

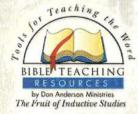
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# A GREAT WHILE BEFORE DAY

Volume VIII

Daily Devotional

by Don Anderson P.O. Box 6611 Tyler, Texas 75711-6611 (903) 939-1201 or Toll-free 1-877-326-7729

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Scripture quotations are noted within the text.

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# **Bible Teaching Resources**

# by Don Anderson Ministries

# What Do We Do?

Formed in 1972 as a nonprofit organization, the Ministries is dedicated to excellence in the communication of the Scripture, camping, and counseling. Our ministry verse is Colossians 3:11b: "*Christ is all and in all*." This, perhaps more than any other verse, sums up the Ministries' philosophy.

Communicating God's Word accurately and clearly is our primary focus. Bible classes are held annually in more than 20 cities in Texas, Arkansas, Oklahoma, and Louisiana. These classes – conducted in homes, businesses, banks, cafeterias, and public auditoriums – open and free of charge to anyone who is interested in learning more about the Scripture and its relevance to daily life. By design, class environments are warm, friendly, and non-threatening.

Believing that biblical principles can be effectively communicated in informal settings, the Ministries conducts fun-filled conferences and retreats throughout the year. Each event is intended to be an oasis of fun, fellowship, relaxation, and renewal – as well as a time of solid Christian growth.

Because our goal is to convey the Good News of Jesus Christ to as many people as possible, the Ministries' media division produces biblically-based messages on cassette and CD. Marriage video and CD series are also available. The Ministries' team also distributes Don's many books. These widely circulated resources for teaching, study, and spiritual enrichment are listed in our media catalog and are available at nominal cost from our office. A quarterly magazine, *The Grapevine*, is sent without cost to anyone requesting to be on our mailing list. Hundreds of copies of Don's series, *How to Become a Christian*, have been given out in classes, camps, and conferences, or mailed from the office through the years. There is never a charge for this timely series and our constant prayer is that it will be used to bring others into a relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

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# A GREAT WHILE BEFORE DAY

he gospel writer Mark records that Jesus "rising up a great while before day... went out and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed." (1:35 KJV). Whenever and wherever you spend your time with the Father each day, we hope that these devotional verses and thoughts will be encouraging. Each Scripture selection from the New Testament comes from the NET Bible unless otherwise noted.

# **JANUARY**

January 1 — Genesis 4:6-7

Then the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry, and why is your expression downcast? Is it not true that if you do what is right, you will be fine? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at the door. It desires to dominate you, but you must suppress it."

Lord, I am weak but you are strong. Did we in our own strength confide, our striving would be losing? Thank You so much for the precious promise of 1 Corinthians 10:13: "But remember that the temptations that come into your life are no different from what others experience. And God is faithful. He will keep the temptation from becoming so strong that you can't stand up against it. When you are tempted, he will show you a way out so that you will not give in to it" (NLT).

**January 2** — **Genesis 5:23-24** 

The entire lifetime of Enoch was three hundred and sixty-five years. Enoch walked with God, and then he disappeared because God took him away.

Lord, I know that it delights Your heart when we take time daily to have fellowship with You. I can just hear You saying to Enoch: "Enoch, we've walked so far together. Why don't we just go on to My house?" Zephaniah 3:17: "For the LORD your God has arrived to live among you. He is a

mighty savior. He will rejoice over you with great gladness. With his love, he will calm all your fears. He will exult over you by singing a happy song" (NLT).

# January 3 — Genesis 6:5-6

But the LORD saw that the wickedness of mankind had become great on the earth. Every inclination of the thoughts of their minds was only evil all the time. The LORD regretted that he had made mankind on the earth, and he was highly offended.

Lord, I am a man of unclean lips and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips. The cry of the psalmist is: "Trust me in your times of trouble, and I will rescue you, and you will give me glory" (Psalm 50:15 NLT). Romans 1:24, 25 describes our condition: "So God let them go ahead and do whatever shameful things their hearts desired. As a result, they did vile and degrading things with each other's bodies. Instead of believing what they knew was the truth about God, they deliberately chose to believe lies. So they worshiped the things God made but not the Creator himself, who is to be praised forever. Amen" (NLT).

# January 4 — Genesis 6:11

# The earth was ruined in the sight of God; the earth was filled with violence.

Lord, what a timely reminder of the certainty of judgment. The words of 2 Peter 3:11-14 are on my heart today: "Since everything around us is going to melt away, what holy, godly lives you should be living! You should look forward to that day and hurry it along—the day when God will set the heavens on fire and the elements will melt away in the flames. But we are looking forward to the new heavens and new earth he has promised, a world where everyone is right with God. And so, dear friends, while you are waiting for these things to happen, make every effort to live a pure and blameless life. And be at peace with God" (NLT).

# January 5 — Genesis 15:1

After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision:

"Fear not, Abram! I am your shield and the one who will reward you in great abundance."

The words of the psalmist come to mind this morning as I read of the promises made by the Lord to Abram: "For the LORD God is our light and protector. He gives us grace and glory. No good thing

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will the LORD withhold from those who do what is right. O LORD Almighty, happy are those who trust in you" (Psalm 84:11-12 NLT).

# January 6 — Genesis 15:6

# Abram believed the LORD, and the LORD considered his response of faith proof of genuine loyalty.

Lord, our meditation this morning is on Hebrews 11:1, 6: "What is faith? It is the confident assurance that what we hope for is going to happen. It is the evidence of things we cannot yet see... So, you see, it is impossible to please God without faith. Anyone who wants to come to him must believe that there is a God and that he rewards those who sincerely seek him" (NLT).

# January 7 — Genesis 18:14

# Is anything impossible for the LORD? I will return to you when the season comes round again and Sarah will have a son.

The words of Jeremiah and Mary minister to our hearts this day: "O Sovereign LORD! You have made the heavens and earth by your great power. Nothing is too hard for you!" (Jeremiah 32:17 NLT). In Luke 1:37, Mary says: "For nothing is impossible with God" (NLT).

## January 8 — Genesis 21:1-2

# The LORD visited Sarah just as he had said he would and did for Sarah what he had promised. So Sarah became pregnant and bore Abraham a son in his old age at the appointed time that God had told him.

"God, who calls you, is faithful; he will do this" (1 Thessalonians 5:24 NLT). "But when the right time came, God sent his Son, born of a woman, subject to the law. God sent him to buy freedom for us who were slaves to the law, so that he could adopt us as his very own children" (Galatians 4:4-5 NLT).

## January 9 — Genesis 22:1

Some time after these things God tested Abraham. He said to him.

## "Abraham!" "Here I am!" Abraham replied.

Tests are designed by our heavenly Father to show us our shortcomings and measure our progress. Job says: "But he knows where I am going. And when he has tested me like gold in a fire, he will pronounce me innocent" (Job 23:10 NLT). Peter agrees: "Dear friends, don't be surprised at the fiery trials you are going through, as if something strange were happening to you. Instead, be very

glad—because these trials will make you partners with Christ in his suffering, and afterward you will have the wonderful joy of sharing his glory when it is displayed to all the world" (1 Peter 4:12-13 NLT).

# **January 10 — Genesis 22:1**2

"Do not harm the boy!" the angel said. "Do not do anything to him, for now I know that you fear God because you did not withhold your son, your only son, from me."

The writer of the book of Hebrews says: "It was by faith that Abraham offered Isaac as a sacrifice when God was testing him. Abraham, who had received God's promises, was ready to sacrifice his only son, Isaac" (Hebrews 11:17 NLT). Abraham assumed that if Isaac were to die, God would be able to bring him back to life again. And, in a sense, Abraham did receive his son back from the dead.

# January 11 — Genesis 24:1

Now Abraham was old, well advanced in years, and the LORD had blessed him in everything. On my lips today in response to this passage are the words of the psalmist: "I will thank you, LORD, with all my heart; I will tell of all the marvelous things you have done... But I trust in your unfailing love. I will rejoice because you have rescued me. I will sing to the LORD because he has been so good to me" (Psalm 9:1, 13:5-6 NLT).

# **January 12 — Genesis 24:26-27**

The man bowed his head and worshiped the LORD, saying "Praised be the LORD, the God of my master Abraham, who has not abandoned his faithful love for my master! The LORD has led me to the house of my master's relatives!"

I find myself bowing my head and worshiping the Lord with the servant: "Trust in the LORD with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. Seek his will in all you do, and he will direct your paths" (Proverbs 3:5-6 NLT). The psalmist writes: "For that is what God is like. He is our God forever and ever, and he will be our guide until we die" (Psalm 48:14). Please join me in singing the first verse of "All the Way the Savior Leads Me": "All the way my Savior leads me—What have I to ask beside? Can I doubt His tender mercy, Who through life has been my guide? Heavenly peace, divinest comfort, Here by faith in Him to dwell! For I know, whate'er befall

me, Jesus doeth all things well; For I know, whate'er befall me, Jesus doeth all things well."

January 13 — Genesis 26:12

# When Isaac planted in that land, he reaped in the same year a hundred times what he had sown because the LORD blessed him.

The psalmist tells us: "You crown the year with a bountiful harvest; even the hard pathways overflow with abundance" (Psalm 65:11 NLT). The words of the apostle Paul likewise encourage us: "Now glory be to God! By his mighty power at work within us, he is able to accomplish infinitely more than we would ever dare to ask or hope" (Ephesians 3:20 NLT).

# January 14 — Genesis 28:15

# I am with you! I will protect you wherever you go and will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I promised you!

Lord, thank You for Your presence, protection, power, and promise. My praise to You is Psalm 3: "But you, O LORD, are a shield around me, my glory, and the one who lifts my head high... I lay down and slept. I woke up in safety, for the LORD was watching over me. I am not afraid of ten thousand enemies who surround me on every side" (Psalm 3:3, 5-6 NLT).

#### January 15 — Genesis 29:20

# So Jacob worked for seven years to acquire Rachel. But they seemed like only a few days to him because his love for her was so great.

Lord, teach me how to persevere one day at a time. "Yes, the LORD has done amazing things for us! What joy!... Those who plant in tears will harvest with shouts of joy. They weep as they go to plant their seed, but they sing as they return with the harvest" (Psalm 126:3, 5-6 NLT).

# January 16 — Genesis 42:36

# Their father Jacob said to them, "You are making me childless! Joseph is gone. Simeon is gone. And now you want to take Benjamin! Everything is against me."

Lord, how limited is our perspective in the midst of the pain and we are so quick to forget the promises. "Now we see things imperfectly as in a poor mirror, but then we will see everything with perfect clarity. All that I know now is partial and incomplete, but then I will know everything completely, just as God knows me now" (1 Corinthians 13:12 NLT).

# **January 17 — Genesis 49:10**

The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until he

# comes to whom it belongs; the nations will obey him.

O Lord, haste the day for the coming of our promised King. "Because of this, God raised him up to the heights of heaven and gave him a name that is above every other name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Philippians 2:9-11 NLT).

# January 18 — Genesis 50:20

As for you, you meant to harm me, but God intended it for a good purpose, so he could preserve the lives of many people, as you can see this day.

My mind turns to Proverbs 20:24: "How can we understand the road we travel? It is the LORD who directs our steps" (NLT). Psalm 139:3: "You chart the path ahead of me and tell me where to stop and rest. Every moment you know where I am" (NLT). Proverbs 16:9: "We can make our plans, but the LORD determines our steps" (NLT).

# January 19 — Exodus 6:6

Therefore, say to the Israelites, "I am the LORD. I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, I will rescue you from the hard labor they impose, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments."

In the words of the psalmist: "I will bless the LORD who guides me; even at night my heart instructs me. I know the LORD is always with me. I will not be shaken, for he is right beside me" (Psalm 16:7-8 NLT). With our Lord, a promise made is a promise kept.

# **January 20 — Exodus 14:13-14**

And Moses said to the people, "Do not fear! Stand firm and see the salvation of the LORD that he will provide for you today; for the Egyptians that you see today you will never, ever see again. The LORD will fight for you, and you can be still."

My thoughts this morning go back to the experience of Jehoshaphat as the Lord answers Him: "...This is what the LORD says to you: 'Do not be afraid or discouraged because of this vast army. For the battle is not yours, but God's (2 Chronicles 20:15 NIV). David caught that truth in the Valley of Elah against Goliath: "... the battle is the LORD's, and he will give all of you into our hands" (1 Samuel 17:47 NIV). Isaiah the prophet affirms this truth: "no weapon forged against you will

prevail, and you will refute every tongue that accuses you. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and this is their vindication from me,' declares the LORD" (Isaiah 54:17 NIV).

January 21 — Exodus 15:2 The LORD is my strength and my song, and he has become my salvation. This is my God, and I will praise him, my father's God, and I will exalt him.

The psalmist writes: "Be exalted, O LORD, in your strength; we will sing and praise your might" (Psalm 21:13 NIV). "They cried to you and were saved; in you they trusted and were not disappointed" (Psalm 22:5 NIV). "The LORD is my light and my salvation—whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold of my life—of whom shall I be afraid?" (Psalm 27:1 NIV).

## **January 22 — Exodus 15:1**3

By your loyal love you will lead the people whom you have redeemed; you will guide them by your strength to your holy habitation.

The psalmist would concur: "He guides the humble in what is right and teaches them his way.... Who, then, is the man that fears the LORD? He will instruct him in the way chosen for him" (Psalm 25:9, 12 NIV).

# **January 23 — Exodus 19:4-5**

You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I lifted you up on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. And now, if you will diligently obey me and keep my covenant, then you will be my special possession out of all the nations, for all the earth is mine.

The Lord is everything to the psalmist: "I love you, O LORD, my strength. The LORD is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge. He is my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold. I call to the LORD, who is worthy of praise..." (Psalm 18:1-3 NIV).

# **January 24 — Exodus 23:2**0

I am going to send an angel before you, to protect you in the way, and to bring you into the place which I have prepared.

Lord, gratitude for Your willingness to send protection and guidance as we journey toward our heavenly home overwhelms my heart. "The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear him, and he delivers them" (Psalm 34:7 NIV). "...I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a

place for you, I will come again, and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also" (John 14:2-3 NASB).

## **January 25 — Exodus 33:13-14**

And now, if I have found favor in your sight, show me your way, that I may know you, that I may continue to find favor in your sight. And see that this nation is your people.

The psalmist says to us this morning: "Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth" (Psalm

46:10 NIV). The passion of the heart of the apostle Paul is recorded in these words: "that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death" (Philippians 3:10 NASB). Paul tells Timothy: "For this reason I also suffer these things, but I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day" (2 Timothy 1:12 NASB).

# **January 26 — Exodus 34:14**

For you must not worship any other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God.

Joshua warns the people before his death: "If you forsake the LORD and serve foreign gods, he will turn and bring disaster on you and make an end of you, after he has been good to you" (Joshua 24:20 NIV). Paul writes the Corinthians: "I wish that you would bear with me in a little foolishness; but indeed you are bearing with me. For I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy; for I betrothed you to one husband, that to Christ I might present you as a pure virgin. But I am afraid, lest as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds should be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ" (2 Corinthians 11:1-3 NASB). John says in 1 John 5:21: "Little children, guard yourselves from idols" (NASB).

#### January 27 — Leviticus 9:6

Then Moses said, "This is what the LORD has commanded you to do so that the glory of the LORD may appear to you."

Eight times in Exodus 40 we read: "Moses did everything just as the LORD commanded him" (NIV). Exodus 40:34-35: "Then the cloud covered the Tent of Meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. Moses could not enter the Tent of Meeting because the cloud had settled upon

it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle" (NIV).

We learn that obedience issues in the revelation of the glory of God in our lives. The angelic beings in Revelation 4 are crying continually: "...Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was and who is to come" (Revelation 4:8 NIV).

# January 28 — Leviticus 19:1-2

# The LORD spoke to Moses: "Speak to the whole congregation of the Israelites and tell them, 'You must be holy because I, the LORD your God, am holy.""

John tells us in his first epistle: "And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure" (1 John 3:3 NASB). According to Paul: "Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2 Corinthians 7:1 NASB).

# **January 29 — Numbers 6:24-26**

# The LORD bless you and protect you; The LORD make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you; The LORD lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace.

This blessing reminds me of the words at the end of the book of Hebrews: "Now the God of peace, who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the eternal covenant, even Jesus our Lord, equip you in every good thing to do His will, working in us that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen" (Hebrews 13:20-21 NASB). The great words of Jude also come to mind: "Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy, to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen" (Jude 1:24-25 NASB).

# January 30 — Numbers 11:23

# And the LORD said to Moses, "Is the LORD's hand shortened? Now you will see whether my word to you will happen or not."

Jeremiah states in the book of Lamentations: "The LORD has done what he planned; he has fulfilled his word, which he decreed long ago..." (Lamentations 2:17 NIV). Solomon responds: "Many are the plans in a man's heart, but it is the LORD's purpose that prevails" (Proverbs 19:21 NIV). Paul tells the Ephesians: "This was in accordance with the eternal purpose which He

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carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Ephesians 3:11 NASB).

## January 31 — Numbers 15:39

You must have this tassel so that you may look at it and remember all the commandments of the LORD and obey them and so that you do not follow after your own heart and your own eyes that lead you to unfaithfulness.

Jeremiah says: "'Is not my word like fire,' declares the LORD, 'and like a hammer that breaks a rock in pieces?" (Jeremiah 23:29 NIV). Jeremiah

15:16: "When your words came, I ate them; they were my joy and my heart's delight, for I bear your name, O LORD God Almighty" (NIV). Samuel writes: "'Do not be afraid,' Samuel replied. 'You have done all this evil; yet do not turn away from the LORD, but serve the LORD with all your heart" (1 Samuel 12:20 NIV).

# **FEBRUARY**

## February 1 — Numbers 23:19

God is not a man, that he should lie, nor a human being, that he should repent. Has he said, and will he not do it? Or has he spoken, and will he not establish it?

Lord, thank You that You are truth and Your purpose is unchangeable. When You speak it is certain to happen and Your promise is signed in blood. Thank You for speaking through Malachi: "I the LORD do not change..." (Malachi 3:6 NIV). The psalmist has it right: "Better is one day in your courts than a thousand elsewhere; I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of the wicked" (Psalm 84:10 NIV).

# February 2 — Deuteronomy 2:7

All along the way I, the LORD your God, have blessed your every effort. I have been attentive to your travels through this great wasteland. These forty years I have been with you; you have lacked for nothing.

Lord, I am singing "Showers of Blessing." You have been an attentive lover on my journeys. You are meeting all my needs. Paul correctly says, "And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:19 NASB). "There shall be showers of blessing: This is the promise of love; There shall be seasons refreshing, Sent from the Savior above. Showers of blessing, Showers of blessing we need: Mercy drops round us are falling, But for the showers we plead." Ezekiel records Your promise: "... I will send down showers in season; there will be showers of blessing" (Ezekiel 34:26 NIV).

# February 3 — Deuteronomy 5:29

If only it would really be their desire to fear me and keep all my commandments in the future, so that it may go well with them and their descendants forever.

I am thinking this morning of Joshua's farewell address to the children of Israel: "Now I am about to go the way of all the earth. You know with all your heart and soul that not one of all the good promises the LORD your God gave you has failed. Every promise has been fulfilled; not one has failed... Now fear the LORD and serve him with all faithfulness... throw away the foreign gods that are among you and yield your hearts to the LORD, the God of Israel" (Joshua 23:14, 24:14, 23 NIV).

# February 4 — Deuteronomy 9:3

Understand today that the LORD your God who goes before you is a devouring fire; he will defeat and subdue them before you. You will dispossess and destroy them quickly just as he has told you.

Moses says, "To the Israelites the glory of the LORD looked like a consuming fire on top of the mountain" (Exodus 24:17 NIV). "Elijah answers the captain, 'If I am a man of God, may fire come down from heaven and consume you and your fifty men!' Then the fire fell from heaven and consumed the captain and his men" (2 Kings 1:10 NIV). Yes, our God is a consuming fire when it comes for the time of judgment. "Jonathan said to his young armour-bearer, 'Come, let's go over to the outpost of those uncircumcised fellows. Perhaps the LORD will act on our behalf. Nothing can hinder the LORD from saving, whether by many or by few" (1 Samuel 14:6 NIV). Lord, thank You for the victory that is ours in the Lord Jesus Christ.

## February 5 — Deuteronomy 15:10

You must by all means lend to him and not be upset by doing it, for because of this the LORD your God will bless you in all your work and in everything you attempt.

Lord, You promise Malachi: "Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this,' says the LORD Almighty, 'and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it"

(Malachi 3:10 NIV). Paul tells the Corinthians: "Let each one do just as he has purposed in his heart; not grudgingly or under compulsion; for God is loving a cheerful giver" (2 Corinthians 9:7 NASB).

# February 6 — Deuteronomy 20:3-4

Listen, Israel! Today you are moving forward to do battle with your enemies. Do not be fainthearted. Do not fear and tremble or be terrified because of them, for the LORD your God goes with you to fight on your behalf against your enemies to give you victory.

Lord, I am changing the words in the first part of the verse from "Listen, Israel!" to "Listen, Don!" Today we move forward to do battle with the enemy. You have given three commands: (1) "Do not be fainthearted";

(2) "Do not fear and tremble"; and (3) "Do not be terrified." Then You have given the reason for these three commands. You have promised Your presence: "God goes with you"; and with His power and performance He will "fight on your behalf against your enemies." The outcome is already certain: He will "give you victory." Lord, the words of 2 Corinthians 2:14 express my gratitude for this intervention: "But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place" (NASB).

## February 7 — Deuteronomy 28:47

Because you have not served the LORD your God joyfully and wholeheartedly with the abundance of everything you have.

Lord, thank You for reminding us today that there is a consequence for not serving You "joyfully and wholeheartedly," relying upon the provision You have already made "with the abundance of everything" You have given us. Because of this, Moses communicates with Israel that: "Among those nations you will find no repose, no resting place for the sole of your foot. There the LORD will give you an anxious mind, eyes weary with longing, and a despairing heart. You will live in constant suspense, filled with dread both night and day, never sure of your life" (Deuteronomy 28:65-66 NIV). Lord, the passion of my heart is to serve You with joy, "wholeheartedly."

## February 8 — Deuteronomy 31:8

The LORD is indeed going before you-he will be with you; he will not fail you or abandon you. Do not be afraid or discouraged!

My thoughts this morning turn to Psalm 32:7-8: "You are my hiding-place; you will protect me from trouble and surround me with songs of deliverance. I will instruct you and teach you in the way you

without proper citation is unintentional

should go; I will counsel you and watch over you" (NIV). Thank You, Lord, that You are the One leading. You are my companion and You will never let me down. Please, dear Lord, help me not to be "afraid or discouraged."

# February 9 — Deuteronomy 32:4

# As for the Rock, his work is perfect, for all his ways are just. He is a reliable God who is never unjust, he is fair and upright.

What a wonderful verse! I find myself responding with the psalmist: "My soul finds rest in God alone; my salvation comes from him. He alone is my rock and my salvation; he is my fortress, I shall never be shaken" (Psalm 62:1-2 NIV). Lord, thank You that Your "work is perfect," Your "ways are just," and You are "a reliable God." Thank You, too, that You are "never unjust." You are "fair and upright." "On Christ the solid Rock I stand, All other ground is sinking sand; All other ground is sinking sand."

# February 10 — Deuteronomy 33:27

The everlasting God is a refuge, and underneath you are his eternal arms; he has driven out enemies before you, and he has said,

# "Destroy!"

Lord, this verse reveals that You surround me as a "refuge," You hold me up with Your "eternal arms," and You are faithfully fighting my battles. The psalmist writes: "But as for me, it is good to be near God. I have made the Sovereign LORD my refuge; I will tell of all your deeds" (Psalm 73:28 NIV).

## February 11 — Joshua 1:8

# This law scroll must not leave your lips! You must memorize it day and night so you can carefully obey all that is written in it. Then you will prosper and be successful.

Lord, Your words to Joshua are a promise for today: (1) Your word "must not leave [my] lips"; (2) "[I] must memorize it day and night"; and (3) "[I] must... carefully obey." When I do these three things, we can claim the truth that "you will promise and [we will] be successful." In the words of the psalmist: "You are my portion, O LORD; I have promised to obey your words. I have sought your face with all my heart; be gracious to me according to your promise" (Psalm 119:57-58 NIV).

# February 12 — Judges 6:13

Gideon said to him, "Pardon me, but if the LORD is with us, why has such disaster overtaken us? Where are all his miraculous deeds our ancestors told us about? They said, 'Did the LORD not bring us up from Egypt?' But now the LORD has abandoned us and handed us over to Midian."

Lord, I see myself in Gideon as he raises questions: "Why has such disaster overtaken us?" and "Where are all his miraculous deeds our ancestors told us about?" I need to change my approach to life by asking these questions: What are You trying to teach me? What do I need to learn through these experiences? With the psalmist I say: "Teach me knowledge and good judgment, for I believe in your commands. Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I obey your word. You are good, and what you do is good; teach me your decrees" (Psalm 119:66-68 NIV).

# February 13 — Judges 16:20

She said, "The Philistines are here, Samson!" He woke up and thought, "I will do as I did before and shake myself free." But he did not realize that the LORD had left him.

Our hearts turn to Romans 13: "...do this, knowing the time, that it is already the hour for you to awaken from sleep; for now salvation is nearer to us than when we believed. The night is almost gone, and the day is at hand. Let us therefore lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. Let us behave properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts" (Romans 13:11-14 NASB).

# February 14 — Ruth 1:16-17

But Ruth replied, "Stop urging me to abandon you! For wherever you go, I will go. Wherever you live, I will live. Your people will become my people, and your God will become my God. Wherever you die, I will die-and there I will be buried. May the LORD punish me severely if I do not keep my promise! Only death will be able to separate me from you!"

What a beautiful, unconditional commitment Ruth makes to her mother-in-law, Naomi. I often use these verses in marriage ceremonies. The Lord says much the same thing to us, only stronger. Consider the words of the psalmist: "but I will not take my love from him, nor will I ever betray my

faithfulness. I will not violate my covenant or alter what my lips have uttered" (Psalm 89:33-34 NIV). What a meaningful promise for this Valentine's Day!

# February 15 — 1 Samuel 2:1

# Hannah prayed, "My heart rejoices in the LORD; my horn is exalted high because of the LORD. I loudly denounce my enemies, for I am happy that you delivered me."

Like the psalmist, Hannah is praying: "Come and listen, all you who fear God; let me tell you what he has done for me" (Psalm 66:16). The Lord is "the horn of my salvation, my stronghold. I call to the LORD, who is worthy of praise, and I am saved from my enemies" (Psalm 18:2-3 NIV). Paul's words to the Corinthians thrill my heart this morning: "but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 15:57 NASB).

# **February 16 - 1 Samuel 3:10**

# Then the LORD came and stood nearby, calling as he had previously done, "Samuel! Samuel!" Samuel replied, "Speak, for your servant is listening!"

Lord, I am deeply convicted today concerning the level of my listening to Your voice. Above all the noise, may we hearken to Your word revealed through the psalmist: "Be still, and know that I am God..." (Psalm

46:10 NIV). May we, like the writer of the book of Hebrews, confess that we have become "dull of hearing" (Hebrews 5:11 NASB). My prayer for this day is that You would perform a miracle and clear away all of the things that would keep me from hearing Your voice so that I along with Samuel can say: "... Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening..." (1 Samuel 3:9 NIV). Help me heed the words of the Lord Jesus to the seven churches in Revelation: "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches..." (Revelation 2:17 NASB).

## February 17 - 1 Samuel 12:7

Now take your positions, so I may confront you before the LORD regarding all the LORD's just actions toward you and your ancestors.

Lord, the writer of the book of Hebrews cautions, "It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Hebrews 10:31 NASB). Lord, it is the desire of my heart this morning to confront the issues that concern You regarding my life rather than to be judged at some future day. Lord, I am

accepting the invitation of Hebrews 10:22 and 23: "Let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful" (NASB).

## February 18 - 1 Samuel 12:23-24

As far as I am concerned, far be it from me to sin against the LORD by ceasing to pray for you. I will instruct you in the way that is good and upright. However, fear the LORD and serve him faithfully with all your heart. Just look at the great things he has done for you!

Lord, thank You for these words of Samuel to the nation Israel that he would not "sin against [you] by ceasing to pray for [them]." Thank You for the four things He tells them: (1) "I will instruct you in the way that is good and upright"; (2) He commands them to "fear the Lord"; (3) "serve him faithfully with all [their] heart"; and (4) to remember "the great things he has done for you!" Lord, help me to call to remembrance all of the wonderful things that You have done and are doing in my life this day. Fill me with deep gratitude and thanksgiving for Your faithfulness.

#### February 19 - 1 Samuel 15:22

Then Samuel said, "Does the LORD take pleasure in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as he does in obedience? Certainly, obedience is better than sacrifice; paying attention is better than the fat of rams."

Lord, you are not impressed by our many sacrifices, but You bless the obedient heart. The psalmist says: "Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night" (Psalm 1:1-2 NIV). James challenges us: "But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves" (James 1:22 NASB). Lord, the words of Job are on my lips today: "Teach me what I cannot see; if I have done wrong, I will not do so again" (Job 34:32 NIV).

# **February 20 — 2 Samuel 2:19**

Asahel chased Abner, without turning to the right or to the left as he followed Abner.

This verse reminds us of the words of the apostle Paul to the Corinthians and the Philippians: "So I run straight to the goal with purpose in every step" (1 Corinthians 9:26 NLT). "No, dear brothers and

sisters, I am still not all I should be, but I am focusing all my energies on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead, I strain to reach the end of the race and receive the prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us up to heaven" (Philippians 3:13-14 NLT). Isaiah reveals how to stay on track: "Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, 'This is the way; walk in it" (Isaiah 30:21 NIV).

# February 21 — 2 Samuel 12:8

# I gave you your master's house, and put your master's wives into your arms. I also gave you the house of Israel and Judah. And if all that somehow seems insignificant, I would have given you so much more as well!

Lord, I often find myself guilty when it comes to the matter of being completely content with all of the provisions and blessings You have brought into my life. Paul tells young Timothy: "But godliness actually is a means of great gain, when accompanied by contentment. For we have brought nothing into the world, so we cannot take anything out of it either" (1 Timothy 6:6-7 NASB). Paul tells the Philippians: "Not that I speak from want; for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need" (Philippians 4:11-12 NASB).

# **February 22 — 2 Samuel 22:17**

# He reached down from above and grabbed me; he pulled me from the surging water.

Lord, I am reminded of what it must be like to be a drowning individual in the sea of sin and to have the great lifesaver of the world reach down and with His strong arm and pull me from the surging waters. Paul tells the Galatians: "He died for our sins, just as God our Father planned, in order to rescue us from this evil world in which we live" (Galatians 1:4 NLT). Jude tells us: "Rescue others by snatching them from the flames of judgment. There are still others to whom you need to show mercy, but be careful that you aren't contaminated by their sins" (Jude 1:23 NLT). I feel like singing: "Rescue the perishing, care for the dying, snatch them in pity from sin and the grave; weep over the erring one, lift up the fallen, tell them of Jesus, the mighty to save."

# February 23 — 2 Samuel 22:31

The one true God acts in a faithful manner; the LORD's promise is reliable; he is a shield to all who take shelter in him.

Lord, this wonderful verse describes You as One who "acts in a faithful manner." Paul writes the Corinthians: "God is faithful, through whom you were called into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord" (1 Corinthians 1:9 NASB). The verse also tells us that Your "promise is reliable." "Praise be to the LORD, who has given rest to his people Israel just as he promised. Not one word has failed of all the good promises he gave through his servant Moses" (1 Kings 8:56 NIV). "The LORD is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and I am helped. My heart leaps for joy and I will give thanks to him in song" (Psalm 28:7 NIV).

# **February 24 — 1 Kings 8:56**

The LORD is worthy of praise because he has made Israel his people secure just as he promised. Not one of all the faithful promises he made through his servant Moses is left unfulfilled.

Lord, it is overwhelming to reflect on the fact that there are over 7000 promises that You have made in Your word and that You are in the process of fulfilling all. There will never be an unfulfilled promise. Peter tells us: "And by that same mighty power, he has given us all of his rich and wonderful promises. He has promised that you will escape the decadence all around you caused by evil desires and that you will share in his divine nature" (2 Peter 1:4 NLT). "Standing on the promises of Christ my King, Through eternal ages let His praises ring, Glory in the highest, I will shout and sing, Standing on the promises of God."

# February 25 — 1 Kings 22:14

But Micaiah said, "As certainly as the LORD lives, I will say what the LORD tells me to say." The words of the Lord to Moses come to mind: "Now go, and do as I have told you. I will help you speak well, and I will tell you what to say" (Exodus 4:12 NLT). "I am the LORD your God, who brought you up out of Egypt. Open wide your mouth and I will fill it" (Psalm 81:10 NIV). Jeremiah hears from the Lord: "Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you and will rescue you,' declares the LORD. Then the LORD reached out his hand and touched my mouth and said to me, 'Now, I have

put my words in your mouth" (Jeremiah 1:8-9 NIV).

# February 26 — 2 Kings 4:44

# So he set it before them; they ate and had some left over, just as the LORD predicted.

Lord, You are Jehovah Jireh, the Lord who will provide. John 6 comes to mind: "Jesus soon saw a great crowd of people climbing the hill, looking for him. Turning to Philip, he asked, 'Philip, where can we buy bread to feed all these people?' He was testing Philip, for he already knew what he was going to do." (John 6:5-6 NLT). Andrew came with a young lad's lunch of five barley loaves and a couple of fish. There were only five barley loaves to start with but twelve baskets were filled with the pieces of bread the people did not eat.

# **February 27 — 2 Kings 7:9**

Then they said to one another, "It's not right what we're doing. This is a day to celebrate, but we haven't told anyone. If we wait until dawn, we'll be punished. So come on, let's go and inform the royal palace."

Selfish delay is met with judgment. What "royal palace" should you inform today of the power and love of Jesus? Jesus' last words were these: "but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth" (Acts 1:8 NASB). Paul tells Timothy: "You therefore, my son, be strong by means of the grace which is in Christ Jesus. And the things you heard from me, in the presence of many witnesses, these things entrust to faithful men, who will be qualified to teach others also" (2 Timothy 2:1-2 DAV).

# February 28 — 2 Kings 19:35

That very night the LORD's messenger went out and killed one hundred eighty-five thousand men in the Assyrian camp. When they got up early the next morning, there were all the corpses.

Lord, Your awesome power and strength overwhelm us as we read of Your exploits on the field of battle. Jehosophat certainly experienced this with his armies: "When the men of Judah came to the place that overlooks the desert and looked toward the vast army, they saw only dead bodies lying on the ground; no-one had escaped" (2 Chronicles 20:24 NIV). Revelation reveals that when our

blessed Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ, comes again, the following will occur: "And from His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may smite the nations; and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty. And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, 'KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS'" (Revelation 19:15-16 NASB).

# February 29 — 1 Chronicles 4:10

Jabez called out to the God of Israel, "If only you would greatly bless me and expand my territory! May your hand be with me! Keep me from harm so I might not endure pain!" God answered his prayer.

Lord, You know I pray this prayer every day. Along with Jabez, I call upon You, the God of Israel, asking that You would first of all "bless me"—do something so big in my life it is obviously from You this day. Secondly, I pray that You would "expand my territory"—that You would give me more and more ministry opportunities. And thirdly, I ask that "your hand be with me" and I would be always aware if I am grieving the Holy Spirit by sin or quenching Him by saying no. Please search my heart, fill me with Your Spirit, use me, and keep me from evil. Lord as You fill me with Your Spirit, I would ask that Your words be on my lips, Your wisdom be in my thoughts, Your works be the labor of my hand, and Your ways be the pathway for my feet. I want to finish well, praying that I can be kept on task, on track, and out of Satan's traps. And just as You answered Jabez, I thank You that You have answered my prayer this morning.

## **MARCH**

#### March 1 — 1 Chronicles 16:8

Give thanks to the LORD! Call on his name! Make known his accomplishments among the nations!

Lord, what a great verse! The three commands outline my responsibility for the day: (1) gratitude – "Give thanks to the Lord!"; (2) prayer – "Call on his name"; and (3) testimony – "Make known his accomplishments among the nations!" "Let the heavens rejoice, let the earth be glad; let them say among the nations, 'The LORD reigns!"" (1 Chronicles 16:31 NIV).

March 2 — 1 Chronicles 28:20

David said to his son Solomon: "Be strong and brave! Do it! Don't be afraid and don't panic!

# For the LORD God, my God, is with you. He will not leave you or abandon you before all the work for the service of the LORD's temple is finished."

Today we hear an elderly father impart wisdom to his young son with four commands: (1) "Be strong and brave!"; (2) "Do it!"; (3) "Don't be afraid"; (4) "don't panic." The verse concludes with the reason for these commands: (1) "the Lord God, my God, is with you"— you can count on His presence—(2) "He will not leave you or abandon you before all the work for the service of the Lord's temple is finished." Isaiah says: "Because the Sovereign LORD helps me, I will not be dismayed. Therefore, I have set my face like a stone, determined to do his will. And I know that I will triumph" (Isaiah 50:7 NLT).

## March 3 — 1 Chronicles 29:12

You are the source of wealth and honor; you rule over all. You possess strength and might to magnify and give strength to all.

Lord, our verse for today tells us that You come bearing gifts of "wealth and honor" and You come as King of kings and Lord of lords. You are the ruler of all things. You come with the promise of strength and power – the purpose of which is to exalt and "give strength to all." With the psalmist we say: "Summon your power, O God; show us your strength, O God, as you have done before" (Psalm 68:28 NIV).

#### March 4 — 2 Chronicles 7:14

If my people, who belong to me, humble themselves, pray, seek to please me, and repudiate their sinful practices, then I will respond from heaven, forgive their sin, and heal their land. What an inspiring verse! The Lord says if we do four things, He'll do three things. The Lord says if we will (1) "humble" yourselves; (2) "pray";

(3) "seek to please me"; and (4) repudiate sinful practices then He will do three things. (1) "I will respond from heaven"; (2) "I will... forgive their sin"; and (3) "I will... heal their land." Joel the prophet says: "Who knows? He may turn and have pity and leave behind a blessing" (Joel 2:14 NIV).

#### March 5 — 2 Chronicles 14:11

As a prayed to the LORD his God: "O LORD, there is no one but you that can help the weak when they are vastly outnumbered. Help us, O LORD our God, for we rely on you and have marched on your behalf against this huge army. O LORD our God, don't let men prevail

# against you!"

As a cries out to the Lord at this time of war and uncertainty. He makes three petitions: (1) "O Lord, there is no one but you that can help the weak when they are vastly outnumbered. Help us"; (2) "O Lord our God, for we rely on you and have marched on your behalf against this huge army"; and (3) "O Lord our God, don't let men prevail against you!" Paul writes the Romans: "What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us?" (Romans 8:31 NASB).

### March 6 — 2 Chronicles 20:17

You will not fight in this battle. Take your positions, stand, and watch the LORD deliver you, O Judah and Jerusalem. Don't be afraid and don't panic! Tomorrow march out toward them; the LORD is with you!

Jehosophat finds himself surrounded by enemies from every direction. The Lord says to him in his opening statement: "You will not fight in this battle." The Lord then issues three commands: (1) "Take your positions"; (2) "stand"; and (3) "watch the Lord deliver you, O Judah and Jerusalem." The Lord concludes the verse with these commands: (1) "Don't be afraid"; (2) "don't panic!"; and (3) "march out toward them."

#### March 7 — 2 Chronicles 32:7-8

"Be strong and brave! Don't be afraid and don't panic because of the king of Assyria and this huge army that is with him! We have with us one who is stronger than those who are with him. He has with him mere human strength, but the LORD our God is with us to help us and fight our battles." The army was encouraged by the words of King Hezekiah of Judah.

The king of Assyria and his vast army have come against the city of Jerusalem and Hezekiah gives this amazing speech, issuing four commands as he begins: (1) "Be strong!"; (2) "Be... brave"; (3) "Don't be afraid"; and (4) "don't panic." The king of Assyria may have a huge army, God's people have "one who is stronger." The Assyrian king "has with him mere human strength," but in contrast "the Lord our God is with us to help us and fight our battles." What Hezekiah promises Judah, the Lord has likewise promised to us: to help us and to fight our battles. In the words of the psalmist: "God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam

and the mountains quake with their surging" (Psalm 46:1-3 NIV).

## March 8 — Ezra 7:10

# Now Ezra had given himself to the study of the law of the LORD, to its observance, and to teaching its statutes and judgments in Israel.

Ezra is blessed because he has true priorities and perspectives. "Ezra had given himself" to three things: (1) "to the study of the law of the LORD"; (2) to obey the "law of the LORD"; and (3) to teach the "law of the LORD...its statutes and judgments in Israel." Paul challenges Timothy in a similar fashion: "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15 NASB).

## **March 9 — Ezra 8:2**3

# So we fasted and prayed to our God about this, and he answered us.

Ezra says our secret is: (1) "we fasted" and (2) "we... prayed to our God about this." The Lord responds by answering. Joel records these words from the Lord: "Even now,' declares the LORD, 'return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning.' Rend your heart and not your garments. Return to the LORD your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, and he relents from sending calamity" (Joel 2:12-13 NIV). As the apostle John states, "Until now you have asked for nothing in My name; ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be made full" (John 16:24 NASB).

## March 10 — Nehemiah 4:14

When I had made an inspection, I stood up and said to the nobles, the officials, and the rest of the people, "Don't be afraid of them. Remember the great and awesome Lord, and fight in behalf of your brothers, your sons, your daughters, your wives, and your families!"

The walls are half done, and Nehemiah faces opposition from without and tired workers and too much rubble within. How does he handle the adversity? He admonishes his hearers with three bits of counsel: (1) "Don't be afraid of them"; (2) "Remember the great and awesome Lord"; and (3) "fight in behalf of your brothers, your sons, your daughters, your wives, and your families!" Lord, help me to include You in all the impossible circumstances that I am facing today. Remind me afresh of the words of the angel to Mary: "For nothing will be impossible with God" (Luke 1:37 NASB).

#### **March 11 — Esther 4:14**

Don't imagine that because you are part of the king's household you will be the one Jew who will escape. If you keep quiet at this time, liberation and protection for the Jews will appear from another source, while you and your father's household perish. It may very well be that you have achieved royal status for such a time as this!

Mordecai's words to Esther are to the point: (1) you won't be exempt because of position; (2) if you don't speak out God will use someone else; and (3) it could be that you are where you are right now so God can use you. Lord, use me this day to bring You glory. Lord, help me to speak out, to be bold, and to understand that I am where I am right now so that You can use me in the lives of others. "Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, 'Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?'And I said, 'Here am I. Send me!'" (Isaiah 6:8 NIV).

#### March 12 — Job 1:21

He said, "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will return there. The LORD gives, and the LORD takes away. May the name of the LORD be blessed!"

Lord, help me to respond as Job when he faces unexplainable adversity. He would describe the picture of his life: "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will return there." Lord, help me to express in the hour of grief and pain that. "The Lord gives, and the Lord takes away." And Lord help me never to question Your dealings or ever to lose the attitude of gratitude for all the blessings You have poured out upon us.

## March 13 — Job 5:17

Therefore, blessed is the man whom God corrects, so do not despise the discipline of the Almighty.

Lord, regarding the times of discipline in my life, help me to respond with the psalmist: "Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I obey your word. You are good, and what you do is good; teach me your decrees" (Psalm 119:67-68 NIV). The writer to the book of Hebrews brings comfort by saying: "FOR THOSE WHOM THE LORD LOVES HE DISCIPLINES... It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline?... All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness" (Hebrews 12:6-7, 11 NASB).

#### March 14 — Job 9:10-11

He does great and unsearchable things, and wonderful things without number. If he passes by me, I cannot see him, if he goes by, I cannot perceive him.

Lord, help me to be comforted in the midst of my suffering and sorrow:

(1)You do "great... things"; (2) You do "unsearchable things," things we couldn't even imagine; and (3) You do "wonderful things without number." Lord, You have promised that Your presence would go with us in the midst of this sorrow and suffering. But because You are invisible, we can only see the results of Your intervention in our lives.

## March 15 — Job14:5

Since man's days are determined, the number of his months is under your control; you have set his limit and he cannot pass it.

Lord, it seems at times of facing terminal illness that we think of these three things that Job sets before us: (1) "[our] days are determined"; (2) "the number of... months is under your control"; and (3) "you have set [the] limit and [we] cannot pass it." Lord, I want to respond to this realization with the words of the psalmist: "Teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain a heart of wisdom" (Psalm 90:12 NIV). And then with the words of Jesus: "We must work the works of Him who sent Me, as long as it is day; night is coming when, no man can work" (John 9:4 NASB).

#### March 16 — Job 19:23-24

O that my words were written down, O that they were written on a scroll, that with an iron chisel and with lead they were engraved in a rock forever!

Job knows his heart and God's heart. His words are significant because they are exactly what the Lord would have him say. "But Micaiah said, 'As surely as the LORD lives, I can tell him only what my God says'" (2 Chronicles 18:13 NIV). "I know, O LORD, that your laws are righteous, and in faithfulness you have afflicted me... Your word, O LORD, is eternal; it stands firm in the heavens. Your faithfulness continues through all generations" (Psalm 119:75, 89-90 NIV).

# March 17 — Job 19:25-27

As for me, I know that my Redeemer lives, and that as the last he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God, whom I will see for myself, and whom my own eyes will behold, and not another. My heart grows faint within me.

What a refreshing declaration of belief on the part of Job. He says "I know": (1) "my Redeemer lives"; (2) "at the last he will stand upon the earth" – that is in judgment; and (3) when I die, "in my flesh I will see God." Lord, help me today to remember what I know and to trust You for the future. Help me to continue in peace, preserving emotional energy knowing that Your timing will be perfect in the accomplishment of Your purpose.

# March 18 — Job 23:10

# But he knows the pathway that I take; if he tested me, I would come forth like gold.

Job finds comfort daily in the Lord's direction and discipline. "The path of the righteous is like the first gleam of dawn, shining ever brighter till the full light of day" (Proverbs 4:18 NIV). "For a man's ways are in full view of the LORD, and he examines all his paths" (Proverbs 5:21 NIV). With the psalmist we can say: "Test me, O LORD, and try me, examine my heart and my mind; for your love is ever before me, and I walk continually in your truth" (Psalm 26:2-3 NIV).

# March 19 — Job 31:1, 4

# I made a covenant with my eyes; how then could I pay attention to a virgin? ...Does he not see my ways and count all my steps?

Peter writes, "that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1:7 NASB). The psalmist says: "He guides the humble in what is right and teaches them his way" (Psalm 25:9 NIV). Lord, Your word says "For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known" (1 Corinthians

13:12 KJV).

#### March 20 — Job 34:32

## Teach me what I cannot see. If I have done evil, I will do so no more.

With Job we would say: "Teach me what I cannot see. If I have done evil [as you search my heart and reveal the disobedience, I too would make the promise for the future] I will do so no more" (Job 34:32 NET). Lord, thank You for Your patience and Your willingness to assist us in fulfilling Your perfect plan. Lord, I am calling to mind the words of the sermon on the mount: "You have heard that

it was said, 'YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY'; but I say to you that every one who looks at a woman to lust for her has committed adultery with her already in his heart" (Matthew 5:27-28 NASB). Job deals with the look, the lust, and the leaving in this covenant regarding his eyes. Lord, You do see all my ways and You count all my steps. In the word of the psalmist: "If the Lord delights in a man's way, he makes his steps firm; though he stumble, he will not fall, for the Lord upholds him with his hand" (Psalm 37:23-24 NIV).

## March 21 — Psalm 1:1-2

How happy is the one who does not follow the advice of the wicked, or stand in the pathway with sinners, or sit in the assembly of arrogant fools! Instead he finds pleasure in obeying the LORD's commands; he intently studies his commands day and night.

Lord, the psalmist tells us that the truly happy person avoids three things and does two things. (1) "[He] does not follow the advice of the wicked"; (2) "[he] does not... stand in the pathway with sinners"; and (3) "[he] does not... sit in the assembly of arrogant fools!" Instead of all this, (1) "he finds pleasure in obeying the Lord's commands" and (2) "he intently studies his commands day and night." O the joys of those who obey Your word and walk in Your ways!

## **March 22 — Psalm 3:3**

# But you, LORD, are a shield that protects me; you grant me honor and give me renewed strength.

Lord, I would like to thank You for the three things mentioned by the psalmist: (1) "Lord, [you] are a shield that protects me"; (2) "you grant me honor" – or provide satisfaction; and (3) "you... give me renewed strength" – You provide all of the strength necessary to the accomplishment of Your will for this day. Isaiah affirms this thought in his prophecy: "but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint" (Isaiah 40:31 NIV). Thank You, Lord, for being my shield, my satisfaction, and my strength.

#### **March 23 — Psalm 4:3**

# Realize that the Lord shows his faithful follower special favor; the Lord responds when I cry out to him.

Lord, the psalmist says two things about the ones who are "his faithful follower[s]": (1) He shows "special favor" to this distinguished group, and (2) "the Lord responds when I cry out to him." Lord,

the longing of my heart this day is to be known as a faithful follower of You, a person who is growing daily in the knowledge of Your word and the pursuit of Your will. Lord, I long to be a person who can testify often to the fact that You have heard and answered my prayers as I have cried to You.

#### **March 24 — Psalm 5:3**

# LORD, in the morning you will hear me; in the morning I will present my case to you and then wait expectantly for an answer.

Lord, the psalmist tells us that it is "in the morning" when all of these wonderful things will happen. You will hear; we will present our case; Your answer is to be expected. Jeremiah records Your invitation: "Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know" (Jeremiah 33:3 NIV).

#### **March 25 — Psalm 5:8**

# LORD, vindicate me as you lead me, because of those who wait to ambush me, remove the obstacles in the way in which you are guiding me!

Lord, thank You for these three wonderful truths: (1) You "vindicate" my choices; (2) You know there are "those who are [waiting] to ambush me"; (3)You allow me to ask You to "remove the obstacles in the way in which you are guiding me!"Thank You, also, for Your words of promise through Isaiah: "I will lead the blind by ways they have not known, along unfamiliar paths I will guide them; I will turn the darkness into light before them and make the rough places smooth. These are the things I will do; I will not forsake them" (Isaiah 42:16 NIV).

## March 26 — Psalm 5:12

Certainly you reward the godly, LORD. Like a shield you protect them in your good favor. The psalmist rejoices this day in two wonderful truths: (1) "Certainly you reward the godly" and (2) "[You are] Like a shield [to] protect them in your good favor." Lord, Your promise in Revelation 22:12 comes to mind, affirming what has been said by the psalmist: "Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done" (NASB).

#### March 27 — Psalm 7:10

The Exalted God is my shield, the one who delivers the morally upright.

Lord, thank You for Your activity in my life to provide protection through this day and to provide deliverance as I walk with integrity before You. Isaiah's words affirm those of the psalmist: "no weapon forged against you will prevail, and you will refute every tongue that accuses you. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and this is their vindication from me,' declares the LORD" (Isaiah 54:17 NIV).

#### March 28 — Psalm 9:1-2

# I will thank the LORD with all my heart! I will tell about all your amazing deeds! I will be happy and rejoice in you! I will sing praises to you, O Sovereign One!

The psalmist makes a four-fold commitment to the Lord as he begins this day: (1) "I will thank the Lord with all my heart!"; (2) "I will tell about all your amazing deeds!"; (3) "I will be happy and rejoice in you!"; (4) "I will sing praises to you, O Sovereign One!" His thanksgiving is untainted by selfishness because he thanks the Lord with all his heart. Secondly, he wants to tell all of the amazing things the Lord has done. Third, he wants to find his happiness and rejoicing in the Lord and not in the circumstances that surround him. Fourth, he verbalizes his praise to the Lord by singing a song.

## March 29 — Psalm 9:9-10

Consequently the LORD provides safety for the oppressed; he provides safety in times of trouble. Those who are loyal to you trust in you, for you, LORD, do not abandon those who seek your help.

I am reminded this morning of Jehovah-Jireh, the Lord who provides. The psalmist says: (1) "the Lord provides safety for the oppressed" and (2) "he provides safety in times of trouble." Those "who are loyal [to the Lord] trust" in Him. Why? Here is the reason: "Lord, [you] do not abandon those who seek your help." I am reminded of the words of Moses in his farewell address to the children of Israel: "The LORD himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged" (Deuteronomy 31:8 NIV). The eternal God is our refuge.

# March 30 — Psalm 13:5-6

But I trust in your faithfulness. May I rejoice because of your deliverance! I will sing praises to the LORD when he vindicates me.

These verses reveal a commitment, a prayer, and a promise. (1) Commitment – "But I trust in your

faithfulness"; (2) prayer – "May I rejoice because of your deliverance"; and (3) promise – "I will sing praises to the Lord when he vindicates me." The apostle Paul tells the Corinthians: "God is faithful, through whom you were called into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord" (1 Corinthians 1:9 NASB).

#### March 31 — Psalm 16:8-9

I constantly trust in the LORD; because he is at my right hand, I will not be upended. So my heart rejoices and I am happy; My life is safe.

The psalmist bears witness to the fact that he constantly trusts in the Lord. We are truly safe when we are in the hands of our sovereign Guide. Because of the LORD's, the psalmist's "heart rejoices", he is "happy", his life is "safe." Lord, thank You so much for the security that only You can provide.

## **APRIL**

# **April 1 — Psalm 16:11**

You lead me in the path of life; I experience absolute joy in your presence; you always give me sheer delight.

Lord, what three wonderful things You do for us, according to the psalmist: (1) "You lead me in the path of life" – "The path of the righteous is like the first gleam of dawn, shining ever brighter till the full light of day" (Proverbs 4:18 NIV); (2) "I experience absolute joy in your presence" – with You there is "joy unspeakable and full of glory"; (3) "you always give me sheer delight." "Delight yourself in the LORD and he will give you the desires of your heart" (Psalm 37:4 NIV).

# **April 2 — Psalm 17:3**

You have scrutinized my inner motives; you have examined me during the night. You have carefully evaluated me, but you find no sin. I am determined I will say nothing sinful.

What a tremendous testimony! (1) "You have scrutinized my inner motives" – the Lord is the only One who can scrutinize our hearts and our minds; (2) "you have examined me during the night"; (3) "You have carefully evaluated me." "Scrutinized... examined... evaluated... but you find no sin." "I am determined I will say nothing sinful." "Therefore, laying aside falsehood, SPEAK TRUTH, EACH ONE of you, WITH HIS NEIGHBOR, for we are members of one another" (Ephesians 4:25 NASB).

# **April 3 — Psalm 17:8**

Protect me as you would protect the pupil of your eye! Hide me in the shadow of your wings! The psalmist has two requests: "Protect me" and "Hide me." (1) "Protect me as you would protect the pupil of your eye" and (2) "Hide me in the shadow of your wings!" "The LORD will keep you from all harm – he will watch over your life; the LORD will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore" (Psalm 121:7-8 NIV).

# **April 4 — Psalm 19:7-8**

The law of the LORD is perfect and preserves one's life. The rules set down by the LORD are reliable and impart wisdom to the untrained. The LORD's precepts are fair and make one happy. The LORD's commands are pure and give moral insight.

The psalmist makes four points: (1) "The law of the Lord is perfect and preserves one's life"; (2) "The rules set down by the Lord are reliable and impart wisdom to the untrained"; (3) "The Lord's precepts are fair and make one happy"; (4) "The Lord's commands are pure and give moral insight." In the words of the prophet, "When your words came, I ate them; they were my joy and my heart's delight, for I bear your name, O LORD God Almighty" (Jeremiah 15:16 NIV).

# **April 5 — Psalm 19:1**2

# Who can avoid sinning? Please do not punish my unintentional sins.

The psalmist begins with a question: "Who can avoid sinning?" No one! "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23 NASB). The question is followed by a request: "Please do not punish my unintentional sins." "Teach me what I cannot see; if I have done wrong, I will not do so again" (Job 34:32 NIV).

# **April 6 — Psalm 19:13**

Moreover, keep me from committing flagrant sins; do not allow such sins to control me. Then I will be blameless, and innocent of blatant rebellion.

This verse contains two requests: (1) "Moreover, keep me from committing flagrant sins" and (2) "do not allow such sins to control me." The result will be that "I will be blameless, and innocent of blatant rebellion." "Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin.... Surely you desire truth in the inner parts; you teach me wisdom in the inmost place" (Psalm 51:2, 6 NIV).

# **April 7 — Psalm 19:1**4

# May my words and my thoughts be acceptable in your sight, O LORD, my protector and my defender.

The psalmist implores the Lord to find his "thoughts" and "words" acceptable. "This you know, my beloved brethren. But let everyone be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger" (James 1:19 NASB). "Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth" (Colossians 3:2 NASB). Lord, thank You that You are "my protector and my defender."

# **April 8 — Psalm 20:4**

# May he grant your heart's desire; may he bring all your plans to pass!

The sure answer to the prayer of the psalmist comes when our "heart's desire" is God's desire and when our "plans" are His plans. "Delight yourself in the LORD and he will give you the desires of your heart" (Psalm 37:4 NIV). "Commit to the LORD whatever you do, and your plans will succeed" (Proverbs 16:3 NIV).

# **April 9 — Psalm 25:4-5**

# Make me understand your ways, O LORD! Teach me your paths! Guide me into your truth and teach me. For you are the God who delivers me; on you I rely all day long.

The psalmist makes three requests of the Lord: (1) "Make me understand your ways, O Lord!"; (2) "Teach me your paths!"; (3) "Guide me into your truth and teach me." The writer concludes with the reason: (1) "you are the God who delivers me" and (2) "on you I rely all day long." These verses make me want to sing: "Jesus, I am resting, resting, In the joy of what Thou art; I am finding out the greatness Of Thy loving heart. Thou hast bid me gaze upon Thee, And Thy beauty fills my soul, For by Thy transforming power, Thou hast made me whole."

# April 10 — Psalm 25:9-10

# May he show the humble what is right! May he teach the humble his way! The LORD always proves faithful and reliable to those who follow the demands of his covenant.

What beautiful requests these are! (1) "May he show the humble what is right!" and (2) "May he teach the humble his way!" The Lord provides both duty and direction. "Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time" (1 Peter 5:6

NASB). Our meditation is concluded with a promise: "The Lord always proves faithful and reliable to those who follow the demands of his covenant."

### **April 11 — Psalm 26:2-3**

Examine me, O LORD, and test me! Evaluate my inner thoughts and motives! For I am ever aware of your faithfulness, and your loyalty continually motivates me.

The psalmist makes three requests of the Lord and then gives the reason: (1) "Examine me, O Lord"; (2) "test me"; (3) "Evaluate my inner thoughts and motives." The reason for these requests is that "I am ever aware of your faithfulness, and your loyalty continually motivates me." "Because of the LORD's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness" (Lamentations 3:22-23 NIV).

## **April 12 — Psalm 27:4**

I have asked the LORD for one thing – this is what I desire! I want to live in the LORD's house all the days of my life, so I can gaze at the splendor of the LORD and contemplate in his temple. The psalmist asks the Lord for "one thing": "to live in the Lord's house all the days of my life." The purpose for the request is to "gaze at the splendor of the Lord and contemplate in his temple." Isaiah conveys a similar experience with these words: "Woe to me!' I cried. 'I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty" (Isaiah 6:5 NIV). "Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin" (Psalm 51:2 NIV).

April 13 — Psalm 27:13-14 Where would I be if I did not believe I would experience the LORD's favor in the land of the living? Rely on the LORD! Be strong and confident! Rely on the LORD!

The psalmist asks a question and gives a three-fold command. Question: "Where would I be if I did not believe I would experience the Lord's favor in the land of the living?" The three-fold command: (1) "Rely on the Lord!"; (2) "Be strong and confident!"; (3) "Rely on the Lord!" Isaiah says: "Then you will look and be radiant, your heart will throb and swell with joy" (Isaiah 60:5 NIV).

### **April 14 — Psalm 28:7**

# The LORD strengthens and protects me; I trust in him with all my heart. I am rescued and my heart is full of joy; I will sing to him in gratitude.

The psalmist testifies the following: (1) "The Lord strengthens and protects me" and (2) "I trust in him with all my heart." Therefore: (1) "I am rescued"; (2) "my heart is full of joy"; (3) "I will sing to him in gratitude." My response is to desire to sing the doxology: "Praise God, from Whom all blessings flow; Praise Him, all creatures here below; Praise Him above, ye heavenly host; Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost."

### April 15 — Psalm 29:11

### The LORD gives his people strength; the LORD grants his people security.

"The Lord gives [two things to] his people": (1) "strength" and (2) "security." Isaiah writes: "but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength..." (Isaiah 40:31 NIV). He also says: "no weapon forged against you will prevail, and you will refute every tongue that accuses you" (Isaiah 54:17 NIV). "See, the Sovereign LORD comes with power, and his arm rules for him. See, his reward is with him, and his recompense accompanies him" (Isaiah 40:10 NIV).

## **April 16 — Psalm 31:7**

## I will be happy and rejoice in your faithfulness, because you notice my pain and you are aware of how distressed I am.

The psalmist tells us that he "will be happy and rejoice in [the Lord's] faithfulness." Then he supplies the two-fold reason: (1) "because you notice my pain" and (2) "you are aware of how distressed I am." "The LORD delights in those who fear him, who put their hope in his unfailing love" (Psalm 147:11 NIV).

## April 17 — Psalm 31:14-16

But I trust in you, O LORD! I declare, "You are my God!" You determine my destiny! Rescue me from the power of my enemies and those who chase me. Smile on your servant! Deliver me because of your faithfulness!

The psalmist says, "I trust in you" and, "I declare, 'You are my God!" Why? Because "You determine my destiny!" You "Rescue me from the power of my enemies and those who chase me." He then makes two requests of the Lord: (1) "Smile on your servant!" and (2) "Deliver me because

of your faithfulness!" "The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you; the LORD turn his face toward you and give you peace" (Numbers 6:24-26 NIV).

#### **April 18 — Psalm 31:1**9

How great is your favor, which you store up for your loyal followers!

In plain sight of everyone you bestow it on those who take shelter in you.

What a testimony! "How great is your favor" (1) "which you store up for your loyal followers" and (2), which you do so "In plain sight of everyone you bestow it on those who take shelter in you." "Will you not revive us again, that your people may rejoice in you? Show us your unfailing love, O LORD, and grant us your salvation" (Psalm 85:6-7 NIV).

### **April 19 — Psalm 32:8**

# I will instruct and teach you about how you should live. I will advise you as I look you in the eye.

The Lord says: (1) "I will instruct and teach you about how you should live" and (2) "I will advise you as I look you in the eye." "My eyes are on all their ways; they are not hidden from me, nor is their sin concealed from my eyes" (Jeremiah 16:17 NIV). "For the eyes of the LORD range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him" (2 Chronicles 16:9 NIV). "And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do" (Hebrews 4:13 NASB).

#### **April 20 — Psalm 32:1**1

## Rejoice in the LORD and be happy, you who are godly! Shout for joy, all you who are morally upright!

This verse contains two commands: (1) "you who are godly... Rejoice in the Lord and be happy," and (2) "you who are morally upright... Shout for joy." "Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will be joyful in God my Saviour" (Habakkuk 3:17-18 NIV).

#### **April 21 — Psalm 33:11**

#### The LORD's decisions stand forever; his plans abide throughout the ages.

Our verse today tells us that (1) "The Lord's decisions stand forever," and (2) "The Lord's... plans

nature of the publication to contain references that may prove difficult to accurately attribute. Any use

abide throughout the ages." "Many are the plans in a man's heart, but it is the LORD's purpose that prevails" (Proverbs 19:21 NIV). "And I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand" (John 10:28-29 NASB).

### April 22 - Psalm 33:18

## Look, the LORD takes notice of his loyal followers, those who wait for him to demonstrate his faithfulness.

This verse challenges us to "look" to see two things: (1) "the Lord takes notice of his loyal followers" and (2) "the Lord takes notice of... those who wait for him [with the purpose] to demonstrate his faithfulness." "Then the LORD said to Satan, 'Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil" (Job 1:8 NIV). "I say to myself, 'The LORD is my portion; therefore I will wait for him.' The LORD is good to those whose hope is in him, to the one who seeks him; it is good to wait quietly for the salvation of the LORD" (Lamentations 3:24-26 NIV).

## **April 23 — Psalm 34:**3

### Magnify the LORD with me! Let's praise his name together!

The commands this morning are as follows: (1) "Magnify the Lord with me!" and (2) "Let's praise his name together!" "And Mary said: 'My soul exalts [makes great] the Lord, And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior" (Luke 1:46-47 NASB). "Sing joyfully to the LORD, you righteous; it is fitting for the upright to praise him" (Psalm 33:1 NIV).

## **April 24 — Psalm 34:5**

## Those who look to him for help are happy; their faces are not ashamed.

Those who look to the Lord for help are (1) "happy" and (2) "their faces are not ashamed." "Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night" (Psalm 1:1-2 NIV). "They will come and shout for joy on the heights of Zion; they will rejoice in the bounty of the LORD" (Jeremiah 31:12 NIV). Moses "was not aware that his face was radiant because he had spoken with the LORD" (Exodus 34:29 NIV).

### April 25 — Psalm 34:6-7

# This oppressed man cried out and the LORD heard; he saved him from all his troubles. The Lord's angel camps around the Lord's loyal followers and delivers them.

The "oppressed man cried out and the Lord heard," saving the man from "all his troubles." The Lord's response is immediate. Why? "The Lord's angel camps around the Lord's loyal followers." He not only "camps around" those who love the Lord, but the angel is there to deliver them from difficulty. "Before they call I will answer; while they are still speaking I will hear" (Isaiah 65:24 NIV). "Until now you have asked for nothing in My name; ask and you will receive, that your joy may be made full" (John 16:24 NASB).

### **April 26 — Psalm 34:8**

## Taste and see that the LORD is good! How happy is the one who takes shelter in him!

The psalmist recommends that we "Taste and see that the Lord is good!" He then gives us a response: "How happy is the one who takes shelter in him!" "When your words came, I ate them; they were my joy and my heart's delight, for I bear your name, O LORD God Almighty" (Jeremiah 15:16 NIV). "I long to dwell in your tent forever and take refuge in the shelter of your wings" (Psalm 61:4 NIV).

## **April 27 — Psalm 34:1**5

## The LORD pays attention to the godly and hears their cry for help.

The godly can count on two great truths: (1) "The Lord pays attention to the godly" and (2) "The Lord... hears [the godly] cry for help." "O Lord, listen! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, hear and act! For your sake, O my God, do not delay, because your city and your people bear your Name" (Daniel 9:19 NIV).

## April 28 — Psalm 34:18-19

## The LORD is near the brokenhearted; he delivers those who are discouraged. The godly face many dangers, but the LORD saves them from each one of them.

The Lord promises to be "near the brokenhearted." His presence is very real in the midst of trial. He also "delivers those who are discouraged" by bringing comfort and peace. The verses conclude with a statement of affirmation: "The godly face many dangers" but in contrast to those dangers, "the Lord saves them from each one of them." "Though the mountains be shaken and the hills be

removed, yet my unfailing love for you will not be shaken nor my covenant of peace be removed,' says the LORD, who has compassion on you" (Isaiah 54:10 NIV).

### **April 29 — Psalm 35:27**

May those who desire my vindication shout for joy and rejoice! May they continually say, "May the LORD be praised, for he wants his servant to be secure."

The reason a follower of the Lord will be vindicated is that "he wants his servant to be secure." Isaiah writes: "no weapon forged against you will prevail, and you will refute every tongue that accuses you. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and this is their vindication from me," declares the LORD" (Isaiah 54:17 NIV). "Praise him for his acts of power; praise him for his surpassing greatness" (Psalm 150:2 NIV).

## **April 30 — Psalm 36:7**

How precious is your loyal love, O God! The human race finds shelter under your wings. This verse suggests two very beautiful thoughts: (1) "How precious is your loyal love, O God!" and (2) "The human race finds shelter under your wings." The words of the song "Under His Wings" come to mind: "Under His wings I am safely abiding, Though the night deepens and tempests are wild, Still I can trust Him; I know He will keep me, He has redeemed me, and I am His child. Under His wings, oh, what precious enjoyment! There will I hide till life's trials are o'er; Sheltered, protected, no evil can harm me, Resting in Jesus, I'm safe evermore."

#### **MAY**

#### May 1 — Psalm 37:3-4

Trust in the LORD and do what is right! Settle in the land and maintain your integrity! Then you will take delight in the LORD, and he will answer your prayers.

Note the four commands in this verse: (1) "Trust in the Lord"; (2) "do what is right!"; (3) "Settle in the land"; (4) "maintain your integrity!" When we do these, we take delight in the Lord, and He will answer our prayers. What a fabulous prescription and promise to carry with us into the wonderful day before us!

#### May 2 — Psalm 37:5

Commit your future to the LORD! Trust in him, and he will act on your behalf.

This verse contains two commands and a promise: (1) "Commit your future to the Lord!" and (2) "Trust in him." He promises to "act on your behalf." "If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and he will rescue us from your hand, O king. But even if he does not, we want you to know, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up" (Daniel 3:17-18 NIV). Let's sing the great old hymn: "I don't know about tomorrow, It may bring me poverty; But the One Who feeds the sparrow, Is the One Who stands by me. And the path that be my portion, May be through the flame or flood, But His presence goes before me, And I'm covered with His blood."

#### May 3 — Psalm 37:7

## Wait patiently for the LORD! Wait confidently for him! Do not fret over the apparent success of a sinner, a man who carries out wicked schemes!

Here we are commanded to wait "patiently" and "confidently" on the Lord, not fretting over the "apparent success" of the bad guys. We are not to wait in resignation, but rather with expectation and excitement. Let us not waste our emotional energy on the wicked. The Lord, in His time, is going to take care of them as well.

#### May 4 — Psalm 37:23-24

# The LORD grants success to the one whose behavior he finds commendable. Even if he trips, he will not fall headlong, for the LORD holds his hand.

These verses offer two observations and a reason. Observations: (1) "The Lord grants success to the one whose behavior he finds commendable" – in other words, He blesses the obedient heart; (2) "Even if he trips, he will not fall headlong" – failure is not fatal or final. Why? The reason is that "the Lord holds his hand." I feel like singing the well known chorus: "Many things about tomorrow I don't seem to understand; But I know who holds tomorrow, and I know who holds my hand."

#### May 5 — Psalm 37:34

## Rely on the LORD! Obey his commands! Then he will permit you to possess the land; you will see the demise of evil men.

Our verse for this morning presents us with two commands and then promises. Commands: (1) "Rely on the Lord!" and (2) "Obey his commands!" Promises: (1) "he will permit you to possess the

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land" and (2) "you will see the demise of evil men." The challenge before us today is two-fold. The Lord is looking for dependence and obedience, and then He, in turn, will give the victory.

## **May 6 — Psalm 39:4**

## O LORD, help me understand my mortality and the brevity of life! Let me realize how quickly my life will pass!

The two key words in our verse for this morning are (1) "understand" and (2) "realize." First of all, "O Lord, help me understand" both "my mortality" and "the brevity of [my] life." Then Lord, "Let me realize how quickly my life will pass!" O Lord, "Teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain a heart of wisdom" (Psalm 90:12 NIV). Lord, as I face this new day, I feel like I am at the two-minute warning. There is much that I want to do for the kingdom, yet there is little time left.

## May 7 — Psalm 39:5

Look, you make my days short-lived, and my life span is nothing from your perspective. Surely all people, even those who seem secure, are nothing but vapor.

Time flies when you're having fun! Lord, my lifespan is nothing from Your perspective. You are the eternal God. The ground time of all people is short. "Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away" (James 4:14 NASB).

#### May 8 — Psalm 40:1-3

I relied completely on the LORD, and he turned toward me and heard my cry for help. He lifted me out of the watery pit, out of the slimy mud. He placed my feet on a rock and gave me secure footing. He gave me reason to sing a new song, praising our God. May many see what God has done, so that they might swear allegiance to him and trust in the LORD!

Today is a time for testimony. "I relied completely on the Lord." Because I did, this is what He did for me: (1) "he turned toward me"; (2) "[he] heard my cry for help"; (3) "He lifted me out of the watery pit, out of the slimy mud; (4) "He placed my feet on a rock and gave me secure footing"; (5) "He gave me reason to sing a new song, praising our God." Because of all He has done, the psalmist longs for fruit: (1) "May many see what God has done" and (2) may they respond so "that they

might swear allegiance to him and trust in the Lord!" How about sharing your testimony with someone who needs to hear from you today? Why not tell what God has done for you?

#### May 9 — Psalm 40:11

## O LORD, you do not withhold your compassion from me. May your loyal love and faithfulness continually protect me!

The psalmist here sounds much like the prodigal son in Luke 15: "And he got up and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him, and felt compassion for him, and ran and embraced him, and kissed him" (Luke 15:20 NASB). The psalmist concludes with a two-fold request: "May your loyal love and your faithfulness continually protect me!" "For the LORD God is a sun and shield; the LORD bestows favour and honor; no good thing does he withhold from those whose walk is blameless" (Psalm 84:11 NIV).

## May 10 — Psalm 40:16

## May all those who seek you be happy and rejoice in you! May those who love to experience your deliverance say continually, "May the LORD be praised!"

Three mays greet us this May morning: (1) "May all those who seek you be happy and rejoice in you!"; (2) "May those who love to experience your deliverance say continually"; (3) "May the Lord be praised!" In the sermon on the mount, Jesus utters similar sentiments: "Blessed are you when men revile you, and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely, on account of Me. Rejoice, and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you" (Matthew 5:11-12 NASB). "I will exalt you, my God the King; I will praise your name for ever and ever" (Psalm 145:1 NIV).

### May 11 — Psalm 42:1-2

# As a deer longs for streams of water, so I long for you, O God! I thirst for God, for the living God. I say, "When will I be able to go and appear in God's presence?"

Lord, I thirst for You. You are "the living God." When may I appear in Your presence?" "And the Spirit and the bride say, 'Come.' And let the one who hears say, 'Come.' And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost" (Revelation 22:17 NASB). Thank You, Lord, for the gift of life today!

#### May 12 — Psalm 43:5

## Why are you depressed, O my soul? Why are you upset? Wait for God! For I will again give thanks to my God for his saving intervention.

Are you depressed today? Upset? Because the Lord makes all things beautiful in His time, the psalmist commands: "Wait for God!" "The LORD has done great things for us; We are glad" (Psalm 126:3 NASB).

#### May 13 — Psalm 44:8

## In God I boast all day long, and we will continually give thanks to your name. (Selah)

The psalmist greets us this morning with the wonderful proclamation: "In God I boast all day long." Do you find yourself extolling all He is doing in you, through you, with you? The psalmist concludes by saying that this gratitude should be ceaseless: "we will continually give thanks to your name."

### May 14 — Psalm 46:1

### God is our secure shelter; he is truly our helper in times of trouble.

God is (1) "our secure shelter" and (2) "our helper in times of trouble." "My soul finds rest in God alone; my salvation comes from him. He alone is my rock and my salvation; he is my fortress, I shall never be shaken" (Psalm 62:1-2 NIV).

#### May 15 — Psalm 46:10

## He says, "Stop your striving and recognize that I am God! I will be exalted over the nations! I will be exalted over the earth!"

Our verse contains a command and two promises. "Stop your striving and recognize that I am God!" Then come the promises: (1) "I will be exalted over the nations!" and (2) "I will be exalted over the earth!" The framed sign in my office says: "Don, trust me. I have everything under control! Signed, Jesus." Lord, "You will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast, because he trusts in you. Trust in the LORD forever, for the LORD, the LORD, is the Rock eternal" (Isaiah 26:3-4 NIV).

#### May 16 — Psalm 49:17

## For he will take nothing with him when he dies; his wealth will not follow him down into the grave.

Paul's words to Timothy come to mind this morning: "But godliness actually is a means of great gain when accompanied by contentment. For we have brought nothing into the world, so we cannot

take anything out of it either. If we have food and covering, with these we shall be content" (1 Timothy 6:6-8 NASB). "And I will say to my soul, 'Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years to come; take your ease, eat, drink and be merry.' But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your soul is required of you; and now who will own what you have prepared?'" (Luke 12:19-20 NASB). "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I shall depart. The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away; may the name of the LORD be praised" (Job 1:21 NIV).

#### May 17 — Psalm 50:15

## Pray to me when you are in trouble! I will deliver you and vindicate you!"

The verse of the morning reminds me of the words of Jeremiah the prophet: "Ah, Sovereign LORD, you have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and outstretched arm. Nothing is too hard for you. You show love to thousands but bring the punishment for the fathers' sins into the laps of their children after them. O great and powerful God, whose name is the LORD Almighty, great are your purposes and mighty are your deeds. Your eyes are open to all the ways of men; you reward everyone according to his conduct and as his deeds deserve" (Jeremiah 32:17-19 NIV).

## May 18 — Psalm 51:2

## Scrub away my wrongdoing! Cleanse me of my sin!

The psalmist here accepts the invitation of the Lord included in Isaiah: "Come now, let us reason together,' says the LORD. 'Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool" (Isaiah 1:18 NIV). John writes: "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9 NASB). "Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2 Corinthians 7:1 NASB).

#### May 19 — Psalm 51:6

## Look, you desire integrity in the inner man; you want me to possess wisdom.

This verse reveals that the psalmist recognizes what the Lord really wants from us: (1) "integrity in the inner man" and (2) "wisdom." David asks the Lord: "Show me your ways, O LORD, teach me

your paths; guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Saviour, and my hope is in you all day long" (Psalm 25:4-5 NIV). Proverbs tells us: "For the LORD gives wisdom, and from his mouth come knowledge and understanding. He holds victory in store for the upright, he is a shield to those whose walk is blameless, for he guards the course of the just and protects the way of his faithful ones" (Proverbs 2:6-8 NIV).

### May 20 — Psalm 51:7

#### Sprinkle me with water and I will be pure; wash me and I will be whiter than snow.

My thoughts turn to Paul's epistles today. To Titus he says, "He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit" (Titus 3:5 NASB). And to the Ephesian saints the apostle writes, "that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless" (Ephesians 5:26-27 NASB).

#### May 21 — Psalm 51:10

## Create for me a pure heart! Transform me and give me integrity!

The psalmist's prayer for today is three-fold: (1) "Create for me a pure heart!"; (2) "Transform me"; (3) "give me integrity!" Paul expresses a parallel idea as he addresses young Timothy: "But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith" (1 Timothy 1:5 NASB). Lord, wash me of my sin so that I might have "a pure heart," then "transform me" by the renewing of my mind, and then, in my conduct, "give me integrity!"

#### May 22 — Psalm 51:17

## The "sacrifices" God desires are a humble attitude – O God, a humble and repentant heart you will not reject.

The Lord communicates through Malachi the prophet: "Oh, that one of you would shut the temple doors, so that you would not light useless fires on my altar! I am not pleased with you,' says the LORD Almighty, 'and I will accept no offering from your hands'" (Malachi 1:10 NIV). The Lord truly desires that we come before Him with a "humble attitude" – "a humble and repentant heart you will not reject." James admonishes, "Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify

your hearts, you double-minded... Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you" (James 4:7-8, 10 NASB).

#### May 23 — Psalm 55:22

## Throw your burden upon the LORD, and he will sustain you. He will never allow the godly to be upended.

Wow! What a great verse for this morning and what a fabulous invitation! "Throw your burden upon the Lord." Why? The reason is two-fold: (1) "he will sustain you" and (2) "He will never allow the godly to be upended." Peter says: "casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you" (1 Peter 5:7 NASB). Peter also writes: "After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you. To Him be dominion forever and ever. Amen" (1 Peter 5:10-11 NASB).

### May 24 — Psalm 57:2

## I cry out for help to the sovereign God, to the God who vindicates me.

Today's verse offers a wonderful invitation. Every word is loaded. Peter recommends: "Therefore, let those also who suffer according to the will of God entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right" (1 Peter 4:19 NASB). Our verse not only invites us to "Cry out for help to the sovereign God," but also to call "to the God who vindicates me." Thank You, Lord, that you know my heart and You are on my side. "But He knows the way I take; When he has tested me, I shall come forth as gold" (Job 23:10 NIV).

### May 25 — Psalm 57:5

## Rise up above the sky, O God! May your splendor cover the whole earth!

I love the way the New Living Bible paraphrases our verse for this morning: "Be exalted, O God, above the highest heavens! May your glory shine over all the earth." Peterson in *The Message* offers a beautiful rendition: "Soar high in the skies, O God! Cover the whole earth with your glory!" In the words of the hymnist: "All hail the power of Jesus' Name! Let angels prostrate fall; Bring forth the royal diadem, and crown Him Lord of all... O that, with yonder sacred throng, we at His feet may fall, Join in the everlasting song, and crown Him Lord of all."

## May 26 — Psalm 57:10-11

For your loyal love extends beyond the sky, and your faithfulness reaches the clouds. Rise up above the sky, O God! May your splendor cover the whole earth!

What wonderful verses greet us this special day, my sweet Pearl's birthday! Three qualities of the Lord's stand out: (1) "your loyal love"; (2) "your faithfulness"; and (3) "your splendor." Peterson, in *The Message*, offers a beautiful paraphrase: "The deeper your love, the higher it goes; every cloud is a flag to your faithfulness. Soar high in the skies, O God! Cover the whole earth with your glory!" "Father, the hour has come; glorify Your Son, that the Son may glorify You.... I glorified Thee on the earth, having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do" (John 17:1, 4 NASB).

#### May 27 — Psalm 59:16-17

As for me, I will sing about your strength; I will praise your loyal love in the morning. For you are my refuge and my place of shelter when I face trouble. You are my source of strength! I will sing praises to you! For God is my refuge, the God who loves me.

The psalmist tells the Lord that he is doing two things early: (1) "I will sing about your strength" and (2) "I will praise your loyal love in the morning." The writer's reasons follow: (1) "For you are my refuge"; (2) "you are... my place of shelter when I face trouble"; (3) "You are my source of strength!" Isaiah states: "He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak" (Isaiah 40:29 NIV). Shall we sing together with the hymnist? "He giveth more grace as our burdens grow greater, He sendeth more strength as our labors increase; To added afflictions He addeth His mercy, To multiplied trials He multiplies peace. His love has no limits, His grace has no measure, His power no boundary known unto men; For out of His infinite riches in Jesus He giveth, and giveth, and giveth again. When we have exhausted our store of endurance, When our strength has failed ere the day is half done, When we reach the end of our hoarded resources Our Father's full giving is only begun."

#### May 28 — Psalm 61:1-2

O God, hear my cry for help! Pay attention to my prayer! From the most remote place on earth I call out to you in my despair. Lead me up to an inaccessible rocky summit!

Here our psalmist seems in panic city – issuing an emergency 9-1-1 call. The New Living version paraphrases these two verses thus: "O God, listen to my cry! Hear my prayer! From the ends of the earth, I will cry to you for help, for my heart is overwhelmed. Lead me to the towering rock of safety..." The third stanza of the great old hymn, "Rock of Ages," likewise comes to mind: "While I draw this fleeting breath, When my eyelids close in death, When I soar to worlds unknown, See Thee on Thy judgement throne, Rock of Ages, cleft for me, Let me hide myself in Thee."

#### May 29 — Psalm 62:1-2

# For God alone I patiently wait; he is the one who delivers me. He alone is my protector and deliverer. He is my refuge; I will not be upended.

When you are most eager to act is when you will likely make the most pitiful mistakes. The psalmist will have none of this haste. He is patiently waiting upon the Lord. Why? God "is the one who delivers me. He alone is my protector and deliverer. He is my refuge; I will not be upended." The key to staying on track and following God's purpose is to patiently wait upon Him. As long as I am keeping my focus on Jesus I won't run into the ditch!

### May 30 — Psalm 62:8

## Trust in him at all times, you people! Pour out your hearts before him! God is our shelter! (Selah)

The psalmist in our verse for this morning advises us to trust and confess. We are to "trust in him at all times" – the good times, the bad times, the happy times, the sad times, the high times, the low times, all times. We are to pour out our hearts before him as well. In the words of the apostle John: "And this is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us" (1 John 5:14 NASB). As the psalmist concludes, "God is our shelter!" He is the One to whom we can turn for protection and for peace.

#### May 31 — Psalm 64:10

The godly will rejoice in the LORD and take shelter in him. All the morally upright will boast. What a great verse greets us this morning! The psalmist tells us that "the godly will" do three things: (1) "The godly will rejoice in the Lord"; (2) "[they will] take shelter in him"; and (3) "All the

morally upright will boast" or praise Him. Peterson in *The Message* paraphrases this verse: "Be glad, good people! Fly to GOD! Good-hearted people, make praise your habit." Walking with God in obedience pays the dividends of joy, protection, and praise.

### **JUNE**

#### June 1 — Psalm 65:11

## You crown the year with your good blessings, and you leave abundance in your wake.

This verse sets the stage for an all-out celebration! Ezekiel 34:26 says: "And I will send showers, showers of blessings, which will come just when they are needed" (NLT). The Lord speaks through Malachi the prophet: "I will open the windows of heaven for you. I will pour out a blessing so great you won't have enough room to take it in! Try it! Let me prove it to you!" (Malachi 3:10 NLT). Besides "good blessings," our psalm also speaks of the Lord's "abundance." After Jesus finished feeding the 5000, the apostle John records: "There were only five barley loaves to start with, but twelve baskets were filled with the pieces of bread the people did not eat!" (John 6:13 NLT). Paul tells the Ephesians: "Now glory be to God! By his mighty power at work within us, he is able to accomplish infinitely more than we would ever dare to ask or hope" (Ephesians 3:20 NLT).

#### **June 2 — Psalm 66:1**0

## For you, O God, tested us; you purified us like refined silver.

Our verse tells us to be prepared because God both tests and purifies us. Jesus tested Philip in the matter of the loaves and fishes: "Therefore Jesus, lifting up His eyes, and seeing that a great multitude was coming to Him, said to Philip, 'Where are we to buy bread, so that these may eat?' And this He was saying to test him; for He Himself knew what He was intending to do" (John 6:5-6 NASB). Moses records the following in Genesis 22:1: "Some time later God tested Abraham..." (NIV). 1 Peter 1:6-7: "In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (NASB). Peter writes further: "Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing

were happening to you" (1 Peter 4:12 NASB). Isaiah records these words from the Lord: "See, I have refined you, though not as silver; I have tested you in the furnace of affliction. For my own sake, for my own sake, I do this. How can I let myself be defamed? I will not yield my glory to another" (Isaiah 48:1011 NIV).

#### June 3 — Psalm 66:16

### Come! Listen, all you who are loyal to God! I will declare what he has done for me.

The psalmist is desirous of an audience as he proclaims what God has done for him. I feel a song coming on, don't you? "To God be the glory, Great things He hath done.... Great things he hath taught us, great things he hath done, and great our rejoicing thru Jesus the Son; but purer, and higher, and greater will be our wonder, our transport, when Jesus we see."

#### **June 4 — Psalm 68:19**

## The sovereign Master deserves praise! Day after day he carries our burden, the God who delivers us. (Selah)

Peterson paraphrases this verse: "Blessed be the Lord – day after day he carries us along. He's our Savior, our God, oh yes! He's God-for-us, he's God-who-saves-us..." (Psalm 68:19-20 MSG). I also love the New Living Bible paraphrase: "Praise the Lord; praise God our savior! For each day he carries us in his arms."

#### **June 5 — Psalm 69:32**

#### The oppressed look on – let them rejoice! You who seek God, may you be encouraged!

Our verse mentions two audiences: (1) "The oppressed" and (2) "[Those] who seek God." The recommendation for "the oppressed" is: "let them rejoice!" The recommendation for "[those] who seek God": "may you be encouraged!" May joy and encouragement fill this wonderful day that is before you! May the joy produced by the Spirit within you be passed onto others today. May the encouragement that comes from the Lord also be shared with others. This is going to be a great day!

#### **June 6 — Psalm 71:9**

#### Do not reject me in my old age! When my strength fails, do not abandon me!

The psalmist in today's verse is looking ahead to his old age. He has two concerns: (1) "Do not

reject me in my old age!" and (2) "When my strength fails, do not abandon me!" The Lord says through Isaiah the prophet: "Even to your old age and grey hairs I am he, I am he who will sustain you. I have made you and I will carry you; I will sustain you and I will rescue you" (Isaiah 46:4 NIV). The palmist also says: "The righteous will flourish like a palm tree, they will grow like a cedar of Lebanon; planted in the house of the LORD, they will flourish in the courts of our God. They will still bear fruit in old age, they will stay fresh and green, proclaiming, 'The LORD is upright; he is my Rock, and there is no wickedness in him" (Psalm 92:12-15 NIV).

#### June 7 — Psalm 71:18

## Even when I am old and gray, O God, do not abandon me, until I tell the next generation about your strength, and those coming after me about your power.

You can almost hear the psalmist praying this morning: "Lord, hang in there with me all the way to the finish line! I still need to tell the next generation about Your strength and Your power." Paul's words to Timothy come to mind this morning: "You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, these entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also" (2 Timothy 2:1-2 NASB).

## June 8 — Psalm 71:20

## Though you have allowed me to experience much trouble and distress, revive me once again! Bring me up once again from the depths of the earth!

This verse reminds me of Paul's words to the Corinthians: "For we do not want you to be unaware, brethren, of our affliction which came to us in Asia, that we were burdened excessively, beyond our strength, so that we despaired even of life; indeed, we had the sentence of death within ourselves so that we would not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead; who delivered us from so great a peril of death, and will deliver us, He on whom we have set our hope. And He will yet deliver us" (2 Corinthians 1:8-10 NASB).

#### June 9 — Psalm 72:18-19

The LORD God, the God of Israel, deserves praise! He alone accomplishes amazing things! His glorious name deserves praise forevermore! May his majestic splendor fill the whole earth! We agree! We agree!

Today's verses start on a high note of praise. "The Lord God, the God of Israel, deserves praise!" The reason He "deserves praise" is that "He alone accomplishes amazing things!" Jeremiah records the invitation of the Lord: "Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know" (Jeremiah 33:3 NIV). "I am the LORD, the God of all mankind. Is anything too hard for me?" (Jeremiah 32:27 NIV). The psalmist's praise rises still higher: "His glorious name deserves praise forevermore!" The psalmist's wish is: "May his majestic splendor fill the whole earth! We agree! We agree!" Let's sing: "Hallelujah, for the Lord our God The Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad And give the glory unto Him."

#### June 10 — Psalm 73:23-24

# But I am continually with you; you hold my right hand. You guide me by your wise advice, and then you will lead me to a position of honor.

What joy and comfort comes to our hearts as we listen to the testimony of the psalmist: (1) he speaks of companionship with the Lord – "But I am continually with you"; (2) he talks about the Lord's care – "you hold my right hand"; (3) he talks about the Lord's counsel – "You guide me by your wise advice"; (4) he talks about the Lord's compassion – "then you will lead me to a position of honor." The words of David's prayer in 2 Samuel 7 come to my thoughts this morning: "Who am I, O Sovereign LORD, and what is my family, that you have brought me this far? And as if this were not enough in your sight, O Sovereign LORD, you have also spoken about the future of the house of your servant. Is this your usual way of dealing with man, O Sovereign LORD?" (2 Samuel 7:18-19 NIV).

#### **June 11 — Psalm 73:25-2**6

## Whom do I have in heaven but you? I desire no one but you on earth. My flesh and my heart may grow weak, but God always protects my heart and gives me stability.

The psalmist begins with a question: "Whom do I have in heaven but you?" Paul tells the Colossians: "Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth" (Colossians 3:2 NASB). The psalmist testifies, "I desire no one but you on earth." The words of Jesus in the sermon on the mount come to mind: "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in and steal; for where your treasure

is, there your heart be also" (Matthew 6:19-21 NASB). The psalmist acknowledges, finally,: "My flesh and my heart may grow weak, but [in contrast] God always protects my heart and gives me stability." May these thoughts accompany you on your journey today.

#### June 12 — Psalm 73:28

## But as for me, God's presence is all I need. I have made the sovereign LORD my shelter, as I declare all the things you have done.

The psalmist begins the day by saying that if he has "God's presence" he has all that he needs. Moses receives the same assurance: "The LORD replied, 'My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.' ... And the LORD said to Moses, 'I will do the very thing you have asked, because I am pleased with you and I know you by name'" (Exodus 33:14, 17 NIV). "I have made the sovereign Lord my shelter, as I declare all the things you have done." The Lord truly is a shelter in the time of storm. His track record of intervention and involvement bring peace. All is well with our soul.

#### **June 13 — Psalm 80:19**

## O LORD God, invincible warrior, restore us! Smile on us! Then we will be delivered!

The psalmist begins by calling the Lord an "invincible warrior." David understood that in the Valley Elah when he gave testimony that the battle is the Lord's. Jonathan understood that: "...Perhaps the LORD will act on our behalf. Nothing can hinder the LORD from saving, whether by many or by few" (1 Samuel 14:6 NIV). Joshua and Jehosophat knew this lesson well. Jehosophat learned from the prophet: "...Do not be afraid or discouraged because of this vast army. For the battle is not yours, but God's" (2 Chronicles 20:15 NIV). The psalmist has two requests: (1) "restore us!" and (2) "Smile on us!" And then he gives the consequence: "Then we will be delivered!" "But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 15:57 NASB).

#### June 14 — Psalm 84:11

For the LORD God is our sovereign protector. The LORD bestows favor and honor; he withholds no good thing from those who have integrity.

A rich and wonderful verse awaits us on the dawning of this new day!

We read: (1) "For the Lord God is our sovereign protector" – "No weapon forged against you will prevail" says the Lord; and (2) "The Lord bestows favor and honor" – in doing this "he withholds no good thing from those who have integrity." The words of Jacob in prayer as he is returning to his homeland come to mind: "I am unworthy of all the kindness and faithfulness you have shown your servant" (Genesis 32:10 NIV).

#### **June 15 — Psalm 86:1-2**

### Listen O LORD! Answer me! For I am oppressed and needy.

The psalmist is in crisis mode. He issues two requests to the Lord, and then he gives two reasons for the requests. His two requests are: (1) "Listen O Lord!" and (2) "Answer me!" Why? (1) "I am oppressed" and (2) "needy." My thoughts turn to the cry of Daniel: "O Lord, listen! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, hear and act! For your sake, O my God, do not delay, because your city and your people bear your Name" (Daniel 9:19 NIV). Paul tells the Philippians: "And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:19 NASB).

#### **June 16 — Psalm 86:5**

## Certainly O sovereign Master, you are kind and forgiving, and show great faithfulness to all who cry out to you.

The psalmist refers to the character of our Lord when he says: "Certainly O sovereign Master." He describes the "sovereign Master" thus: (1) "you are kind"; (2) "you are... forgiving"; and (3) "you...show great faithfulness to all who cry out to you." Whatever our need today, the Lord is the "sovereign Master" who controls all the storms in our lives. We need not fear for He is "kind." We need not worry about what we have done because He is "forgiving." And, above all, we need to realize that He never changes and that he shows "great faithfulness to all who cry out" to Him. After meditating on this verse, don't you want to get on your knees and pray, seeking God's face anew this day?

#### June 17 — Psalm 86:11

## O LORD, teach me how you want me to live! Then I will obey your commands. Make me wholeheartedly committed to you!

O what an awesome prayer of humility! "O Lord, teach me how you want me to live!" Job says: "Teach me what I cannot see; if I have done wrong, I will not do so again" (Job 34:32 NIV). David says: "Show me your ways, O LORD, teach me your paths; guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Saviour, and my hope is in you all day long" (Psalm 25:4-5 NIV). The psalmist then

says: "Then I will obey your commands." Yes, the Lord blesses the obedient heart. As He teaches, we obey. He concludes: "Make me wholeheartedly committed to you!" In the words of the hymnist: "All to Jesus, I surrender; All to Him I freely give; I will ever love and trust Him, In His presence daily live."

#### **June 18 — Psalm 90:12**

## So teach us to consider our mortality, so that we might live wisely.

Once again the word "teach" appears in our verse for today. The writer's prayer request is, "So teach us to consider our mortality." The reason for this is "so that we might live wisely." How do we "consider our mortality"? We realize earthly life is temporary – time waits for no man. We know we will be tested at the end. As the flight attendant would say: "Our ground time will be brief. Prepare for immediate departure." As we acknowledge the transitory nature of life, we should desire to invest each day with meaning and ministry. "Now before the Feast of the Passover, Jesus knowing that His hour had come that He would depart out of this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end" (John 13:1 NASB).

#### June 19 — Psalm 91:1

# As for you, the one who lives in the shelter of the Sovereign One, and resides in the protective shadow of the mighty king.

Isn't it a joy and a delight to face the brand new day with these wonderful statements? We are those who (1) "[live] in the shelter of the Sovereign One" and (2) "[reside] in protective shadow of the mighty king." The "shelter" speaks of the place that the Lord has provided—a place to run to, a place to hide until the storm is past. And the "protective shadow" reminds us of the Lord's 24/7 surveillance, continuous protection, ceaseless intervention. Lord, I thank You for caring so much for us that You bless us and that You meet all of our needs.

#### June 20 — Psalm 92:1-2

It is fitting to thank the LORD, and to sing praises to your name, O Sovereign One! It is fitting to proclaim your loyal love in the morning, and your faithfulness during the night.

In today's verses, the phrase "it is fitting" occurs twice. That which is "fitting" is that which pleases the Lord. Here we see that it is "fitting" to (1) "thank the Lord"; (2) "sing praises" to His name; (3) "proclaim" in the morning His "loyal love" and in the evening His "faithfulness." I feel like singing the second verse of the great hymn "Day

by Day": "Ev'ry day the Lord Himself is near me With a special mercy for each hour; All my cares He fain would bear and cheer me, He whose name is Counselor and Pow'r. The protection of His child and treasure, Is a charge that on Himself He laid; 'As your days, your strength shall be in measure,' This the pledge to me He made."

#### June 21 — Psalm 92:4

## For you, O LORD, have made me happy by your work. I will sing for joy because of what you have done.

Because the Lord has "made me happy by [His] work," my response is going to be to "sing for joy." I think we'd better sing again this morning: "To God be the glory, great things He has done; So loved He the world that He gave us His Son, Who yielded His life an atonement for sin, And opened the life gate that all may go in. Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, Let the earth hear His voice! Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, Let the people rejoice! O come to the Father, through Jesus the Son, And give Him the glory, great things He has done."

#### June 22 — Psalm 92:14

## They bear fruit even when they are old; they are filled with vitality and have many leaves.

Your age does not matter. The key to being fruitful is revealed by the Lord Jesus: "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me" (John 15:4 NASB). Lord, glorify Yourself by bearing much fruit through me today! The last phrase in our psalm says: "they are filled with vitality and have many leaves." I am reminded of the words of Jeremiah the prophet: "But blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, whose confidence is in him. He will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit" (Jeremiah 17:7-8 NIV).

#### **June 23 — Psalm 95:6-7**

Come! Let's bow down and worship! Let's kneel before the LORD, our creator! For he is our God; we are the people of his pasture, the sheep he owns. Today, if only you would obey him! The psalmist issues an invitation to "Come!" to do two things: (1) "bow down and worship" and (2) "kneel before the Lord, our creator!" Why? "For he is our God." In contrast, "we are the people of

his pasture, the sheep he owns." Our verse concludes with a painful plea: "Today, if only you would obey him!" Isaiah's words come to my thoughts this morning: "We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah 53:6 NIV).

#### **June 24 — Psalm 98:1**

## Sing to the LORD a new song, for he performs amazing deeds! His right hand and his mighty arm accomplish deliverance.

In this verse we are invited to "Sing to the Lord a new song." The reason we are to be singing is given in the remainder of the verse: "for he performs amazing deeds! His right hand and his mighty arm accomplish deliverance." Let's sing together verse 3 of "Trust and Obey": "Not a burden we bear, not a sorrow we share, But our toil He doth richly repay; Not a grief or a loss, not a frown or a cross, But is blessed if we trust and obey. Trust and obey, for there's no other way To be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey."

#### June 25 — Psalm 104:33

## I will sing to the LORD as long as I live; I will sing praise to my God as long as I exist!

The psalmist makes two promises this morning in our verse: (1) "I will sing to the Lord as long as I live" and (2) "I will sing praise to my God as long as I exist!" Needless to say, with those two promises we'd better find ourselves singing in this early morning! How about giving voice to a couple of verses of "O For a Thousand Tongues to Sing"? "O for a thousand tongues to sing My great Redeemer's praise, The glories of my God and King, The triumphs of His grace! My gracious Master and my God, Assist me to proclaim, To spread through all the earth abroad The honors of Thy name."

#### **June 26 — Psalm 108:4-5**

# For your loyal love extends beyond the sky, and your faithfulness reaches the clouds. Rise up above the sky, O God! May your splendor cover the whole earth!

These verses point to two things: (1) "your loyal love [O Lord] extends beyond the sky" and (2) "your faithfulness reaches the clouds." The psalmist then says: "Rise up above the sky, O God!" He also makes a request: "May your splendor cover the whole earth!" We should be singing again this

morning: "All hail the power of Jesus' Name! Let angels prostrate fall; Bring forth the royal diadem, and crown Him Lord of all. Bring forth the royal diadem, and crown Him Lord of all. O that, with yonder sacred throng, we at His feet may fall, Join in the everlasting song, and crown Him Lord of all, Join in the everlasting song, and crown Him Lord of all!"

#### June 27 — Psalm 109:27

### Then they will realize this is your work, and that you, LORD, have accomplished it.

The psalmist's desires for the Lord's work to be evident to all. Nehemiah and Isaiah would both agree with this. Nehemiah 6:15-16: "So the wall was completed on the twenty-fifth of Elul, in fifty-two days. When all our enemies heard about this, all the surrounding nations were afraid and lost their self-confidence, because they realized that this work had been done with the help of our God" (NIV). Isaiah 26:12: "LORD, you establish peace for us; all that we have accomplished you have done for us" (NIV). "Now to Him who is able to do exceeding abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us" (Ephesians 3:20 NASB).

#### **June 28 — Psalm 112:7-8**

## He does not fear bad news. He is confident; he trusts in the LORD. His resolve is firm; he will not succumb to fear before he looks in triumph on his enemies.

Six wonderful thoughts appear in these two verses. Of the godly man, the psalmist says (1) "He does not fear bad news"; (2) "He is confident"; (3) "he trusts in the Lord"; (4) "His resolve is firm"; (5) "he will not succumb to fear"; (6) "he looks in triumph on his enemies." Jehosophat says: "We do not know what to do, but our eyes are upon you" (2 Chronicles 20:12 NIV). Isaiah writes: "Because the Sovereign LORD helps me, I will not be disgraced. Therefore have I set my face like flint, and I know I will not be put to shame" (Isaiah 50:7 NIV).

#### June 29 — Psalm 116:1-2

# I love the LORD because he heard my plea for mercy, and listened to me. As long as I live, I will call to him when I need help.

These verses begin with a testimony: "I love the Lord." The reason "I love the Lord" is two-fold: (1) "because he heard my plea for mercy" and (2) "because he... listened to me." The psalmist then

concludes with a promise and a commitment: "As long as I live, I will call to him when I need help." Hebrews 4:14-16: "Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (NASB).

#### June 30 — Psalm 118:23-24

# This is the LORD's work. We consider it amazing! This is the day the LORD has brought about. We will be happy and rejoice in it.

Aren't these wonderful verses? The psalmist recognizes and testifies that the Lord is at work: "We consider it amazing!" Then he says: "This is the day the Lord has brought about. We will be happy and rejoice in it." Every day of life that we have bears testimony to the fact that it is the Lord who has brought it about. The psalmist concludes by saying: "We will be happy and rejoice in it." Expressing similar sentiments, Peterson paraphrases Philippians 4:4: "Celebrate God all day, every day. I mean, *revel* in him!" (MSG).

### **JULY**

#### July 1 — Psalm 119:18

## Uncover my eyes so I can gaze at marvelous things out of your law!

Here the psalmist makes a request and then supplies the reason for it. The request: "Uncover my eyes." The reason: "so I can gaze at marvelous things out of your law!" Paul tells the Corinthians: "For to us God revealed them through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God" (1 Corinthians 2:10 NASB). Jesus promises the disciples in the upper room: "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you" (John 14:26 NASB). "But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come" (John 16:13 NASB). "Open my eyes, that I may see glimpses of truth thou hast for me; place in my hands the wonderful key that shall unclasp and set me free."

## July 2 — Psalm 119:65

## You are good to your servant, O LORD, just as you promised.

This verse tells us that the Lord is a good master. He is good to His servants. Psalm 136:1: "Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good. His love endures for ever" (NIV). The psalmist points to the unchanging character of the Lord because His goodness is "just as you promised." The writer of the book of Hebrews says: "Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful" (Hebrews 10:23 NASB). Joshua would agree: "Now I am about to go the way of all the earth. You know with all your heart and soul that not one of all the good promises the LORD your God gave you has failed. Every promise has been fulfilled; not one has failed" (Joshua 23:14 NIV).

## **July 3 — Psalm 119:7**1

### It was good for me to suffer, so that I might learn your statutes.

Yesterday's psalm proclaimed, "You are good to your servant" (Psalm 119:65 NET). Now the psalmist says: "It is good for me to suffer." The reason for this declaration is given in the final phrase: "so that I might learn your statutes." Peter agrees with this: "Therefore, let those also who suffer according to the will of God entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right" (1 Peter 4:19 NASB). "After you have suffered for a little, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you" (1 Peter 5:10 NASB). "All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness" (Hebrews 12:11 NASB).

## **July 4 — Psalm 119:10**3

## Your words are tastier in my mouth than honey!

The psalmist agrees with Peter and Jeremiah. "Like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation" (1 Peter 2:2 NASB). "When your words came, I ate them; they were my joy and my heart's delight, for I bear your name, O LORD God Almighty" (Jeremiah 15:16 NIV). Solomon says: "Eat honey, my son, for it is good; honey from the comb is sweet to your taste" (Proverbs 24:13 NIV). How sweet is the word of the Lord to those who

love it and feed upon it! "The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul. The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple. The precepts of the LORD are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the LORD are radiant, giving light to the eyes... They are more precious than gold, than much pure gold; they are sweeter than honey, than honey from the comb" (Psalm 19:7-8,10 NIV).

## **July 5 — Psalm 119:11**1

### I claim your rules as my permanent possession, for they give me joy.

This verse offers a statement and a reason. The statement: "I claim your rules as my permanent possession." The reason: "for they give me joy." "How happy is the one who does not follow the advice of the wicked, or stand in the pathway with sinners, or sit in the assembly of arrogant fools! Instead he finds pleasure in obeying the LORD's commands; he intently studies his commands day and night" (Psalm 1:1-2 NET). The Lord says to Joshua: "This law scroll must not leave your lips! You must memorize it day and night so you can carefully obey all that is written in it. Then you will prosper and be successful" (Joshua 1:8 NET). Jesus says: "If you obey my commandments, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commandments and remain in his love. I have told you these things so that my joy may be in you, and your joy may be complete" (John 15:10-11 NET).

#### **July 6 — Psalm 119:13**0

## Your instructions are like a doorway through which the light shines. They give insight to the untrained.

This verse reveals two truths about the word of God: (1) "Your instructions are like a doorway through which the light shines" and (2) "Your instructions... give insight to the untrained." Solomon says: "Blessed is the man who listens to me, watching daily at my doors, waiting at my doorway" (Proverbs 8:34 NIV). He also writes: "The path of the righteous is like the first gleam of dawn, shining ever brighter till the full light of day" (Proverbs 4:18 NIV). Jesus says: "But he who practices the truth comes to the light, so that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God" (John 3:21 NASB).

## **July 7 — Psalm 119:14**0

## Your word is absolutely pure, and your servant loves it.

The NIV translates our verse for today: "Your promises have been thoroughly tested, and your servant loves them." Peterson paraphrases the verse: "Your promise has been tested through and through, and I, your servant, love it dearly" (MSG). The New Living Bible paraphrases it: "Your

promises have been thoroughly tested; that is why I love them so much." "Oh, how I love your law! I meditate on it all day long" (Psalm 119:97 NIV).

## July 8 — Psalm 119:143

## Distress and hardship confront me, yet I find delight in your commands.

The psalmist describes two trials he is facing: "Distress and hardship." He also reveals where, in the midst of pain, he finds his delight: "yet I find delight in your commands." Why? "All your words are true; all your righteous laws are eternal" (Psalm 119:160 NIV). "The LORD will keep you from all harm – he will watch over your life; the LORD will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore" (Psalm 121:7-8 NIV). "I will extol the LORD at all times; his praise will always be on my lips. My soul will boast in the LORD; let the afflicted hear and rejoice. Glorify the LORD with me: let us exalt his name together" (Psalm 34:1-3 NIV). "For the word of the LORD is right and true; he is faithful in all he does. The LORD loves righteousness and justice; the earth is full of his unfailing love" (Psalm 33:4-5 NIV).

## July 9 — Psalm 119:147

### I am up before dawn crying out. I find hope in your assuring word.

The New Living Bible paraphrases our verse for today: "I rise early, before the sun is up; I cry out for help and put my hope in your words." "Morning by morning, O Lord, you hear my voice; morning by morning I lay my requests before you and wait in expectation" (Psalm 5:3). It is recorded of Jesus: "And in the early morning, while it was still dark, He arose and went out and departed to a lonely place, and was praying there" (Mark 1:35 NASB).

#### **July 10 — Psalm 126:3**

## The LORD did indeed accomplish great things for us. We were happy.

Peterson paraphrases this verse: "GOD was wonderful to us; we are one happy people" (MSG). The New Living Bible paraphrases the text: "Yes, the LORD has done amazing things for us! What joy!" "And Mary says, 'My soul exalts the Lord, And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior. For He has had regard for the humble state of His bondslave; For behold, from this time on all generations will count me blessed. For the Mighty One has done great things for me; And holy is His name" (Luke 1:46-49 NASB). David says: "For the sake of your word and according to your will, you have done

this great thing and made it known to your servant. How great you are, O Sovereign LORD! There is no one like you, and there is no God but you..." (2 Samuel 7:21-22 NIV).

### July 11 — Psalm 126:5-6

Those who shed tears as they plant will shout for joy when they reap the harvest. The one who weeps as he walks along, carrying his bag of seed, will certainly come in with a shout of joy, carrying his sheaves of grain.

There are tears involved in planting and shouts of joy when we reap the harvest. The New Living Bible says: "Those who plant in tears will harvest with shouts of joy. They weep as they go to plant their seed, but they sing as they return with the harvest." Remember that old hymn "Bringing in the Sheaves"? "Going forth with weeping, sowing for the Master, Though the loss sustained our spirit often grieves; When our weeping's over, He will bid us welcome, We shall come rejoicing, bringing in the sheaves." In the words of the psalmist: "...weeping may remain for a night, but rejoicing comes in the morning" (Psalm 30:5 NIV).

## July 12 — Psalm 127:2

It is vain for you to rise early, come home late, and work so hard for your food. Yes, he can provide for those whom he loves even when they sleep.

How instructive is our verse for this morning! "It is vain for you" the psalmist says, to do three things: (1) "rise early"; (2) "come home late"; (3) "work so hard for your food." His explanation is given in the second part of the verse: "Yes, he can provide for those whom he loves even when they sleep." Proverbs tells us: "Whoever trusts in his riches will fall, but the righteous will thrive like a green leaf" (Proverbs 11:28 NIV). "There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death" (Proverbs 14:12 NIV). "I denied myself nothing my eyes desired; I refused my heart no pleasure. My heart took delight in all my work, and this was the reward for all my labour. Yet when I surveyed all that my hands had done and what I had toiled to achieve, everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind; nothing was gained under the sun" (Ecclesiastes 2:10-11 NIV). "All his days his work is pain and grief; even at night his mind does not rest. This too is meaningless" (Ecclesiastes 2:23 NIV). Paul tells the Philippians: "And my God will supply all your needs

according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:19 NASB). "But godliness actually is a means of great gain when accompanied by contentment. For we have brought nothing into the world, so we cannot take anything out of it either" (1 Timothy 6:6-7 NASB).

#### **July 13 — Psalm 138:6**

## Though the LORD is exalted, he takes note of the lowly, and recognizes the proud from far away.

The psalmist tells us that although the "Lord is exalted" (1) "he takes note of the lowly," and (2) "[he] recognizes the proud from far away." "The LORD is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit. A righteous man may have many troubles, but the LORD delivers him from them all" (Psalm 34:18-19 NIV). Isaiah records: "For this is what the high and lofty One says – he who lives forever, whose name is holy: "I live in a high and holy place, but also with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite" (Isaiah 57:15 NIV). "This is the one I esteem: he who is humble and contrite in spirit..." (Isaiah 66:2b NIV). "GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE... Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you" (James 4:6, 10 NASB).

### **July 14 — Psalm 138:8**

## The LORD avenges me. O LORD, your loyal love endures. Do not abandon those whom you have made!

The psalmist pays tribute to the Lord in two ways: (1) "The Lord avenges me" and (2) "O Lord, your loyal love endures." He concludes with a request: "Do not abandon those whom you have made!" Paul tells the Romans: "Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, 'VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY,' says the Lord" (Romans 12:19 NASB). The woman caught in the act of adultery heard from the lips of Jesus Himself: "Woman, where are they? Did no one condemn you?'And she said, 'No one, Lord.' And Jesus said, 'Neither do I condemn you; go your way; from now on sin no more" (John 8:10-11 NASB). The psalmist records the words of the Lord: "If I forget you, O Jerusalem, may my right hand forget its skill" (Psalm 137:5 NIV). The writer to the Hebrews records the Lord's words: "I WILL NEVER DESERT YOU, NOR WILL I EVER FORSAKE YOU" (Hebrews 13:5 NASB).

#### **July 15 — Psalm 139:**3

## You carefully observe me when I travel or when I lie down to rest; you are aware of everything I do.

What comfort there is in this verse! The key words are "observe" and "aware." (1) "You carefully observe me when I travel or when I lie down to rest" and (2) "you are aware of everything I do." On Jacob's first night away from home he heard these words from the Lord: "I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you" (Genesis 28:15 NIV). The woman at the well in John 4 learned quickly about the Lord's awareness of what goes on in our lives: "The woman answered and said, 'I have no husband.' Jesus said to her, 'You have well said, "I have no husband"; for you have had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband; this you have said truly" (John 4:17-18 NASB). "For the eyes of the LORD range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him" (2 Chronicles 16:9 NIV). "And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do" (Hebrews 4:13 NASB).

#### **July 16 — Psalm 139:17**

## How difficult it is for me to fathom your thoughts about me, O God! How vast are their sum total!

This verse first presents the confession and then the confirmation. The confession: "How difficult it is for me to fathom your thoughts about me, O God!" The confirmation: "How vast are their sum total!" "For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God... For WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, THAT HE WILL INSTRUCT HIM? But we have the mind of Christ" (1 Corinthians 2:11, 16 NASB). "Oh the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways! For WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, OR WHO BECAME HIS COUNSELOR?" (Romans 11:33-34 NASB).

#### July 17 — Psalm 139:23-24

Examine me, and probe my thoughts! Test me, and know my concerns! See if there is any idolatrous tendency in me, and lead me in the reliable ancient path!

Psalm 139 conveys the key to David's relationship with his Lord: (1) "Examine me"; (2) "probe my thoughts"; (3) "Test me, and know my concerns!" Doing these three allows the Lord to "See if there is any idolatrous tendency in me." Have my priorities gotten mixed up and am I putting the wrong things first in my life? David ends with an invitation: "lead me in the reliable ancient path!" Peterson paraphrases Proverbs 3:5-6: "Trust GOD from the bottom of your heart; don't try to figure out everything on your own. Listen for GOD's voice in everything you do, everywhere you go; he's the one who will keep you on track" (MSG).

#### **July 18 — Psalm 143:8**

## May I hear about your loyal love in the morning, for I trust in you. Show me the way I should go, because I long for you.

Two requests with two reasons characterize our verse for today. The first request is: "May I hear about your loyal love in the morning." Why? "For I trust in you." The second request is: "Show me the way I should go." The reason: "because I long for you." Lord, what comfort and assurance comes when we hear again of Your unconditional love for us. Lord, because I want to please You, "Show me the way I should go, because I long for you." I loveYou, too. I am reminded of the Lord's words through Isaiah: "I will lead the blind by ways they have not known, along unfamiliar paths I will guide them; I will turn the darkness into light before them and make the rough places smooth. These are the things I will do; I will not forsake them" (Isaiah 42:16 NIV).

### July 19 — Psalm 143:10

## Teach me to do what pleases you, for you are my God. May your kind presence lead me into a level land.

The psalmist begins with a request: "Teach me to do what pleases you." The reason follows: "for you are my God." The writer's second request is this: "May your kind presence lead me into a level land." Why? "For you are my God." It delights the heart of God when we, in our requests, manifest a teachable spirit. "Show me your ways, O LORD, teach me your paths; guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Savior, and my hope is in you all day long" (Psalm 25:4-5 NIV). Lord, coupled with this, I also need "your kind presence [to] lead me into a level land." Lord, I want to take the easiest and simplest route that You have designed rather than to resist and rebel against

the path You have for me. "He guides the humble in what is right and teaches them his way" (Psalm 25:9 NIV).

#### July 20 — Psalm 145:16

## You open your hand, and fill every living thing with the food they desire.

Lord, You opened Your hand for the children of Israel in the wilderness and provided manna and meat to satisfy their desires on their journey. Jesus says: "Until now you have asked for nothing in My name; ask and you will receive, so that your joy may be made full" (John 16:24 NASB). Later, the psalmist writes, "The LORD is close to all who call on him, yes, to all who call on him sincerely. He fulfills the desires of those who fear him; he hears their cries for help and rescues them" (Psalm 145:18-19 NLT).

## July 21 — Psalm 147:5

### Our sovereign Master is great and has awesome power; there is no limit to his wisdom.

What an awesome tribute the psalmist gives to the Lord! (1) "Our sovereign Master is great and has awesome power" and (2) "there is no limit to his wisdom." I love the way the New Living Bible paraphrases this verse: "How great is our Lord! His power is absolute! His understanding is beyond comprehension!" Peterson paraphrases it well, too: "Our Lord is great, with limitless strength; we'll never comprehend what he knows and does." His "power" and "wisdom" no man can measure! Thank You, Lord, that You are at the controls today and everyday!

#### **July 22 — Proverbs 3:5-6**

# Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not rely on your own understanding. Acknowledge him in all your ways, and he will make your paths straight.

These two verses are the favorites of many. The verses contain (1) a positive statement; (2) a negative warning; (3) a positive command; (4) the promise. (1) "Trust in the Lord with all your heart" – this is not a joint effort. It's one hundred percent trust and dependence upon the Lord. Then negatively (2) "do not rely on your own understanding" – it is His wisdom alone that must prevail. (3) "Acknowledge him in all your ways" – not just in some of them. We are called to follow the Lord with "all" our heart and "all" our ways. Then the promise will be fulfilled: (4) "he will make

your paths straight." "The path of the righteous is like the first gleam of dawn, shining ever brighter till the full light of day" (Proverbs 4:18 NIV).

## **July 23 — Proverbs 4:23**

## Guard your heart with all vigilance, for from it are the sources of life.

This verse gives us a warning and a reason. The warning: "Guard your heart with all vigilance." The reason: "for from it are the sources of life." From the heart, the issues of life flow. Peterson paraphrases the verse thus: "Keep vigilant watch over your heart; *that's* where life starts" (MSG). The New Living Bible paraphrases it: "Above all else, guard your heart, for it affects everything you do." Jesus says much the same thing, as Mark records, ""For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, deeds of coveting and wickedness, as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness. All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man" (Mark 7:21-23 NASB). To be forewarned is to be forearmed. Lord, fill my heart with Your protection, Your peace, and above all, Your presence.

#### **July 24 — Proverbs 4:25-26**

## Let your eyes look directly in front of you and let your gaze look straight before you. Make the path for your feet level, so that all your ways may be established.

These verses supply three commands and a desired result. Commands:

(1) "Let your eyes look directly in front of you"; (2) "let your gaze look straight before you"; (3) "Make the path of your feet level." The result is that "all your ways may be established." The New Living Bible paraphrases these two verses: "Look straight ahead, and fix your eyes on what lies before you. Mark out a straight path for your feet; then stick to the path and stay safe." Peterson paraphrases the verses: "Keep your eyes straight ahead; ignore all sideshow distractions. Watch your step, and the road will stretch out smooth before you" (MSG). Solomon is saying, above everything else, stay focused. Don't get distracted. The writer to the Hebrews says: "fixing our eyes on Jesus..." (Hebrews 12:2 NASB). Job says: "I made a covenant with my eyes not to look lustfully at a girl" (Job 31:1 NIV). "Don't get sidetracked; keep your feet from following evil" (Proverbs 4:27 NLT). Lord, keep us on task, on track, and out of Satan's traps!

## July 25 — Proverbs 13:4

## The appetite of the sluggard craves but gets nothing, but the desire of the diligent will be abundantly satisfied.

Our proverb today is a proverb by contrast. The New Living paraphrase provides insight: "Lazy people want much but get little, but those who work hard will prosper and be satisfied." Solomon writes in Ecclesiastes: "Laziness lets the roof leak, and soon the rafters begin to rot" (Ecclesiastes 10:18 NLT). He says further: "Be sure to stay busy and plant a variety of crops, for you never know which will grow—perhaps they all will" (Ecclesiastes 11:6 NLT). "Teach us to make the most of our time, so that we may grow in wisdom" (Psalm 90:12 NLT). "You crown the year with a bountiful harvest; even the hard pathways overflow with abundance" (Psalm 65:11 NLT).

## **July 26 — Proverbs 15:3**

## The eyes of the LORD are in every place, keeping watch on those who are evil and those who are good.

According to our verse this morning, the Lord has worldwide surveillance in place. He sees it all, both the good and the evil. While the Lord is providing Moses with the law and the ramifications thereof, he abruptly says: "Go down, because your people, whom you brought up out of Egypt, have become corrupt. They have been quick to turn away from what I commanded them and have made themselves an idol cast in the shape of a calf. They have bowed down to it and sacrificed to it and have said, 'These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt'" (Exodus 32:7-8 NIV). We can truly say: "Yes, the Lord sees me." He sees Ananias and Sapphira sign on to a false real estate deal. He sees an Ethiopian eunuch reading Isaiah 53 and dispatches Philip to lead him to Christ. This knowledge of God's omnipresence, if you are pursuing His will and good things, should give great peace and comfort. But if you are following the pathway of evil, it should make you just a little bit uncomfortable to know that He sees what's going on. Thank You, Lord, for keeping Your eye upon me.

### **July 27** — **Proverbs 16:3**

## Commit your works to the LORD, and your plans will be established.

Our verse for today reads as follows in the NIV: "Commit to the LORD whatever you do, and your plans will succeed." Peterson paraphrases it thus: "Put GOD in charge of your work, then what you've planned will take place" (MSG). The New Living Bible paraphrases it: "Commit your work

to the LORD, and then your plans will succeed." I am reminded of Jeremiah 29:11: "For I know the plans I have for you,' declares the LORD, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future" (NIV). Lord, keep me focused today on pursuing Your plans and not my own.

#### **July 28** — **Proverbs 16:9**

### A person plans his course, but the LORD directs his steps.

The NIV translates verse 9: "In his heart a man plans his course, but the LORD determines his steps." The New Living Bible paraphrases it as follows: "We can make our plans, but the LORD determines our steps." The key to contentment is to be sure that the Lord is included in the planning process of whatever we endeavor. "If the LORD delights in a man's way, he makes his steps firm" (Psalm 37:23 NIV).

### **July 29 — Proverbs 16:31**

## Gray hair is like a crown of glory; it is attained in the path of righteousness.

We learn a couple of things about gray from today's proverb: (1) "Gray hair is like a crown of glory" and (2) "Gray hair... is attained in the path of righteousness." I guess what that means is that the righteous often live longer than the wicked. The Lord says in Isaiah 46:4: "Even to your old age and grey hairs I am he, I am he who will sustain you. I have made you and I will carry you; I will sustain you and I will rescue you" (NIV). "Show me, O LORD, my life's end and the number of my days; let me know how fleeting is my life" (Psalm 39:4 NIV). The righteous "is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers... For the LORD watches over the way of the righteous..." (Psalm 1:3, 6 NIV).

## July 30 — Proverbs 17:3 The crucible is for refining silver and the furnace is for gold, likewise the LORD tests hearts.

Our verse speaks of the crucible and the furnace – illustrations of the way "the Lord tests hearts." Job would say: "But he knows the way that I take; when he has tested me, I shall come forth as gold" (Job 23:10 NIV). The Lord says through Isaiah: "See, I have refined you, though not as silver; I have tested you in the furnace of affliction" (Isaiah 48:10 NIV). Peter says: "In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, that the

proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1:6-7 NASB). Paul tells the Corinthians: "Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves!..." (2 Corinthians 13:5 NASB).

### **July 31 — Proverbs 19:21**

There are many plans in a person's mind, but it is the counsel of the LORD which will stand. The New Living Bible paraphrases our verse for today: "You can make many plans, but the LORD's purpose will prevail." Peterson puts it well also: "We humans keep brainstorming options and plans, but GOD's purpose prevails" (MSG). The Lord also communicates this message through Isaiah: "And do not forget the things I have done throughout history. For I am God—I alone! I am God, and there is no one else like me. Only I can tell you what is going to happen even before it happens. Everything I plan will come to pass, for I do whatever I wish" (Isaiah 46:9-10 NLT). When the Lord says "Done," it is.

## AUGUST

## August 1 — Proverbs 24:10

## If you faint in the day of trouble, your strength is small!

The New Living Bible paraphrases our verse for this morning: "If you fail under pressure, your strength is not very great." Peterson, in The Message, paraphrases the verse: "If you fall to pieces in a crisis, there wasn't much to you in the first place" (MSG). Paul knows the secret to standing strong. As he tells the Corinthians: "And He has said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.' Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me" (2 Corinthians 12:9 NASB). "Because the Sovereign LORD helps me, I will not be disgraced. Therefore have I set my face like flint, and I know I will not be put to shame" (Isaiah 50:7 NIV).

#### August 2 — Ecclesiastes 3:11

God has made everything fit beautifully in its appropriate time, but he has also placed ignorance in the human heart so that people cannot discover what God has ordained, from the beginning to the end of their lives.

Our verse this morning says "God has made everything fit beautifully in its appropriate time, but [in contrast to that] he has also placed ignorance in the human heart." What is His purpose? So "people cannot discover what God has ordained, from the beginning to the end of their lives." If we knew all that God intended, we would be busy trying to help Him fulfill His purpose and plan. Galatians 4:4: "But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law" (NASB). When God is the One orchestrating all things, everything works together beautifully to accomplish His ultimate purpose. In the words of the Lord through Isaiah the prophet: "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,' declares the LORD. 'As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts'" (Isaiah 55:8-9 NIV). I feel like singing the well-known chorus: "In His time, He makes all things beautiful, in His time. Lord, please show me everyday as You are teaching me Your way that You do just what You say, in Your time. Lord, my life to You I bring, may each song I have to sing be to You a lovely thing, in Your time."

#### August 3 — Ecclesiastes 7:13

### Consider the work of God: For who can make straight what he has bent?

In our verse for today we have a command and a reason. First, the command: "Consider the work of God." The reason: "For who can make straight what he has bent?" The New Living Bible paraphrases our verse: "Notice the way God does things; then fall into line. Don't fight the ways of God, for who can straighten out what he has made crooked?" And *The Message* paraphrases it in this way: "Take a good look at God's work. Who could simplify and reduce Creation's curves and angles To a plain straight line?" Paul tells the Romans: "When a potter makes jars out of clay, doesn't he have a right to use the same lump of clay to make one jar for decoration and another to throw garbage into?" (Romans 9:21 NLT).

#### August 4 — Ecclesiastes 9:9

Enjoy life with your beloved wife during all the days of your fleeting life that God has given you on earth during all your fleeting days; for that is your reward in life and in your burdensome work on earth.

I love this morning's verse because I am enjoying life with my beloved wife with great excitement and enthusiasm. The New Living version paraphrases this verse: "Live happily with the woman you

love through all the meaningless days of life that God has given you in this world. The wife God gives you is your reward for all your earthly toil." *The Message* paraphrases the verse: "Relish life with the spouse you love Each and every day of your precarious life. Each day is God's gift. It's all you get in exchange For the hard work of staying alive. Make the most of each one!" Peter says: "You husbands likewise, live with your wives in an understanding way, as with a weaker vessel, since she is a woman; and grant her honor as a fellow-heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered" (1 Peter 3:7 NASB). Thank You, Lord, for my sweet Pearl!

### August 5 — Ecclesiastes 11:9

Rejoice, young man, while you are young, and let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth. Follow the impulses of your heart and the desires of your eyes, but know that God will judge your motives and actions.

The New Living Bible paraphrases this verse: "Young man, it's wonderful to be young! Enjoy every minute of it. Do everything you want to do; take it all in. But remember that you must give an account to God for everything you do." *The Message* adds insight: "You who are young, make the most of your youth. Relish your youthful vigor. Follow the impulses of your heart. If something looks good to you, pursue it. But know also that not just anything goes; You have to answer to God for every last bit of it." Paul says to young Timothy: "Let no one look down on your youthfulness, but rather in speech, conduct, love, faith and purity, show yourself an example of those who believe" (1 Timothy 4:12 NASB). Solomon writes in the last chapter of Ecclesiastes: "Don't let the excitement of youth cause you to forget your Creator. Honor him in your youth before you grow old and no longer enjoy living" (Ecclesiastes 12:1 NLT).

### August 6 — Song of Songs 2:15

Catch the foxes for us, the little foxes, that ruin the vineyards – for our vineyard is in bloom. In today's verse the young women in Jerusalem are telling Shulamith, the future bride of Solomon, what she needs to do to protect their love. The New Living version paraphrases the verse: "Quick! Catch all the little foxes before they ruin the vineyard of your love, for the grapevines are all in

blossom." The weeds of selfishness, guilt, bitterness, and an unforgiving spirit can ruin the bloom of love in our hearts. The writer of the book of Hebrews warns us: "See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by it many be defiled" (Hebrews 12:15 NASB). These "foxes" can cause catastrophic damage to a marriage relationship, and thus we are challenged to take the initiative to catch them. "Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2 Corinthians 7:1 NASB).

## August 7 — Isaiah 6:8

## I heard the voice of the sovereign master say, "Whom will I send? Who will go on our behalf?" I answered, "Here I am, send me!"

Isaiah has just caught a vision of the Lord and he records in our verse today: "I heard the voice of the sovereign master say." Two questions: (1) "Whom will I send?" and (2) "Who will go on our behalf?" Isaiah then answers: "Here I am, send me!" Samuel says: "Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening" (1 Samuel 3:9 NIV). "And Mary said, 'Behold, the bondslave of the Lord; may it be done to me according to your word" (Luke 1:38 NASB). Jesus said: "If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me" (Luke 9:23 NASB).

### August 8 — Isaiah 12:5

Sing to the LORD, for he has done magnificent things, let this be known throughout the earth! In today's verse we are commanded to "Sing to the Lord." The reason: "for he has done magnificent things." Then we are to bear testimony and witness: "let this be known throughout the earth!" The psalmist invites us: "Come, let us sing for joy to the LORD; let us shout aloud to the Rock of our salvation" (Psalm 95:1 NIV). "Sing to the LORD a new song; sing to the LORD, all the earth. Sing to the LORD, praise his name; proclaim his salvation day after day. Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous deeds among all peoples. For great is the LORD and most worthy of praise..." (Psalm 96:1-4 NIV). Jesus said to the man who had been demon-possessed and was healed: "Go home to your people and report to them what great things the Lord has done for you, and how He had mercy on you" (Mark 5:19 NASB).

## August 9 — Isaiah 25:1

## O LORD, you are my God! I will exalt you in praise, I will extol your fame. For you have done extraordinary things, and executed plans made long ago exactly as you decreed.

Isaiah first proclaims that the Lord is his God; he then announces his intention to exalt the Lord in praise and to extol His fame. The reason for these three outbursts of testimony and promise is that the Lord has done "extraordinary things, and executed plans made long ago." Won't you join me this morning in telling the Lord, "You are my God!"? Let us exalt His name in praise, singing the doxology: "Praise God, from Whom all blessings flow; Praise Him, all creatures here below; Praise Him above, ye heavenly host; Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost." "Because of the LORD's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail" (Lamentations 3:22 NIV). "And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He might be the firstborn among many brethren; and whom He predestined, these He also called; and whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified" (Romans 8:28-30 NASB).

## August 10 — Isaiah 33:6

## He is your constant source of stability; he abundantly provides safety and great wisdom; he gives all this to those who fear him.

Isaiah underscores three things that the Lord does for those who fear Him. (1) "He is your constant source of stability"; (2) "he abundantly provides safety"; (3) "he abundantly provides... great wisdom." All of these gifts and interventions are designed for "those who fear him." James says: "But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all men generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But let him ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways" (James 1:5-8 NASB). Thank You, Lord, for caring and providing for us in such a generous way!

#### **August 11 — Isaiah 40:31**

But those who wait for the LORD's help find renewed strength; they rise up as if they had eagles' wings, they run without getting weary, they walk without getting tired.

This verse reveals the rewards that belong only to those "who wait for the Lord's help": (1) "[they will] find renewed strength"; (2) "they rise up as if they had eagles' wings"; (3) "they run without getting weary"; (4) "they walk without getting tired." The psalmist says: "Wait for the LORD; be strong and take heart and wait for the LORD" (Psalm 27:14 NIV). "The LORD is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and I am helped. My heart leaps for joy and I will give thanks to him in song" (Psalm 28:7 NIV).

## **August 12 — Isaiah 48:1**7

This is what the LORD, your protector, says, the sovereign king of Israel: "I am the LORD your God, who teaches you how to succeed, who leads you in the way you should go.

This is another of the rich nuggets of wisdom tucked away in the book of Isaiah. The NIV translates the verse: "This is what the LORD says – your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: 'I am the LORD your God, who teaches you what is best for you, who directs you in the way you should go." Look at what the Lord promises to do for us: (1) "I am the Lord your God"; (2) "who teaches you how to succeed"; (3) "who leads you in the way you should go." Lord, thank You that You know what I need to be doing and how I can get there. Isaiah told us earlier "He will feed his flock like a shepherd. He will carry the lambs in his arms, holding them close to his heart. He will gently lead the mother sheep with their young" (Isaiah 40:11 NLT).

## August 13 — Isaiah 50:7

But the sovereign LORD helps me, so I am not humiliated. For that reason my face is firm; I know I will not be put to shame.

The NIV translates the verse: "Because the Sovereign LORD helps me, I will not be disgraced. Therefore have I set my face like flint, and I know I will not be put to shame." "Because the sovereign Lord helps me": (1) "I am not humiliated"; (2) "my face is firm"; (3) "I know I will not be put to shame." "So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand" (Isaiah 41:10 NIV).

#### **August 14 — Isaiah 55:8-9**

Indeed, my plans are not like your plans, and my deeds are not like your deeds, for just as the sky is higher than the earth, so my deeds are superior to your deeds and my plans superior to your plans.

The Lord says: (1) "my plans are not like your plans" and (2) "my deeds are not like your deeds." Then He gives an illustration: "for just as the sky is higher than the earth, so my deeds are superior to your deeds and my plans superior to your plans." The writer of the book of Hebrews says: "In the same way God, desiring even more to show to the heirs of the promise the unchangeableness of His purpose, interposed with an oath, in order that by two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we may have strong encouragement, we who have fled for refuge in laying hold of the hope set before us" (Hebrews 6:17-18 NASB). "God is not a man, that he should lie, nor a son of man, that he should change his mind. Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfil?" (Numbers 23:19 NIV). "Come and see what God has done, how awesome his works on man's behalf!" (Psalm 66:5 NIV). Yes, Lord, we can declare "great are your purposes and mighty are your deeds!"

#### August 15 — Isaiah 57:15

For this is what the high and exalted one says, the one who rules forever, whose name is holy: "I dwell in an exalted and holy place, but also with the discouraged and humiliated, in order to cheer up the humiliated and to encourage the discouraged."

Our heavenly Father, in this glorious verse You are introduced in three ways: (1) "For this is what the high and exalted one says"; (2) "[He] is the one who rules forever"; and (3) "[He] is the one... whose name is holy." This is what You have to say: "I dwell in an exalted and holy place, but [in contrast] also with the discouraged and humiliated." Your purpose is "in order to cheer up the humiliated and to encourage the discouraged." The psalmist writes: "The LORD is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit. A righteous man may have many troubles, but the LORD delivers him from them all" (Psalm 34:1819 NIV). Jesus delivers a sick man, as recorded in John 5: "And a certain man was there, who had been thirty-eight years in his sickness. When Jesus saw him lying there, and knew that he had already been a long time in that condition, He said to him, 'Do you wish to get well?' The sick man answered Him, 'Sir, I have no man to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up, but while I am coming, another steps down before me.' Jesus said to him, 'Arise, take up your pallet, and walk.'And immediately the man became well, and took up his pallet and began to walk" (John 5:5-9 NASB). "And let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some,

but encouraging one another; and all the more, as you see the day drawing near" (Hebrews 10:24-25 NASB).

#### **August 16 — Isaiah 61:10**

I will greatly rejoice in the LORD; I will be happy because of my God. For he clothes me in garments of deliverance; he puts on me a robe symbolizing vindication. I look like a bridegroom when he wears a turban as a priest would; I look like a bride when she puts on her jewelry.

Isaiah begins by saying "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord; I will be happy because of my God." The reasons for this outburst of rejoicing and happiness are the following: (1) "For he clothes me in garments of deliverance" and (2) "he puts on me a robe symbolizing vindication." Isaiah describes what he looks like, clothed by the Lord: "I look like a bridegroom when he wears a turban as a priest would; I look like a bride when she puts on her jewelry." This scene reminds me of that glorious kingdom scene in Revelation 19:6-8: "And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude and as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty peals of thunder, saying, 'Hallelujah! For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready.' And it was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints" (NASB).

## August 17 — Jeremiah 4:3-4

Yes, the LORD has this to say to the people of Judah and Jerusalem: "Your lives are as unproductive as an unplowed field covered with thorns. So get rid of your sin and make a new beginning. Dedicate yourselves fully to the LORD and get rid of everything that hinders your commitment to me, people of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem. If you do not, my anger will leap out like a flaming fire against you that no one will be able to put out. That will happen because of the evil you have done."

Let's personalize these sobering words from Jeremiah: "Yes, the Lord has this to say to the people of the USA," or wherever you live. The charge: "Your lives are as unproductive as an unplowed field covered with thorns." Hosea's prophecy gives the Lord's answer to this problem: "Sow for yourselves righteousness, reap the fruit of unfailing love, and break up your unploughed ground; for

it is time to seek the LORD, until he comes and showers righteousness on you" (Hosea 10:12 NIV). The Lord's correction to the problem in our verses is two-fold: (1) "get rid of your sin and make a new beginning" and (2) "Dedicate yourselves fully to the Lord and get rid of everything that hinders your commitment to me, people of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem." (3) The consequences of not following these corrective measures are, "If you do not, my anger will leap out like a flaming fire against you that no one will be able to put out. That will happen because of the evil you have done." "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Hebrews 10:31 NKJV). "Let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water" (Hebrews 10:22 NASB).

### August 18 — Jeremiah 6:16

The LORD said to his people: "You are standing at the crossroads. So consider your path. Ask where the old, reliable paths are. Ask where the path is that leads to blessing and follow it. If you do, you will find rest for your souls." But they said, "We will not follow it."

Our verse begins with a statement from the Lord: "The Lord said to his people: 'You are standing at the crossroads." I am also reminded of the Lord's words through Isaiah: "Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, 'This is the way; walk in it'" (Isaiah 30:21 NIV). The Lord follows the statement in Jeremiah 6 with a solution: "So consider your path. Ask where the old, reliable paths are. Ask where the path is that leads to blessing and follow it." What the Lord is saying is be humble enough to stop and ask for directions so you don't make a mistake and continue to be lost. The result is two-fold: (1) "If you do, you will find rest for your souls" but (2) "they said, 'We will not follow it." The choice is between rest and resistance. In the words of the writer to the Hebrews: "For as long, then, as that promise of resting in him pulls us on to God's goal for us, we need to be careful that we're not disqualified" (Hebrews 4:1 MSG).

#### August 19 — Jeremiah 10:23

LORD, we know that people do not control their own destiny. It is not in their power to determine what will happen to them.

This verse is a magnificent testimony to the sovereignty of God, offering two great truths! First, "we know that people do not control their own destiny" and second, "It is not in their power to determine

what will happen to them." I am reminded of the words of Isaiah to Hezekiah in 2 Kings: "Have you not heard? Long ago I ordained it. In days of old I planned it; now I have brought it to pass" (2 Kings 19:25 NIV). Joseph understood this as well: "You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives" (Genesis 50:20 NIV). Abraham learned it: "If only Ishmael might live under your blessing!" (Genesis 17:18 NIV). The Lord's response is: "But my covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah will bear to you by this time next year" (Genesis 17:21 NIV). "And I will say to my soul, 'Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years to come; take your ease, eat, drink and be merry.' But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your soul is required of you; and now who will own what you have prepared?"" (Luke 12:19-20 NASB).

## August 20 — Jeremiah 18:4

## Now and then there would be something wrong with the pot he was molding from the clay with his hands. Then he would rework the clay into another pot as he saw fit.

The scene of this morning's verse is the potter's house. Jeremiah records these words from the Lord: "Now and then there would be something wrong with the pot he was molding from the clay with his hands." Isn't it comforting to know that we are not the first ones to pose a problem for the potter? And He didn't give up on us! "Then he would rework the clay into another pot as he saw fit." I don't know about you, but this really excites me concerning the future! Isaiah records: "Yet, O LORD, you are our Father. We are the clay, you are the potter; we are all the work of your hand" (Isaiah 64:8 NIV). Paul says to the Romans: "On the contrary, who are you, O man, who answers back to God? The thing molded will not say to the molder, 'Why did you make me like this,' will it? Or does not the potter have a right over the clay, to make from the same lump one vessel for honorable use, and another for common use?" (Romans 9:2021 NASB). I'm so excited that I would like for us to sing the first verse of "Have Thine Own Way" to get us going on this day: "Have Thine own way, Lord! Have Thine own way! Thou art the Potter, I am the clay. Mold me and make me after Thy will, While I am waiting, yielded and still."

### August 21 — Jeremiah 29:11

## "For I know what I have planned for you," says the LORD. "I have plans to prosper you, not to harm you. I have plans to give you a future filled with hope."

Today's verse is one of my favorites in the whole of the Old Testament. The Lord makes an opening statement: "For I know what I have planned for you." The remainder of the verse is a two-fold definition of these plans: (1) "I have plans to prosper you, not to harm you" and (2) "I have plans to give you a future filled with hope." Isn't that just fabulous? What a future – prosperity and hope! The constant conflict in life is the conflict between our plans and His plans. Jeremiah records the negative response of the people: "But they will reply, 'It's no use. We will continue with our own plans; each of us will follow the stubbornness of his evil heart" (Jeremiah 18:12 NIV). Proverbs tells us: "There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death" (Proverbs 14:12 NIV).

## August 22 — Lamentations 3:22-23

## The LORD's many kindnesses never cease, for his great compassion never comes to an end. They are renewed every morning; your faithfulness is abundant!

Jeremiah is standing in the rubble of the city of Jerusalem as he writes these fabulous words. "The Lord's many kindnesses never cease." His unconditional love remains, whether or not we respond: "for his great compassion never comes to an end." Jeremiah affirms this: "They are renewed every morning." He then testifies: "your faithfulness is abundant!" Paul tells young Timothy: "If we are faithless, He remains faithful; for He cannot deny Himself" (2 Timothy 2:13 NASB). To the Thessalonians, the apostle writes: "Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass" (1 Thessalonians 5:24 NASB). And to the Corinthians, Paul adds: "God is faithful, through whom you were called into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord" (1 Corinthians 1:9 NASB). "Great is Thy faithfulness, O God my Father; There is no shadow of turning with Thee; Thou changest not, Thy compassions, they fail not; As Thou hast been, Thou forever will be. Great is Thy faithfulness! Great is Thy faithfulness! Morning by morning new mercies I see. All I have needed Thy hand hath provided; Great is Thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me!"

#### August 23 — Lamentations 3:40-42

Let us carefully examine our ways, and let us return to the LORD. Let us lift up our hearts and our hands to God in heaven: "We have sinned rebelliously; you have not forgiven."

These verses give us the keys for getting back on track and under the blessing of our Lord! Peterson paraphrases these verses: "Let's take a good look at the way we're living and reorder our lives under GOD. Let's lift our hearts and hands at one and the same time, praying to God in heaven: 'We've been contrary and willful, and you haven't forgiven'" (MSG). In 2 Chronicles 7:14, the Lord states: "if my people, who are called by my name, will 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" (NIV). Listen also to David in Psalm 51:12: "Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me" (NIV).

## August 24 — Ezekiel 3:10

And he said to me, "Son of man, listen carefully to all my words that I speak to you and take them to heart.

Our verse contains the message from the Lord to the prophet Ezekiel. "And he said to me, 'Son of man, listen carefully to all my words that I speak to you and take them to heart." The two key thoughts are (1) "listen carefully" and (2) "take them to heart." Hearing and obeying lead to blessing. The plight of the Hebrews in Hebrews 5:11 concerns us: "Concerning him we have much to say, and it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing" (NASB). The Lord's letters to the seven churches in Revelation 2 & 3 conclude: "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches (Revelation 2:29 and 3:22 NASB)." Lord, my prayer to You as this day begins is to ask You to sensitize my hearing to the speaking of the Spirit and my will to be submissive in instant obedience.

## **August 25 — Ezekiel 18:21-22**

But if the wicked person turns from all the sin he has committed and keeps all my statutes and does what is just and right, he will surely live; he will not die. None of the sins he has committed will be held against him; because of the righteousness he has done, he will live. These tasty verses provide our spiritual meal for the morning! After the initial qualifier, "But if," the rest of passage tells us of the blessing that can be ours with a proper response. The key words in the

first part of the verse are: "turns," "keeps," and "does." (1) "But if the wicked person turns from all the sin he has committed"; (2) "and keeps all my statutes"; and (3) "does what is just and right, he will surely live; he will not die. None of the sins he has committed will be held against him; because of the righteousness he has done, he will live." Samuel told the people when they asked for a king in 1 Samuel 12:20: "Do not be afraid....You have done all this evil; yet do not turn away from the LORD, but serve the LORD with all your heart" (NIV). Paul gives us his assessment in Philippians 3:12-14: "Not that I have already obtained it, or have already become perfect, but I press on in order that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead. I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (NASB).

## August 26 — Ezekiel 22:30

## I looked for a man from among them who would repair the wall and stand in the gap before me on behalf of the land, so that I would not destroy it; but I found no one.

The verse we have this morning from the prophet Ezekiel reminds me of Nehemiah who went back to Jerusalem for the purpose of rebuilding the wall. We read of him in Nehemiah 2:20: "I answered them by saying, 'The God of heaven will give us success. We his servants will start rebuilding, but as for you, you have no share in Jerusalem or any claim or historic right to it'" (NIV). In Ezekiel's day the Lord "looked for a man from among them [with the mission] who would repair the wall and stand in the gap before me on behalf of the land, so that I would not destroy it; but I found no one." The Lord was looking for this one person who would step forward and lead the nation back to the paths of righteousness, so He "would not destroy it." But the sad thing is that He "found no one." As a result, judgment and destruction were inevitable. The Lord's words to Cain come to mind in my meditation this morning: "Then the LORD said to Cain, 'Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it" (Genesis 4:6-7 NIV).

#### **August 27 — Ezekiel 34:15-16**

I myself will feed my sheep and I myself will make them lie down, declares the Sovereign LORD. I will seek the lost and bring back the strays; I will bandage the injured and strengthen the sick, but the fat and the strong I will destroy – I will "feed" them with judgment.

These verses remind us of the wonderful truth that the Lord is our shepherd. Meditate on the things that the shepherd does for us: (1) "I myself will feed my sheep"; (2) "I myself will make them lie down, declares the Sovereign Lord"; (3) "I will seek the lost and bring back the strays"; (4) "I will bandage the injured and strengthen the sick." In contrast to these we have the final sobering words: "but the fat and the strong I will destroy – I will 'feed' them with judgment." They are fat because they are consumed with pleasure, and they are strong because they have resisted the will of the shepherd. Let's close our meditation for this morning with Psalm 23 from *The Message*: "GOD, my shepherd! I don't need a thing. You have bedded me down in lush meadows, you find me quiet pools to drink from. True to your word, you let me catch my breath and send me in the right direction. Even when the way goes through Death Valley, I'm not afraid when you walk at my side. Your trusty shepherd's crook makes me feel secure. You serve me a six-course dinner right in front of my enemies. You revive my drooping head; my cup brims with blessing. Your beauty and love chase after me every day of my life. I'm back home in the house of GOD for the rest of my life."

## August 28 — Daniel 3:25

He answered, "But I see four men, untied and walking around in the midst of the fire! No harm has come to them! And the appearance of the fourth is like that of a god!"

This wonderful verse is the concluding observation made by Nebuchadnezzar after he had ordered Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to be thrown into the fiery furnace. Thank You, Lord, for the promise in Exodus 33:14: "The LORD replied, 'My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest" (NIV). Isn't it wonderful to know that the Lord goes with us through the storm? Mark 4:37-39 records the Lord's experience with His disciples: "And there arose a fierce gale of wind, and the waves were breaking over the boat so much that the boat was already filling up. And He Himself was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they awoke Him and said to Him, 'Teacher, do You not

care that we are perishing?'And being aroused, He rebuked the wind and said to the sea, 'Hush, be still.' And the wind died down and it became perfectly calm" (NASB). David's words in Psalm 4:8 give us our response: "I will lie down and sleep in peace, for you alone, O LORD, make me dwell in safety" (NIV).

### August 29 — Daniel 9:14

## The LORD was mindful of the calamity, and he brought it on us. For the LORD our God is just in all he has done, and we have not obeyed him.

We have the privilege this morning of entering into the throne room with Daniel and listening to him pray. First of all he says: "The LORD was mindful of the calamity, and he brought it on us." Here Daniel is referring to the Babylonian captivity which he and the people are in the midst of experiencing. There are two reasons given in the remainder of the verse. The first has to do with the Lord and the second has to do with the people. "For the LORD our God is just in all he has done, and we have not obeyed him." The psalmist says in Psalm 119:66-68: "Teach me knowledge and good judgment, for I believe in your commands. Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I obey your word. You are good, and what you do is good; teach me your decrees" (NIV). Lord, my prayer to You this morning is that You would find in me this day an obedient heart. With David in Psalm 119:57-58, I would say: "You are my portion, O LORD; I have promised to obey your words. I have sought your face with all my heart; be gracious to me according to your promise" (NIV).

#### August 30 — Daniel 9:19

## O Lord, hear! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, pay attention, and act! Don't delay, for your own sake, O my God! For your city and your people are called by your name."

Once again this morning we have the privilege of entering the throne room with Daniel as he continues his prayer. There are five requests in his prayer this morning: (1) "O Lord, hear!"; (2) "O Lord, forgive!"; (3) "O Lord, pay attention"; (4) "O Lord... act"; (5) "O Lord... Don't delay." There are two reasons given at the end of this prayer: (1) "for your own sake, O my God!" and (2) "For your city and your people are called by your name." I am so comforted this morning by the words that are recorded by John in 1 John 5:14-15: "And this is the confidence which we have before Him,

that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him" (NASB).

#### August 31 — Hosea 6:3

So let us acknowledge him! Let us seek to acknowledge the LORD! He will come to our rescue as certainly as the appearance of the dawn, as certainly as the winter rain comes, as certainly as the spring rain that waters the land."

Hosea challenges us this morning: (1) "So let us acknowledge him!" and (2) "Let us seek to acknowledge the Lord!" Then we have the Lord's response: "He will come to our rescue." The verse concludes with three praises, each of which begins with "as certainly": (1) "as certainly as the appearance of the dawn"; (2) "as certainly as the winter rain comes"; (3) "as certainly as the spring rain that waters the land." As the sun rises and the sun sets always on schedule, so the Lord will come to our rescue if we but "acknowledge him" and declare our dependence upon Him. Jeremiah says: "You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart" (Jeremiah 29:13 NIV). The Lord's response to this is in the next verse, Jeremiah 29:14: "I will be found by you,' declares the LORD, 'and will bring you back from captivity. I will gather you from all the nations and places where I have banished you,' declares the LORD, 'and will bring you back to the place from which I carried you into exile" (NIV).

## **SEPTEMBER**

## September 1 — Hosea 10:12

Sow righteousness for yourselves, Reap unfailing love. Break up the unplowed ground for yourselves, for it is time to seek the LORD, until he comes and showers deliverance on you. Isn't this verse a wonderful way to start September? The Lord issues three instructions: (1) "Sow righteousness for yourselves"; (2) "Reap unfailing love"; (3) "Break up the unplowed ground for yourselves." The words of the psalmist in Psalm 34:18 come to mind: "The LORD is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit" (NIV). The sequence of events in Hosea 10:12 is: (1) coming to the Lord in brokenness and repentance – "break[ing] up the unplowed ground"; (2) sowing seeds of righteousness; (3) reaping a crop of "unfailing love."

The reason is given at the end of our verse: "for it is time to seek the Lord, until he comes and showers deliverance on you." The Lord speaks through Ezekiel the prophet: "I will bless them and the places surrounding my hill. I will send down showers in season; there will be showers of blessing" (Ezekiel 34:26 NIV).

### September 2 — Joel 2:12

## "Yet even now," the LORD says, "return to me with all your heart –with fasting, weeping, and mourning. Tear your hearts, not just your garments!"

Joel has such a passionate message for us from the Lord. "Yet, even now,' the LORD says": (1) "return to me with all your heart"; (2) "return to me... with fasting"; (3) "return to me... with weeping"; (4) "return to me... with mourning"; (5) "Tear your hearts, not just your garments!" My thoughts turn to James 4:7-10: "Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Be miserable and mourn and weep: let your laughter be turned into mourning, and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you" (NASB). Remember the prodigal son in Luke 15:17-18: "But when he came to his senses he said, 'How many of my father's hired men have more than enough bread, but I am dying here with hunger! I will get up and go to my father, and will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in your sight'" (NASB).

### September 3 — Amos 8:11

# "Be certain of this, the time is coming," says the sovereign LORD, "when I will send a famine through the land. I'm not talking about a shortage of food or water but an end to divine revelation."

Amos lets us know there is a famine coming. "Be certain of this, the time is coming,' says the sovereign Lord." This time is coming "when I will send a famine through the land." The Lord then defines the famine: "I'm not talking about a shortage of food or water but [in contrast] an end to divine revelation." My mind goes to the book of Hebrews this morning: "GOD, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world" (Hebrews 1:1-2 NASB). God's last word to the world was the message regarding His Son, the Lord

Jesus Christ. John's inspired words helped bring to conclusion the book of Revelation: "I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues which are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city, which are written in this book" (Revelation 22:18-19 NASB). Jesus, in the sermon on the mount, says: "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied" (Matthew 5:6 NASB). It is feeding upon the Word of God that brings about this hunger and thirst for righteousness.

#### September 4 — Obadiah 1:15

For the day of the LORD is approaching for all the nations! Just as you have done, so it will be done to you. You will get exactly what your deeds deserve.

Obadiah in his brief prophecy lets us know that the day of the Lord is approaching for all nations. Paul tells the Thessalonians the same thing in 1 Thessalonians 5:2: "For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night" (NASB). Paul writes further: "While they are saying, 'Peace and safety!' then destruction will come upon them suddenly like birth pangs upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape" (1 Thessalonians 5:3 NASB). This time of judgment and accountability seems to be very close in the day in which we are living. Paul's words to the Romans serve as a challenge: "And this do, knowing the time, that it is already the hour for you to awaken from sleep; for now salvation is nearer to us than when we believed" (Romans 13:11 NASB).

#### September 5 — Jonah 1:9-10

He said to them, "I am a Hebrew! And I worship the LORD, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land." Hearing this, the men became even more afraid and said to him, "What have you done?" The men said this because they knew that he was trying to escape from the LORD because he had previously told them.

Here we find our hero, Jonah the prophet, running away from the Lord's clear instructions to go to Nineveh. On a boat sailing in the opposite direction, he gives his testimony: "I am a Hebrew! And I worship the Lord, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land." Having heard this

testimony from Jonah's lips, the men who were sailors on the ship "became even more afraid and said to him, 'What have you done?'" The men asked this question "because they knew that he was trying to escape from the Lord because he had previously told them." I wonder if we will ever realize, before we get to heaven, how the decisions we make and the lives we live endanger the lives of others? Let's think about that today as we consider our vocation, our witness, our marriage, our family, and our personal walk with God.

## September 6 — Micah 6:8

He has told you, O man, what is proper, and what the LORD really wants from you: He wants you to promote justice, to be faithful, and to live obediently before your God.

Micah tells us in today's verse that the Lord has made quite clear: (1) what He considers "proper" and (2) "what the Lord really wants" from us. He concludes the verse by saying there are three things He wants of His children: (1) "to promote justice"; (2) "to be faithful"; and (3) "to live obediently before your God." In other words, Micah says the Lord wants us be fair in our relationships with others, "faithful" both on the vertical and horizontal levels of our lives, and fruitful because we are being obedient to His word. I can tell already this is going to be a great day! **September 7**— **Nahum 1:7** 

## The LORD is good – indeed, he is a fortress in time of distress, and he protects those who seek refuge in him.

We are considering Nahum's testimony in our verse for the day. Nahum tells us that "The Lord is good." There are two reasons for this acclamation: (1) "he is a fortress in time of distress" and (2) "he protects those who seek refuge in him." I am reminded of the words of Hezekiah to the people in 2 Chronicles 32:7-8: "Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or discouraged because of the king of Assyria and the vast army with him, for there is a greater power with us than with him. With him is only the arm of flesh, but with us is the LORD our God to help us and to fight our battles" (NIV). As Paul writes the Romans in Romans 8:31: "What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us?" (NASB).

### September 8 — Habakkuk 3:17-18

When the fig tree does not bud, and there are no grapes on the vines; when the olive trees do

not produce, and the fields yield no crops; when the sheep disappear from the pen, and there are no cattle in the stalls, I will rejoice because of the LORD; I will be happy because of the God who delivers me.

Habakkuk reminds us that there are six external circumstances that cannot affect our internal joy: (1) "When the fig tree does not bud"; (2) "[when] there are no grapes on the vines"; (3) "when the olive trees do not produce"; (4) "[when] the fields yield no crops"; (5) "when the sheep disappear from the pen"; (6) "[when] there are no cattle in the stalls." The prophet voices his two responses in light of these matters: (1) "I will rejoice because of the Lord" and (2) "I will be happy because of the God who delivers me." Habakkuk sounds exactly like Job in Job 19: "I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; I myself will see him with my own eyes – I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!" (Job 19:25-27 NIV). I find myself singing as the day begins: "I've got peace like a river, I've got joy like a fountain, and I've got love like an ocean, in my soul."

## September 9 — Zephaniah 3:17

The LORD your God is in your midst; he is a warrior who can deliver. He takes great delight in you; he renews you by his love; he shouts for joy over you."

Today's verse is one of my favorites in the Old Testament! Zephaniah first records the Lord's presence: "The Lord your God is in your midst." Secondly, we learn that He is coming with terms of peace: "he is a warrior who can deliver." Thirdly, "He takes great delight in you." God is passionate about you and He demonstrates this passion and delight in the fact that He daily "renews you by his love" – these are words of reassurance, forgiveness, encouragement, and hope. God gets so excited about you that He can't keep still. "He shouts for joy over you." I love the way the NIV translates that last phrase: "he will rejoice over you with singing." It makes me so happy to start the day knowing that the Lord is singing in response to my submissive and obedient heart. It just doesn't get any better than that!

## September 10 — Haggai 1:5-6

Here then is what the sovereign LORD says: "Think carefully about what you are doing. You have planted much, but have little harvest.

## You eat, but are never filled. You drink, but are still thirsty. You are clothed, but not warm. Those who earn wages end up with holes in their money bags."

Haggai reveals a message for us from the Lord. The people had the mandate to go back and to rebuild the temple but they ceased the building project. The Lord admonishes them for their neglect: "Think carefully about what you are doing." Then He reflects upon the effect of this disobedience in five areas: (1) "You have planted much, but have little harvest"; (2) "You eat, but are never filled"; (3) "You drink, but are still thirsty"; (4) "You are clothed, but not warm"; (5) "Those who earn wages end up with holes in their money bags." This sounds so strangely familiar when we read the sermon on the mount in Matthew. Matthew 6:25,26: "For this reason I say to you, do not be anxious for your life, as to what you shall eat, or what you shall drink; nor for your body, as to what you shall put on. Is not life more than food, and the body than clothing? Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they?" (NIV). Jesus concludes these thoughts in Matthew 6:33-34: "But seek first His kingdom, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added to you. Therefore do not be anxious for tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own" (NIV). Lord, I make a fresh commitment today to put first things first, to spend quality time with You, and to be busily engaged in the pursuit of Your will with a surrendered and obedient heart.

## September 11 — Zechariah 13:9

Then I will bring the remaining third into the fire; I will refine them like silver is refined and will test them like gold is tested. They will call on my name and I will answer; I will say, "These are my people," and they will say, "The LORD is my God."

The Lord, speaking through Zechariah, tells us what He is going to do with those who are the survivors. What a timely verse for us on September 11. The Lord says: (1) "I will bring the remaining third into the fire"; (2) "I will refine them like silver is refined"; (3) "I will test them like gold is tested." Because of these refining fires, the people "will call on my name and I will answer." Then the Lord gives this testimony: "I will say, 'These are my people." And their testimony will be: "The Lord is my God." O Lord, "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."

### September 12 — Malachi 3:10

"Bring the entire tithe into the storehouse so that there may be food in my temple. Test me in this matter," says the sovereign LORD, "to see if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you a blessing until there is no room for it all."

In our verse this morning, Malachi the prophet records a command and a challenge from the Lord. The command: "Bring the entire tithe into the storehouse so that there may be food in my temple." The challenge: "Test me in this matter,' says the sovereign Lord." As you test Him, He says: "to see if I will not open for you the windows of heaven." Indeed, the Lord will also "pour out for you a blessing until there is no room for it all." I find myself this morning singing a verse of "Showers of Blessing" taken from Ezekiel 34:26: "I will send down showers in season; there will be showers of blessing" (NIV). "There shall be showers of blessing; Send them upon us, O Lord; Grant to us now a refreshing, Come, and now honor Thy Word."

## September 13 — Matthew 1:21

She will give birth to a son and you will name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."

Today's verse contains the message from the angel to Joseph about what will be happening to Mary. The verse includes (1) the announcement of the event; (2) the name of he who is going to be born; (3) the mission of the special one. The event: "She will give birth to a son." The name: "you will name him Jesus." The reason, His mission: "because he will save his people from their sins." John the Baptist recognized this, as he proclaims in John 1:29: "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (NASB). Paul's words in 2 Corinthians 9:15 express the exuberance, the excitement, the joy of this announcement: "Thank God for his Son—a gift too wonderful for words!" (NLT). Peterson paraphrases our beautiful verse in the following way: "She will bring a son to birth, and when she does, you, Joseph, will name him Jesus – 'God saves' – because he will save his people from their sins" (MSG). I am primed to sing an early Christmas carol! "Joy to the world, the Lord is come! Let earth receive her King; Let every heart prepare Him room, And Heaven and nature sing."

## September 14 — Matthew 6:33

But above all pursue his kingdom and righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

These words recorded from the lips of the Lord Jesus offer a message about focus and priorities. First things first. The number one priority. "But above all pursue" two things: (1) "pursue his kingdom" and (2) "pursue his... righteousness." When we do what He says, then comes the promise: "and all these things will be given to you as well." The "all things" that Jesus is talking about are those things He mentions earlier in His sermon: adequate financial resources, protection of life, food for the table, drink, clothing, etc. The Lord is able to do exceeding abundant above all we can ask or think in making daily provisions for us – that is, when we follow His prescribed priorities by pursuing His kingdom and pursuing His righteousness.

#### September 15 — Matthew 9:37-38

Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into his harvest."

Again Jesus speaks to His disciples: "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few." This is the crisis of contrast. A fantastic harvest awaits, ripe and ready, but in contrast, few workers will come and harvest the crop. The words of Jeremiah 8:20 are haunting: "The harvest is past, the summer has ended, and we are not saved" (NIV). Jesus said to the disciples in John 4:34-36: "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to accomplish His work. Do you not say, 'There are yet four months, and then comes the harvest'? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes, and look on the fields, that they are white for harvest. Already he who reaps is receiving wages, and is gathering fruit for life eternal; that he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together" (NASB).

### **September 16 — Matthew 11:28-30**

Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke on you and learn from me, because I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy to bear, and my load is not hard to carry.

Our verses begin with an invitation from our Lord: "Come to me." Then the Lord defines the ones who are to come: "all you who are": (1) "weary" and (2) "burdened." He promises to "give you rest." His instructions are not only for us to come but to take: "Take my yoke on you." He also implores us to "learn from me," for He is "gentle and humble in heart." We will find "rest" for our

souls. Why? Jesus says it well: "For my yoke is easy to bear, and my load is not hard to carry." Perhaps these verses find you weary and heavy laden and you need to pause and declare the fact that you are depending upon the Lord and you are entering afresh into the rest that becomes yours when the Lord fully takes over. Peterson's paraphrase of Revelation 22:17 is so timely this morning: "Come!' say the Spirit and the Bride.Whoever hears, echo, 'Come!' Is anyone thirsty? Come! All who will, come and drink, Drink freely of the Water of Life!" (MSG).

#### September 17 — Mark 1:35

Then Jesus got up early in the morning when it was still very dark, departed, and went out to a deserted place, and there he spent time in prayer.

Jesus is following in the steps of Abraham, Jacob, and David as one who "got up early in the morning when it was still very dark." David says in Psalm 5:3: "Morning by morning, O Lord, you hear my voice; morning by morning I lay my requests before you and wait in expectation." Psalm 143:8: "Let the morning bring me word of your unfailing love, for I have put my trust in you. Show me the way I should go, for to you I lift up my soul" (NIV). The mission of our Lord on this early morning is revealed in the text, which says He "went out to a deserted place, and there he spent time in prayer." Lord, I must do the same if I expect to receive instructions to prepare me for the day which is ahead. Speak, Lord, for Your servant is listening! Psalm 55:17: "Evening, morning and noon I cry out in distress, and he hears my voice" (NIV). "Sweet hour of prayer! Sweet hour of prayer! That calls me from a world of care, And bids me at my Father's throne Make all my wants and wishes known. In seasons of distress and grief, My soul has often found relief And oft escaped the tempter's snare By thy return, sweet hour of prayer!"

### September 18 — Mark 5:19

But Jesus did not permit him to do so. Instead, he said to him, "Go to your home and to your people and tell them what the Lord has done for you, that he had mercy on you."

Our verse for this morning is set in the context of the healing of this demon-possessed man who has a great desire to accompany the Lord on His future ministry. Our verse opens with the words: "But Jesus did not permit him to do so." The questions that come to mind this morning are these: Am I

sensitive to the Lord's restraint? Do I want my way more than His way? Am I sensitive to His timing? Our text tells us that Jesus told the healed man: (1) "Go to your home"; (2) "[Go] to your people"; (3) "tell [your people] what the Lord has done for you, that he had mercy on you." The verse seems to suggest that the Lord is challenging us to be busy about sharing what the Lord has done for us and to tell our story about how He has had mercy upon us. Jeremiah 1:7: "But the LORD said to me, 'Do not say, "I am only a child." You must go to everyone I send you to and say whatever I command you'" (NIV). I feel like singing a verse of "I'll Go Where You Want Me to Go": "It may not be on the mountain's height, or over the stormy sea; It may not be at the battle's front my Lord will have need of me; But if by a still, small voice He calls to paths I do not know, I'll answer, dear Lord, with my hand in Yours, I'll go where You want me to go."

### **September 19 — Mark 7:20-2**3

He said, "What comes out of a person defiles him. For from within, out of the human heart, come evil ideas, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, evil, deceit, debauchery, envy, slander, pride, and folly. All these evils come from within and defile a person."

These verses are spoken to us by the Lord Jesus, warning us about our thought life and the results of being careless in this area. Peterson paraphrases the Lord's words beautifully, including a list of foul things emerging from the careless heart: "It's what comes out of a person that pollutes: obscenities, lusts, thefts, murders, adulteries, greed, depravity, deceptive dealings, carousing, mean looks, slander, arrogance, foolishness – all these are vomit from the heart. There is the source of your pollution" (MSG). Paul's cry in Romans 7:24 comes to mind: "Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?" (NASB). The answer to his cry comes in verse 25: "Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh the law of sin" (NASB). Galatians 5:16: "But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh" (NASB).

#### September 20 — Mark 10:45

For even the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.

Our verse this morning provides the key statement regarding our savior's mission to earth: He "did

not come to be served but to serve." Secondly, He came "to give his life as a ransom for many." My heart goes back to Philippians 2, which illustrates for us the price of servanthood: "Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bondservant, and being made in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross" (Philippians 2:5-8 NASB). Jesus says in Matthew 20:26-27: "It is not so among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave" (NASB). Lord, thank You for showing us, in the final hours that You had here upon earth, our roles as servants as You picked up the towel and took the basin of water and washed the feet of the disciples. Lord, I am totally available and ready to serve in anyway that You desire this day.

## September 21 — Luke 1:37

## For nothing will be impossible with God.

What a fabulous verse comes under our scrutiny this morning! It's brief but it's powerful! The angel tells Mary that she is the one by whom the Lord Jesus Christ would be born, "For nothing will be impossible with God." My mind goes to the passage in Jeremiah 32:26-27: "Then the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah: 'I am the LORD, the God of all mankind. Is anything too hard for me?" (NIV). Jeremiah says in 32:17: "Ah, Sovereign LORD, you have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and outstretched arm. Nothing is too hard for you" (NIV). Lord, I am resting this day in some of the final words of Moses before he comes home to be with You: "The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms" (Deuteronomy 33:27 NIV).

## September 22 — Luke 1:38

## So Mary said, "Yes, I am a servant of the Lord; let this happen to me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.

Here is Mary's response to the angel's announcement that she has been chosen to be the vehicle for the birth of the messiah. Mary replies (1) "Yes, I am a servant of the Lord"; (2) "let this happen to me according to your word"; (3) "Then the angel departed from her." The New Living Bible paraphrases our verse: "Mary responded, 'I am the Lord's servant, and I am willing to accept

whatever he wants. May everything you have said come true.'And then the angel left." Peterson likewise does a beautiful job with the paraphrase: "And Mary said, 'Yes, I see it all now: I'm the Lord's maid, ready to serve. Let it be with me just as you say.' Then the angel left her" (MSG). Lord, give me the grace, the courage, and the dignity to respond as Mary: "Yes, I am Your servant." And secondly, Lord, whatever it is that You want me to do I want to be busy doing it. I loveYou, Lord, and I know You are going to do great things! With Samuel, as I begin this day, I am saying, "Speak Lord for Your servant is listening!"

### September 23 — Luke 4:13

## So when the devil had completed every temptation, he departed from him until a more opportune time.

The verse for today comes at the conclusion of our Lord's temptation by the devil. The devil, having been defeated on every count, departed from him until a more opportune time."You get the feeling that Satan is studying our game films so that he can discern weaknesses and areas of vulnerability in order that he might be successful in his next attack. Jesus warns Simon at the time of the crucifixion in Luke 22:31-32: "Simon, stay on your toes. Satan has tried his best to separate all of you from me, like chaff from wheat. Simon, I've prayed for you in particular that you not give in or give out. When you have come through the time of testing, turn to your companions and give them a fresh start" (MSG). Lord, my prayer this morning is that the power of the Spirit will provide strength and victory in the areas of my vulnerability.

### September 24 — Luke 9:23

## Then he said to them all, "If anyone wants to become my follower, he must deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow me."

The wonderful verse is spoken by our Lord Jesus and is a declaration of His demands for discipleship. They are three in number: (1) surrender – "he must deny himself"; (2) servanthood – "take up his cross daily"; (3) service – "follow me." My mind goes to 1 Peter 2:21: "This suffering is all part of what God has called you to. Christ, who suffered for you, is your example. Follow in his steps" (NLT). 1 Peter 4:19: "So if you are suffering according to God's will, keep on doing what is right, and trust yourself to the God who made you, for he will never fail you" (NLT). The pay may not be much when you are serving the Lord, but the retirement benefits are out of this world!

## September 25 — John 3:30

## He must become more important while I become less important.

John the Baptist speaks this brief but powerful verse, showing that he understands his role and his mission in life. Christ must continually be increasing and John must be decreasing. The focus of our life, our ministry, our witness for Jesus must follow this simple pattern. Jesus said in John 12:32: "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself" (NASB). The writer of the book of Hebrews tells us in Hebrews 12:2: "fixing our eyes on Jesus the author and perfecter of faith" (NASB). Paul tells the Corinthians in 2 Corinthians 3:18: "But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit" (NASB). Lord, my prayer this morning is that You will hasten Your good work in conforming me more and more to the image of the Lord Jesus.

## September 26 — John 6:20

## But he said to them, "It is I. Do not be afraid."

Isn't this a comforting verse for today? Jesus comes to His disciples in the middle of the night, walking upon the water toward them as they are rowing the boat three or four miles from shore. What comforting words the disciples hear: "It is I." Then comes the command: "Do not be afraid." Can you hear the Savior say these same two things to you and to me as we begin this new day? "It is I. I've come in time to help. I'm totally at your disposal. I'm ready to do whatever is needed." Then hearken to His parting command: "Do not be afraid." I love the way Peterson paraphrases Isaiah 41:10 in The Message: "Don't panic. I'm with you. There's no need to fear for I'm your God. I'll give you strength. I'll help you. I'll hold you steady, keep a firm grip on you" (MSG).

### September 27 — John 9:4

## We must perform the deeds of the one who sent me as long as it is daytime. Night is coming when no one can work.

I call this verse, spoken by the Lord Jesus, the "Two-Minute Warning." Jesus says: "We must perform the deeds of the one who sent me as long as it is daytime." Jesus is truly focused upon finishing. Jesus tells the Father in His prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane in John 17:4: "I glorified Thee on the earth, having accomplished the work which Thou hast given Me to do" (NASB). His cry

"Tetelestai, it is finished!" from the cross is an exclamation point to the prayer of Gethsemane. Paul told young Timothy in 2 Timothy 4:7: "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith" (NASB). Jesus concludes his words in our verse this morning: "Night is coming when no one can work." Time waits for no man and the clock is running. Opportunities are passing us by. Remember that great old hymn: "Work, for the night is coming, Work through the sunny noon; Fill brightest hours with labor, Rest comes sure and soon. Give every flying minute, Something to keep in store; Work, for the night is coming, When man works no more."

### September 28 — John 14:6

## Jesus replied, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

These words are spoken in the upper room by Jesus to Thomas in response to two previous questions: (1) "Lord, we do not know where You are going" and (2) "how do we know the way?" (John 14:5 NASB). Jesus answers: "I am the way, and the truth, and the life." In other words, "Thomas, I am everything that you're ever going to need!" Jesus concludes by saying: "No one comes to the Father except through me." As Paul writes young Timothy in 1 Timothy 2:5: "For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (NASB). Lord, thank You as I begin this day that I have found in Jesus the right way, the only truth, and the eternal life! Help me to have the courage to share the gospel with someone else this day.

## September 29 — Acts 1:8

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the farthest parts of the earth.

The verse for today records the final spoken words of Jesus before He ascended into heaven. He makes a two-fold promise: (1) "you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you," and (2) "you will be my witnesses." The Spirit of God comes to indwell us permanently when we receive the Lord Jesus as savior. As Christians, we have received the power. But are we being His witnesses? Jesus mentions four geographical locations in His plan: (1) "in Jerusalem" – where the disciples were presently residing; (2) "in all Judea" – the surrounding county;

(3) "Samaria" – the city to the north; (4) "and to the farthest parts of the earth." The passion of the Savior's heart as He ascended into glory, having accomplished His work on earth, was that we would be witnesses worldwide. Peterson paraphrases Peter's words in 1 Peter 3:15: "Through thick and thin, keep your hearts at attention, in adoration before Christ, your Master. Be ready to speak up and tell anyone who asks why you're living the way you are, and always with the utmost courtesy" (MSG). Lord, help me to be a faithful, fruitful witness for You this day.

### September 30 — Acts 3:20

## So that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and so that he may send the Messiah appointed for you – that is, Jesus.

This verse is part of Peter's sermon to the people in Acts 3. Peter's plea in his message is recorded in the verse just prior to the one we are considering: "Repent therefore and return, that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord" (Acts 3:19 NASB). Peterson paraphrases these verses: "Now it's time to change your ways! Turn to face God so he can wipe away your sins, pour out showers of blessing to refresh you, and send you the Messiah he prepared for you, namely, Jesus" (MSG). Heaven is always ready and eager to respond with times of refreshing. Lord, make me aware of anything in my life that is keeping You from showering Your blessings upon me this day. Our verse concludes: "and so that he may send the Messiah appointed for you – that is, Jesus." The Bible concludes with these final words: "He who testifies to these things says, 'Yes, I am coming quickly.' Amen. Come, Lord Jesus. The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen" (Revelation 22:20-21 NASB). Lord Jesus, perhaps it will be today that You will come and call us home!

## **OCTOBER**

#### **October 1 — Acts 24:16**

## This is the reason I do my best to always have a clear conscience toward God and toward people.

This verse is part of Paul's defense. He focuses upon having "a clear conscience." Then he points vertically "toward God" and horizontally "toward people." Paul tells Timothy in his first epistle: "But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith" (1 Timothy 1:5 NASB). In 1 Timothy 1:19, he elaborates upon the nature of instruction in godliness:

"keeping faith and a good conscience, which some have rejected and suffered shipwreck in regard to their faith" (NASB). I find myself praying this morning in the words of Psalm 139:23-24: "Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (NIV). "Lord, take my life, and make it wholly Thine; Fill my poor heart with Thy great love divine. Take all my will, my passion, self and pride; I now surrender, Lord, in me abide."

#### **October 2 — Acts 27:25**

## Therefore keep up your courage, men, for I have faith in God that it will be just as I have been told.

Paul makes this announcement before the 275 other passengers on a storm-tossed vessel that has been adrift for two weeks and is filled with folks fearful of losing their lives. The apostle assures them that everyone is going to be saved and that they need to get something to eat. He then speaks these words that are our meditation for this morning: "Therefore keep up your courage, men." This is not the time to fold 'em and throw in your hand! He then states the reason: "for I have faith in God that it will be just as I have been told." These words cause me to think of Numbers

23:19: "God is not a man, that he should lie, nor a son of man, that he should change his mind. Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfill?" (NIV). It's time for us to keep the courage, to persevere and press on because the One who has promised is faithful.

#### October 3 — Romans 1:28

## And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what should not be done.

Our verse this morning spells out the consequences of resisting and rebelling against God. "And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God." Jeremiah 6:16 says: "This is what the LORD says: 'Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls. But you said, "We will not walk in it" (NIV). As a result of the people's rebellion, Romans 1:28 continues: "God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what should not be done." Out of the "depraved mind" come the thoughts that issue in conduct repulsive to our Lord. My mind turns to Isaiah 30:15, 18: "This is what the Sovereign LORD, the Holy One of

Israel, says: 'In repentance and rest is your salvation, in quietness and trust is your strength, but you would have none of it.... Yet the LORD longs to be gracious to you; he rises to show you compassion. For the LORD is a God of justice. Blessed are all who wait for him!'" (NIV).

#### October 4 — Romans 8:5

For those who live according to the flesh have their outlook shaped by the things of the Spirit. Paul helps us to understand the frustration of the flesh as opposed to the fruit of the Spirit: "For those who live according to the flesh have their outlook shaped by the things of the flesh." Paul has said previously in Romans 7:5: "For while we were in the flesh, the sinful passions, which were aroused by the Law, were at work in the members of our body to bear fruit for death" (NASB). Our verse concludes with the contrast: "but those who live according to the Spirit have their outlook shaped by the things of the Spirit." Paul expresses his joy in Romans 8:1-2: "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death" (NASB). Lord, my prayer this morning would be that You would sensitize my heart to the promptings of the Spirit, revealing what He wants to accomplish in my life this day.

#### October 5 — Romans 8:28

## And we know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose.

What a familiar verse comes to our attention this morning! "And we know that all things work together for good." This tells us that God is sovereign, that He is in complete control of all of the circumstances and the events that surround us. Joseph was certainly convinced of this as he revealed himself to his brothers in Genesis 45:5: "And now, do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you" (NIV). Joseph continues, "So then, it was not you who sent me here, but God" (Genesis 45:8 NIV). At the conclusion of the book in Genesis 50:20, Joseph says it again: "You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives" (NIV). You will notice that Romans 8:28 contains some stipulations regarding those for whom "all things work together for good." The stipulations are (1) "for those who love God" and (2) "for those... who are

called according to his purpose." As we love Him and want to fulfill His purpose in our lives, we understand that all things work together for "good." Lord, forgive me for being anxious when things do not seem to be working out from my perspective. Help me to trust You. Paul's words to the Philippians come to mind: "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God" (Philippians 4:6 NASB).

#### October 6 — Romans 9:31

#### But Israel even though pursuing a law of righteousness did not attain it.

Paul reminds us of Israel's failure in righteousness. James warns us that God doesn't grade on the curve: "For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all" (James 2:10 NASB). Earlier in Romans 3:19-20, Paul writes: "Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, that every mouth may be closed, and all the world may become accountable to God; because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin" (NASB). If God thought for one moment that there was a possibility of our keeping of the law and attaining acceptable righteousness, He would not have taken the drastic measure of sending His Son as a gift to pay the penalty for our broken law.

#### October 7 — Romans 12:12

### Rejoice in hope, endure in suffering, persist in prayer.

What a beautiful verse because it gives us a three-point prescription for a productive Christian life: (1) "Rejoice in hope"; (2) "endure [persevere] in suffering"; (3) "persist in prayer." I love Paul's prayer in Romans 15:13: "Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit" (NASB).

#### October 8 — 1 Corinthians 2:9

But just as it is written, "Things that no eye has seen, or ear heard, or mind imagined, are the things God has prepared for those who love him."

This verse prompts us to think about heaven and our glorious future. Our glorious heavenly future is filled with that which (1) "no eye has seen"; (2) "or ear heard"; or (3) "mind imagined." These "are

the things God has prepared for those who love him." Peterson paraphrases John 14:1-3 beautifully: "Don't let this throw you. You trust God, don't you? Trust me. There is plenty of room for you in my Father's home. If that weren't so, would I have told you that I'm on my way to get a room ready for you? And if I'm on my way to get your room ready, I'll come back and get you so you can live where I live" (MSG).

#### October 9 — 1 Corinthians 6:19-20

Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price. Therefore glorify God with your body.

These verses instruct us in the fact that as Christians, we have a divine resident; therefore, Paul challenges the Corinthians concerning what they are allowing to come in to this residence where the Spirit of God dwells. He begins with a question: "Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you?" The Spirit of God is a gift from God and as a result "you are not your own." In the next phrase Paul turns to Calvary: "For you were bought at a price." Then he issues a final command: "Therefore" in view of the fact that "you are not your own" and "you were bought at a price," "glorify God with your body." In 2 Corinthians 5:9 Paul says: "So our aim is to please him always, whether we are here in this body or away from this body" (NLT). My response is 2 Corinthians 7:1: "Because we have these promises, dear friends, let us cleanse ourselves from everything that can defile our body or spirit. And let us work toward complete purity because we fear God" (NLT).

#### October 10 — 1 Corinthians 9:24

Do you not know that all the runners in a stadium compete, but only one receives the prize? So run to win.

Here Paul begins as he did in yesterday's verse, with a question and a command. The question: "Do you not know that all the runners in a stadium compete, but only one receives the prize?" And then the command: "So run to win." There are lots of runners at the starting line but only one will finish first and win the prize. My response is in Hebrews 12:1: "Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a huge crowd of witnesses to the life of faith, let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily hinders our progress. And let us run with endurance [or

perseverance] the race that God has set before us" (NLT). Lord, today I want to fulfill Philippians 3:14: "I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (NASB).

#### October 11 — 1 Corinthians 10:13

No trial has overtaken you that is not faced by others. And God is faithful: He will not let you be tried beyond what you are able to bear, but with the trial will also provide a way out so that you may be able to endure it.

This verse is probably the key verse in the New Testament regarding the subjects of temptation and trial. Isn't it comforting to know that the Lord knows our strengths and our weaknesses? He also knows the levels of our limitations when it comes to putting us in the fire. "No trial has overtaken you that is not faced by others." We are not unique but others have traveled the path before us and have been victorious. "And God is faithful." Because He is faithful, "He will not let you be tried beyond what you are able to bear, but [in contrast] with the trial will also provide a way out so that you may be able to [bear up] endure it." Comforting words from 1 Peter 5:10 come to mind this morning: "And after you have suffered for a little, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you" (NASB). Lord, take me to the potter's house, throw me upon the wheel, and make me into the vessel that You want me to be for Your glory and honor.

#### October 12 — 1 Corinthians 15:58

So then, dear brothers and sisters, be firm. Do not be moved! Always be outstanding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

Paul refers to the Corinthians as his "dear brothers and sisters." He offers these three pieces of advice: (1) "be firm"; (2) "Do not be moved!"; (3) "Always be outstanding in the work of the Lord." Be firm—my mind goes to Ephesians 6:10-11: "Finally, be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of His might. put on the full armor of God, that you may be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil" (NASB). Do not be moved—Isaiah 50:7: "Because the Sovereign LORD helps me, I will not be disgraced. Therefore have I set my face like flint, and I know I will not be put to shame" (NIV). Pursue God's work with excellence—Paul tells Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:15: "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed" (NASB). We are

to be doing all of this "knowing that [our] labor is not in vain in the Lord." Lord, the passion of my heart on this new day is to be a person who is determined to finish strong, to finish well, and to finish with Your blessing upon me.

## October 13 — 2 Corinthians 1:3-4

Blessed is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles so that we may be able to comfort those experiencing any trouble with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. In the time of grief and sorrow there's no better place to go than to these two verses to find the comfort to continue. "Blessed is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." He is characterized as "the Father of mercies and God of all comfort." It is He "who comforts us in all our troubles." The purpose in His so doing is: "so that we may be able to comfort those experiencing any trouble with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God." The Lord's comfort to our hearts should be stored and shared with others experiencing times of grief and sorrow. In the upper room, Jesus speaks of the ministry of the Holy Spirit and follows His words with a promise: "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you. Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives, do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful" (John 14:26-27 NASB). My mind turns to Isaiah 40:11: "He tends his flock like a shepherd: He gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart; he gently leads those that have young" (NIV).

#### October 14 — 2 Corinthians 2:14

But thanks be to God who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ and who makes known through us the fragrance that consists of the knowledge of him in every place.

This verse today makes me want to strike up the band and lead a victory parade! Thanks be to God (1) "who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ" and (2) "who makes known through us the fragrance that consists of the knowledge of him in every place." 1 Corinthians 15:57 says: "but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (NASB). John speaks of

victory, too, in 1 John 5:4-5: "For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world – our faith. And who is the one who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?" (NASB). Peterson paraphrases our verse beautifully: "In the Messiah, in Christ, God leads us from place to place in one perpetual victory parade. Through us, he brings knowledge of Christ. Everywhere we go, people breathe in the exquisite fragrance" (MSG).

## October 15 — 2 Corinthians 3:18

# And we all, with unveiled faces reflecting the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another, which is from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

What a magnificent verse! Paul says to the Corinthians that: "we all, with unveiled faces" are doing two things: (1) "reflecting the glory of the Lord" and (2) being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another, which is from the Lord, who is the Spirit." Jesus, in the sermon on the mount in Matthew 5:16, tells us: "Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven" (NASB). Paul tells the Philippians in Philippians 2:15: "that you may prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world" (NASB). We are not only to be "reflecting the glory of the Lord" but we are also "being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another." Paul tells the Romans in Romans 12:2: "And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect" (NASB). Lord, the longing of my heart this morning is that I might reflect Your glory to a dark and dying world. May I continually be transformed by Your Spirit into Christlikeness through the study of Your word and times of communion and prayer.

## October 16 — 2 Corinthians 4:7

But we have this treasure in clay jars, so that the extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us.

In the verse for today we learn that we are nothing more than "clay jars" or cracked pots. The treasure is the indwelling Christ. Because He dwells within, we learn: "so that the extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us." Jesus says this clearly in John 15:5: "I am the

vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me, and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing" (NASB). Isaiah 64:8: "Yet, O LORD, you are our Father. We are the clay, you are the potter; we are all the work of your hand" (NIV). Zechariah 4:6: "'Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,' says the LORD Almighty" (NIV). Lord, Your word tells us that Your strength is made perfect in our weakness. "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me" (2 Corinthians 12:9 KJV).

#### October 17 — 2 Corinthians 9:6-7

My point is this: The person who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the person who sows generously will also reap generously. Each one of you should give just as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, because God loves a cheerful giver.

In these two verses on the subject of giving, Paul starts with an illustration: "My point is this: The person who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the person who sows generously will also reap generously." The apostle presents the infallible law of sowing and reaping. You can't sow a little and reap a lot. What you sow is what you're going to reap. Proverbs 11:24-25: "One man gives freely, yet gains even more; another withholds unduly, but comes to poverty. A generous man will prosper; he who refreshes others will himself be refreshed" (NIV). Paul turns from his illustration of sowing and reaping to counsel with regard to giving: "Each one of you should give just as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion." The reason to give cheerfully is "because God loves a cheerful giver." The matter of giving is a personal matter between the saint and his savior, so "each one of you should give just as he has decided in his heart." This should be done "not reluctantly or under compulsion, because God loves a cheerful giver." Lord, help me to be more like the Macedonia Christians in 2 Corinthians 8:3: "For I testify that according to their ability, and beyond their ability they gave of their own accord" (NASB).

#### October 18 — Galatians 2:20

I have been crucified with Christ, and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. So the life I now live in the body, I live because of the faithfulness of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

This is Paul's testimony: "I have been crucified with Christ." Romans 6:8 helps us understand Paul's

opening phrase: "Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him" (NASB). Because he has been "crucified with Christ" the apostle continues, "it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me" (NASB). Colossians 3:3: "For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God" (NASB). Paul says: "So the life I now live in the body, I live because of the faithfulness of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." This verse always reminds me of the words of the Lord Jesus in John 12:24-25: "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains by itself alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. He who loves his life loses it; and he who hates his life in this world shall keep it to life eternal" (NASB).

#### October 19 — Galatians 5:1

# For freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not be subject again to the yoke of slavery.

I dare say the fair winds of heaven flow through this glorious verse that is ours to consider today. Paul tells the Galatian Christians: "For freedom Christ has set us free." This was the whole purpose of the cross. John 8:32: "And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (NLT). The Galatians were tempted to go back and to live in the prison house of the law under bondage. Paul challenges them in the next phrase: "Stand firm, then, and do not be subject again to the yoke of slavery." Their positive action is to "Stand firm," to be immovable. Their negative responsibility is "do not be subject again to the yoke of slavery" or the Mosaic Law. John 8:36: "If therefore the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed" (NASB). I feel like singing the third verse of "And Can It Be That I Should Gain": "Long my imprisoned spirit lay, Fast bound in sin and nature's night; Thine eye diffused a quickening ray – I woke, the dungeon flamed with light; My chains fell off, my heart was free, I rose, went forth, and followed Thee."

#### October 20 — Galatians 5:16-17

But I say, live by the Spirit and you will not carry out the desires of the flesh. For the flesh has desires that are opposed to the Spirit, and the Spirit has desires that are opposed to the flesh, for these are in opposition to each other, so that you cannot do what you want.

These two verses help us understand the conflict between the old flesh and the new nature energized by the Spirit of God dwelling within us. Paul, writing to the Galatians, says: "But I say, live by the

Spirit and you will not carry out the desires of the flesh." As believers, living under the domination and control of the Spirit of God gives us the strength to gain victory over the flesh in our lives. The reason we need to live in this manner is given in the next phrase: "For the flesh has desires that are opposed to the Spirit, and the Spirit has desires that are opposed to the flesh." Then Paul adds another reason: "for these are in opposition to each other, so that you cannot do what you want." The secret to victory is learning to do what God wants, not what we want. Listening to the still, small voice of the Spirit in our reading of the word and in our prayer time will put us on track for doing those things which the Spirit desires of us. Paul is very realistic about the conflict between the flesh and Spirit in Romans 7:18-19: "For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the wishing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not. For the good that I wish, I do not do; but I practice the very evil that I do not wish" (NASB). Romans 8:2 thrills our hearts with the news: "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death" (NASB).

#### October 21 — Galatians 6:7

# Do not be deceived. God will not be made a fool. For a person will reap what he sows.

Paul returns again to the law of the sowing and the harvesting. He says

- (1) "Do not be deceived" and (2) "God will not be made a fool." The reason is that "a person will reap what he sows." The apostle continues in verse 8 to say: "For the one who sows to his own flesh shall from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit shall from the Spirit reap eternal life" (NASB). Hosea 8:7: "They sow the wind and reap the whirlwind" (NIV). Hosea also says in 10:12: "Sow for yourselves righteousness, reap the fruit of unfailing love, and break up your unploughed ground; for it is time to seek the LORD, until he comes and showers righteousness on you" (NIV). Jeremiah 4:3: "This is what the LORD says to the men of Judah and to Jerusalem: 'Break up your unploughed ground and do not sow among thorns'" (NIV). Psalm 126:5
- 6: "Those who sow in tears will reap with songs of joy. He who goes out weeping, carrying seed to sow, will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with him" (NIV). Lord, I am reminded of Jesus' parable of the sower and the seed, and my prayer is that His seeds will fall on the good soil in my heart and will yield a crop, some a hundred fold, some sixty, some thirty. Jesus said in John 15:8: "By this is My Father glorified, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples" (NASB).

# October 22 — Ephesians 2:8-9

# For by grace you are saved through faith, and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God; it is not from works, so that no one can boast.

We should all memorize these verses. Paul reveals how we are saved: "For by grace you are saved through faith." It was grace on the part of God the Father that sent Jesus Christ, His Son, to the cross to pay my penalty. I appropriate the benefits of this finished work upon Calvary by faith, just by simply accepting what God has provided. "And this is not from yourselves." This is not something that we can produce or provide on our own, but on the other hand, "it is the gift of God; it is not from works, so that no one can boast." Notice, this salvation (1) "is not from yourselves"; (2) "is the gift of God"; (3) "is not from works." Therefore, "no one can boast." Because God did it all, there are no grounds for boasting from the human point of view. I feel like singing a verse from "Grace Greater Than Our Sin": "Marvelous grace of our loving Lord, Grace that exceeds our sin and our guilt! Yonder on Calvary's mount outpoured, There where the blood of the Lamb was spilled. Grace, grace, God's grace, Grace that will pardon and cleanse within; Grace, grace, God's grace, Grace that is greater than all our sin." Romans 5:20: "And the Law came in that the transgression might increase; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more" (NASB).

# October 23 — Ephesians 3:20

# Now to him who by the power that is working within us is able to do far beyond all that we ask or think.

Paul is concluding a beautiful prayer with Ephesians 3:20. At the prayer's beginning, in 3:16, the apostle says, "that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man" (Ephesians 3:16 NASB). In Philippians 4:13, he writes: "I can do all things through Him who strengthens me" (NASB). In Colossians 1:11, he says: "strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience, joyously" (NASB). To Timothy he says in 2 Timothy 1:7: "For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline" (NASB). Lord, make my life a demonstration of Your strength and power today!

# October 24 — Ephesians 4:2

# With all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love.

Paul challenges the Ephesians to "walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called" (4:1 NASB). In our verse he describes a worthy walk in four ways. It is a walk with "all humility." Peter draws attention to this in 1 Peter 5:6: "Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time" (NASB). Second, it is a walk with "gentleness." Gentleness is a fruitage of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22. Paul tells the Corinthians in 2 Corinthians 10:1: "Now I Paul myself urge you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ" (NASB). Third, it is a walk "with patience." Patience, too, is a fruitage of the Spirit. It is also a characteristic of love in 1 Corinthians 13. Finally, it is a walk in which we bear "with one another in love." Paul says to the Colossians in Colossians 3:12-13: "And so, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complain against any one; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you" (NASB).

## October 25 — Ephesians 4:31-32

You must put away every kind of bitterness, anger, wrath, quarreling, and evil, slanderous talk. Instead, be kind to one another, compassionate, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ also forgave you.

These are two of the best verses on interpersonal relationships in the scriptures. You will notice that in verse 31 Paul deals with the negative. In verse 32 he deals with the positive. "You must put away" the following: (1) "every kind of bitterness"; (2) "anger"; (3) "wrath"; (4) "quarreling"; (5) "evil, slanderous talk." He then turns in verse 32 to the positive. "Instead" of all of that: (1) "be kind to one another"; (2) be "compassionate"; (3) "forgiving one another, just as God in Christ also forgave you." Paul tells the Philippians in Philippians 2:3-4: "Don't be selfish; don't live to make a good impression on others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourself. Don't think only about your own affairs, but be interested in others, too, and what they are doing" (NLT). Lord, I would ask You to renew my mind and to fill my heart with Your Spirit, thus producing freely an abundant crop of the fruit of the Spirit.

# October 26 — Philippians 1:6

# For I am sure of this very thing, that the one who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.

Isn't this a wonderful truth? "For I am sure of this very thing," Paul writes the Philippians, "that the one who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus." This work of making us more like the Lord Jesus will go on until the day of Christ, that time when Christ comes to gather His church home. I am reminded of the words of the psalmist in Psalm 138:8: "The LORD will fulfill his purpose for me; your love, O LORD, endures forever – do not abandon the works of your hands" (NIV). 1 John 3:2-3: "Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet that we shall be. We know that, if He should appear, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is. And every one who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure" (NASB). Lord, thank You that there are no unfinished projects in Your workshop! You never give up, You never leave us nor forsake us. What peace! What security! What hope for the future!

# October 27 — Philippians 2:5

## You should have the same attitude toward one another that Christ Jesus had.

Paul is telling the Corinthians that the key to victorious Christian living is to follow this advice. Later in Philippians 2, the apostle illustrates what he means as he talks about the attitude or the mind of Christ. Jesus "who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bondservant, and being made in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross" (Philippians 2:6-8 NASB). Paul illustrates this mind and attitude in Philippians 2:17: "But even if I am being poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I rejoice and share my joy with you all" (NASB). Timothy is mentioned in Phillipians 2:20-21: "For I have no one else of kindred spirit who will genuinely be concerned for your welfare. For they all seek after their own interests, not those of Christ Jesus" (NASB). Finally Paul speaks of Apaphrodites in verse 30: "because he came close to death for the work of Christ, risking his life to complete what was deficient in your service to me" (NASB). Lord,

teach me how to do what Paul is saying in 2 Corinthians 10:5: "we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ" (NASB). Teach me how to follow Paul's mental menu in Philippians 4:8: "Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, let your mind dwell on these things" (NASB).

# October 28 — Philippians 3:14

With this goal in mind, I strive toward the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. This verse is the key to the book of Philippians. "With this goal in mind" Paul is referring to what he had said earlier in the chapter: "that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death" (Philippians 3:10 NASB). All of these could be summarized in the goal of being made like the Lord Jesus Christ. So Paul says, "I strive toward the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus." That "prize" is described for us in 2 Timothy 4:8: "in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing" (NASB).

# October 29 — Philippians 4:19

And my God will supply your every need according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus. What a great promise is ours to consider for today! Paul says: "And my God will supply your every need." We need to notice first of all that it's not our every want, but our "every need." James 1:16-17: "Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren. Every good thing bestowed and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation, or shifting shadow" (NASB). The limitlessness of His resources is seen in that last phrase: "according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus." Proverbs 11:28: "Whoever trusts in his riches will fall, but the righteous will thrive like a green leaf" (NIV). Paul prays in Ephesians 1:18: "I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints" (NASB).

#### October 30 — Colossians 2:6-7

Therefore, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, rooted

# and built up in him and firm in your faith just as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.

Paul challenges the Colossians with these words: "Therefore, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, [by faith] continue to live your lives in him [by faith]": (1) "rooted and built up in him"; (2) firm in your faith just as you were taught"; (3) "overflowing with thankfulness." Psalm 1:3 says: "He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers" (NIV). Jeremiah 17:7-8: "But blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, whose confidence is in him. He will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit" (NIV). Lord, I want to be living my life in You today, "rooted and built up," "firm in [my] faith," and "overflowing with thankfulness."

## October 31 — Colossians 3:16

# Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and exhorting one another with all wisdom, singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, all with grace in your hearts to God.

The first command from our verse for this morning is to "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly." To fulfill this command we have to first read it and then receive it. Ezra 7:10: "For Ezra had devoted himself to the study and observance of the Law of the LORD, and to teaching its decrees and laws in Israel" (NIV). Next we are to be "teaching and exhorting one another with all wisdom." We first read and receive the word, then we relate it to others through teaching and exhortation. We do this "with all wisdom" which is given to us by the Lord. We then are "singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, all with grace in your hearts to God." I find myself thinking of Zephaniah 3:17: "The LORD your God is with you, he is mighty to save. He will take great delight in you, he will quiet you with his love, he will rejoice over you with singing" (NIV). With the psalmist I would say: "Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law" (Psalm 119:18 NIV). Why not sing about it? "Open my eyes, that I may see Glimpses of truth Thou hast for me; Place in my hands the wonderful key That shall unclasp and set me free. Open my mind, that I may read More of Thy love in word and deed, What shall I fear while yet Thou dost lead, only for light free Thee I plead."

# **NOVEMBER**

## November 1 — Colossians 3:23

# Whatever you are doing, work at it with enthusiasm, as to the Lord and not for people.

The apostle Paul in Colossians 3 is challenging husbands, children, parents, and servants. We qualify as servants of the Lord, so this verse is for us. What a great motivation for this day! Our verse begins with "Whatever you are doing," encompassing all of the appointments, opportunities, challenges, and projects on our agenda. Paul then issues a command: "work at it with enthusiasm." That is saying, "Oh boy, I get to!" instead of "Oh man, do I have to." It is being excited. It is being passionate. It is working from the heart. Romans 12:11 gives perspective: "Never be lazy in your work, but serve the Lord enthusiastically" (NLT). Our verse concludes with our proper orientation as to whom we are serving: "as to the Lord and not for people." Paul tells the Thessalonians: "and to make it your ambition to lead a quiet life and attend to your own business and work with your hands, just as we commanded you" (1 Thessalonians 4:11 NASB). I feel like singing a verse of "When the Roll Is Called Up Yonder": "Let us labor for the Master from the dawn till setting sun, Let us talk of all His wondrous love and care; Then when all of life is over, and our work on earth is done, And the roll is called up yonder, I'll be there."

#### November 2 — 1 Thessalonians 2:13

And so we too constantly thank God that when you received God's message that you heard from us, you accepted it not as a human message, but as it truly is, God's message, which is at work among you who believe.

Paul, writing to the Thessalonians, first expresses thanksgiving to God for their reception of the truth of the word of God. Not only have they heard God's truth, but they "accepted it" not as a human message, but as God's message. Paul has received sufficient knowledge of events in Thessalonica that he can be sure that God's word is "at work" among believers there. This calls to mind Paul's words in Philippians 2:12-13: "So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure" (NASB). Peter

and the writer of Hebrews characterize the word as milk and meat, things which bring about growth. 1 Peter 2:2: "like newborn babes, long for the pure milk of the word, that by it you may grow in respect to salvation" (NASB). Hebrews 5:13-14: "For every one who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil" (NASB). 2 Peter 3:18: "but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen" (NASB). Psalm 119:89: "Forever, O LORD, your word stands firm in heaven" (NLT). The hymn writer said it right: "How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord, Is laid for your faith in His excellent Word! What more can He say than to you He hath said, You, who unto Jesus for refuge have fled?"

#### November 3 — 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17

For the Lord himself will come down from heaven with a shout of command, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be suddenly caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will always be with the Lord.

Aren't these wonderful verses of promise and hope? The Thessalonian Christians had experienced intense persecution. Many believers had died. Paul instructs them concerning their "hope." He refers to the next prophetic event on the horizon, the rapture of the church, when the Lord will call all the believers home: "For the Lord himself will come down from heaven with a shout of command." Perhaps the shout will be "Come forth!" because in the cemetery in Bethany, Jesus stood by the open tomb and cried "Lazarus come forth!" Now the general command will empty every grave of the believers. He will come "with the voice of the archangel." He will be accompanied by "the trumpet of God." Then "the dead in Christ will rise first," and "we who are alive, who are left, will be suddenly caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air." Paul concludes this glorious description thus: "And so we will always be with the Lord." The apostle speaks this same message in 1 Corinthians 15:51-52: "But let me tell you a wonderful secret God has revealed to us. Not all of us will die, but we will all be transformed. It will happen in a moment, in the blinking of

an eye, when the last trumpet is blown. For when the trumpet sounds, the Christians who have died will be raised with transformed bodies. And then we who are living will be transformed so that we will never die" (NLT). These verses challenge us to work intensely, to wait expectantly, and to watch with hope. As we do, may we accept John's advice in 1 John 3:3: "And every one who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure" (NASB).

#### November 4 — 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

# Always rejoice, constantly pray, in everything give thanks. For this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

These verses contain three commands and a reason: (1) always be rejoicing; (2) constantly be praying; (3) in everything be giving thanks. The reason for these three commands is this: "For this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." May we consistently make a positive impact in our witness for the Lord Jesus by doing these three actions: (1) "Always rejoice"; (2) "constantly pray"; and (3) "in everything give thanks."

#### November 5 — 1 Thessalonians 5:24

# He who calls you is trustworthy, and he will in fact do this.

One of the hardest things to do in life is to continue to trust God and believe what He says when you have lost loved ones or suffered some great adversity. Paul cuts to the chase. He reminds us that the Lord is "trustworthy." He is dependable; He is faithful; you can stake your eternal life upon what He says. You can have confidence that the best is yet to come: "he will in fact do this." God is a keeper of promises. He has never broken one yet! Peterson in *The Message* paraphrases this verse: "The One who called you is completely dependable. If he said it, he'll do it!" (MSG). The New Living Bible paraphrases the verse: "God, who calls you, is faithful; he will do this." In the words of the hymnist, "Great is Thy faithfulness, O God my Father; There is no shadow of turning with Thee; Thou changest not, Thy compassions, they fail not; As Thou hast been, Thou forever will be. Great is Thy faithfulness! Great is Thy faithfulness! Morning by morning new mercies I see. All I have needed Thy hand hath provided; Great is Thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me!"

## November 6 — 2 Thessalonians 1:11

And in this regard we pray for you always, that our God will make you worthy of his calling and fulfill by his power your every desire for goodness and every work of faith.

In this great verse Paul assures the Thessalonians that in the midst of their adversity and in view of the soon-coming of the blessed savior, the apostle is praying for them. He even lets us enter into his prayer closet and hear his prayers for the Thessalonians: that God will make them "worthy of his calling," "fulfill by his power [their] every desire for goodness," and complete their "every work of faith." Job could tell us volumes about being "worthy of his calling" in the midst of great adversity: "But he knows the way that I take; when he has tested me, I shall come forth as gold" (Job 23:10 NIV). You will notice that it is "by his power" that he will fulfill "your every desire for goodness." Psalm 37:4: "Delight yourself in the LORD and he will give you the desires of your heart" (NIV). Our verse concludes with the phrase: "every work of faith." The psalmist again in Psalm 37:3 says: "Trust in the LORD and do good; dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture" (NIV). Psalm 37:5: "Commit your way to the LORD; trust in him and he will do this" (NIV). Lord, I long to be worthy of your calling. By the power of Your Spirit may every desire for goodness that You long to see in me come to pass. May my life be a demonstration of faith.

## November 7 — 2 Thessalonians 2:13

But we ought to give thanks for you always, brothers and sisters loved by the Lord, because God chose you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth.

Paul says to the Thessalonian believers: "But we ought to give thanks for you always," and he calls them "brothers and sisters loved by the Lord." Why not make a list of all the people for whom you need to thank the Lord? God has chosen them and you from the "beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth." Ephesians 1:4: "just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him" (NASB). "Sanctification by the Spirit" is described for us in 2 Corinthians 7:1: "Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (NASB). Regarding "faith in the truth," Jesus said in the upper room in John 14:26: "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you" (NASB). Lord, my heart is overwhelmed this morning to know how much You love us and that You called us from the

beginning, You are daily making us more Christlike, and we are walking by faith in the truth of the word of God.

#### November 8 — 2 Thessalonians 3:3

# But the Lord is faithful, and he will strengthen you and protect you from the evil one.

Three wonderful truths emerge in this verse: (1) "the Lord is faithful";

(2) "he will strengthen you"; (3) "he will... protect you from the evil one." For faithfulness, also consider 1 Corinthians 1:9: "God will surely do this for you, for he always does just what he says, and he is the one who invited you into this wonderful friendship with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord" (NLT). Regarding God's strength, Colossians 1:11 comes to mind: "We also pray that you will be strengthened with his glorious power so that you will have all the patience and endurance you need. May you be filled with joy" (NLT). As for the Lord's protection, 1 Peter 5:8-9 encourages us: "Be careful! Watch out for attacks from the Devil, your great enemy. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for some victim to devour. Take a firm stand against him, and be strong in your faith. Remember that your Christian brothers and sisters all over the world are going through the same kind of suffering you are" (NLT). James 4:7: "So humble yourselves before God. Resist the Devil, and he will flee from you" (NLT).

## November 9 — 2 Thessalonians 3:5

# Now may the Lord direct your hearts toward the love of God and the endurance of Christ.

Paul's prayer for the Thessalonian saints is that the Lord would direct their hearts toward "the love of God" and "the endurance of Christ." Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 5:14-15: "For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died; and He died for all, that they who live should no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf" (NASB). I prefer to translate the phrase "endurance of Christ" as "perseverance of Christ." It is a reference to active steadfastness, not being tossed to and fro but persevering in Christ, denying ourselves, and carrying our cross daily. Hebrews 10:36: "For you have need of [perseverance] so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised" (NASB). Hebrews 10:23: "Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering for He who promised is faithful" (NASB).

## November 10 — 1 Timothy 6:6-8

Now godliness combined with contentment brings great profit. For we have brought nothing into this world and so we cannot take a single thing out either. But if we have food and shelter, we will be satisfied with that.

What wisdom is found in these simple observations of Paul to young Timothy. "Now godliness combined with contentment brings great profit." Paul had told the Philippians: "Not that I speak from want; for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am" (Philippians 4:11 NASB). He has learned contentment because "we have brought nothing into this world and so we cannot take a single thing out either." Job's statement at the time of his great loss puts it aptly: "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I shall depart. The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away; may the name of the LORD be praised" (Job 1:21 NIV). Paul admonishes Timothy to be content: "if we have food and shelter, we will be satisfied with that." In the words of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount: "For this reason I say to you, do not be anxious for your life, as to what you shall eat, or what you shall drink; nor for your body, as to what you shall put on. Is not life more than food, and the body than clothing?" (Matthew 6:25 NASB). Matthew 6:33: "But seek first His kingdom, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added to you" (NASB). Lord, thank You for the peace, joy, and contentment that comes when we are living life on Your terms.

# November 11 — 1 Timothy 6:11

But you, as a person dedicated to God, keep away from all that. Instead pursue righteousness, godliness, faithfulness, love, endurance, and gentleness.

This verse outlines the Lord's agenda for our lives. Paul has just finished saying to Timothy in the previous verses: "those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction" (1 Timothy 6:9 NASB). He is now telling Timothy, as a godly person, "But you, as a person dedicated to God, keep away from all that." Instead, pursue these six things: (1) "righteousness"; (2) "godliness"; (3) "faithfulness"; (4) "love"; (5) "endurance" or perseverance; and (6) "gentleness." "Righteousness" has to do with conduct, and Paul, at the end of his life in 2 Timothy 4:8, says: "in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and

not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing" (NASB). "Godliness" has to do with character. This is the evidence of the Spirit's work in the inner man. Godliness is a manifestation of the fruit of the Spirit. As for faithfulness, the statement that all of us will long to hear on that glorious day of examination is "well done good and faithful servant." The fourth word is "love." Jesus said in the upper room in John 13:35: "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" (NASB). Paul's fifth word is "endurance." My mind returns to Romans 15:5: "Now may the God who gives perseverance and encouragement grant you to be of the same mind with one another according to Christ Jesus" (NASB). The sixth word is "gentleness." Ephesians 4:1-2: "I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, entreat you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing forbearance to one another in love" (NASB). Lord, the level of my pursuit toward Christlikeness is revealed through these six wonderful words. Lord, I am ready and available for You to do Your good work in my life to produce these qualities.

# November 12 — 1 Timothy 6:12

# Compete well for the faith and lay hold of that eternal life you were called for and made your good confession for in the presence of many witnesses.

Paul challenges Timothy to "Compete well for the faith." That reminds me of 1 Corinthians 9:24: "Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win" (NASB). Paul next tells Timothy to "lay hold of that eternal life you were called for." Later, in his second and final letter to Timothy, Paul writes, "But I have no regrets. I couldn't be more sure of my ground – the One I've trusted in can take care of what he's trusted me to do right to the end" (2 Timothy 1:12 MSG). In the final phrase of our verse today, Paul reminds Timothy of the fact that Timothy made a "good confession for [the faith] in the presence of many witnesses." My mind goes to Hebrews 12:1: "Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a huge crowd of witnesses to the life of faith, let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily hinders our progress. And let us run with endurance the race that God has set before

us" (NLT). Lord, my prayer for today is that I will "compete well," that I will "lay hold of" eternity, and that I will make a "good confession" of the faith which I have in the Lord Jesus Christ.

# **November 13 — 2 Timothy 2:3-4**

Take your share of suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No one in military service gets entangled in matters of everyday life; otherwise he will not please the one who recruited him.

These verses are a pair of jewels well worth memorizing. Paul tells Timothy: "Take your share of suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus." This reminds me of Ephesians 6:13: "Therefore take up the full armor of God, that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm" (NASB). Paul continues by saying: "No one in military service gets entangled in matters of everyday life." In the military, the mission consumes the man. There's no time for deviation or distractions. Duty demands this. Our verses conclude with the sobering phrase: "otherwise he will not please the one who recruited him." My mind turns toward many statements that are made by the Father about His Son, Jesus. Matthew 3:17: "and behold, a voice out of the heavens, saying, 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased'" (NASB). Pleasing Him must be our primary mission. Proverbs 16:7: "When a man's ways are pleasing to the LORD, he makes even his enemies live at peace with him" (NIV). 2 Corinthians 5:9: "Therefore also we have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him" (NASB). Ephesians 5:10: "trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord" (NASB). Ephesians 5:17: "So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is" (NASB). Lord, I want to be a good soldier, totally consumed with Your mission.

## November 14 — 2 Timothy 2:15

Make every effort to present yourself before God as a proven worker who does not need to be ashamed, teaching the message of truth accurately.

Paul challenges Timothy to make "every effort"—that is, to focus on the one thing: to run straight toward the goal with purpose in every step. Peterson paraphrases our verse for today beautifully: "Concentrate on doing your best for God, work you won't be ashamed of, laying out the truth plain and simple" (MSG). Timothy is to make "every effort" to "present [himself] before God as a proven worker." Paul writes in Philippians 3:13: "No, dear brothers and sisters, I am still not all I should be,

but I am focusing all my energies on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead" (NLT). Timothy is to be about the business of "teaching the message of truth accurately." Isaiah 50:7: "Because the Sovereign LORD helps me, I will not be dismayed. Therefore, I have set my face like a stone, determined to do his will. And I know that I will triumph" (NLT). Isaiah 50:4: "The Sovereign LORD has given me his words of wisdom, so that I know what to say to all these weary ones. Morning by morning he wakens me and opens my understanding to his will" (NLT). Lord, I want to be known as a man who has studied the word, who understands the word, and who communicates it effectively to others.

# **November 15 — 2 Timothy 3:16-17**

Every scripture is inspired by God and useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the person dedicated to God may be capable and equipped for every good work.

Paul tells Timothy two things about God's word: (1) "Every scripture is inspired by God" – that is, it is God-breathed; and (2) "Every scripture is... useful." Peterson paraphrases 2 Peter 1:20-21: "The main thing to keep in mind here is that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of private opinion. And why? Because it's not something concocted in the human heart. Prophecy resulted when the Holy Spirit prompted men and women to speak God's Word" (MSG). Every scripture is not only inspired but it is also useful for a number of things. Paul lists four uses of scripture in these verses: (1) "for teaching"; (2) "for reproof"; (3) "for correction"; (4) "for training in righteousness." Paul concludes these verses with a statement of God's purpose in providing His word: "that the person dedicated to God may be capable and equipped for every good work." I would join the psalmist in Psalm 119:37 asking You, Lord, to "Turn my eyes away from worthless things; renew my life according to your word" (NIV).

#### **November 16 — 2 Timothy 4:6-8**

For I am already being poured out as an offering, and the time for me to depart is at hand. I have competed well; I have finished the race; I have kept the faith! Finally the crown of righteousness is reserved for me. The Lord, the righteous Judge, will award it to me in that day – and not to me only, but also to all who have set their affection on his appearing.

These three verses are Paul's swan song. They are the statement of his fantastic finish for the glory of God. Paul is writing young Timothy from a prison cell in Rome. He knows the time of his death is very near, and he says: "For I am already being poured out as an offering, and the time for me to depart is at hand." As he looks back over his life he says three things: (1) "I have competed well"; (2) "I have finished the race"; (3) "I have kept the faith!" In our final verse this morning he looks to the future: "Finally the crown of righteousness is reserved for me. The Lord, the righteous Judge, will award it to me in that day – and not to me only, but also to all who have set their affection on his appearing." Peterson in *The Message* paraphrases Philippians 3:13-14: "I've got my eye on the goal, where God is beckoning us onward—to Jesus. I'm off and running, and I'm not turning back" (MSG). Lord, my prayer this day is that when it comes time to terminate assignments down here, may I make a strong finish for Your glory and honor!

#### **November 17 — Titus 2:12-13**

It trains us to reject godless ways and worldly desires and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, as we wait for the happy fulfillment of our hope in the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Our verses for these next three days come from the wonderful little book of Titus, the pastor on the island of Crete to whom Paul writes. Paul has announced to Titus in verse 11, just preceding our selection for today: "For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men" (NASB). Paul then says that the grace of God "trains us" to "reject godless ways and worldly desires." God's grace further trains us to live "self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age." Finally, God's grace enables us to "wait for the happy fulfillment of our hope in the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ." To reject, to live, and to wait. That's an assignment I can live with for today! This reminds me of the Phillips paraphrase of Romans 12:2: "Don't let the world around you squeeze you into its own mould, but let God re-mould your minds from within, so that you may prove in practice that the plan of God for you is good, meets all his demands and moves towards the goal of true maturity."

## November 18 — Titus 3:5

He saved us not by works of righteousness that we have done but on the basis of his mercy, through the washing of the new birth and the renewing of the Holy Spirit.

This verse is the heart of the gospel. It's a good one to memorize and use when you are presenting God's plan of salvation to others. Paul employs a negative and a positive here. God saves us, negatively, "not by works of righteousness that we have done," but in contrast, positively, "on the basis of his mercy, through the washing of the new birth and the renewing of the Holy Spirit." Isaiah 64:6: "We are all infected and impure with sin. When we proudly display our righteous deeds, we find they are but filthy rags. Like autumn leaves, we wither and fall. And our sins, like the wind, sweep us away" (NLT). Yes, God is merciful to the sinner and extends grace to provide eternal salvation. Salvation in Christ is ours (1) "on the basis of his mercy"; (2) "through the washing of the new birth"; (3) "through... the renewing of the Holy Spirit." Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 5:17: "What this means is that those who become Christians become new persons. They are not the same anymore, for the old life is gone. A new life has begun!" (NLT).

# November 19 — Titus 3:8

This saying is trustworthy, and I want you to insist on such truths, so that those who have placed their faith in God may be intent on engaging in good works. These things are good and beneficial for all people.

Paul emphasizes the truth of his words with this opening statement: "This saying is trustworthy." He also tells Titus: "and I want you to insist on such truths." The reason for Paul's emphasis on accuracy is "so that those who have placed their faith in God may be intent on engaging in good works. These things are good and beneficial for all people." Paul told the Philippians: "work out your salvation with fear and trembling" (Philippians 2:12 NASB). He did not say "work for" but "work out." Paul tells the Ephesians: "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them" (Ephesians 2:10 NASB). Peter gives definition and focus to the areas of concern in 2 Peter 1:5-8, as Peterson's paraphrase so beautifully illumines: "So don't lose a minute in building on what you've been given, complementing your basic faith with good character, spiritual understanding, alert discipline, passionate patience, reverent wonder, warm friendliness, and generous love, each dimension fitting into and developing the others. With these qualities active and growing in your lives, no grass will

grow under your feet, no day will pass without its reward as you mature in your experience of our Master Jesus" (MSG).

#### November 20 — Philemon 1:4-5

# I always thank my God as I remember you in my prayers, because I hear of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints.

Our verses for the next two mornings will come from Paul's little "postcard," the book of Philemon. Paul is speaking about Philemon as he says, "I always thank my God as I remember you in my prayers." Philemon was probably a Christian businessman who lived in the Lycus Valley. Paul tells Philemon that there are two reasons why the apostle remembers him with prayerful gratitude. Paul has heard of Philemon's "faith in the Lord Jesus" and his "love for all the saints." Philemon is an example to us all. He is a man who has come to know Jesus by faith and he is demonstrating that faith on a daily basis with the fruit of the Spirit whose first manifestation in our lives is love. John, the apostle of love, in 1 John 4:7 says: "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and every one who loves is born of God and knows God" (NASB). 1 John 4:11: "Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another" (NASB). Lord, my prayer is that I might be motivated by the love produced by Your Spirit so that my life would flow into the lives of others, bringing help and peace.

#### November 21 — Philemon 1:11

# Who was formerly useless to you, but is now useful to you and me.

Our verse today needs a little explanation. Onesimus was a slave who had run away from Philemon. He had stolen some things and fled to Rome, where he ended up in a cell next to the apostle Paul. Paul had the privilege of leading Onesimus to Jesus Christ. This little postcard is a letter of recommendation for Onesimus, asking Philemon to receive this runaway slave. Paul describes Onesimus in our verse: "Who was formerly useless to you, but is now useful to you and me." Isn't the Lord wonderful in that He, by His mercy and grace, can take that which is useless and make it into something useful for His service? Paul writes the Ephesians: "But even though we were dead in our sins God, who is rich in mercy, because of the great love he had for us, gave us life together with Christ – it is, remember, by grace and not by achievement that you are saved – and has lifted us right

out of the old life to take our place with him in Christ in the Heavens. Thus he shows for all time the tremendous generosity of the grace and kindness he has expressed towards us in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 2:4-7). Paul writes Timothy in a last letter from prison in 2 Timothy 4:11: "Only Luke is with me. Pick up Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for service" (NASB). Remember, Mark had failed in ministry at one time, but it didn't end there. Now even the apostle Mark is useful to Paul for service. Lord, my prayer to You this morning is to ask You to throw me on the potter's wheel and make me into a vessel that is useful in Your service.

#### November 22 — Hebrews 4:12

For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any double-edged sword, piercing even to the point of dividing soul from spirit, and joints from marrow; it is able to judge the desires and thoughts of the heart.

The focus here is upon the word of God and what it is designed to do. The writer reveals five truths about the word of God. First, "the word of God is living" – it is alive. Secondly, it is "active" – it encourages, it exhorts, it comforts, it commands, it speaks to our hearts. It is not only "living" and "active" but it is "sharper than any double-edged sword." Additionally, God's word is "piercing even to the point of dividing soul and spirit, and joints from marrow." When Peter proclaims his message at Pentecost, his listeners respond as Acts 2:37 reveals, "Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, 'Brethren, what shall we do?"" (NASB). As our verse from Hebrews clarifies, the word is "able to judge the desires and thoughts of the heart." My mind turns to Acts 8:18-21: "Now when Simon saw that the Spirit was bestowed through the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money, saying, 'Give this authority to me as well, so that everyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit.' But Peter said to him, 'May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money! You have no part or portion in this matter, for your heart is not right before God'" (NASB). Lord, use Your word in my life this day to correct, to convict, to chasten, and to comfort as You see fit!

#### **November 23 — Hebrews 4:14-16**

Therefore since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast to our confession. For we do not have a high priest incapable of

# sympathizing with our weaknesses, but one who has been tempted in every way just as we are, yet without sin. Therefore let us confidently approach the throne of grace to receive mercy and find grace whenever we need help.

These wonderful verses are rich with divine truth. "Therefore since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God." Yes, what a prize we have in our mediator, our go-between, our advocate who represents us before the throne of God. What are we supposed to do in view of this great gift that we have been given through our salvation? "Let us hold fast to our confession." Don't let pressure, persecution, or personal problems cause you to deviate from your loyalty and commitment to Jesus Christ. Why? Jesus understands: "For we do not have a high priest incapable of sympathizing with our weaknesses, but [we have] one who has been tempted in every way just as we are, yet without sin." He qualifies because He can have audience with a holy God, our Father in heaven, because He is "without sin." Our verses conclude with a recommendation: "Therefore let us confidently approach the throne of grace." We come to (1) "receive mercy" and (2) "find grace whenever we need help." O what joy as I find myself singing: "Jesus, I am resting, resting, In the joy of what Thou art; I am finding out the greatness Of Thy loving heart. Thou hast bid me gaze upon Thee, And Thy beauty fills my soul, For by Thy transforming power, Thou hast made me whole."

# November 24 — Hebrews 7:25

# So he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them.

This verse offers comfort, security, stability, and assurance. Christ's priesthood is an eternal one and it will never change or cease to exist. So the writer celebrates the fact that Jesus "is able to save completely those who come to God through him." Paul agrees, as he writes in 1 Timothy 2:5: "For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (NASB). Jesus acknowledges this, too, in the upper room in John 14:6: "Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me" (NASB). Our verse concludes with a reason: "because he always lives to intercede for them." Jesus, our high priest, is on duty 24/7. He is continually maintaining our relationship with the Holy God by dealing with our sins

that occur on a daily basis. My mind turns in great appreciation to 1 John 1:9: "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (NASB).

#### November 25 — Hebrews 12:1-2

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, we must get rid of every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and run with endurance the race set out for us, keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith. For the joy set out for him he endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God.

Before this verse, the writer has just completed his enumeration of the majestic hall of faith in Hebrews 11, offering powerful testimony of the great heroes of the faith. These men and women did it, and we can, too, because God is faithful. Because of this "great cloud of witnesses," there are four things we must do: (1) "get rid of every weight"; (2) "get rid of...the sin that clings so closely"; (3) "run with endurance [perseverance] the race set out for us"; (4) "keeping our fixed on Jesus." Why Jesus? He is "the pioneer and perfecter of our faith." He "for the joy set out for him he endured the cross." He disregarded "its shame." He "has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God." Lord, Your race has been run. The work has been done. You wait at the right hand of the Father, interceding for us, waiting for us to make it home.

## November 26 — James 1:5

But if anyone is deficient in wisdom, he should ask God, who gives to all generously and without reprimand, and it will be given to him.

James, in the opening verses of this epistle, writes, "Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials; knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance [perseverance]" (James 1:2-3 NASB). But what if you are "deficient in wisdom"? In other words, what if you don't understand what God is doing in your life and why He is doing it? James invites us to ask God when we are "deficient in wisdom." He is a God "who gives to all generously," and He won't "reprimand" us. For he who asks for wisdom in faith, "it will be given to him." Proverbs 9:10: "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding" (NIV). Paul tells Timothy that there is a wisdom from the word as well: "and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through

faith which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 3:15 NASB). Proverbs 3:5-7: "Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight. Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD and shun evil" (NIV).

**November 27 — James 3:14-16** 

But if you have bitter jealousy and selfishness in your hearts, do not boast and tell lies against the truth. Such wisdom does not come from above but is earthly, natural, demonic. For where there is jealousy and selfishness, there is disorder and every evil practice.

In James 3, James contrasts the wisdom which comes from below with the wisdom which comes from above. In our verses for today, we examine this false wisdom which comes from the pit, originating with Satan himself. James begins by revealing the things in our hearts that can create a destructive lifestyle: (1) "bitter jealousy" and (2) "selfishness in your hearts." Such things motivate men to "boast and tell lies against the truth." Paul tells the Ephesians in Ephesians 4:31: "Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice" (NASB). Ephesians 4:25:"Therefore, laying aside falsehood, speak truth, each one of you, with his neighbor, for we are members of one another" (NASB). James pronounces his verdict on this kind of activity: "Such wisdom does not come from above." It is (1) "earthly"; (2) "natural"; (3) "demonic." He concludes with the reason for his verdict: "For where there is jealousy and selfishness, there is disorder and every evil practice." Proverbs 4:23-27: "Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life... Let your eyes look straight ahead, fix your gaze directly before you. Make level paths for your feet and take only ways that are firm. Do not swerve to the right or the left; keep your foot from evil" (NIV).

November 28 — James 3:17

But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, accommodating, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial, and not hypocritical.

Our verse for today is in contrast to the verses of yesterday. Whereas we spoke of the wisdom which is below, now we speak of the wisdom which is from above. James characterizes this wisdom which is from above in eight ways. It is (1) "pure"; (2) "peaceable"; (3) "gentle"; (4) "accommodating"; (5) "full of mercy"; (6) "full of...good fruit"; (7) "impartial"; (8) "not hypocritical." The wisdom from

above is "pure" in the sense that there are no hidden agendas. It is "peaceable" – "the work of righteousness shall be peace" (Isaiah 32:17 KJV). It is "gentle" in that it is not necessary to prove a point. It is "accommodating" – not about winning and losing but about yielding. It is "full of mercy" – forgiving by nature. It is "full of...good fruit" – the fruit of the Spirit. It is "impartial" – in that it does not make distinctions. It is "not hypocritical" – it is honest through and through. Proverbs 4:18: "The path of the righteous is like the first gleam of dawn, shining ever brighter till the full light of day" (NIV).

# November 29 — 1 Peter 1:6-7

This brings you great joy, although you may have to suffer for a short time in various trials. Such trials show the proven character of your faith, which is much more valuable than gold – gold that is tested by fire, even though it is passing away – and will bring praise and glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.

Peter speaks to us this morning. In his first epistle he deals with the suffering saint. Peter had just finished writing in 1 Peter 1:5 of those: "who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" (NASB). This truth "brings you great joy, although [in the midst of it] you may have to suffer for a short time in various trials." Yes, God does test His own. Peter goes on to say: "Such trials show the proven character of your faith." Job 23:10: "But he knows the way that I take; when he has tested me, I shall come forth as gold" (NIV). Peter says of our faith "which is much more valuable than gold – gold that is tested by fire, even though it is passing away – and will bring praise and glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed." Paul tells the Romans in Romans 8:18: "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us" (NASB).

## November 30 — 1 Peter 2:20-21

For what credit is it if you sin and are mistreated and endure it? But if you do good and suffer and so endure, this finds favor with God. For to this you were called, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving an example for you to follow in his steps.

Our verses today begin with a question: "For what credit is it if you sin and are mistreated and

endure it?" David in Psalm 32 describes the consequence of sin: "When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer" (Psalm 32:3-4 NIV). Peter suggests that when we just receive the normal consequences of sin and disobedience, there is no credit for enduring that. "But [in contrast] if you do good and suffer and so endure, this finds favor with God." Jesus speaks of this very issue in the sermon on the mount, Matthew 5:10-12: "Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when men revile you, and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely, on account of Me. Rejoice, and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you" (NASB). Peter gives the reason for the suffering of the saints: "For to this you were called, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving an example for you to follow in his steps." Peterson paraphrases this last verse beautifully in *The Message*: "This is the kind of life you've been invited into, the kind of life Christ lived. He suffered everything that came his way so you would know that it could be done, and also know how to do it, step-by-step." I find myself singing the last verse of "Footprints of Jesus": "Then at last when on high He sees us, Our journey done, We will rest where the steps of Jesus End at His throne. Footprints of Jesus, That make the pathway glow; We will follow the steps of Jesus Where'er they go."

## **DECEMBER**

December 1 — 1 Peter 4:12-13

Dear friends, do not be astonished that a trial by fire is occurring among you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice in the degree that you have shared in the sufferings of Christ, so that when his glory is revealed you may also rejoice and be glad. Peter challenges us with the fact that Christian people do suffer as a part of the plan of God. "Dear friends, do not be astonished that a trial by fire is occurring among you, as though something strange were happening to you." Such adversity is just a part of God's plan to make us more like Christ. We are not to "be astonished." In contrast, we are to "rejoice in the degree that you have shared in the sufferings of Christ, so that when his glory is revealed you may also rejoice and be glad." Peter says later in the chapter in verse 16: "but if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not feel ashamed, but in

that name let him glorify God" (NASB). He concludes the chapter by saying: "Therefore, let those also who suffer according to the will of God entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in dong what is right" (1 Peter 4:19 NASB). I find myself singing verse 3 of "Day by Day": "Help me then, in every tribulation, So to trust Thy promises, O Lord, That I lose not faith's sweet consolation, Offered me within Thy holy Word. Help me, Lord, when toil and trouble meeting, E'er to take, as from a father's hand, One by one, the days, the moments fleeting, Till I reach the promised land."

For if these things are really yours and are continually increasing, they will keep you from becoming ineffective and unproductive in your pursuit of knowing our Lord Jesus Christ more intimately.

Peter has just given a list of things requiring our attention as part of our maturation as Christians. If these "things" are "really" ours and are "continually increasing," they will keep us effective and productive in our pursuit of "knowing our Lord Jesus Christ more intimately." Since the longing of our hearts is to know Him more intimately, let's meditate upon the things that Peter underscores, beginning with 2 Peter 1:5: "Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge; and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness; and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, Christian love" (2 Peter 1:5-7 NASB). Lord, I am reminded of Jesus' words in John 15:4: "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you, unless you abide in Me" (NASB). Lord, I want You to be glorified in bearing much fruit through my life and witness for You.

#### December 3 — 2 Peter 1:10-11

December 2 — 2 Peter 1:8

Therefore, brothers and sisters, make every effort to be sure of your calling and election. For by doing this you will never stumble into sin. For thus an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, will be richly provided for you.

These two verses involve family talk: "Therefore, brothers and sisters." Peter then challenges his brothers and sisters in Christ to "make every effort to be sure of your calling and election." Paul did

the same thing with the Corinthians: "Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you – unless indeed you fail the test?" (2 Corinthians 13:5 NASB). Peter states the reason he admonishes his Christian "family" to be sure of their calling: "For by doing this you will never stumble into sin. For thus an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, will be richly provided for you." Romans 8:29-30: "For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren; and whom He predestined, these He also called; and whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these he also glorified" (NASB).

## December 4 — 2 Peter 3:18

# But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the honor both now and on that eternal day.

This verse marks Peter's final contribution to the divine record. What a wonderful challenge! "But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." In his first epistle, Peter gives us the prescription for Christian growth in 1 Peter 2:2: "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby" (KJV). Paul agrees with Peter, as we see in Philippians 3:13-14: "No, dear brothers and sisters, I am still not all I should be, but I am focusing all my energies on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead, I strain to reach the end of the race and receive the prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us up to heaven" (NLT). For a vision of "that eternal day," let's turn to the words of the apostle John in Revelation 19:6-7: "And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude and as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty peals of thunder, saying, 'Hallelujah! For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready" (NASB).

## **December 5 — 1 John 1:3-4**

What we have seen and heard we announce to you too, so that you may have fellowship with us (and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ). Thus we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete.

The apostle John deals with the subject of fellowship with the Father. John writes as an eyewitness: "What we have seen and heard we announce to you too." The reason he does so is "so that you may have fellowship with us (and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ)." John is concerned about fellowship in the vertical relationship with the Father, and also fellowship in horizontal relationships with other brothers and sisters. He concludes by saying: "Thus we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete." My mind goes back to 1 Peter 1:8: "and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory" (NASB). Dear Lord, no greater joy is possible than when our vertical and horizontal relationships are right before You!

## December 6 — 1 John 1:9

# But if we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous, forgiving us our sins and cleansing us from all unrighteousness.

This verse is another excellent one to memorize. When we sin after becoming believers, it is necessary for us to dial 1 John 1:9: "But if we confess our sins" – that is to say the same things that God says about our sins, He indeed is going to respond. We must know that the Lord is (1) "faithful"; (2) "righteous"; (3) forgiving us our sins"; and (4) "cleansing us from all unrighteousness." Psalm 130:3-4: "If you, O LORD, kept a record of sins, O Lord, who could stand? But with you there is forgiveness; therefore you are feared" (NIV). Psalm 32:2: "Blessed is the man whose sin the LORD does not count against him and in whose spirit is no deceit" (NIV). Psalm 51:2: "Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin" (NIV). Psalm 51:6: "Surely you desire truth in the inner parts; you teach me wisdom in the inmost place" (NIV). John 8:10,11: "And straightening up, Jesus said to her, 'Woman, where are they? Did no one condemn you?'And she said, 'No one, Lord.'And Jesus said, 'Neither do I condemn you; go your way; for now on sin no more" (NASB). Isaiah 43:25: "I, even I, am he who blots out your transgressions, for my own sake, and remembers your sins no more" (NIV).

#### **December 7 — 1 John 2:1-2**

(My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin.) But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous One, and he himself is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for our sins but also for the whole world.

These verses illustrate John's deep concern about what sin does to our fellowship with the Father. "My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin." When sin does occur, "we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous One." Isn't it wonderful to know that we have a representative in heaven who pleads our case 24 hours a day, representing us in our failure and sin? We are deeply indebted to our precious savior. John concludes by saying: "and he himself is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for our sins but also for the whole world." My thoughts turn to Hebrews 10:12: "but He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, sat down at the right hand of God" (NASB). I find myself singing again this morning: "O the love that drew salvation's plan! O the grace that brought it down to man! O the mighty gulf that God did span At Calvary! Mercy there was great, and grace was free; Pardon there was multiplied to me; There my burdened soul found liberty at Calvary."

## **December 8 — 1 John 3:2-3**

Dear friends, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet been revealed. We know that whenever it is revealed we will be like him, because we will see him just as he is. And everyone who has this hope focused on him purifies himself, just as Jesus is pure).

These are rich and wonderful verse! "Dear friends, we are God's children now." John 1:12: "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name" (NASB). "And what we will be has not yet been revealed." There are many details about our future residence in heaven yet to be revealed. John continues by saying: "We know that whenever it is revealed we will be like him." The reason for this is "because we will see him just as he is." The curse will be lifted; all of our sinful past will be cast away along with the nature that produced it, and "we will see him just as he is." John concludes by saying: "And everyone who has this hope focused on him purifies himself, just as Jesus is pure." Jesus said in the sermon on the mount in Matthew 5:8: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God" (NASB). Paul tells Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:22: "Now flee from youthful lusts, and pursue after righteousness, faith, love and peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart" (NASB). Lord, I'm looking

forward with great anticipation to that glorious day when we will instantaneously be made like You and will enjoy the glories of heaven throughout eternity.

## **December 9 — 1 John 4:16**

And we have come to know and to believe the love that God has in us. God is love, and the one who resides in love resides in God, and God resides in him.

The apostle of love spells out love in the verse for this morning. John

15:13: "Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends" (NASB). Romans 5:8: "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (NASB). John says, "God is love." He concludes the verse by saying: "and the one who resides in love resides in God, and God resides in him." John 13:34, 35: "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" (NASB). Lord, I realize how important and necessary it is for Your love not only to be received in our hearts but also to flow through our hearts and lives into the lives of others.

#### December 10 — 1 John 5:11-12

And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. The one who has the Son has this eternal life; the one who does not have the Son of God does not have this eternal life.

These two verses are among the best to use with people who are trying to locate themselves in their relationship to the Lord. John states clearly, "And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son." This eternal life does not reside in ordinances, church membership, sacrificial giving, or good works. It is life "in his Son." As the last portion of this passage reveals, with John there are no gray areas. Either we know Him or we don't know Him. "The one who has the Son has this eternal life, the one who does not have the Son of God does not have this eternal life." Yes, Jesus is the way the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father but by Him. John 3:36 affirms this truth: "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him" (NASB). It wouldn't be a bad idea for each of us to stop and affirm with the Father the fact that we have placed our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Lord does live in our hearts and we are looking forward to the time that we meet Jesus face to face in glory.

December 11 — 1 John 5:14-15

And this is the confidence that we have before him: that whenever we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us in regard to whatever we ask, then we know that we have the requests that we have asked from him.

Only one verse separates today's selection from yesterday's. Let's look at Peterson's paraphrase of 1 John 5:13-15: "My purpose in writing is simply this: that you who believe in God's Son will know beyond the shadow of a doubt that you have eternal life, the reality and not the illusion. And how bold and free we then become in his presence, freely asking according to his will, sure that he's listening. And if we're confident that he's listening, we know that what we've asked for is as good as ours" (MSG). When we are born again by the Spirit, we are born into God's family and we become His sons and daughters. With that privilege also comes access into His very presence. The writer of the book of Hebrews describes it for us in Hebrews 10:19-20: "And so, dear brothers and sisters, we can boldly enter heaven's Most Holy Place because of the blood of Jesus. This is the new, life-giving way that Christ has opened up for us through the sacred curtain, by means of his death for us" (NLT). Romans 8:16: "The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God" (NASB). Our verses today then take on real meaning: "And this is the confidence that we have before him: that whenever we ask anything according to his will, he hears us." Out of our relationship with Jesus comes access into the Father's presence to present our petitions before Him. If these petitions are "according to his will, he hears us." John concludes: "And if we know that he hears us in regard to whatever we ask, then we know that we have the requests that we have asked from him." Now that you understand this, why don't you join me in a verse of "What a Friend We Have in Jesus"? "What a Friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear! What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer! O what peace we often forfeit, O what needless pain we bear, All because we do not carry everything to God in prayer."

December 12 — 2 John 1:1-2

From the elder, to an elect lady and her children, whom I love in truth (and not I alone, but

# also all those who know the truth), because of the truth that resides in us and will be with us forever.

The brief epistle of 2 John is only 13 verses long. Today we read, "For the elder, to an elect lady and her children." John, I'm sure, is using veiled language to protect the church from persecution. Peterson paraphrases verses 1 and 2: "My dear congregation, I, your pastor, love you in very truth. And I'm not alone – everyone who knows the Truth that has taken up permanent residence in us loves you" (MSG). John continues to say: "and not I alone, but also all those who know the truth." John says the reason for this love is the truth: "because of the truth that resides in us and will be with us forever." 1 John 3:18-19: "Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth. We shall know by this that we are of the truth, and shall assure our heart before Him" (NASB). 1 Peter 1:22: "Since you have an obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart" (NASB). 2 Timothy 2:15: "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth" (NASB). In John 17:17, Jesus prays these words in Gethsemane: "Sanctify them in the truth; Thy word is truth" (NASB). Jesus also said in John 8:32: "and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (NASB).

#### December 13 — 2 John 1:4

# I rejoiced greatly because I have found some of your children living according to the truth, just as the Father commanded us.

John begins with a show of emotion – his is a do-a-twirl and kick up your heels kind of joy! John gives us the reason for this response: "because I have found some of your children living according to the truth." John isn't sugar coating things or exaggerating. He says that there are some that are "living according to the truth," which also implies that there are some who are not. John has chosen to be rejoicing over those who have embraced the truth rather than wallowing in sadness over those who have not. John 16:13 records Jesus' comments to His disciples on that night before the cross: "But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak of His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come" (NASB). "Living according to the truth" means being deeply concerned about being obedient to that which the Lord has commanded. John 14:21: "He who has My commandments, and keeps them, he it is who loves me; and he who loves me shall be loved by My Father, and I will love him

, and will disclose Myself to him" (NASB). With careful obedience comes greater revelation and affirmation from the Lord. Exodus 40:32: "They washed whenever they entered the Tent of Meeting or approached the altar, as the LORD commanded Moses" (NIV). Exodus 40:34-35: "Then the cloud covered the Tent of Meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. Moses could not enter the Tent of Meeting because the cloud had settled upon it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle" (NIV).

#### **December 14 — 3 John 1:2**

# Dear friend, I pray that all may go well with you and that you may be in good health, just as it is well with your soul.

This epistle, 3 John, is the final of the apostle's little postcards. It is only fourteen verses long, but what a rich and wonderful verse emerges for our meditation. John addresses Gaius, whom he loves "in truth." He wants to tell Gaius that he's praying for him, and the remainder of the verse is that prayer. "I pray that all may go well with you and that you may be in good health, just as it is well with your soul." When loving God is your number one priority and you daily give the Father an obedient heart, it indeed will "go well with you." Paul affirms this in Romans 8:28: "And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose" (NASB). John's second request is "and that you may be in good health." Physical health seems to be intimately related to spiritual health. David confesses in Psalm 32:3-4: "When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer" (NIV). John concludes in our verse: "just as it is well with your soul." John affirms Gaius in his relationship with Christ. I am reminded of the words often stated by our sweet daughter Becky who, in the throes of diabetes, would say: "It is not all right with my body but it is well with my soul." Will you join me this morning in singing a verse of that great old hymn "It Is Well with My Soul"? "My sin, oh, the bliss of this glorious thought! My sin, not in part but the whole, Is nailed to the cross, and I bear it no more, Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul! It is well, with my soul, It is well, with my soul, It is well, it is well, with my soul."

#### **December 15 — 3 John 1:9**

# I wrote something to the church, but Diotrephes, who loves to be first among them, does not acknowledge us.

Here John, the apostle of love, has to write about a disorderly dipstick named Diotrephes. John says: "I wrote something to the church, but Diotrephes, who loves to be first among them, does not acknowledge us." Let's think a little bit this morning of what pride has done to so many biblical characters. Miriam and Aaron began to talk against Moses. Miriam was stricken with leprosy and we hear the cry of Aaron: "Please, my lord, do not hold against us the sin we have so foolishly committed" (Numbers 12:11 NIV). Korah, Dathan, Abiram, and On rebelled against Moses' leadership: "the ground under them split apart and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them, with their households and all Korah's men and all their possessions. They went down alive into the grave, with everything they owned" (Numbers 16:31-33 NIV). Saul took up the mantle of the priesthood and offered the sacrifice before Samuel arrived, and Saul lost his kingdom. The children of Israel refused to believe that the Lord was going to give them the land of Canaan and spent 40 years wandering in the wilderness. That generation lost the chance to receive what God had promised them. In view of all this, I find myself singing to the Lord this morning: "Have Thine own way, Lord! Have Thine own way! Thou art the Potter, I am the clay. Mold me and make me after Thy will, While I am waiting, yielded and still."

#### December 16 — 3 John 1:11

## Dear friend, do not imitate what is bad but what is good. The one who does good is of God; the one who does what is bad has not seen God.

In this verse, John is still writing to Gaius and he has completed the thoughts about Diotrephes discussed yesterday. Now he says to Gaius: "Dear friend, do not imitate what is bad but what is good. The one who does good is of God, the one who does what is bad has not seen God." The New Living Bible paraphrases this verse: "Dear friend, don't let this bad example influence you. Follow only what is good. Remember that those who do good prove that they are God's children, and those who do evil prove that they do not know God." Jesus, in the sermon on the mount in Matthew 7, repeats the same phrase twice. Matthew 7:16: "You will know them by their fruits" (NASB). Matthew 7:20: "So then, you will know them by their fruits" (NASB). Christ said earlier in the passage in Matthew 7:13-14: "Enter by the narrow gate; for the gate is wide, and the way is broad

that leads to destruction, and many are those who enter by it. For the gate is small, and the way is narrow that leads to life, and few are those who find it" (NASB). Paul writes in Philippians 3:17-20: "Brethren, join in following my example, and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us. For many walk, of whom I often told you, and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, whose god is their appetite, and whose glory is in their shame, who set their minds on earthly things. For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ" (NASB).

### **December 17 — Jude 1:17**

But you, dear friends – recall the predictions foretold by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ. These next four mornings we are going to have the privilege of looking at some verses in the little book of Jude, which is only 25 verses long. Jude says in our verse today: "But you, dear friends – recall the predictions foretold by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ." Peter writes in 2 Peter 1:19: "And so we have the prophetic word made more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts" (NASB). James 5:8: "You too be patient; strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand" (NASB). John the apostle on the Isle of Patmos records this observation in Revelation 21:4: "and He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there shall no longer be any death; there shall no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain: the first things have passed away" (NASB). Revelation 22:7: "And behold, I am coming quickly. Blessed is he who heeds the words of the prophecy of this book" (NASB). Paul writes in 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17: "For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and thus we shall always be with the Lord" (NASB). Yes Jude, we thank you for this reminder. The words of John in 1 John 3:3 motivate us this day: "And every one who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure" (NASB).

#### **December 18 — Jude 1:20**

## But you, dear friends, be building yourselves up in your most holy faith, by praying in the Holy Spirit.

We return to the little epistle of Jude for some further meditation. Yesterday Jude admonished us to "recall the predictions," and today he says: "But you, dear friends, be building yourselves up in your most holy faith." Paul tells the Colossians how to do just that in Colossians 2:6-7: "As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, having been firmly rooted and now being built up in Him and established in your faith, just as you were instructed, and overflowing with gratitude" (NASB). The two tools used by the Spirit of God for our edification are the written word and the living word. The living word is Jesus Christ. We are to know Him more and more intimately. The written word is given to us to study and to obey. Paul tells us we have the indwelling Holy Spirit to enable us to frame our petitions in such a way that they are glorifying to God and are in line with His purposes and plan – that they might be answered in the affirmative. Romans 8:26-27: "And in the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words; and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God" (NASB). Paul tells the Ephesians: "So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord" (Ephesians 5:17-19 NASB).

#### **December 19 — Jude 1:22-2**3

And have mercy on those who waver; save others by snatching them out of the fire; have mercy on others, coupled with a fear of God, hating even the clothes stained by the flesh. Jude is passionate about our living faithfully for the glory of God in the days of apostasy. In verses 20-23 he lists seven things that we must be about. In our verse yesterday he admonished us to be (1) "building yourselves up on your most holy faith" and (2) praying in the Holy Spirit." In verse 21 he gives us two more instructions: (3) "keep yourselves in the love of God" and be (4) "expectantly looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life." Now we come to the two verses for today, where Jude exhorts us to (5) "have mercy on those who waver" or are doubting. In verse 23,

he tell us to (6) "save others by snatching them out of the fire" and to (7) "have mercy on others, coupled with a fear of God, hating even the clothes stained by the flesh." Paul warns Timothy in 2 Timothy 3:12: "And indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted" (NASB). Lord, help me to follow in the steps of the apostle Paul as recorded in 2 Timothy 4:16-17: "At my first defense no one supported me, but all deserted me; may it not be counted against them. But the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me, in order that through me the proclamation might be fully accomplished, and that all the Gentiles might hear; and I was delivered out of the lion's mouth" (NASB).

#### **December 20 — Jude 1:24-25**

Now to the one who is able to keep you from falling, and to cause you to stand, rejoicing, without blemish before his glorious presence, to the only God our Savior through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, power, and authority, before all time, and now, and for all eternity. Amen.

These two wonderful verses provide a glorious benediction. Jude says two things in verse 24: (1) "Now to the one who is able to keep you from falling" – He will be there to strengthen and sustain in the hour of our need; (2) "and to cause you to stand, rejoicing without blemish before his glorious presence." Ephesians 5:26-27: "that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she should be holy and blameless" (NASB). Jude in verse 25 pays tribute "to the only God our Savior through Jesus Christ our Lord." His tribute to the Lord is four-fold, involving (1) "glory"; (2) "majesty"; (3) "power"; (4) "authority." "Before all time, and now, and for all eternity. Amen." Lord, this day I would request of You that I might be a recipient of Your power, Your presence, and Your peace as I endeavor to glorify Your Son on this day.

### **December 21** — Revelation 1:7

(Look! He is returning with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, and all the tribes on the earth will mourn because of him. This will certainly come to pass! Amen.)

What a verse of promise and hope comes before us this December morning! "Look! He is returning with the clouds." John is speaking of Jesus Christ the Messiah when He returns a second time to set

up His kingdom. "And every eye will see him, even those who pierced him." Zechariah predicted this piercing over 400 years before it ever happened on Calvary's cross. Zechariah 12:10: "Then I will pour out a spirit of grace and prayer on the family of David and on all the people of Jerusalem. They will look on me whom they have pierced and mourn for him as for an only son. They will grieve bitterly for him as for a firstborn son who has died" (NLT). In our verse for this morning, John says "and all the tribes on the earth will mourn because of him." The verse concludes with this final affirmation: "This will certainly come to pass! Amen." John, in Revelation 19, likewise records this event: "Then I saw heaven opened, and a white horse was standing there. And the one sitting on the horse was named Faithful and True. For he judges fairly and then goes to war" (19:11 NLT). Revelation 19:16: "On his robe and thigh was written this title: King of kings and Lord of lords" (NLT). My heart wells up in song as I sing the final stanza of "It Is Well With My Soul": "And Lord, haste the day when my faith shall be sight, The clouds be rolled back as a scroll; The trump shall resound, and the Lord shall descend, Even so, it is well with my soul."

### **December 22** — Revelation 2:4

### But I have this against you: You have departed from your first love!

Our verse for today is part of a letter from the Lord Jesus to the church at Ephesus. The Lord says: "But I have this against you [the church at Ephesus]." The charge: "You have departed from your first love!" To have "departed from [our] first love" indicates that we have found something sufficient to steal our hearts from that "first love." Paul writes in 2 Timothy 4:10: "for Demas, having loved this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica" (NASB). Many a marriage has been destroyed because one of the partners has proven unfaithful and found another love. Jesus, in the Sermon on the Mount, says in Matthew 6:21: "for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (NASB). The Lord also says in Matthew 6:24: "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will hold to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and Mammon" (NASB). This solution that Jesus offers is in Matthew 6:33: "But seek first His kingdom, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added to you" (NASB). Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 13:13: "But now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the

greatest of these is love" (NASB).

### December 23 — Revelation 3:11

## I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have so that no one can take away your crown.

This verse comes from the Lord Jesus' letter to the church at Philadelphia. Jesus says to this church: "I am coming soon." The final chapter of the book of Revelation and the next to last verse, Revelation 22:20, says: "He who testifies to these things says, 'Yes, I am coming quickly.'Amen. Come, Lord Jesus" (NASB). The Lord says, in view of this, "Hold on to what you have so that no one can take away your crown." Paul tells Timothy that because Paul has finished well, "in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing" (2 Timothy 4:8 NASB). The key to fulfilling this mandate is to be daily denying ourselves and taking up our cross and following in the steps of the Lord Jesus Christ. Lord, I pray that I will finish well, finish on task, finish on track, and bring glory and honor to Your name.

#### December 24 — Revelation 3:15-16

I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either cold or hot! So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I am going to vomit you out of my mouth! These two verses come from the Lord's seventh and final letter in the Revelation, addressed to the church at Laodicea. The Lord begins by saying: "I know your deeds." Because He knows everything, He legitimately makes this claim. Then He begins to outline what he knows: "that you are neither cold nor hot." The Lord says, "I wish you were either cold or hot! So because you are lukewarm [somewhere in the middle] and neither hot nor cold, I am going to vomit you out of my mouth!" This spiritual lukewarmness makes the Lord sick and He wants to throw up. Zephaniah 3:17 on the other hand reveals our potential to make the Lord sing: "The LORD your God is with you, he is mighty to save. He will take great delight in you, he will quiet you with his love, he will rejoice over you with singing" (NIV). The key to getting back on track is to clear out the clutter, rearrange your priorities, put the Lord first, and be passionate about your service for Him.

#### December 25 — Revelation 3:20

# Listen! I am standing at the door and knocking! If anyone hears my voice and opens the door I will come into his home and share a meal with him, and he with me.

What a great verse for Christmas morning! John 1:11 tells us that when Jesus came the first time: "He came unto his own, and his own received him not" (KJV). There was no room for Him in the inn. Our verse for today is a condemnation of the members of the church at Laodicea who, through their lukewarmness, have literally pushed the Lord out from His church. I love the way Peterson in *The Message* paraphrases this verse: "Look at me. I stand at the door. I knock. If you hear me call and open the door, I'll come right in and sit down to supper with you" (MSG). My hope is as you celebrate Christmas this year, you won't get caught up in tinsel and trees but will instead focus on the greatest gift and be thankful. As Paul puts it in 2 Corinthians 9:15: "Thank God for his Son – a gift too wonderful for words!" (NLT)

#### December 26 — Revelation 4:11

## You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, since you created all things, and because of your will they existed and were created!

The scene of today's verse is the throne room in heaven where there is a gigantic worship service going on. The four living creatures are bowing before the Lord and are saying: "HOLY, HOLY, HOLY, HOLY, is the Lord God, the Almighty, who was and who is and who is to come "(Revelation 4:8 NASB). They are joined with the 24 elders who fall down before Him "who sits on the throne" (Revelation 4:9 NASB). In our key verse today they express their worship by saying: "You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, since you created all things, and because of your will they existed and were created!" Lord,You alone are worthy! You are our Lord and God! You alone are worthy to receive (1) "glory"; (2) "honor"; (3) "power." The reason for this is that "you created all things." There is no question in heaven who is responsible for the creation of this world. "Because of your will they existed and were created!" John says it much the same way in his gospel in John 1:3: "All things came into being through Him; and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being" (NASB). Paul in his letter to the Colossians says: "For in Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or

dominions or rulers or authorities – all things have been created through Him and for Him" (Colossians 1:16 NASB). How about expressing your worship today with a verse from "Holy, Holy, Holy"? "Holy, holy, holy! All the saints adore Thee, Casting down their golden crowns around the glassy sea; Cherubim and seraphim falling down before Thee, Who was, and is, and evermore shall be."

#### **December 27 — Revelation 5:12**

## All of whom were singing in a loud voice: "Worthy is the lamb who was killed to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and praise!"

Our verse today records a heavenly vision of the Lord Jesus Christ being worshiped and praised by a massive choir! Revelation 5:11 sets the stage: "And I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne and the living creatures and the elders; and the number of them was myriads of myriads, and thousands of thousands" (NASB). Then comes our wonderful verse: "All of whom were singing in a loud voice: 'Worthy is the lamb who was killed to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and praise!" This has got to be better than the greatest rendition of the "Hallelujah Chorus"! In yesterday's verse we had "You are worthy," and now in today's verse we read, "Worthy is the lamb [the Lord Jesus Christ] who was killed to receive" seven gifts: (1) "power"; (2) "wealth"; (3) "wisdom"; (4) "might"; (5) "honor"; (6) "glory"; (7) "praise!" The great hymnbook of praise, the Psalms, ends with these words in Psalm 150:6: "Let everything that has breath praise the LORD. Praise the LORD" (NIV).

## **December 28 — Revelation 7:17**

# Because the Lamb in the middle of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to springs of living water, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."

The heavenly scene that is before us in Revelation 7 reveals a dramatic picture of a host of individuals who have come to know Jesus Christ. Revelation 7:14 records: "And I said to him, 'My lord, you know.' And he said to me, 'These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb'" (NASB). In 7:17, we read, "for the Lamb in the center of the throne [the Lord Jesus Christ] shall be their shepherd [that is of those who have given their lives specifically during this tribulation period] and [He] shall guide

them to springs of the water of life" (NASB). It reminds us of Psalm 23 as Peterson paraphrases the first verses: "GOD, my shepherd! I don't need a thing. You have bedded me down in lush meadows, you find me quiet pools to drink from" (Psalm 23:1-2 MSG). "And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes." In Psalm 30:5 we read: "weeping may remain for a night, but rejoicing comes in the morning" (NIV). The day of tears has passed and joy unspeakable full of glory has arrived on the scene!

### December 29 — Revelation 19:6

Then I heard what sounded like the voice of a vast throng, like the roar of many waters and like loud crashes of thunder. They were shouting: "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God, the All-Powerful, reigns!"

Our verse comes from Revelation 19. This is the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ to bring an end to the battle of Armageddon and to set up His promised eternal kingdom. "Then I heard what sounded like the voice of a vast throng." This voice sounded "like the roar of many waters and like loud crashes of thunder." It is greater than the roar of Niagara Falls. Greater than the worst thunder and lightning storm you've ever been through. "They were shouting: 'Hallelujah! For the Lord our God, the All-Powerful, reigns!'" How about joining with me in a loud rendition of "All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name"? "All hail the power of Jesus' Name! Let angels prostrate fall; Bring forth the royal diadem, and crown Him Lord of all. Bring forth the royal diadem, and crown Him Lord of all. O that, with yonder sacred throng, we at His feet may fall, Join in the everlasting song, and crown Him Lord of all!"

#### December 30 — Revelation 22:17

And the Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let the one who hears say: "Come!" And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wants it take the water of life free of charge.

This verse issues a final invitation for getting one's heart right with God before it is too late. In the background, imagine you hear the words: "Just as I am, without one plea, But that Thy blood was shed for me, And that Thou bidst me come to Thee, O Lamb of God, I come, I come." (1) "And the Spirit and the bride say, 'Come!'"; (2) "And let the one who hears say: 'Come!'"; (3) "And let the

one who is thirsty come"; (4) "let the one who wants it take the water of life free of charge." Paul says in 2 Corinthians 6:1-2: "As God's partners, we beg you not to reject this marvelous message of God's great kindness. For God says, 'At just the right time, I heard you. On the day of salvation, I helped you.' Indeed, God is ready to help you right now. Today is the day of salvation" (NLT). Join me in singing one more verse: "Just as I am, Thou wilt receive, Wilt welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve; Because Thy promise I believe, O Lamb of God, I come, I come."

#### December 31 — Revelation 22:20-21

The one who testifies to these things says, "Yes, I am coming soon!" Amen! Come, Lord Jesus! The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all.

These two verses we meditate upon this New Year's Eve morning are the last two verses in the book of Revelation and the whole Bible for that matter. John is speaking of Jesus here in the beginning of these verses: "The one who testifies to these things says." What does Jesus say? "Yes, I am coming soon!" The response is "Amen! Come, Lord Jesus! The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all." Peterson paraphrases our verses: "He who testifies to all these things says it again: 'I'm on my way! I'll be there soon! Yes! Come, Master Jesus! The grace of the Master Jesus be with all of you. Oh, Yes!" (MSG). I feel like closing the year with a song: "Soon and very soon, we are going to see the King. Soon and very soon, we are going to see the King. Hallelujah! Hallelujah! We're going to see the King. No more crying there, we are going to see the King. No more crying there, we are going to see the King. No more dying there, we are going to see the King. No more dying there, we are going to see the King. No more dying there, we are going to see the King. No more dying there, we are going to see the King. No more dying there, we are going to see the King. No more dying there, we are going to see the King. No more dying there, we are going to see the King. Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah! We're going to see the King. No more dying there,



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