? If so, do not allow the enemy or his mouthpieces to cause your mind to become evil affected against the person or persons God has strategically placed in your life to bless you. Refrain from doubtful dispositions.

## Day 326

### *Today's Reading: James 1-5*

**Today's Reflection:** James 3:17 *But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.*

It is with regret that there is not enough room on this page to expound thoroughly upon this verse; nonetheless, we shall give it some consideration. Allow me to address those who are in positions of leadership in the church, who find themselves often giving advice and counsel. Hopefully, much of what we share with others has been taught to us by the Holy Spirit; however, perhaps a great portion of what we share has also been passed down by other men (or women) in our lives. What is important is that when we give counsel, it should measure up to the standards of our text. Quickly, notice with me all of the elements found in true wisdom that is from above: first, it is pure. This speaks to its lack of contamination caused by the erroneous words and wills of sinful men. Let us not allow our advice to be tainted by our own personal opinions or agendas. Second, it is peaceable. It should be guided by a determination not to prove a point, but to make peace with an otherwise offended party. Third, it is gentle. We shouldn't come across as careless, heartless, harsh, or arrogant when speaking the truth. It should be done in such a way that the hearer is as convinced of our love, as they are convinced that we speak the truth. Fourth, it should be easily intreatable. We should have such a Christ-like spirit that those we care for spiritually would never feel as if we are too difficult to approach. We should be a safe place for them to come and get wisdom; a place where they know they'll be cared for and not condemned. Fifth, full of mercy and good fruits. We should be merciful, and we should be fruit bearers, not fruit destroyers. Sixth, without partiality. There is no place to play favorites in the Kingdom of God. What is good for one is good for all. Do not give different advice to different people depending upon how much you like them. Seventh, and lastly, without hypocrisy. Although we are not going to be perfect, let us not relax in that reality! We cannot afford the luxury of being sloppier in our own walk with God than what we advise others to do. Otherwise, we become the fool!

### *Today's Reading: Acts 15-16*

**Today's Reflection:** Acts 16:25a *And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God...*

What will you do in your midnight hour? The answer to this question could be the difference between bondage and deliverance! The fact is, everyone at some point in their lives will experience a midnight season. Whether it comes in the form of a divorce, a child gone astray, the loss of a job, bankruptcy, the loss of your health, or maybe even the loss of a loved one, regardless of what it may be, these kinds of unfavorable circumstances often leave us feeling imprisoned and powerless to do anything about them. Weighed down by the pressures of such traumatic experiences, we are often so beaten down by the jerks and the jolts that we sometimes wonder if we will ever be able to sing again. Sometimes, even our prayers grow dim under the shadow of seemingly overpowering, consistent, routine blows of an enemy who would have us convinced that God may have forgotten us. But, the devil is a liar! What I admire about Paul and Silas was that in spite of the fact that they were lied on, beaten, and cast into prison (for doing the right thing, might I add), they still had a prayer, and they still had a song! Notice with me if you will that while they were praying and singing praises unto God (not complaints, but praises), all of the other prisoners were listening in! Here is a word for you; you are where you are so that when you go to praying and praising God, the others who will be listening and watching will experience deliverance as a direct result of witnessing your very own breakthrough! Faith is contagious; it cannot be spread without an ear to absorb the Word. So, since faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God, open your mouth, call upon the name of the Lord, and give Him praise right in the middle of your crisis, and He will begin to move mightily on your behalf, and on the behalf of those around you! I believe with all of my heart that it is only when we quit our whining, doubting, and pouting, and when we put on a garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness, that God really begins to move in on our behalf. You might be waiting on God, but He might be waiting on you. He has given us the power to turn things around by simply praying, and then by praising! Have you done your share lately? Why wait? Now's the time!

## Day 328

### *Today's Reading: Galatians 1-3*

**Today's Reflection:** Galatians 3:3 *Are ye so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?*

One who has truly placed his or her trust in Jesus Christ for salvation must come to an understanding that Christ is not just the author of their faith, but also the finisher! How often do Christians get confused and even afraid after they have sinned, thinking that somehow it is up to them to keep themselves saved from the wrath to come? Dear brothers and sisters, we are indeed admonished not to sin after we have put our faith in Christ, and yet we are also given the promise that when we do, Jesus Christ is our advocate, representing our case before our Heavenly Father (see 1 John 2:1). In other words, not only does He save us from our past sins, but He will also sustain our salvation through any present or future sins we may commit. Look again at what Paul wrote to us in our text, "Are ye so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?" In essence, what Paul is teaching is this; due to the fact that no flesh could be justified by keeping the law in the first place, do you really think that's going to change after placing your faith in Christ? Do you really believe that since Christ Himself is the fulfillment of the law, that He is going to place you back under the yoke and the bondage of a law that only brought condemnation in the first place? No! The only reason the law was given was to convince men of their inability to keep it, so that they would see themselves as sinners in need of a Savior! Once you trust Christ as your Savior, salvation is complete! It is not only started in Christ, but it is also finished. Therefore, our works after receiving Christ are not so that we can keep ourselves saved; our works are simply to glorify our Father, and to bring others to Him! They do not contribute one ounce of holiness or worthiness to us in terms of salvation. The only safe place for us before a holy God is not in our continued efforts, but in Christ's complete work at Calvary! No wonder Jesus said, "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." Question: Are you just free, or are you free indeed? If trying to live right couldn't save you before, what makes you think it's going to work now? It will never work, and that's why Christ had to do such a thorough work on the Cross. Trust Christ, who said, "It is finished."

### *Today's Reading: Galatians 4-6*

**Today's Reflection:** Galatians 4:1 *Now I say, That the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all;*

I do believe that this verse gives us great insight into what it means to grow in grace. If you'll study the context of our selected text, Paul is dealing specifically with the subject of law verses grace. He is using here an heir and a servant to help us understand the differences between the two. For example, consider the differences between them both at childhood; there is none! As long as the heir is a child, you can tell absolutely no difference between him and the servant. Why? Because a child will be a child! When we make this comparison, what truth is it that we are attempting to understand? It is to help us understand that when a believer first trusts Christ as Savior, he is going to take time to develop, mature, and come to a full understanding of who he is in Christ, and what his full privileges and responsibilities are as an heir. At first, it is difficult to grasp the concept, due to the fact that before Christ, he was a servant to sin, condemned under the law. But, now that he is saved by the blood of Christ, he is a new creature in the inner man, while still fighting the sinful tendencies of the flesh. As a believer, we must stop thinking of ourselves as servants to sin, and begin viewing ourselves as the heirs of God through Christ. When this mindset is fully adopted, Christians begin to grow in grace, understanding that the freedoms of grace will empower them as heirs to live above that which living as a servant beforehand simply could not afford. Why do many still try to live under the law after many years of having been members of the body of Christ? It is because they are yet children. That's why you can hardly tell any difference between a carnal Christian and an unbeliever; because the carnal Christian is still living in the spirit of the letter which condemns, rather than being liberated from that guilt and condemnation by the Spirit of grace which empowers him to live for Christ! Making the transition from law to grace is just like moving from the mindset of a servant to the mindset of an heir. I'll say this; as long as you continue to adapt to your list of do's and don'ts, you will always be enslaved. It is only when you decide to live in God's free grace that you are set free!

## Day 330

### *Today's Reading: Acts 17-18:18*

**Today's Reflection:** Acts 18:5 *And when Silas and Timotheus were come from Macedonia, Paul was pressed in the spirit, and testified to the Jews that Jesus was Christ.*

One of the keys of learning to walk in the Spirit is that of knowing when you are being pressed by Him to move this way or that. It is a fact that every minister of the Gospel who is truly called of God to preach has within them a certain amount of "inner pressure" to declare boldly the Word of God. The prophet Jeremiah described it as a burning fire shut up in his bones (Jer. 20:9). Paul described it as being pressed in the spirit. However you describe it is not as important as simply recognizing its presence and responding to its promptings. Perhaps you are like many Christians who wished that an audible voice would come out of the sky when God was speaking so that there would be no doubt that it was Him. Guess what...that's most likely not going to happen! However, for those who will look in, love all, and live by the Word of God, the Spirit of God will speak to them much like He did Elijah, in a still small voice. The next time you are around someone, and you just feel a nudge in your spirit to testify about Jesus, pay close attention to that, because that is the Holy Spirit cluing you in to the proper timing in which to be a witness. The ministry of Paul the Apostle was primarily effective because he knew how to listen to the voice of the Spirit of God everywhere he went. As a matter of fact, there were even times that Paul would have preached, but the Holy Ghost refused to let him, and then led him in a different direction. Only God knows the heart of man, and only God knows when someone is ready to receive the Word, and when they are not. It is imperative that the church gets back to seeking a Spirit-Filled life, so that our ministries will be effective in reaching this generation with the only hope they have...Jesus Christ! If you are always urged in the Spirit to open your mouth boldly to declare the Gospel, you might just be the next Paul the Apostle if you will allow the Holy Spirit to lead you in all of your ways. Answer to the call, and yield to God's will for your life today. Become the witness that you were destined to become. Live the life that God has ordained you to live. Decide that you will no longer be silent about your faith; go preach!

### *Today's Reading: 1 Thess. 1-5, 2 Thess. 1-3*

**Today's Reflection:** 1 Thess. 2:3-4 *For our exhortation was not of deceit, nor of uncleanness, nor in guile: But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts.*

What a wonderful set of guidelines given to us here of how we ought to preach the gospel! Let us break it down together, shall we? Verse 3 says, "For our exhortation was not of deceit..."; this means that our preaching should always be 100% truthful, leaving no room for misleading the congregation to benefit ourselves in any fashion. Then, it goes on to say, "...nor of uncleanness..."; this means that our preaching should always be 100% pure, leaving no room for carelessness and lack of discipline which might lead to filthy jesting or crude speech. We should also consider that a preacher is a preacher whether he is in church or not, so would this standard not apply only to our pulpit, but also our private lives outside of church? Then, it says, "...nor in guile..."; in other words, no bitterness of heart. One of the biggest challenges preachers have today is not allowing their inner frustrations to bleed through in their preaching in such a way that poison winds up in the pot. We should mount the pulpits full of the Holy Spirit so that we avoid this kind of ill-spirited "preaching". Now, notice the next portion, "But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak..." Paul is simply pointing out the fact that he never forgets the weight of responsibility entrusted to him as a preacher of the gospel. To maintain this kind of attitude alone should automatically guide us in our efforts to preach the gospel with utmost dignity and respect. Finally, he says, "...not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts." Though this may be the last point of our selected text, it is certainly not the least. As preachers of the gospel, we are never to preach so as to please men; that goes for the brethren as well! Too often I have personally witnessed preaching too easily recognized as "This is what I'm preaching because I know it's expected of me" kind of preaching. May God deliver ALL of his men from the tendency to just hit all the points they know they'll get a good hearty "amen" from the brethren on. May we preach the truth, even if it goes against the grain of the "chosen few"!

## Day 332

### *Today's Reading: Acts 18:19-19:41*

**Today's Reflection:** Acts 19:32 *Some therefore cried one thing, and some another: for the assembly was confused: and the more part knew not wherefore they were come together.*

Confusion in an assembly always leads to a crowd without a cause, a crowd without a course, and a crowd where Christ is without. Please forgive me if I seem to be a bit negative here, but it does seem that many churches today, if described, would match the description given in our selected text. There seems to be a lot of confusion, so much to the point that the greater portion of our congregations wonders why they even meet from time to time. When division gets that bad in a church, it is way past time for an old-fashioned revival! The problem is, people have a tendency to feel the need to be right, regardless of whether or not they were wrong. This creates division in our hearts that sometimes creeps in unawares. The next thing that happens is that we begin to focus on defending ourselves, rather than placing ourselves under subjection to our brothers and sisters in Christ. Then, we pretend like everything is ok, when really it isn't. That's why folks can be in the same church for thirty years and never speak to one another. May God have mercy on us all! When we get that far off focus, we really do lose sight of why we are here, don't we? Let's face it; when we get to focusing on the wrong things, we do in fact get to a place where our Sunday morning worship service is more like a mandatory routine or exercise than it is anything else. We go to church, play the part, and go home to start back on the world where we left off, if we ever left off at all. Is it any wonder that the church of our age is often referred to as the church that has a form of Godliness while denying the power thereof? Dear friends, God is never the author of confusion. When something creates division and confusion in a church or ministry, it is a direct ambush from Hell, sought to shift our focus off of what is really at stake, and what really counts. The enemy knows that if he can keep us confused and bewildered, he will win every time. But, the very second he bumps into Holy Ghost power, he's got to go. Why? Because the Holy Ghost never shows up without shedding the light of the gospel of Christ into any given situation, thereby dissipating the darkness and confusion! Let it be so now!

### *Today's Reading: 1 Corinthians 1-4*

**Today's Reflection:** 1 Cor. 3:14 *If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward.*

Oh that God would give us a work that is built to last! It is amazing to me at how much activity goes on in the church world today that yields no remaining, lasting fruit. If we are to build, then we are to build according to the specificity of God's blueprints! His Word is our guideline, and that alone. Nothing else will last. Men's traditions have failed us, leaving us bleeding and dying in the coldness of dead religion. Colleges and universities have failed us, often giving us young preachers that have unparalleled intellect, but who have no power with God. Our own agendas have failed us, causing us to crash and burn at a time when we should be doing better than ever. Economics have failed us, causing us to learn that the things which money can't buy are the things which money can't fix. Entertainment has failed us, giving us false illusions of so-called success, but leaving us still empty inside after the last song is sung and the last stage light is turned off. Politics have failed us, reminding us of how weak even our strongest leaders can be when faced with a proposal to compromise. Men have tried every gimmick, every tactic, every strategy, every approach, and every angle they can to build the work of God the way they want it built, all to no avail. Until we get back to the core principles of the Word of God which are provided to ensure endurance, stability, and consistency, then we will never see a lasting work. What good is it for a pastor to gain an audience's attention, if he has not gained their allegiance? What good is it to have a large following, if no future leaders are discipled and trained to carry on the work? What good is it to a farmer to have a field, but to sow no seed? Furthermore, what good is it, if after having sown the seed, to never water and cultivate it so it can have the opportunity to increase? So it is with the church; if we meet together every week, and the church pews are full, and we are dazzled by the professional musicians and the eloquent speakers, and yet the raw truth of the Word of God, uncompromised, is never sown or watered, what good is it? If we build our buildings, but never build our people, what good have we done? May God help us never to skip the process of laying the foundation first!

## Day 334

### *Today's Reading: 1 Corinthians 5-8*

**Today's Reflection:** 1 Cor. 6:7 *Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law one with another. Why do ye not rather take wrong? Why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded?*

Just how valuable is your friendships with your brothers and sisters in Christ? Are they more important to you than money? I certainly hope so. Here, we get a close look at a situation in the church of Corinth where Christians are suing each other in court, rather than settling things gracefully. May it not be so among us! We are asked a tough question, one which I'm not sure how many would be ready to answer, "Why do ye not rather take wrong?" The religious side of man says, "You've worked too hard for yourself to just let it go without demanding restoration!" The carnal man says, "I'm not taking that from anybody!" The flesh seems to "live for the fight" if you will. However, the question flies in the face of all natural thinking, again by asking, "Why do ye not rather take wrong?" In other words, some things are not worth fighting over. Furthermore, some things are not worth breaking fellowship over! Allow me to point out the fact that we do not have to be literally going to court against each other in order to be going "to the law one with another". Let me explain; when you are "offended" by the behavior or actions of a brother or sister in Christ, and you resort to laying down the law in a spirit of condemnation, quoting all the Bible verses that prove to them that they are wrong, and you do so without a spirit of meekness and grace, with no intent to restore, then you also have gone "to the law one with another". It is the spirit of the law that kills our fellowships today! That judgmental, pharisaical, holier-than-thou, nose-up-in-the-air, I'm better than you, you're going to Hell if you don't get right, kind of attitude that saps all the life out of what formerly was known as church. This kind of arrogance is the kind of religious pious that Christ often rebuked in His earthly ministry. Our text says it well when it emphasizes the fact that "Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you..."

Question: Are you more interested in instigating a riot, or initiating restoration? Pray with me that God will revive the church in such a way that we begin again to walk in wisdom, grace, and forgiveness.

## *Today's Reading: 1 Corinthians 9-11*

**Today's Reflection:** 1 Cor. 9:22b *...I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.*

Is it just me, or is this verse still being overlooked by the religious elite of our day? Seriously, some today would write it to say, "I am made one thing to one camp, that I might by one method save some." One of the most powerful truths I have ever learned was from a man named Scott Boatner. Here is what he said, "Are you growing in grace, or are you just adapting to your environment?" What a revelation! Just to realize that your environment is not the only environment there is can begin the process of setting you free. You see, Paul the Apostle walked with the kind of wisdom that knew how to preach a consistent message in an ever-changing world. He could not go worship with the Jews, coming to them from the perspective of a Gentile. Neither could he minister to the Gentiles, coming from the angle of a Jew. Furthermore, he did not come to the pagan worshippers with the assumption that they attended Sunday School all their lives. He knew how to approach each and every nationality, people group, and religion, meeting them where they were at, and then taking them straight to Calvary. Today, what we have been taught is how it works only in our own camps. We have in general not been given so much as a little liberty to even expand our ministry outreaches to others outside of our own camps. We therefore have no real concept of what Paul was truly saying when he said that he became all things to all men that he might by all means save some.

Unfortunately, most of us are more concerned with "sticking with our own kind" than we are reaching out with the heart of a true biblical missionary who'll preach the same Grace of God anywhere to anybody, should God open the door. It is a shame that souls will never hear the Gospel because of fear-based ministries who are afraid to "lose their support" if they dare walk through an open door of ministry that brings them beyond the boundaries that their brethren have set for them. Men and brethren, are we not called to preach the Gospel to every creature? Can we not exercise the same liberties Paul did? Paul's message never changed, and his character never changed, but his methods of approach did. May God give us the wisdom we need to reach EVERYONE!

## Day 336

### *Today's Reading: 1 Corinthians 12-14*

**Today's Reflection:** 1 Cor. 13:4a *Charity suffereth long, and is kind...*

Call me a softy if you wish, but I'd like to be known as a man with a Christ-like, kind, gentle spirit. Men who are gentle and kind are often wrongfully categorized as weak by this world's standards. However, what the world may call weak is actually categorized by scripture as a great strength. Kindness in this world is a rare thing to find, sadly even among Christians. However, if we are true followers of Christ, and if we are truly filled with the Spirit, then kindness should be exhibited in our daily lives as the rule, and not the exception. Question: have you ever allowed yourself to be unkind to someone else, excusing your behavior due to your opinion that they deserved the unkindness you sent their way? If so, join the club! If we were all to be honest with ourselves, there are times in each of our lives that we could be a little more sparing with kindness. Why do we do it? I mean, when you think about it, each of us deserve a whole lot more punishment for our sins than we have ever received because of God's grace. God has always been kind to us, not rewarding us according to our own iniquities. If God so loved us, so ought we also to love one another! It ought to be our prayer today that God would fill us with His kindness, so that we could share His love with someone who desperately needs an intervention of Grace in their life right now! It could be just one word or act of kindness that turns their whole life around. It is amazing at just how far your charity will go when you decide to let God love others through you. Sometimes I think we forget that others need just as much kindness as what we would desire to receive. The problem is, some of us were never really shown much kindness in the past, and so we've never learned how to show others the kind of kindness we personally never received. It doesn't have to be that way! Regardless of your past, receive healing for yourself by ministering Grace through kindness to another. Just because you suffered, doesn't mean you must ensure that others around you suffer as well. Go to Jesus with your pain, receive His kindness, and let the love of God begin to flow through you like never before. Your bitterness can be completely gone, and a new life can begin simply through God's love!

*Today's Reading: 1 Corinthians 15-16*

**Today's Reflection:** 1 Cor. 15:42-43 *So also is the resurrection of the dead...it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power:*

There is nothing dead that God, at His Word, can't raise from its deadness! Today, I wish to speak to those that are experiencing or have experienced a death of some sort in your life. I wish not to focus so much on the literal death of a loved one (although in the resurrection at the last day there is hope even of them who have put their faith in Christ!), but perhaps the death of a dream, a desire, an aspiration, or a vision of some sort. That thing that you had so longed for, which has not gotten better or made progress, but that has rather gotten worse, even to the point of hopelessness. Maybe there is something that you have been reaching for all your life, but that seems to drift further and further away from your grasp. I'm not even referring to selfish ambitions and sinful appetites, because for many of you, that which you long for would yield only good and health to its environment and those impacted by its success. Why is it that sometimes the most difficult accomplishments in life are those which would also be the most beneficial? Have you ever wondered why you have to fight so hard to do right? There are seasons where you feel like that when you take one step forward, you get knocked two steps back from your goal. Well, God has given me a word just for you; that which has been sown in weakness, shall be raised in power! God intentionally waits until the former is dead so that the latter can be raised in His power. God will not call that which is alive to come forth from the grave; only that which is dead. It is only when the natural is completely lifeless that the supernatural can come to life. Some reading this have been living in the tomb of your circumstance so long that not only is the thing dead which you had hoped for, but the stench of death has filled the air. At first, it was just the idea that died, but now death is creeping into your spirit, and now your whole life is becoming saturated in the odor of death. Jesus speaks to your spirit today, "Come forth!" You've been in the tomb long enough! What you thought was the end is only the beginning of new and great things in your life. Wipe the tears from your eyes, be loosed from your grave clothes, let them go, and look to Jesus, who is the author and the finisher of your faith!

## Day 338

### *Today's Reading: 2 Corinthians 1-4*

**Today's Reflection:** 2 Cor. 1:9 *But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead:*

Sometimes we pray that God will take things out of our way that He has no intentions of removing; at least not now. I say that not to discourage you, but to help you see what God made me to see in my own journey with Him. Sometimes the problems which we so desperately need for God to just fix and make go away are the very things He is going to use to strengthen our faith in Him. I probably won't get a whole lot of amen's on this next statement, but I'm afraid that we often need our problems worse than we need them fixed. Let me explain. If it were not for the struggles of life, we would never truly learn what it is to place our faith in the One and only who can do anything about them. Furthermore, if our faith is never tried and tested, then our Lord would never be pleased with us, because we are told that without faith it is impossible to please God (see Heb. 11:6)! Now, I don't like that reality any more than you do, but it is the truth none the less. So at times, God really does do us a favor through "unanswered" prayer. It is not that God is cold, heartless, cruel, or sadistic. On the contrary, He is loving and gracious, desiring to build up our most holy faith so that He indeed can remove the mountains that need moving in our lives. But, at first, don't be surprised if He leaves some of your mountains in the way so as to give your faith a good work-out. One thing is for sure; regardless of whether or not He ever gets around to removing that mountain completely away, He will always give us the grace to withstand the pressure. We will survive, and we will thrive with His grace by our side! I'm not saying that we should just accept our reality and stop praying for God to change it. By all means, pray to God and speak to the mountain that it will be removed. Meanwhile, what I am saying is that if you are living with a "sentence of death" over your head, where it looks like avoidance is impossible, then learn to live with that sentence with the kind of faith that believes that God will bring forth life even after the funeral is over! What do you do when you've prayed, fasted, wept, and pleaded with God, and the mountain is still there? Trust Him to the death, and life will come again!

### *Today's Reading: 2 Corinthians 5-9*

**Today's Reflection:** 2 Cor. 7:1 *Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.*

Do not assume that simply because you successfully abstain from fleshly sinful appetites, that you are perfecting holiness! This is a necessary discipline for any child of God who wants to please the Lord, and is commendable, but it's certainly not all there is to Christianity. Our text instructs us to be cleansed not only from the filthiness of the flesh, but also of the spirit. Have you ever seen someone who was morally clean so far as outward sins of the flesh are concerned, but who had filthy spirits? They may not steal, kill, commit adultery, drink, cuss, chew, or go out with those who do, but they have the most destructive, divisive, negative, nasty, filthy spirits you would ever even care to see. This is where man's religion can get him in trouble. Often is the case that some of the most divisive and mean spirits are found among people who have a form of godliness, but who deny the power thereof. Just because you keep more of the commandments than someone else, doesn't make you holy in the sight of God. The only way a man or woman can truly be cleansed from ALL filthiness, is to be cleansed not only of the filthiness of the flesh, but also of the spirit. I would even dare say that a cleansing of the spirit yields even more effectively a cleansing of the flesh. It is difficult to keep the flesh out of trouble when the spirit is out of sorts with God! May God cleanse us of both, so that, as the text says, we might perfect holiness in the fear of God! Living holy is more than just living up to your "thou shalt not" list, as it relates to the sins of the flesh. It always starts on the inside. How is your spirit? Is it also governed by the Spirit of God? Is a Christ-like spirit found in you? Or, is it usually tangled up with doubts, fears, and judgmental attitudes? We need a revival in our churches today that cleanses not only our hands, but also our hearts! What can wash away my sins? Nothing but the blood of Jesus! What can make me whole again? Nothing but the blood of Jesus! Oh, precious is that flow that makes me white as snow! No other fount I know; nothing but the blood of Jesus! Are you washed inside and out? Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved!

## Day 340

### *Today's Reading: 2 Corinthians 10-13*

**Today's Reflection:** 2 Cor. 12:14 *Behold, the third time I am ready to come to you; and I will not be burdensome to you: for I seek not yours but you: for the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children.*

“...for I seek not yours but you...” What an incredible choice of words to describe the heart of a true God-called pastor. This should be (and no doubt is for many) the attitude that we should have when feeding the sheep of God. Our gifts and calling should be to edify and build up the body of Christ, and not to be a drain to them. Here, Paul is not diminishing the role that the church should play in supporting their pastor, because in 1 Cor. 9:9, he quotes the Old Testament as saying, “Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn.” But what he is doing is this; he is assuring the church that his heart is in the right place! Although he would have had every right (with Biblical precedence) to expect to receive from the church for his labor in the work of the Lord, he chooses rather to illustrate in verse fifteen that “I will very gladly spend and be spent for you...” He even proves this level of commitment by practicing what he preaches. The last part of verse fifteen even says, “...though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved.” In other words, what Paul was saying in essence is this, “I am very glad to sacrifice until it hurts for you, even though the more I do it, the less it is appreciated.” Ouch for the church, and at-a-boy for Paul! Often is the case that Satan gets an advantage in the church when he turns congregation against pastor without a cause. One of the first things that is usually brought up when a congregation becomes ungrateful for their pastor is money. Often, and unfortunately, people begin to make comments like, “Well, all that preacher wants is our money!” And in some cases that may be true, but probably in more cases than not, the congregation is using an unjust balance and not considering all the facts when making such comments. My challenge for you is this; if you have a pastor whose heart is in the right place, and who knowingly and willingly goes out of his way to minister to the needs of the saints, thank God for him, and support him as much as you can! You cannot over-pay a true man of God, but you can under-support him. What will you do?

### *Today's Reading: Acts 20:1-3, Rom. 1-3*

**Today's Reflection:** Acts 20:2 *And when he had gone over those parts, and had given them much exhortation, he came into Greece,*

Paul gave the church “much exhortation”. To exhort is simply to speak in such a way as to motivate or encourage people through sound advice or counsel to do that which is good or commendable. Often in a world as crazy as ours is today, it is very tempting for leadership to discourage people from doing those things which ought not to be done, rather than encouraging them to do that which should be done. On this note, there should be a healthy balance. We get in trouble when we lose balance on this issue. Some make it their primary “ministry” to reprove and rebuke, forgetting afterwards to exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine (2 Tim. 4:2). On the other hand, some make it their entire “ministry” to exhort, forgetting also to reprove and rebuke when necessary. Why is it that with every major issue in the Bible, there seems always to be an extreme left and an extreme right, making it difficult to find anyone in the “happy medium”? As ministers of the Gospel, we are required as stewards to be found faithful with the whole council of God. We are required to walk in wisdom, for he that winneth souls is wise (Prov. 11:30). We are also told by Christ to be as wise as serpents, and harmless as doves (Matt. 10:16). This requires balance! Although the church is not only about motivational speaking, neither is it to be used solely as a battering ram! At times, our message places more emphasis on the need to repent of our wicked ways; at other times our message places more emphasis on the need to step up and be all you can be for Christ! At times, we come to church and fall under conviction for our sinful ways; at other times, we come to church to be comforted and inspired by the Holy Spirit to do something mighty for God! The truth is, at different times in life, different people need different things, and the only way we are going to be successful in ministry is by listening to the leading of the Holy Spirit, who knows exactly what everyone needs, when they need it! Quit worrying about being called a “compromiser” when God tells you to speak a motivational sermon, and quit worrying about being called a “hell fire and brimstone” preacher when a stern message of warning is to be delivered. Bring balance, and obey God!

## Day 342

### *Today's Reading: Romans 4-7*

**Today's Reflection:** Romans 5:5a *And hope maketh not ashamed...*

I understand this text to be teaching us that to have hope is to ensure an outcome that we can be proud of! It is only when we lose hope that we lose all sense of direction which then begins the downward spiral of depression, despair, and destruction. It is amazing what hope alone can produce, for when hope is all you have left, it becomes the fuel that drives you towards your destiny. Hebrews 11:1 says that faith is the substance of things hoped for. Here is another way to look at it: "The substance of things HOPED for = Faith!" This means that hope is what fuels your faith; without hope, faith does not exist. Real faith goes beyond knowing that God can; real faith goes into the realm of actually expecting God to do whatever you are hoping that He will do for you! There are lots of things that I know God CAN do if He wants to, but the real question is, do I really EXPECT God to do them? Or, have I lost hope that He will intervene? When you lose all hope, your faith has died. It is not knowledge of God's abilities that you need to work on; it is your expectation! When you begin to understand that faith is defined as the substance of things HOPED for, then you realize that HOPE is the foundation of real genuine faith. Consider this; Hebrews 11:6 says, "But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." Now, let's plug the definition of faith into the verse; "But without [the substance of things HOPED for] it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." This means that the only way to please God is to come before His presence with all the things in my life that I am hoping and believing for Him to bring to pass. The biggest testament to our lack of faith is found in James 4:2b, which says, "...ye have not, because ye ask not." We don't ask God, because we don't believe that He will. We don't believe that He will, because we don't believe that He cares. We don't believe that He cares, because we don't know who He is! If you ever learn who God really is, and not what men have said that He is, then your whole life will change! Trust HIM!

### *Today's Reading: Romans 8-10*

**Today's Reflection:** Romans 8:19 *For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God.*

All of God's creation is longing for the impact of the Glory of God which is purposed to be revealed in His children! This world is a miserable place without the light of God's glorious grace. We as Christians under-estimate far too much the significance of our God-given purpose. There is a place, a life, an environment, a jurisdiction, a geographical location, an event, a series of events, or any combination of the same, that is to be lit up by the Glory of God shining through our existence. We have been too timid with our gifts and talents in God's kingdom, hiding them under bushels, and not letting our lights shine for Him. We must lay aside our timidity, unveil the hope that is within us, and let our lights so shine before men, that they may see our good works and glorify our Father which is in Heaven! The truth is, this world is waiting desperately for you to allow God to reveal His glory in you through your unique personality, gifts, calling and opportunities. Read our text again; "For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God." When you are made manifest to this world that you are a child of God, it is because God has shone His glorious light on you to put you on display as a vessel of honor, so that His glory can be revealed in you and through you. That is why the preceding verse says, "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." You may not look like much today, but when God gets ready to reveal Himself through you, He will do so as a result of all the sufferings of this present time which have been used to prepare you to be put on display for His glory. No vessel is ready to be used until it has first gone through the fires of adversity. Do not think that you are going to die in your trial of affliction. To the contrary, you are going to come through on the other side with not so much as a smell of smoke on you, and having been tempered by the fire, you will be able to be used of God in such a capacity as is needed to fulfill the magnitude of God's divine purpose for your life. Every detail of your life at some point will be used for the sole purpose of displaying God in all of His splendor in your life!

## Day 344

### *Today's Reading: Romans 11-13*

**Today's Reflection:** Romans 11:4 *But what saith the answer of God unto him? I have reserved to myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal.*

I wish to focus on these five words spoken by God to the prophet Elijah, "I have reserved to myself..." Amazing, isn't it? Just look at the magnitude of this truth; God has people on reserve who are wholly dedicated to Him! This was true in Elijah's day, it was true in Paul's day, and it is true today. Isn't it nice to know that even when you feel all alone in the service of the Lord, that you are not really alone? This word "reserved" tells me that God is in control; not you and me! If it were up to us, we would have a lot to worry about, but thankfully it is not up to us. God has a network of believers across the globe, many who do not even know that the others exist, but at divine moments God will interconnect them to fulfill His purpose in the earth! The word "reserved" not only tells of God's control, but it also tells of His intentions. You do not place anything on reserve without first having some future use in mind for the thing you reserved. That's why God has reserved you for Himself; He has every intention of raising you up in the right place at the right time to do His will! Some of you are upset that you have been sitting on a shelf, when you should be shouting that you were on a shelf at all! The fact that you are even on the shelf indicates that there is a purpose God has in mind for you being there! Instead of pouting over inactivity, just get yourself prepared for the movement of a lifetime, because God is getting ready to use you in a mighty way if you will continue to yield your will to His! He has reserved you, and he has reserved everyone else connected to your destiny. Therefore, when He gets ready to move you into your destiny, He will also move everyone else into place, so that in the end men might all magnify the name of the Lord in the earth for the great things which HE hath done! I once heard it said that the secret of success in life is for a man to be ready for his time when it comes. When your time comes, will you still be on reserve, ready to move when God says move? Or will you be caught complaining that you didn't get the position when someone else did? May God help us all to get ready for an outpouring of His Spirit!

### *Today's Reading: Romans 14-16*

**Today's Reflection:** Romans 14:20a *For meat destroy not the work of God...*

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ, if we are not careful, we will destroy the very thing which we think we are protecting! The “issue” of the day during the time in which Paul wrote the book of Romans was whether or not Christians should eat meat that had been offered unto idols. Although that is no longer an issue for the modern church, we can take a principle from this text which can be applied to any “issue” in our day which seems to bring contention, strife, or confusion to the body of Christ. Some argue over music, some over clothing, some over hair length or style, some over this or that; you name it, in every camp or denomination, there always seems to be someone making such a big deal over the “meat” issue, that they miss the whole point, destroying the work of God rather than building it up. I ask you this; would you even think about disciplining an infant for making a mess of things? Would you not rather raise him up in a loving environment where he is supported and trained as he develops and matures in age? As we would do in the natural, so we should do in the spiritual! If you see a brother or sister who is weak in one area or another, consider the fact that they probably don't need a rebuke as much as they need a safe environment where they are loved, accepted, and given a chance to grow and mature with age and experience. Maybe, just MAYBE, we can win their respect AND give them a reason to want to come back around us when we take this approach! Too many times we are careless in our approach with others, especially when it comes to our own particular religious dogma, whatever that may be; it's different for everyone. We all have our pets of religious ideology, which if the truth be known, are primarily for cosmetics anyway. No one really lives up to what they expect everyone else to live up to. We only verbalize our expectations to pretend like we have it all together! LET'S GET REAL!! Do not destroy the work of God by destroying the trust of people around you. Earn their trust, even if it means dropping that “issue” that you got so worked up about! If you do this, you will be able to make a MUCH bigger impact for Christ in their lives that you ever could have just harping about that “meat”!

## Day 346

*Today's Reading: Acts 20:4-23:35*

**Today's Reflection:** Acts 22:11 *And when I could not see for the glory of that light, being led by the hand of them that were with me, I came into Damascus.*

Paul the Apostle was a man of destiny! We know this because God had set him apart to preach the gospel to the Gentiles. Yet, we see Paul struggling during his divine transformation to be able to see clearly. I find it true that when Christ manifests Himself and His purpose in our lives, often is the case that the light is too bright for our limited eyes to be able to process, thus placing us in a place of blindness, as it were. Has God ever shown you so much of the glory that is to be revealed in you, that it hurt your eyes to the point of blindness? Have you ever thought that you heard God speak a word to you about what He wants to do through you, and, like Sarah (Abraham's wife), because you could not SEE it, you sort of chuckled? If so, then God has given me a word for you! Even though YOU cannot see the way, does not mean that you won't get there! You see, Paul was in a very fortunate position; he had some friends that were with him. Our text says of Paul that he was "led by the hand of them that were with [him]..." I need to say this; God will always send somebody in defining moments of destiny in your life that are with you. I'm not talking about people that are just physically present, but I'm talking about people who are really WITH you...they are not just in it for the causes that you represent, but they are actually in it FOR YOU! You may not have very many, but even if it is just one or two, that is ok, because they have been hand-picked by God to help you get to the place of your destiny! I am telling you that even though YOU can't see it all clearly yet, God has others around you that he will connect with you who will be able to help SEE you through! And you will know that they are for you, because they will only be there to bless you, and not to drain you or take advantage of your vulnerability. They will recognize the call of God that is upon your life, and will give you the respect and the space you need to be able to spread your wings and fly, without becoming jealous of who you are becoming, and without trying to hold you back, run you down, talk about you behind your back, or even kill you just to get your position. Someone is on your way now!

### *Today's Reading: Acts 24-26*

**Today's Reflection:** Acts 24:23 *And he commanded a centurion to keep Paul, and to let him have liberty, and that he should forbid none of his acquaintance to minister or come unto him.*

Oh, the glorious power of God at work! It is understood that Paul was in prison for a few years here, and it goes without saying that the prisons of his day were in no way convenient or comfortable. However, there is a couple of things I want you to consider. First, if you will study the context of our passage, you will discover that Paul had enemies on every side wanting to literally kill him for his faith in Christ. So, although prison was not an ideal place in our minds, we know why Paul mentioned in Php. 1:12, "...these things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel;" The truth is, God placed him in a prison to protect him for a season from his enemies who would have killed him, if they had been able to get to him! The second thing to notice is that while he was there, he was given liberty to work with his outside ministry partners, who kept him a steady supply of ink and paper necessary to write much of what we call the New Testament today! Not to mention the food and clothing that was provided for him while in prison. It was the perfect place for God to preserve and provide for Paul the time, resources, and protection he needed to complete the writings he was called to complete. So, now for the application; you may be in a 'prison' of your own. You may be in a place of hardship that you are bound to, perhaps a situation that has you in a corner, that keeps you imprisoned, and that you can't seem to get loose from. I believe what God would have me to encourage you to do today is to look for the miracle in this moment of your life. For some, your miracle is that you have survived, and that you are still in your right mind! For some, it is a miracle that you have kept your cool, and that you have not lost your testimony in the process. Whatever it may be, rather than weeping over your imprisonment, learn to praise God for His sustaining power, protection, and provisions through it all! Paul even said, "I think myself happy..." What a great attitude! May God help us today to thank Him for the miracles of the prison, rather than complaining over the misery of the prison. You may be bound, but rest assured that God is in charge!

## Day 348

### *Today's Reading: Acts 27-28*

**Today's Reflection:** Acts 28:6a *Howbeit they looked when he should have swollen, or fallen down dead suddenly: but after they had looked a great while, and saw no harm come to him, they changed their minds...*

Isn't it interesting at just how many people have nothing better to do than to just sit around and wait for you to fall? I wish to address those of you who are in a situation where others are not offering to aid or help you in your dilemma, but rather they are getting entertainment out of watching you go through your hardships, just hoping you will die, so they can say, "I told you so!" to their buddies they have been placing bets with. Have you ever been there? If so, you're not alone! Often is the case, especially in church (can I be real?), that there are more spectators than there are companions in the ministry. It never occurs to them that you could use a little help or a little encouragement, because all they're interested in is winning their bet on how long they think you'll last! They are getting a kick out of what is draining the life out of you. Don't be surprised when you discover those in your life who are willing to stand idly by and permit you to invest everything you've got into their spiritual wellbeing, even to the point of your own demise, without showing so much as a little appreciation or concern for your wellbeing in the process. This is not a complaint; just a reality of ministry they don't teach you in Bible College! That being said, just know that when Satan bites you, and the barbarians bet on you, Christ will bring you through! God is setting you up as a spectacle, so that when what should have killed you doesn't, and what should have been the end of your ministry is just the beginning, those beholding will have a testimony against them of their perception of you as a man or a woman of God. Some will have a change of heart to the point of conversion, and others will have a change of heart to the point of confusion. These barbarians in our text were not converted; they were confused. They went from accusing Paul of being a murderer, to being a god. The point is, God will have the last laugh, and He will confirm the word of His servants. He will preserve you, and those who hate you and wish you dead, in time, will see God's hand continually on your ministry. Just let God be God in your life!

### *Today's Reading: Colossians 1-4, Philemon 1*

**Today's Reflection:** Colossians 4:17 *And say to Archippus, Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfill it.*

No one better understands the sense of urgency and the passion that first comes with the receiving of a ministry than those who have just gotten started. There you are; excited, amazed, humbled, overjoyed, optimistic, and anxious to see what God is going to accomplish in your life! These are definitely exciting days in which to live, and those are the kinds of emotions one ought to experience who is truly dedicated to fulfilling God's will for his or her life. So is the case with Archippus. The scriptures do not mention his name to my knowledge but two times, both in brief salutations. This is the first mentioning. Here, we can agree that Paul understands the temptations, stresses, and strains of life and ministry which have a way of depleting us of our initial zeal, if we are not careful! Therefore, Paul is giving a charge not only because of his knowledge of the challenges Archippus will face, but also because of the things he is yet to learn in the process! It is possible to have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge (see Rom. 10:2)! Let's just be honest, when we first start in ministry, we are naïve. So naïve, as a matter of fact, that we are blinded to the things we will suffer down the road for the name of Christ. If we knew going in exactly what it would take to do ministry, most of us would not have been that excited about getting started in the first place! It is to this end that Paul is emphasizing the importance of having a commitment to fulfill, or to finish, the ministry that God has entrusted to us. I ask you this question; you may have started off good, but will you finish? Will you fulfill the mission that God has laid out, even after the newness wears off, and even after you find yourself at times with more hardships, trials, and afflictions than what you anticipated? Do not be surprised when you are bitten by the wolves, for Christ sent us into the midst of them! This is a challenge for all of us in ministry, to walk in wisdom and humility. To let the Holy Spirit teach us what we need to know in order to survive and thrive even in hostile environments, to learn how to respond to haters with dignity and grace, and to accept the challenges as they come. To finish well!

## Day 350

### *Today's Reading: Ephesians 1-6*

**Today's Reflection:** Ephesians 3:9a *And to make all men see...*

What I love about this portion of scripture is the use of the word “all”. Paul’s vision was the world! If you read about his life in the scriptures, you will discover that he was more than just talk. He literally “fought Hell by the acre” as some would say, just to be able to finish his course. What drives a man to the point in his heart and mind where he will stop at nothing to fulfill the mission entrusted to his care? What makes a man, who was tortured, shipwrecked, imprisoned, abused, betrayed, and plotted against during his entire ministry, say something like, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”? Seriously, the man would not cower, bend, bow, or quit at nothing! The only time he quit was when he was martyred for the name of Christ, and that’s because he had no choice! And even now, he being dead yet speaketh! What I’m attempting to point out is the level of passion and commitment Paul had in fulfilling his mission! I believe that if Paul had what we call a “mission statement”, it would be this; To make all men see! I truly believe that what made Paul’s ministry so powerful was the drive that was put in him the day Jesus saved him and put him in the ministry. That drive was fueled by what Paul saw for the first time in his entire life; a Jesus that was not defined by religion, nor halted by death. The same can be true for us; if we were to see Jesus in all of HIS glory, minus our preconceived ideas of who He is, and if we could see Him ALIVE and WELL, then we too would adopt this mission statement, “To make all men see”! As a matter of fact, the more I SEE Him, the more I burn with passion to help others see Him even as I have. Those of you who have spent some time in His presence understand what I am talking about. The truth is, most people who even grow up in church hear about Jesus, read about Jesus, and talk about Jesus, but never really SEE Him for who He is! Oh that we may KNOW Him! Oh that we might taste of the POWER of His resurrection, and that we might partake in the FELLOWSHIP of His sufferings. If you ever get a real close glimpse of HIM, you will never be the same, and you’ll want to spend the rest of your days making other men see Him as well! And for those of you who would like to see me just quit, sorry, but I’ve seen too much to be quiet!

### *Today's Reading: Philippians 1-4*

**Today's Reflection:** Philippians 3:14a *I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.*

There is something that Paul is after here. Let's deal with this verse in reverse order if you don't mind. Let's talk about the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. This reveals for us the why; why is Paul pressing? He is pressing because he has been given a high calling! It is important to know that you are called of God before you endeavor to weigh into spiritual warfare against principalities, powers, rulers of the darkness of this world, and against spiritual wickedness in high places...just saying! Now that we know he is called, let us consider the prize. What could be the prize for fulfilling your God-given assignment? May I suggest that it is to be able to hear the words of the Lord saying, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant!" Paul considered this to be a sufficient pay-off, as he declared in 2 Tim. 4:7-8a, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness..." The prize then is to finish well in the eyes of Christ our Master. Now, let us consider the mark he is pressing towards. The mark is that moment in time in which he knows he has finished well, and has obtained the prize. And finally, let us focus on the pressing. Paul understood that the only way he was going to get there was by pressing. He said "I press..." Question: Are you pressing? To press is to act upon with steadily applied weight or force. To fulfill your calling is not to sit idly by and just watch it drop in your lap. You have to apply pressure in the direction of your destiny, because nothing moves without pressure. Jesus even spoke of the pressure that Hell itself would undertake by those moving into their destiny, when He said, "Upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it." This literally means that Hell itself shall not be able to withstand the pressure applied by those busting through its gates! To resist the devil so that he will flee is to return the pressure through the power of Christ in you! Fight back! Fight forward! Put the devil on the run! Resist the devil, and he will flee from you! You will always have to apply pressure to move forward, but if you run so that you may obtain, God will grant you the sweet cup of victory every time! PRESS ON!

## Day 352

### *Today's Reading: 1 Timothy 1-6*

**Today's Reflection:** 1 Timothy 1:18 *This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by them mightest war a good warfare;*

A prophetic word from God projects vision, focus, and expectation. You will know when the prophecy is of God whenever the prophecy is consistent with the Word of God, and when it is consistent with what the Spirit of God is speaking to your spirit. When God speaks a word over you, it is to the end that you may begin to live by, or go by, that vision. It is important to know how to respond to God's promises, because if you don't learn how to respond to His promises, then you will never learn how to receive His promises! I will go a step further by saying that to respond appropriately IS to receive appropriately. Let me explain. When most people think of receiving the promises of God in full, they think it is all going to happen in an instance. They think that everything is going to come all at once. But what they don't realize is that to receive all of God's promises and plans for your life is to do so in process of time. God gives in phases. He moves us from faith to faith, and from glory to glory. He promotes us one level at a time. He entrusts to us one responsibility at a time. He trains us one lesson at a time. And in process of time, as we grow and mature, the blessings we receive of Him come in one package at a time. He does not give it all to us at once. He prepares us for our place, while simultaneously preparing our place for us. If we will just learn that to receive is not just to pray a quick "Ok, Lord, I receive it in Jesus' name!" prayer, but to live every day from then on out in full faith and assurance that what God said shall surely come to pass, then we shall truly be able to receive it as it comes and as it unfolds before our very eyes, because it is the hope of the promise that pushes us towards our destiny! It is the faith that we exemplify in our daily walk with God that truly creates the atmosphere in which God can bring on the blessing in its fullest manifestation. So, when are you going to start taking baby steps towards your prophecy? When are you going to make life decisions in faith, based upon what God has spoken to you about His plans for your life? This is how you prove to Him that you are receiving, is by trusting Him even when you don't see how it's going to play out!

## *Today's Reading: Titus 1-3*

**Today's Reflection:** Titus 2:15 *These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee.*

As Paul addresses another one of his sons in the faith, Titus, he exhorts him just as he did Timothy to let no man despise him. To Timothy, he put it this way, "Let no man despise thy youth..." Two young men have been given the same exhortation in the ministry, which shows us that there is a very significant truth to learn early on in ministry. The lesson is this; we are not to conduct ourselves in such a way that others could justifiably despise, or resent or find fault with, our leadership. This requires two key elements in our leadership; first, we are to be an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, and in purity (1 Tim. 4:12). Second, we are to be so confident in our calling, that we offer no hesitation in exercising the fullest authority that comes with that calling. This means that we are, as our text says, to speak, exhort, and rebuke with ALL authority. It is time that we as leaders rise up in our calling with the godly character and conduct required to set things in order at the house of God without reservation or hesitation. We must get past the barrier of intimidation that Satan throws at us as we lead the flock of God into all truth and in the service of the Lord. We must stand flat-footed, with head held high, with shoulders squared back, with strength in our backbone, with clarity in our voice, and with eyes full of fire, to declare what thus saith the Word of the Lord, right in the middle of this wicked and perverse generation. We are to be wise as serpents, harmless as doves, and bold as lions in our leadership. Young men of the gospel, take the lead that God has given you, and do just that, LEAD! If God wanted others to lead, He would have promoted them, but He didn't! He picked YOU! Stand up, be strong and courageous, look the devil in the eyes, and stare him down if you have to, but lead with full confidence and assurance that the Lord will stand by you and with you! No matter what you are facing, and no matter whether or not you feel you are experienced enough, old enough, or respected enough, if God called you to the task, trust His pick, and unapologetically operate in the fullest authority of your calling, and God will help you become the giant of faith that you need to be!

## Day 354

### *Today's Reading: 1 Peter 1-5*

**Today's Reflection:** 1 Peter 3:9 *Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing.*

It's easy to bless those who bless you. However, to bless those who render evil is another story. Isn't it amazing that this Peter who is writing to us about blessing people in return for their evil treatment of us, is the same Peter that cut off a soldier's ear trying to protect Jesus from being taken away to be crucified? But then, that's what the cross does; it nails the old sinful man to the cross. Even so, through the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, Peter himself experienced his own personal and spiritual death, burial, and resurrection. The Peter we see now is the Peter AFTER the cross! Now we see a man with a Christ-like spirit; a man that will later in life prefer to be crucified upside down so as not to be crucified in the same fashion as his Lord, because he stated he was not worthy to be crucified that way. He went from that of taking matters into his own hands, to that of laying his own life down for the cause of Christ. He went from being a fighter to being a lover. He went from looking for ways to get even, to looking for ways to bless those who mistreated him. He went from resisting the way of the cross, to embracing the way of the cross. He finally understood that you cannot enjoy the power of the resurrection until you have suffered the way of the cross. So it is for us; until we decide that we are going to travel the path less trodden, and become Christ-like in our response to the way others treat us, we will never know the resurrection power of Christ in our personal lives or ministry. It is only AFTER the cross (taking up your cross and following Jesus) that you will inherit the blessing. When we quit whining because of our sufferings, and accept the fact that we are called thereunto, only then can God truly release the fullest of His blessings and anointing upon our lives. And now, I wish to speak to those of you who have been doing just that; you've been loving your enemies, blessing them that curse you, doing good to them that hate you, and praying for them which spitefully use you and persecute you. You need to know that you have inherited your blessing, and that it is on its way! Christ will not allow you to suffer with Him, without also reigning with Him (2 Tim. 2:12a)!

*Today's Reading: Hebrews 1-6*

**Today's Reflection:** Hebrews 5:8 *Though he [Jesus] were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered;*

Son-ship comes with both its privileges and responsibilities. Do not think that just because you are a son of God, that you will avoid the hardships required to instill into your inner man what it takes to appropriately live up to your family name! Some look at Jesus when He is healing people and raising people from the dead, and think to themselves, "Yea, that's easy for Him to do, He's Jesus! He's God's son!" But what they don't realize is the price of suffering He paid in order to be able to be given that name that is above every name! Many people only see the Jesus who fed the multitudes, but never really get a close-up of the Christ of Calvary. Christ was given the kind of favor that is unparalleled in eternity past or eternity future; why? Because He learned obedience by the things which He suffered! In like manner, we need to stop thinking to ourselves, "I'm a child of the King...I'm not supposed to be treated this way!" If you bear the weight of son-ship in the family of God, you will have your privileges indeed, but you will also have your responsibilities! There is a price to pay to be promoted by God, and to be favored by God! I'm not talking about lying down and letting the enemy run over you; I'm talking about accepting the path that God has chosen for you, even if it means taking the path of MOST resistance! One thing is for sure; your reward will be in direct proportion to your level of suffering you have gone through for His names' sake. If you can't take up your cross, then you won't get that resurrection power that comes afterwards. Being a child of God is much better than being a child of the devil ANY day, but let me tell you, those who truly follow God know that it is not a cake walk! True obedience to God requires great discipline to say no to self, Satan, society, and everything else that would oppose His direction for your life. True obedience does not ask permission or check in with your circumstances, your bank account, your associates, your brethren, your family, or even your own personal preferences. True obedience pushes the Abraham inside of you to be willing to lay his Isaac on the altar if need be to ensure that God's will be done. Are you found in obedience today? If so, look for the promotion!

## Day 356

### *Today's Reading: Hebrews 7-10*

**Today's Reflection:** Hebrews 7: 9-10 *And as I may so say, Levi also, who receiveth tithes, payed tithes in Abraham. For he [Levi] was yet in the loins of his father [Abraham], when Melchisedec met him.* [Brackets] added for clarification.

Wow! This is one LOADED passage!! Allow me to summarize it for you; Levi (Abraham's descendent) was blessed with the *receiving* of tithes, all because his forefather Abraham *paid* tithes to Melchisedec. This is such a powerful principle that it is mind-boggling! To think that what one man does by faith will not only reap benefits to himself in his lifetime, but also to his descendants way down the line, makes serving God even that much more worth the journey! That is why we **MUST** stop just thinking about ourselves; future generations are at stake! If we want our children and grandchildren to "have it better than we did", and to reap a harvest of blessings, then we must sow those seeds of blessings today. I am afraid that we have overlooked the significance and weight of the tithe covenant. It is **NOT** about the money; it is about a covenant-keeping God who wants to bless us both now, and for generations to come! It is not how much your offering adds up to, but what it represents that counts the most. When we tithe (give 10% of our income) to the Lord in worship, it is not what we are losing monetarily, but what we are gaining spiritually both for ourselves, and for our children. Oh sure, God will bless you financially for giving, but the true blessings are so much richer than what money alone can buy! So, here's what we need to do; the next time we pay our tithes, we need to understand that they only symbolize and illustrate our faith in the same God who promised Abraham that in blessing He would bless him, and in multiplying He would multiply him, and make his seed (descendants) as the sand of the seashore for number. On one occasion He even promised that in his seed all the nations of the earth would be blessed. Has not this prophecy already partially been fulfilled? Has not the gospel of Jesus Christ (a descendant of Abraham) touched in some fashion every nation on the planet? And the best is yet to come! So, even as God blessed Abraham for tithing and for believing, He will release the covenantal blessings in our lives if we both tithe and believe God ourselves!

*Today's Reading: Hebrews 11-13*

**Today's Reflection:** Hebrews 11:3 *Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.*

“Things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.” In other words, things which are visible and tangible are not created by other things which are visible and tangible. Think about it; everything is perceived with a thought, projected with a word, and procured with faith in that word. That is why faith comes by hearing the word of God. We do not simply believe; we believe IN SOMETHING. Faith has an object. Our faith should be grounded in what God has said. Companies are built upon words of men with great vision. Why? Because people place confidence in men's words, and therefore join their causes.

Governments are formed by men of influence. Why? Because those same leaders understand the weight of words that are believable. Leaders know that if they can get you to BELIEVE what they are saying, they can also get you to DO what they want you to do. Everybody believes in something. What do you believe in? Show me what you are DOING, and I'll show you what you BELIEVE! Which leads me to my main point; what do you DO in efforts to effect change in your world? If what you are DOING to effect change is not working, then perhaps your FAITH is being placed in the wrong area. In order to get the visible and tangible circumstances of life to change, we MUST place our faith in an invisible God who can move mountains. Again, our text says, “Things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.” That means that whatever is tangible and visible in your life was birthed FIRST in the spiritual realm. So, in order to get it to move, we must wage warfare against it in the spiritual realm. If you can get it moving in the spirit world, it will manifestly move in the natural world. This explains why you hear stories of former cancer patients walking away from the X-Ray room with a clean bill of health; someone placed their faith in the Word of God, spoke that Word in faith into the spiritual realm, and moved the mountain of cancer from the natural body. I'm telling you today that you will get nowhere fighting the tangible; do battle on your knees with God's Word as your sword, and things will begin to move in your life!

## Day 358

### *Today's Reading: 2 Timothy 1-4*

**Today's Reflection:** 2 Timothy 1:16 *The Lord give mercy unto the house of Onesiphorus; for he oft refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain:*

As a preacher of the Gospel, I understand full well what it means to have those who, for all practical purposes, are only with you when it makes them look good. In other words, they are with you in word only (of course, just when they're around you), but not in deed. You learn real quickly who your real friends are by sitting back and observing who will stand with you when the religious "elite" put their proverbial chains on you to try to bind you down. If you have friends who become afraid to be associated with you because of your "bonds" and "afflictions" for Christ, then my friend, you have just found yourself someone who is more loyal to those who want you bound than they are to you. Ministry has no place for spineless companions. When you're in the heat of the battle, that is not the time to be figuring out who is really with you and who isn't. Although that happens no matter how hard you try to prevent it, you learn eventually to be able to discern who you can trust and who you can't. Here, Paul gives us an honorable mentioning of one of his "true blue" friends. Onesiphorus was said to have "refreshed" Paul often, and more importantly, he was not ashamed of Paul's bonds. In other words, it made no difference to Onesiphorus what everybody else was saying about Paul, nor what they were doing to him. Onesiphorus simply saw Paul for who he really was, an anointed man of God, and then did his duty to aid Paul in his ministry, even at the "expense" of being publicly affiliated with him. Isn't it funny at just how big the difference is between how many "public" friends you have in ministry, verses how many "secret" friends you have? You know what I mean; those "secret" friends who smooch up to you in private conversations, but if caught around others who do not like you, would change their entire attitude towards you in a flash. Oh yes, some of you may be shocked that this kind of thing happens in ministry; don't be! Wherever there are humans, there will be two-facedness. My challenge for you is, don't be one of them! Find you a man of God that needs refreshing, and aid him in his cause, and stand WITH him even in bonds!

*Today's Reading: 2 Peter 1-3, Jude 1*

**Today's Reflection:** 2 Peter 1:21 *For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.*

If there is a part of our legacy of faith that we need reviving in our day, it is that holy men of God would again speak as they are moved by the Holy Ghost. Question; when you preach, what moves you to say what you say? Is it personal opinion? Is it other's expectations? Is it what others have said that you feel compelled to repeat because it sounds good to you? Is it tradition that compels you to speak? Is it applause that motivates you? Is it money that is the driving force that molds your messages? Is it religious peer pressure? Is it a fear of being exiled from the fellowship that shapes your words? Is it revenge that controls your tongue? Could it be a need to be heard that drives you, because you've never been heard before, and now is your chance to be in the spot light? Is it your hunger for power, or your lust for control? I ask again, what moves you, or what motivates you to say what you say when you stand to speak to God's people? These questions need to be answered honestly and thoroughly by every person who professes to be a God-called preacher. What we ought to be willing to do is not speak at all if what we are saying is not guided by the leading of the Blessed Holy Ghost. However, I'm afraid that a great deal of "man-made" sermons are "preached" across the world Sunday after Sunday, hence one of the primary reasons a good number of churches are not revived, no matter what style, method, denomination, gimmick, trinket, or program they claim or adopt. We've tried everything! Here's an idea; what about preaching only what the Bible says, as we are moved only by the Holy Ghost? Too old-fashioned? I think not! Some things never change; one of those being our need for Holy Ghost filled preaching of the Word of God. I would suggest that if more of our pulpits were filled with the Holy Ghost, then more of our pews would also be filled with the Holy Ghost! May God grace us one more time with some holy men of God who will speak as they are moved by His Spirit, and His Spirit alone! I can't speak for anyone else, but I personally have heard enough of men's opinions, men's agendas, men's religions, and men's boastings!

## Day 360

### *Today's Reading: 1 John 1-5*

**Today's Reflection:** 1 John 3:12 *Not as Cain, who was of that wicket one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous.*

Cain is still killing Abel! What a metaphor from which we can learn just how we should expect to be treated by those who are at enmity with us. If you are a believer, and have yet to encounter hatred for your faith and good standing with God, just keep serving the Lord, and it will come! You see, some people would rather “kill” you, than to learn how to be in just as good a standing with the Lord as you are! That’s why the more you are blessed, the more you are hated. Oddly enough, we as believers not only receive hatred from unbelievers, but also from some of the “brethren” as well. When you come across someone who cannot celebrate your successes and be glad for you when you are blessed, then you have found a “Cain” in the midst. Cain cannot bear the thought of someone else doing better than him, so he will do whatever it takes, even to the point of becoming destructive, to rid you of your chance to succeed, and to steal the spotlight for himself. Cain is the person in your life that has always been jealous of you, and who cannot stand to see you doing well for yourself. Cain is that person that must degrade you in order to make himself look better. Cain is that person who will forsake the rules of the game to get to the top, no matter who he must step on, hurt, or crush to get there. Why does Cain act like this? The Bible tells us plainly that it is because his own works were evil, and his brother’s works were righteous. Cain has not yet learned that demoting you will never promote him. Oh, how blind a religious man can become in an effort to promote his own self-righteousness. He can literally get to a place to where he will kill others, thinking that he is doing God a service. How many Cains have you seen who are readily willing to “kill” others, all in the name of their own religious dogma, thinking that God would be proud of them? Well, now that we have pointed out what the spirit of Cain would look like, the only question that is really important at this point in our reading today is this; are you Cain, or Abel? Are you going about seeking to Glorify God, or seeking the glory of man? If you are found guilty today, turn to Christ for forgiveness while there is time!

### *Today's Reading: 2 John 1, 3 John 1*

**Today's Reflection:** 3 John 1:10 *Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church.*

Diotrephes has issues! His issues stem from what verse nine tells us, that he “loveth to have the preeminence”. In other words, he just had to be number one at all times. This kind of Diotrephes spirit often rises up its ugly head in any situation where it recognizes that God is doing a work, and thus feels the need to fight. Satan always finds someone he can try to use to become a distraction, and to sow discord among the brethren. However, I wish not to focus so much on verse nine, but verse ten, which shows us how this spirit should be dealt with in the church. Paul says, “...if I come, I will remember his deeds...” In other words, Paul is not going to simply over-look or ignore the problem. He is going to deal with it. Any time there is a divisive spirit manifesting itself through someone in the church, it must be dealt with by Spirit-filled, strong leadership. If you ignore it, it will not go away; instead, it will just grow on you and get bigger! That is why it needs to be stopped; otherwise it will become a monster and do irreversible damage to the body of Christ. It is interesting that this spirit is so possessive and self-centered that it will not allow you to be friends and fellowship with anyone it don't approve of. If you do, you will be next on its “X” list. It's not just happy talking about and running down its list of hated individuals, but it will dare anyone who dis-agrees with its discourse to do anything about it. It especially thrives through intimidation. If you have someone in your church who uses intimidation to promote himself into authority, without any character to back him, then you have identified a Diotrephes spirit. My advice to any pastor or church leader facing this in your church; don't be intimidated! They may talk, and they may divide, but if you will rise up as the leader of your church in a boldness guided by the Spirit of God, you can overcome this divisive spirit. You may lose some in the process, but in the end, you will win so many more than you lost, simply because a kingdom divided against itself shall not stand!

## Day 362

### *Today's Reading: Revelation 1-5*

**Today's Reflection:** Revelation 3:11 *Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.*

Is Jesus teaching us that, if we're not careful, other men can end up with the crown that we should have obtained? Exactly! There is a crown for our taking, but we must run in order to obtain (1 Cor. 9:24). One of the tendencies of the human nature is to sit idle while we should be moving. Often is the case that the Christian is stifled both in his progress and in his spiritual growth by this natural tendency. What's worse is we can convince ourselves that we're doing the right thing when we sit around and pretend like we're "waiting on the Lord". Don't get me wrong; there are times in our walk with the Lord that we should just "stand still", but I have discovered both through experience and in my studies that this is the exception rather than the rule. More often, God would have us MOVING in faith to what He has already promised and commanded. Sometimes we wait on the Lord to speak to us in that still small voice, when He's already given us a steady, strong verse of scripture for our direction. Jesus' voice is not just for us to fall in love with hearing, but also for us to fall in love with obeying; for if we begin not to obey, He may choose not to speak. Have you heard the voice of God lately? If not, could it be because you did not heed His voice the last time He spoke? Let us not forget what we are taught in 1 Sam. 15:22b, "...Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." What this means is, it is better to simply do what the Word says, than to go through all of the outward motions of religious ceremony and ritual, and yet be void of any real commitment to the voice of the Lord. Sometimes we can get so addicted to religious activity that we mistake that activity for obedience. The true test of our faith in what God has spoken to us is this; will we still be striving to trust and obey His voice, even after the initial experience of Him speaking to us has long passed? Think of Noah, for example; God spoke to him about building the ark, and so he trusted what he heard God speak for the next 120 years. I am not saying that God never spoke to him again during that time, but it sure makes you wonder how dedicated we would be, and how long we would remain committed to what God wants us to do. What about you?

### *Today's Reading: Revelation 6-11*

**Today's Reflection:** Revelation 6:16-17 *And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?*

There is still coming a day that every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord! It does not matter who it is that rises to power and influences men to blaspheme the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; God will have the last word. No matter how foolish this seems to some who may be reading it, let this be your warning to make preparations to meet God. For you see, the same Jesus that this world has chosen to reject and forsake, is the same Jesus who came before in meekness and grace, but the next time will come in strength and power. Trust me when I tell you, you do not want to face Him in His wrath! Not a believer? You will be, either sooner or later, but you do have the choice to put your faith in Christ today, so as to avoid the wrath of God and the pending judgment that is scheduled to come upon all the earth for their wickedness. Not fair, you say? To the contrary; God has done everything divinely and humanly possible in order for you to be saved, so if you face Him in His wrath, it will be of your own choosing. The good news is we are, at the time of this writing, still in the day of Grace. Jesus died for everyone who will believe in Him and trust Him to forgive them of their sins and make them His own. Dear reader, would you accept Christ's forgiveness right there where you are today? The Bible teaches that whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. If you will call on Him right now, by faith, He will come into your heart, forgive you of your sins, purchase you with His blood, and make you a permanent member of His family, forever secured and accepted in Him from this day forward. Why worry about the pending judgment day the world has yet to face, when you can get it settled in your heart right now? Go ahead, call on Him! He will do what He said He will do! Trusting Jesus as your Savior will be the best decision you will ever make in a lifetime. If you just trusted Christ, please let us know of your decision by emailing us at [floodgatesofheaven1@gmail.com](mailto:floodgatesofheaven1@gmail.com). We would be glad to hear from you and share more info with you!

## Day 364

### *Today's Reading: Revelation 12-18*

**Today's Reflection:** Revelation 16:5-6 *And I heard the angel of the waters say, Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and wast, and shalt be, because thou hast judged thus. For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou has given them blood to drink; for they are worthy.*

Talk about reaping and sowing! Can you imagine what a horrible day that will be for the inhabitants of Earth? By this time, the anti-christ will have already risen to power, and the nations of the world under a one-world government and one-world religion will have gone completely hostile towards the Christian faith. Furthermore, the number of martyrs will grow exponentially from what it is even today at the time of this writing. By this time, if you do not take the mark of the beast, indicating your allegiance to and worship of the anti-christ, then you will be executed. What happens next cannot even be depicted accurately in a horror movie; God Himself will release His angel to turn the water into blood, by reason of the blood of saints and prophets who have been slain by wicked men. Before you cry, "That's a bit harsh, don't you think?" I would strongly suggest that you get on God's side and work FOR Him and His people, and not against them! The Bible here actually says that, because of the sins of those who martyred Christians, they are worthy of their punishment. So, I'd think twice before I decided to make war with God or His people! There is a reckoning day coming, and every man, woman, boy, and girl shall stand before a Holy and Righteous God, who will judge all for the deeds they have done upon this planet. This may be a little "stout" for a devotional; so be it! God is SO gracious to give us fair warning of the wrath which is to come, because He has given us a space to repent. The Bible says of Jesus Christ (Acts 4:12), "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." Jesus Christ is the only way to Heaven, because He took your Hell on the cross. All you must do is accept His free gift of salvation in repentance of your sins. If you will put your faith in Christ, and Him alone, then you will be spared from this great day of wrath which shall come upon the Earth before the Second coming of Christ. Are you sure where you stand with God? You can be!

### *Today's Reading: Revelation 19-22*

**Today's Reflection:** Revelation 21:4 *And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.*

“For the former things are passed away.” From the beginning of time, our Creator God has been calling us beyond; beyond where we’ve been, beyond what we’ve done, and even beyond where we are today. At what point does He stop calling us closer to Himself? At what point does He stop leading us further away from that which pales in comparison to His presence? Answer: Never! From the first cry in the garden, “Adam, where art thou?” to the cry on the cross, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!” to His cry in Rev. 22:17, where it is written, “And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.” God is ever showing us of His passionate desire to be reunited in fellowship with His fallen creation. He was so heart-broken over the trouble we got ourselves in that He took it upon Himself to become the ultimate sacrifice for sins, so that once and for all sin would never separate us from His presence again! What can separate us from His love? According to the scriptures, nothing shall be able to do so! You can trace His love for us from before the foundations of the world to the beginning of a new era in our text, where time shall be no more. In that great day, we are told that “...God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.” In other words, God will ever be calling us into the perfection of His presence until that day comes where all that we have known on this side of Heaven, as it relates to pain, sickness, death, and suffering, shall be forever in the past, never to sorrow our hearts any more. Dear reader, can you see that special place Jesus was talking about in the gospels when He said, “I go to prepare a place for you.”? Only know this; there is but one way through which we can get there. Jesus said it like this in John 10:9, “I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.” You are invited; please come!

# Floodgates of Heaven

**Floodgates of Heaven** is written to inspire everyone to read the Bible every day. We have formatted it so that when the daily reading is followed consistently, one will have read the entire Bible through in one year. Along with each day's reading will be a reflection; something that stood out the most to the author during his personal devotional time. This is one of the most unique Bible study aids, as you get both a daily Bible reading plan as well as a related "devotional" for each day of the year; a two-in-one combo!

Our main purpose is to encourage our readers to develop a healthy habit of getting into the Word of God; therefore, this book is provided as more than just a "devotional." You are encouraged to read the entire passage(s) listed at the top of each day for maximum benefit! Hopefully, our thoughts will only open your eyes to some of the tremendous truths that can be derived from any portion of Scripture, no matter where the reference!

As you begin your journey with us through the Bible, you will discover that the Holy Spirit will show you things in the Word that you have never seen before. When this happens, we encourage you to write them down in your own journal so that you can look back on them from time to time. You will be amazed at what a difference this process will make in your spiritual growth!

Our prayer is that you will be blessed by this ministry. May the Lord richly bless you in your Bible reading!

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