



DEVOTIONAL

"BE STILL and KNOW"

By Pastor Ray Viola

Dear Saints in Christ Jesus,

These notes were taken from our Old and New Testament Bible surveys at Koinonia on Wednesday and Sunday evenings. The intention was to give an overview of the entire Bible and see how the two testaments “connect.” Within the notes, practical truths were brought out because we know that the study of Scripture without application is like a vehicle without gas...going nowhere.

If the Holy Spirit can use these simple truths to draw you closer to Jesus Christ and develop a more mature love of God the Father, then this booklet will have accomplished its task.

May the blessings of God be shed upon you as you receive, with meekness, His engrafted Word.

Selah,

Pastor Ray

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DAY 1

MARRIED TO JESUS

The Scripture says that believers are married to Jesus.¹ This is a great mystery.² What isn't a mystery is the conclusion that can be drawn from these verses, and that is that the Lord Jesus wants to have a loving, personal, intimate, and eternal relationship with us.³ How wonderful it is to have this fellowship with Jesus.⁴ Your marriage with Jesus is supposed to be a joy.⁵

Just as in any good marriage, there needs to be meaningful communication. Cultivate that relationship with the Lord by reading the Bible and praying. God speaks to us through His word,⁶ and we speak to God through prayer.⁷ We can also speak God's word to Him in prayer with the result being His ministering to us as we become still before Him.⁸

You can be sure that your adversary, the devil,⁹ will stir up all kinds of pleasures to distract you.¹⁰ Satan is the god of this world,¹¹ whose agenda has as its goal the Christian's betrayal of wedding vows by getting us to fall in love with this world again.¹² Even though this world appeals to our flesh, we must remember that its pleasures are only momentary.¹³ King David knew that lasting pleasures are only found in God. "In Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore."¹⁴

When we are virtuous, we are a crown to our Husband Jesus.¹⁵ Our Husband is also our Maker.¹⁶ We, like every faithful wife, should give to Jesus due affection¹⁷ and reverence.¹⁸ Let's present ourselves to Him and Him alone.¹⁹ As we learn to blessedly submit to our Head,²⁰ the love that He gives us²¹ will be shed abroad to others.²² That's the fruit of being married to Jesus.²³

1-Rom 7:4; 2-Eph 5:32; 3-Song of Solomon 2:2-6, 3:8-14, 7:10, 8:6,7;
4-1 Cor 1:9; 5-1 John 1:3,4; 6-Psalm 119:23b,24; 7-Psalm 119:145-147;
8-Psalm 46:10a; 9-1 Peter 5:8; 10-Luke 8:14; 11-1 John 5:19;
12-1 John 2:15-17, James 4:4; 13-Heb 11:25; 14-Psalm 16:11; 15-Prov 12:4;
16-Isaiah 54:5; 17-1 Cor 7:3; 18-Eph 5:33b; 19-2 Cor 11:2; 20-Eph 5:22,23;
21-Rom 5:5; 22-1 John 3:14a; 23-Gal 5:22,23.

DAY 2

THE LIVING GOD

Thirty times in Scripture, God reveals Himself as “the living God”. Fifteen times, in fact, in each Testament. When He uses the word "living" to describe Himself, He is conveying to us that He is active in the present tense or, simply put, "I AM."¹ He is actively full of grace, love, mercy, and truth.² He's always there when we need Him.³ He will never fail us.⁴ Our living God seals those that belong to Him.⁵ That means that once we trust in Jesus Christ for our salvation, we become the property of the living God.⁶ We are born by the Spirit of the living God⁷ and forever His!⁸

How sad to see what unregenerate man worships or relies upon. "Wise" Solomon informs us that to live for anything other than the Lord is vanity.⁹ Collectively we, as His Church, are to be “the pillar and ground of the truth” that the living God has revealed to us.¹⁰ But, it's having a personal relationship with Jesus our Savior that inspires each of us to lovingly¹¹ labor and suffer reproach.¹² However, we must guard our heart from something far more lethal than cholesterol, namely, the unbelief that causes us to depart from the living God.¹³

Wealthy people are cautioned not to trust in their uncertain riches but in a very certain living God.¹⁴ When Israel was facing the challenge of conquering the Promised Land, Joshua told them that they did not need to fear their adversaries, but could rely upon the greatness of the living God among them.¹⁵ David said that Goliath should not get away with defying the armies of the living God.¹⁶

The living God is my God, and I understand why David's soul got so thirsty for Him.¹⁷ It is good that we cry out now to the living God.¹⁸ for His favor because the world will have to face the wrath of this living God one day.¹⁹ Reader, heed the gospel's call²⁰ and escape this wrath.²¹ Never doubt the Lord's ability to deliver you when you feel "caged in".²² The kingdom of the living God is forever. It is indestructible.²³

“‘Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom, and strength and honor and glory and blessing!’ And every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, I heard saying: ‘Blessing and honor and glory and power be to Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, forever and ever!’”²⁴

1-Ex 3:14; 2-Ex 34:6,7; 3-Psalm 139:7-10, Joshua 1:9; 4-Joshua 1:5;
5-Eph 1:13,14; 6-2 Cor 6:16; 6-John 1:12,13; 8-John 10:28,29;
9-Eccl 1:1,2, 12:8,13; 10-1 Tim 3:15; 11-2 Cor 5:14a; 12-1 Tim 4:10;
13-Heb 3:12; 14-1 Tim 6:17; 15-Joshua 3:10; 16-1 Sam 17:26;
17-Psalm 42:1,2; 18-Psalm 84:2; 19-Jer 10:10; 20-Acts 2:38; 21-Rom 5:9;
22-Dan 6:20; 23-Dan 6:26; 24-Rev 5:12-14.

DAY 3

THAT NONE SHOULD PERISH

That none should perish but have everlasting life is the perfect will of God.¹ Of course, this does not mean that none will perish for the twentieth chapter of Revelation tells us otherwise.² There we read that “anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.”

Do you recall the men and women Paul mentioned in Philippians 4:3 as his fellow workers in the gospel? Their names were written in the Book of Life, and they were well aware of it long before they died. How did they get their names in that Book? They, like Paul, embraced the righteousness that God provided for them through Jesus Christ and rejected any notion of earning their salvation.³

The Father has no pleasure in the death of the wicked.⁴ Over and over, Jehovah cries out to mankind to turn from their sin. He tells them that unless they repent, they will die in their iniquity.⁵ It is sad that people would choose to suffer eternally because they prefer to “enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season”,⁶ but it is a choice, and there is a way out.

God has provided an escape for mankind and it is found in repenting from your sin and turning your life over to Jesus Christ.⁷ God has done all that is required to settle your debt of sin.⁸ All that is required of you is to call upon the name of Jesus Christ.⁹ The work is complete.¹⁰ and it is all of grace.¹¹

Reader, you have an appointment with the True and Living God.¹² How will you answer for yourself? Will you claim to be a good person? Scripture says, “There is none righteous, no, not one”.¹³ Will you plead ignorance? That won't cut it either: “For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse”.¹⁴ Will you seek to enter heaven some other way? Jesus insisted there is no other way.¹⁵

The gospel of Jesus Christ is the only cure for sin. Where you spend eternity is your choice. God does not want you to perish¹⁶ That's the truth. The question is, do you believe it?¹⁷

I beseech you today, right now, be reconciled to God.¹⁸ Respond to Jesus; don't ignore His knock.¹⁹ Simply enter into the family of God by faith in Him.²⁰

1-John 3:15,16; 2-Rev 20:11-15; 3-Phil 3:4-9; 4-Ezek 18:23; 5-Ezek 18:30-32;
6-Heb 11:25; 7-Acts 2:38; 8-John 1:29, 19:30; 9-Rom 10:4-10; 10-Col 2:10;
11-Eph 2:8,9; 12-Heb 9:27; 13-Rom 3:10; 14-Rom 1:20; 15-John 10:1,9;
16-1 Tim 2:3-4, 2 Peter 3:9; 17-Isaiah 53:1; 18-2 Cor 5:17-21; 19-Rev 3:20;
20-John 1:12.

DAY 4

ONE BY ONE

God told His people Israel that He would gather them from the Euphrates River to the brook of Egypt one by one.¹ Those words “one by one” reveal the personal love and attention that God displays toward His people, not just as a nation, but as individuals.

One of the devil's most effective lies is that God is disinterested in us. Quite the contrary! Psalm 139 is actually everyone's personal psalm because it reveals the depth of God's care for me and His creation of me. He knows my every move.² In fact, God is always thinking precious thoughts about me.³ This same God, who knows me so well, died on a cross made of wood He created,⁴ so that I could have fellowship with Him.⁵

Jesus cares for you and me personally, but it's so easy to get “lost in the crowd” so to speak, and forget that truth. Every one of our very hairs are numbered by Him.⁶ Who else would pay such attention to us that every time we brushed our hair or took a shower, they would subtract the hairs from the previous total? God cares for us!⁷ Believe it, because it's true. It's true even if you don't believe it.

Just as God chose the nation Israel for a unique purpose in His redemptive plan⁸ yet cared for them one by one, you and I in this mystery body called “the Church”⁹ are saved one by one. The Lord throughout His word unlocks the precious truth about His love and care for us. Read, for example, Jeremiah 31:3: “Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore, with lovingkindness I have drawn you.” Note all of the personal pronouns in the psalms. Think about the “whosoever” in the Scriptures; for example: “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”¹⁰ You and I can draw fresh encouragement from God's word each and every day.¹¹

Just like the good Samaritan took care of the wounded, beaten and bruised traveler,¹² Jesus Christ takes care of us.¹³ We, like Jesus, should reflect that same care for each other.¹⁴ In fact, that care that you and I receive from one another is nothing other than the operation of God in our hearts.¹⁵ To Him be the glory!¹⁶

Personalize your Bible. Yes, there are the historical and theological truths that are vitally important, but never forget that God's word is God's message of hope, love, peace, forgiveness and comfort - for you! “Search from the book of the LORD, and read”!¹⁸

1-Isaiah 27:12; 2-Psalm 139:2,3; 3-Psalm 139:17-18, Jer 29:11; 4-Col 1:16,19,20;
5-1 John 1:3; 6-Matt 10:30; 7-1 Peter 5:7; 8-Deut 7:6; 9-Col 1:24-26; 10-John 3:16;
11-Psalm 119:24; 12-Luke 10:30-37; 13-Psalm 23; 14-1 Cor 12:25; 15-2 Cor 8:16;
16-Psalm 115:1; 17-Rom 15:4; 18-Isaiah 34:16.

DAY 5

PAUL'S CONFESSION

Confession of your faith in Jesus Christ is both edifying and fruitful. When we confess Jesus before men (saved and unsaved), He confesses us before our heavenly Father.¹ There is what is called the confessional aspect of salvation,² and our testimony is a vital part of our walk. Read how the Tribulation saints will prevail by their testimony.³

Paul said, "I believed, therefore have I spoken."⁴ In 2 Timothy 1, note what our brother Paul confessed:

- 1:3 his thankfulness to God in serving Him with a pure conscience. When your conscience disrupts you, God is trying to draw your attention to an area of sin or of need. Only the sacrifice of Jesus Christ can cleanse a man's conscience.⁵ However, it is our duty to exercise ourselves unto godliness⁶ in order to maintain a clear conscience.⁷
- 1:12 "I also suffer these things". We all experience suffering to some degree in our walk with Christ.⁸ It is a choice⁹ as well as a privilege.¹⁰ To enter into "the fellowship of His sufferings"¹¹ is the deepest, most intimate experience for a disciple of Christ because "as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounds through Christ."¹²
- 1:12 "I am not ashamed". We should be proud of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ,¹³ and His powerful gospel of salvation.¹⁴ Too many of us take the words of Christ about being ashamed of Him too lightly.¹⁵ Jesus is not ashamed of us,¹⁶ but how will we feel at His coming?¹⁷
- 1:12 "I know whom I have believed". Paul knew Jesus, personally. Do you have the Son today?¹⁸ Are you born again¹⁹ of God's incorruptible seed?²⁰ Any and all religion is dung if you don't have a relationship with Jesus Christ.²¹
- 1:12 "I have committed to Him". Committed what? His soul. Have you truly committed your life to Jesus Christ? A genuine confession of faith²² will result in a visible expression of faith,²³ which has as its root God's powerful agape love.²⁴

When the tongues in our shoes match the tongue in our mouth, that is evidence of a true confession of faith.²⁵

1-Matt 10:32; 2-Rom 10:9; 3-Rev 12:11; 4-2 Cor 4:13; 5-Heb 10:1-10;
6-1 Tim 4:7-8; 7-Acts 24:16; 8-Phil 1:29, 1 Pet 4:1; 9-Heb 11:25;
10-2 Thess 1:4-5; 11-Phil 3:10; 12-2 Cor 1:5; 13-1 Cor 1:31; 14-Rom 1:16;
15-Mark 8:38; 16-Heb 2:11; 17-1 John 2:28; 18-1 John 5:12; 19-John 3:3;
20-1 Peter 1:23; 21-Phil 3:4-9; 22-Rom 10:10; 23-James 2:17-18;
24-1 Cor 13:4-8a; 25-1 John 3:17-18.

DAY 6

THE PRISON OF "SELF"

The saddest person, the loneliest person, the most unfulfilled person is the individual whose life orbits around one thing - self. How empty, how sad. To live for the pleasure of self is an indication that one is truly dead.¹ The only way to be freed of self is through the cross of Jesus Christ.² That is where your perspective of life and purpose for life change. Whereas you formerly lived on a purely physically-focused and self-fulfilling plane,³ you are now free to live for God's pleasure.⁴ Having the mind of Christ⁵ through rebirth,⁶ we now can look out for the interests of others.⁷

Our example, Jesus, lived to always please the Father,⁸ not Himself.⁹ Only when we live to please God can we find true peace, joy and strength. Paul prayed that we might "walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing".¹⁰ As we yield ourselves to the Lord¹¹ and meekly receive His engrafted word,¹² the net result is God working in us that which is well pleasing in His sight.¹³ However, those who live for the flesh cannot please God.¹⁴

How glorious to have a blessed confidence¹⁵ that Jesus is working in my life.¹⁶ He provides the victory over self by giving me many opportunities to serve Him with the ability that He supplies.¹⁷ Although every and any Spirit-filled believer will have their share of tribulation¹⁸ and suffering,¹⁹ they are rarely depressed for long periods of time because they are living for their Lord and others.²⁰

To seek the profit of others brings true prosperity.²¹ The Dead Sea is dead because there is an inflow of water but no outflow. That symbolizes the self. In contrast, be like the Jordan River. Take the things that God gives to you and has blessed you with, and then lovingly and sacrificially impart such things to others.²² That's how we break out of the prison of self.

1-1 Tim 5:6; 2-Col 2:13-14, John 8:36; 3-Eph 2:3; 4-Rev 4:11; 5-1 Cor 2:16;
6-1 Peter 1:23; 7-Phil 2:1-7; 8-John 8:29; 9-Rom 15:3a; 10-Col 1:10;
11-Rom 6:13; 12-James 1:21; 13-Heb 13:21; 14-Rom 8:8; 15-Phil 1:6;
16-Phil 2:13; 17-1 Peter 4:11; 18-John 16:33; 19-Rom 8:18; 20-Psalm 144:15b,
Prov 14:21; 21-1 Cor 10:33; 22-Heb 13:16.

DAY 7

THE PRESERVATION OF GOD

In 2 Samuel 8:6 and 14, the word of God tells us that “the Lord preserved David wherever he went.” What a precious comfort to be aware of God’s preserving influence! The unsaved do not have this promise,¹ but the child of God indeed does! God says that He preserves the faithful,² those who walk in obedience to Him. Furthermore, “He preserves the souls of His saints”,³ saints being people who have called upon “the name of Jesus Christ our Lord”.⁴ For those of us that are not very flashy or bright, we can rejoice because “the LORD preserves the simple.”⁵ If you can say that you love the Lord with all your heart,⁶ then you can be assured that no matter what may happen in your life, God will preserve you.⁷

As Christians, we are sometimes misunderstood because of the stand we take for the Lord. After all, we are strangers and pilgrims in this world,⁸ but never forget that He watches over those who are His strangers.⁹ To know that God preserves my every way is wonderful.¹⁰ However, we must never presume upon God’s preservation if we are walking in the flesh instead of the Spirit.¹¹

Oh, how we daily need a fresh work of the Holy Spirit in our lives! We can only walk “the preserved walk” as we continually submit these “wineskins” of ours to God’s new wine.¹² God desires our entire “spirit, soul and body (*to*) be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.”¹³

Our eternal destiny is found in these words: ‘preserved in Christ Jesus.’¹⁴ Thank God, through Jesus we’re eternally preserved!¹⁵ As we wait upon God and walk with integrity and uprightness,¹⁶ the Lord’s lovingkindness and truth will continually preserve us.¹⁷ “The LORD shall preserve you from all evil; He shall preserve your soul. The LORD shall preserve your going out and your coming in from this time forth, and even forevermore.”¹⁸

1-Job 36:6; 2-Psalm 31:23; 3-Psalm 97:10; 4-1 Cor 1:2; 5-Psalm 116:6;
6-Matt 22:37; 7-Psalm 145:20; 8-1 Peter 2:11; 9-Psalm 146:9a; 10-Prov 2:8;
11-Gal 6:8; 12-Matt 9:17; 13-1 Thess 5:23; 14-Jude 1; 15-2 Tim 4:18;
16-Psalm 25:21; 17-Psalm 40:11; 18-Psalm 121:7,8.

DAY 8

TO QUENCH OR NOT TO QUENCH

The word “quench” means “to put out or extinguish; to suppress.” In the New Testament, there are three passages where this word is found. The first, which is quoted from Isaiah 42:3, reveals the Father’s heart toward lost souls: “A bruised reed He will not break, and smoking flax He will not quench”.¹ Calvary is the active love of God shed forth for fallen, hurting man. “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”² Thus, it is not God’s desire to extinguish or quench the sinner, but to save him! “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.”³

The second New Testament use of the word “quench” is associated with our spiritual growth. Like any good parent, God wants us to grow up in Christ.⁴ In order for us to do that, the Lord has given to believers His Holy Spirit.⁵ Now, we can be sure that the Holy Spirit will be faithful to do what He is sent to do, but the question is, are we listening for Him⁶ and walking in obedience to Him?⁷ Having the Holy Ghost is the gift given to us when we give our hearts to Jesus Christ.⁸ At the moment of conversion we are sealed by the Holy Spirit.⁹ But growth in the Lord does not occur by the process of osmosis or a series of accidents. Spiritual growth comes as we study the word of God and apply it.¹⁰ To listen to it, but not intend to activate it, amounts to quenching the Spirit of God.¹¹ When we do this, we stunt our growth and grieve our Lord.¹²

The third and last reference to the word “quench” is really thought-provoking, and is found in Ephesians 6:16. Now this is the kind of quenching that we want to take place, but in essence, if I am quenching the Spirit of God, then I am “condensing” the shield that should be quenching Satan’s fiery darts! When I am not quenching the Spirit, then I’m actually enlarging the shield of faith. The lesson? Don’t ignore those Scriptures that jump out at you. Don’t be content with Bible information apart from life application. Instead of quenching God’s Spirit with alibis or excuses, let’s submit to Him and start quenching the real problems - those flaming missiles of the enemy.

1-Matt 12:20; 2-Rom 5:8; 3-John 3:16-17; 4-Eph 4:15; 5-John 14:26,
1 John 2:20,27; 6-1 Kings 19:11-13; 7-1 Peter 1:14-16; 8-1 Cor 12:13;
9-Eph 1:13; 10-James 1:21,22; 11-1 Thess 5:19; 12-Eph 4:30.

DAY 9

THE COUNSEL OF GOD

One of the titles for Jesus is Counselor.¹ In fact, since the comma is not in the original text, this title could read “Wonderful Counselor”, and it reveals to us a part of God’s nature, which is His desire and ability to counsel us. Some of the synonyms for the verb “to counsel” are: advise, encourage, instruct, direct, warn, support, help, guide, and assist. Wow! That’s what our God wants to do, and is able to do for us, and because He is God, that should not surprise us. David declared, “I will bless the Lord, who has given me counsel.”² No wonder we are called blessed (or happy) when we reject the counsel of the ungodly,³ because it eventually amounts to nothing.⁴

Oh the grief that follows rejection of the word of God!⁵ It is our fallen human nature that desires to walk according to our own lusts.⁶ Any time that we choose our way over God's, that's pride, and pride produces shame.⁷ A woe is pronounced upon those who try to hide their rebellious plans from the Lord.⁸ Will any of us who have challenged God argue with that?

Oh that we might grasp the truth that Jesus is both ready and willing to counsel us, and is grieved when we reject Him!⁹ Furthermore, we can be sure that His counsel will never lead us astray.¹⁰ Christian, we are in a war zone,¹¹ and it’s only by God’s wise counsel that we can successfully make war.¹² “*There is no wisdom or understanding or counsel against the LORD.*”¹³

To be counseled by the Lord, it is necessary for us to be listening for His voice.¹⁴ Jesus has told us this also, more than once in fact.¹⁵ Disappointment is the conclusion of any endeavor that doesn't check in with the Lord.¹⁶ Our problem is that we think we are smarter than God Himself.¹⁷ We are forgetful and impatient.¹⁸

Dear saint, never tell God that He doesn’t understand because He most certainly does.¹⁹ He has the full picture, not you. If you and I were at Calvary 2,000 years ago, we would have called God cruel, unfair and mean. We also would have no eternal alternative but hell. It’s when we listen to ourselves that we are “cast down”, we fail.²⁰ In contrast, the person who lives on the Rock of the word and the word of the Rock²¹ shall stand.²²

Let’s learn to listen to God's voice, whether it be through His word, a song, or a fellow saint. God’s word is God’s counsel.²³ The Lord’s counsel will be tried in the fires of life, but the richness that results from it cannot be valued.²⁴

1-Isaiah 9:6; 2-Psalm 16:7a; 3-Psalm 1:1a; 4-Psalm 33:10; 5-Prov 1:24-27;
6-Psalm 81:10-12; 7-Prov 11:2a; 8-Isaiah 29:15; 9-Isaiah 30:1-3;
10-Psalm 19:7-11; 11-Eph 6:12; 12-Prov 24:6; 13-Prov 21:30; 14-Prov 19:20;
15-Matt 13:9, Rev 2:7; 16-Prov 15:22; 17-Prov 3:5-7a; 18-Psalm 106:13;
19-Job 12:13; 20-Job 18:7; 21-Matt 7:24-25; 22-Psalm 33:11; 23-2 Tim 3:16,17;
24-Rev 3:18.

DAY 10

OUR GOD IS GOOD

David said, while in the midst of some heavy trials, that he would have fainted if he didn't know that God was good.¹ This knowing is the kind that dwells in the heart; it's not a mere mental assent. None of the children of God² escape hardships. I don't think that we are much different from David, or vice versa.

So, where can we find peace or make sense while in life's crucible? In this fact – God is good.³ Not only is God good, but His mercy is operating right now as you read this devotional.⁴ The great "I AM"⁵ is always good.⁶ In fact, only He is exclusively good.⁷ Meditate on that truth for a moment. By (partial) definition our Lord Jesus is: effective, beneficial, untainted, genuine, real, strong, honorable, worthy, desirable, dependable, complete, ample, sufficient, morally excellent – in short, GOOD!

Don't let life's potholes alter your understanding of God's character. Don't allow Satan's lies to prevail over the eternal truth⁹ of God's goodness. Because God is good, we are told to give Him thanks.¹⁰ Why don't you do that right now. Thank Him for saving you, loving you, preparing a place for you in heaven. Thank Him for His "benefits program!"¹¹

It's so wonderful to know that the true and living God¹² is in "the business" of teaching sinners like me¹³ how to live like a child of God.¹⁴ That the good God would love, die for, and live in an "un-good" guy like me is amazing, but His impartiality toward all mankind is one way He manifests His goodness.¹⁵ Once you've tasted God's goodness, you'll never have trouble trusting Him.¹⁶ Even when the Holy Spirit deals with us, we realize that the basis of His correction is His goodness.¹⁷ The mischief of man will never outlast the goodness of God¹⁸ because the Lord is "good, and ready to forgive, and abundant in mercy".¹⁹ Furthermore, He can be called upon in the day of trouble for He is good, provides security and protection, "and He knows those who trust in Him."²⁰

We will faint unless we, like David, are certain of God's unchanging, unending goodness. Knowing this enables us to conclude that everything today is part of His good plan.²¹

1-Psalm 27:13; 2-John 1:12; 3-Psalm 119:68a; 4-1 Chron 16:34;
5-Exodus 3:14a; 6-Malachi 3:6; 7-Mark 10:18; 8-Psalm 119:89;
10-Psalm 136:1; 11-Psalm 68:19; 12-Jer 10:10; 13-Psalm 25:8; 14-Eph 5:1;
15-Acts 10:34-35; 16-Psalm 34:8; 17-Rom 2:4; 18-Psalm 52:1; 19-Psalm 86:5;
20-Nahum 1:7; 21-Rom 8:28.

DAY 11

IMPRESSIONS

We live in a nation whose values are twisted and unbiblical. This is revealed so plainly by the things that we are impressed by, or the people we are impressed with. The lesson that the prophet Samuel learned is a basic one for the disciple of Jesus Christ, namely, that God does not see or value people like man does.¹ In fact, Jesus said that “what is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God.”² The psalmist Asaph was nearly swept away by faulty impressions, wasn't he?³

The Lord Jesus, the most beautiful expression of God Himself, was not given a very good rating by society.⁴ Our generation is impressed with wealth, beauty, strength, or intelligence. Inasmuch as any of these things are godly they are beautiful; but it's sad to see the people of God “in awe” of those who are highly esteemed in any field, yet ungodly.

The Lord recorded this “refresher course” to the sons of Korah in Psalm 49. Although apparently impressed by the wealth of the unsaved and depressed by their own poverty (Were they jealous, angry at God, or both?), the Lord reassures them that there will not be a U-Haul trailer following the hearse during the funeral procession.

Oh yes, while the ungodly were alive they were praised, and they even praised themselves. However, their hourglass stopped ... now what?⁵ Jesus Himself told about the eternal destinies of an impressive man and an unimpressive man, which you will surely want to read.⁶ (Note: It was not his status or net worth that determined each man's destiny.) There is no eternal value to any human accomplishment apart from whatever is done in Jesus' name.⁷ “For what will it profit”⁸ is the question Jesus asks every generation. God is not impressed by outward things, titles, or trophies. Those are “of the world” and will perish.⁹

Look around you today at those whom God chooses and uses.¹⁰ What God is impressed with is a heart that is totally in love with Him and, consequently, compassionate toward others.¹¹ Don't be deceived, saints, by the false glamour and enticements of this world.¹² All these things will be dissolved.¹³ The only “Hall of Fame” that is of eternal significance is found in Hebrews 11 and includes every “whosoever” of John 3:16. Are you impressed by those who are elevated to “godhood” by the unsaved, or are you getting homesick?¹⁴ We'll be home soon.¹⁵ Then we'll know what being impressed is really about!

1-1 Sam 16:7; 2-Luke 16:15; 3-Psalm 73; 4-Isaiah 53:2-3; 5-Psalm 49:16-20, Heb 9:27; 6-Luke 16:19-31; 7-Col 3:23-24; 8-Mark 8:36; 9-1 John 2:15-17; 10-1 Cor 1:27-29; 11-Matt 22:37-40; 12-Luke 12:15-21; 13-2 Peter 3:11; 14-Heb 11:13-16; 15-Rev 21:10-23.

DAY 12

O JERUSALEM !

The prophet Daniel (in chapter nine), when praying for the restoration of his people after 70 years of captivity, acknowledges the true owner of the city Jerusalem in verse 16. Jerusalem is God's city and is a key piece of Bible prophecy. The first coming of Jesus Christ can be discovered by figuring from the date when the command was given "to restore and build Jerusalem".¹ Ever since King David's victory over the Jebusites,² Jerusalem has been the capital of Israel in the hearts of the Jewish people. David reigned as king for 33 years there.³ When the heathen plundered the temple, Asaph grieved over the fact that Jerusalem was destroyed.⁴

Oh how the Jewish people long for the new temple in the midst of Jerusalem.⁵ To stand in that holy city is the cry of any God-seeking heart.⁶ God instructs us to pray for the peace of Jerusalem.⁷ Child of God, just as God has surrounded Jerusalem with mountains, so has He surrounded you!⁸ In a unique way, God dwells at Jerusalem.⁹ To forget about Jerusalem for the Jew is unthinkable!¹⁰

Israel today is an absolute miracle of God!¹¹ The Lord's building of Jerusalem and gathering of His outcasts is fulfillment of Bible prophecy.¹² The beauty of Jerusalem is to be noted.¹³ During the Millennium, the word of the Lord will go forth from Jerusalem.¹⁴

In all of the current discussions about the land of Israel and the city of Jerusalem, I find it fascinating that in Islam's holy book, The Koran, Jerusalem is not specifically mentioned once! And yet, in the Bible, the city of Jerusalem is referred to in 36 of 66 books! Jesus Christ was "dedicated" in Jerusalem,¹⁵ crucified in Jerusalem,¹⁶ triumphant over death¹⁷ in Jerusalem. The Church was endowed with power from on high at Jerusalem.¹⁸ And the eternal home for the saints will be the New Jerusalem,¹⁹ Holy Jerusalem.²⁰

Our Lord wept over Jerusalem and the hard hearts there.²¹ He foresaw its destruction in 70 A.D.,²² and He prophesied that it would be trodden down until the times of the Gentiles were fulfilled.²³ The end of the age will center, in part, around the ownership of Jerusalem.²⁴

There should be no doubt as to whom the city belongs and whose capital it is.²⁵ The city of Jerusalem belongs to Israel. That's not political, it's Biblical.²⁶

1-Dan 9:25; 2-2 Sam 5:1-9; 3-2 Sam 5:5; 4-Psalm 79:1; 5-Psalm 116:19;
6-Psalm 122:1,2; 7-Psalm 122:6; 8-Psalm 125:2; 9-Psalm 135:21;
10-Psalm 137:1-6; 11-Ezek 36:1-12; 12-Psalm 147:2; 13-Psalm 48:2;
14-Isaiah 2:3; 15-Luke 2:25-30; 16-Mark 10:33,34; 17-Mark 16:6;
18-Luke 24:49; 19-Rev 3:12; 21:2; 20-Rev 21:10; 21-Luke 13:34;
22-Luke 21:20; 23-Luke 21:24; 24-Zech 12:3; 25-Isaiah 60:14;
26-Isaiah 62:1-7,12.

DAY 13

CHRIST - THE ONLY ROCK

Scripture directs our attention to only one Rock, and that Rock is Jesus Christ.¹ Indeed, as David wrote, “The LORD is my Rock”. Who *is* God, except the Lord? And who *is* a rock, except our God?”² May we always remember that all Christian music should be “Rock music”, styles notwithstanding. God created music to glorify Him. Music is a gift from God and can minister to us in the form of “psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs”.³ As Paul indicated in that verse, the place where the melody comes from is the heart. Heartless music is dead music, be it soft or loud, rock or jazzy. Therefore, if we are called to minister the gospel of Jesus Christ through music, the Lordship of Christ must exist in our hearts.

Lord is His title. That’s how we’re to relate to Him. Step one in being a truly effective music minister is found in one’s personal commitment to Jesus. Talent alone cannot minister and, although I’m certain that half-hearted, good-enough-to-get-by attitudes grieve the Lord, I’m equally certain that a motivation of impressing others or showing the devil that Christians can play skillfully is also wrong.⁴ Jesus does not gift us to be exhibitionists! Meekness and lowliness of heart⁵ with a compassion for the lost⁶ are keys to anointed ministry.

Let’s not forget that it’s this Rock that was smitten⁷ that gives life.⁸ Also, in Numbers 20:8-13, we read that Moses was to speak to the Rock, but instead he smote it twice, incensed at the “rebels” in the camp. (I’ve seen angry evangelism!) Moses, in anger, misrepresented the Lord before the people. Think about that. As Christians, our life is our ministry, regardless of our line of work.⁹ God hasn’t called us to call down fire from heaven to consume the lost!¹⁰ No, “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners”.¹¹ They need to see the light,¹² not lightning!

Oh, blessed be this Rock,¹³ Jesus! My heart echoes the words of the prophet Micah: “Who *is* a God like You, pardoning iniquity and passing over the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He does not retain His anger forever, because He delights *in* mercy.”¹⁴ Brother or sister in music ministry or the arts, cultivate your personal walk with Jesus. In doing this, Christ will be expressed through you. I cannot emphasize enough the importance of the word of God.¹⁵ I love (eros, not agape) music, but as a musician I must always remember that “God so loved the world that He gave...” Gave what? Hymns, contemporary music, etc.? No, “His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”¹⁶

May we rivet that truth in our hearts! May we accept the gift of music to assist us in communicating the gospel to a lost and needy world. No doubt some people will consider us offensive, but that should be because of the “aroma” we project,¹⁷ not because we are obnoxious or rude. Belonging to and walking with Jesus will unavoidably make us offensive¹⁷ to some people.

We desperately need to catch the heart of God if our evangelism is to be effective. The fruit of the Spirit is love,¹⁹ and it's the love of Christ (not music) that must constrain us to serve.²⁰ It is this agape love that also must overcome the differences in musical tastes and ministries in order to prevent them from becoming divisive.²¹

My heart is truly supportive of music ministry, but I recognize that it's a tool that can be both used and abused. The key? Each one of us and our walk with Jesus. We must continually abide in Christ,²² read His word, pray and talk with Him throughout the day. Furthermore, let me encourage you to redeem the time,²³ and get involved in your local church. After all, if you're not ministering now, what makes you think you will "on the road?"

1-1 Cor 10:4; 2-Psalm 18:2,31; 3-Eph 5:19; 4-Col 3:23-24; 5-Matt 11:29;
6-Mark 6:34; 7-Ex 17:6; 8-John 7:37,38; 9-Rom 12:1; 10-Luke 9:54-56a;
11-1 Tim 1:15; 12-Matt 5:16; 13-Psalm 18:46; 14-Micah 7:18; 15-Matt 7:24-25;
16-John 3:16; 17-2 Cor 2:15,16; 18-1 Peter 2:8, 2 Tim 3:12; 19-Gal 5:22;
20-2 Cor 5:14a; 21-1 Cor 13:4-5,7; 22-John 15:4,5; 23-Eph 5:16.

DAY 14

THE MARY DOCTRINE

Why pray to Mary when you can go right to Jesus? Sounds pretty simple, doesn't it? Sadly for some, tradition has made the work of God of no effect.¹ Religious traditions have a way of mesmerizing their adherents. For example, in the Catholic church Mary is elevated to a place that is nothing less than idolatry.

Now, let me state here and now that I personally respect Mary, her faith, and her virtue. I'm sure that Joseph found her to be a superb helpmeet² and as close to the Proverbs 31 woman as one could possibly get. However, to respect Mary is much different from deifying her. Consider the following:

- There are 16 feast days in the Catholic church reserved for Mary.
- In the Rosary, ten times Mary is "hailed" for every one "Our Father".
- Many today celebrate the Assumption of Mary, an event whereby she was allegedly taken up body and soul into heaven after her death. (Question: If she was sinless, how could she die?³ And don't dare try to connect Christ's death to any personal sin on His part for He was our sinless sin-bearer.⁴) And by the way, this belief, which is not Scriptural, did not become a church dogma until Pope Pius XII decreed it on November 1, 1950.
- Also, the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception did not become a church belief until December 8, 1854. That doctrine states that Mary was conceived free from original sin in the womb of her mother, Saint Anne. If that is true, it makes Romans 3:10 and 3:23 lies.

In the well known "Magnificat",⁵ Mary magnifies the Lord and rejoices in God, her Savior. Although official Papal prayers call upon Mary to "save the faithful", the Bible teaches that Jesus Christ is "the Savior of the world".⁶ In fact, Scripture leaves no doubt that Jesus alone is to be exalted above all of His creation.⁷ "Him God has exalted to His right hand *to be* Prince and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins."⁸

In a specific sense, Jesus is the Savior of the Church, His body.⁹ The Bible records that Mary also gathered with the disciples of Jesus on the days prior to Pentecost.¹⁰ And do you know what were her last words recorded in Scripture? "Whatever He says to you, do *it*."¹¹ Although called "the Queen of Heaven" (not very original, and I take exception to calling her that, in light of Jeremiah 7:18; 44:17-25), there is no record of her being worshiped in heaven, or even slightly being venerated! In Catholic theology, Christ is the Mediator between God and man, but Mary is the "Mediatix" of all graces in the secondary sense. Is that so? Read 1 Tim 2:5; Heb 8:6, 9:15, and 12:24; and don't give me that "it's all a matter of interpretation" trip. Putting words in God's mouth is the devil's ploy.¹²

Catholic theology (not Scripture) states that in heaven Mary cooperates in distributing the graces of redemption to men by her intercession for all mankind. Every grace, they claim, is the result of her powerful intercession. In contrast the Bible says: "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights".¹³ Who is really interceding for you in heaven?¹⁴

I do love Mary. I admire her faith and strength. When I get to glory, I'd like to chat with her a while. For she knew, as well as anyone possibly could, the simple truth proclaimed in John 3:16.

God has spoken to us through His Son.¹⁵ Listen to Him.¹⁶

1-Mark 7:7-13; 2-Gen 2:18; 3-Rom 6:23; 4-John 1:29, Heb 7:26-27;
5-Luke 1:46-55; 6-John 4:42; 7-Phil 2:9-11; 8-Acts 5:31; 9-Eph 5:23;
10-Acts 1:14; 11-John 2:5; 12-Gen 3:4-5; 13-James 1:17; 14-Rom 8:34,
Heb 7:25; 15-Heb 1:2; 16-Matt 17:5.

DAY 15

CHRISTMAS or INCARNATION?

I have a button that says, “Keep Christ in Christmas”. Pondering the upcoming holiday season, I became saddened at how secularized Christmas has become. For some, keeping Christ in Christmas may mean nothing more than including Him with Santa Claus, Rudolph (flying reindeer?), Frosty the Snowman, company parties, etc.

The birth of Jesus Christ, fully God and fully man, is in and of itself the greatest miracle of all time. Isaiah spoke about His miraculous birth.¹ The angel Gabriel appeared to Mary and declared: “Fear not, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end.”² Around this same period of time, presumably, an angel appeared to Joseph and said, “Joseph, son of David, fear not to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she will bring forth a son, and you shall call his name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins.”³ What a declaration! What an event! The very God from ever-lasting⁴ would become flesh.⁵ He would be the seed (descendant) of David,⁶ the seed of Abraham,⁷ the Lion of the Tribe of Judah.⁸ This birth was foreseen from the very foundation of the world,⁹ and promised since the Fall of man.¹⁰

The “Christ” (in Hebrew, “Messiah”) was to be born to destroy the works of the devil,¹¹ and to “deliver those who through the fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.”¹² “God was manifested in the flesh”.¹³ Why? To take away the sin of the world.¹⁴ My sin, your sin. Not only our sinful thoughts and actions, but our very sin nature.¹⁵

You see, the Incarnation is the proclamation, “For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.”¹⁶ When He was born, the heavenly hosts praised God. It was a time for worship.¹⁷ When he was born, the lowly shepherds were told the good news,¹⁸ and “the wise men from the East” came to worship Him and present gifts to Him.¹⁹

It is sad to say, but for most people Christmas is nothing more than another holiday. What part does Jesus Christ have in your home? What place does He have in your heart? One theme that prevails in the gospel is deliverance from bondage.²⁰ How many of you will go into financial bondage this year in order to celebrate Christmas? Does Jesus require this of you? How many of you that are prospering will give gifts to the needy, orphans, and widows? After all, isn’t that “pure and undefiled religion”²¹ in the Spirit of the Incarnation?

Yes, enjoy your blessings and your family. They are God's gifts to you. However, may we all do our part to peel away the secularization and commercialization of Christmas, and boldly proclaim the message of John 3:16: "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him would not perish, but have everlasting life."

May your home and your heart be the place where Jesus Christ dwells as King of kings and Lord of lords!²²

1-Isaiah 7:14, 9:6; 2-Luke 1:30-33; 3-Matt 1:20,21; 4-Micah 5:2; 5-John 1:14;
6-Rom 1:3; 7-Matt 1:1; 8-Rev 5:5; 9-Rev 13:8; 10-Gen 3:15; 11-1 John 3:8b;
12-Heb 2:15; 13-1 Tim 3:16; 14-John 1:29; 15-Rom 6:6, 2 Cor 5:17;
16-Luke 2:11; 17-Luke 2:13,14; 18-Luke 2:8-10; 19-Matt 2:1-2,11;
20-Luke 4:18; 21-James 1:27; 22-Rev 19:16.

DAY 16

WHICH RESURRECTION WILL YOU BE IN?

A common misunderstanding about the resurrection of the dead exists today, both in and outside the church. That is, that there is going to be one general, all-encompassing resurrection of the dead and then a final judgment. Is there going to be a bodily resurrection? Yes; it's one of the ABC's of the Christian faith.¹ However, there are two separate and distinct resurrections taught in the Bible. There is the resurrection of the just, and that of the unjust.² Notice also, as explained in Revelation 20:4-6, there is a thousand-year period between the first and second resurrections.

The first resurrection is "the better resurrection",³ the resurrection of the just,⁴ the resurrection of life.⁵ All those who have received Jesus Christ as Savior⁶ will be a part of this event.⁷ Sadly, the second resurrection is called the resurrection unto damnation⁸ because it results in the second death and eternal separation from God.⁹ All who reject Christ as Savior will participate in this event.

So my question to you is, which resurrection do you expect to be part of? What do you base your decision upon? Being a "good person"?¹⁰ Keeping all of your church's rules?¹¹ Believing in God all of your life isn't sufficient.¹² Neither is doing a lot of good works.¹³ Do you believe that Jesus only opened the door of salvation, but that you somehow must "qualify" to enter into glory?¹⁴ Whatever your excuse or reason for rejecting Christ is, it will not hold up on judgment day. Perhaps you are saying, "I'll take my chances." Let me remind you: "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."¹⁵

The truth and the good news is found in John 3:16-18a. This is what being "born again" is,¹⁶ believing in Christ and following Him. The bad news is: "But he who does not believe is condemned already because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."¹⁷ Thus, the Christ-rejecter is self-condemned, and blinded by the devil.¹⁸

"Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, today is the day of salvation."¹⁹ If you hear His voice today,²⁰ know it is the loving heavenly Father drawing you.²¹ Don't harden your heart!²² Follow Paul's words in Romans 10:9-13, and in doing so you will inspire the heavens to rejoice.²³

You will die someday, eventually be resurrected, and you will be judged.²⁴ Which resurrection will you be part of?

1-Heb 6:1-2; 2-Acts 24:15; 3-Heb 11:35; 4-Luke 14:14b; 5-John 5:29a;
6-John 1:12; 7-John 11:25,26; 8-John 5:29b; 9-Rev 20:11-15; 10-Rom 3:12,
3:23; 11-Gal 5:4, 2 Cor 3:6b; 12-James 2:19; 13-Eph 2:8-9; 14-Gal 3:2,3,
Heb 12:2a; 15-Heb 10:31; 16-John 3:3,6,7; 17-John 3:18b; 18-2 Cor 4:4;
19-2 Cor 6:2; 20-Heb 3:7; 21-John 6:44a; 22-Heb 3:8; 23-Luke 15:7;
24-Heb 9:27.

DAY 17

UNTIL YOU KNOW

In the fourth chapter of the Book of Daniel, the Holy Spirit has a message for the king of Babylon. His name is Nebuchadnezzar. The king was probably the most powerful man on the face of the earth. He, like so many people, believed that his success was the product of his own energy and efforts.¹ What the Lord spoke to the king was basically a lesson that we must all learn once and for all, and that is: “That the Most High rules in the kingdom of men”, even to the appointment of leaders of nations that we would never approve of.²

This king was being dealt with because of his sin of pride.³ Pride is a sin that we must all address. It’s the first one listed of seven abominations to the LORD.⁴ It was a temptation for Paul to be exalted with pride because of the abundance of revelations, which necessitated his having “a thorn in the flesh”.⁵ Nebuchadnezzar was strong and, as far as outward things go, he was extremely fruitful.⁶ He was self-confident and self-sufficient, and he had the world by the tail but he did not know that the god of this world⁷ had his tail! Pride turned this man into a beast.⁸

I’ve discovered that it’s very difficult to detect “beasts” in our affluent nation. Some beasts are C.E.O.’s of major companies, professors, lawyers, doctors. They don’t want to hear about Jesus. They seem to think: “After all, He’s the Savior of the ‘low-lives’, the beggars, not me.” Oh, of course they fulfill their spiritual obligations, and even admit to believing in God. (But do they tremble?⁹) However, when you begin to share the word of God and their need to repent and believe in Jesus Christ for salvation,¹⁰ they get defensive, even offended.¹¹ Why won’t they seek the Lord? Pride.¹² They do not want anything more than a form of godliness¹³ because that form is good for their “image.”

God told the king that He was going to deal with his pride until he knew who was really in charge.¹⁴ How could the king end this literal nightmare? By breaking off his sins through righteousness.¹⁵ In other words, the antidote to pride (which is humility¹⁶) is obtained by turning in our rags of sin for the Lord’s garment of righteousness through Jesus.¹⁷

Pride will reign until the King who is meek and humble dwells in your heart. Until we know this, we will never enjoy the fullness of a relationship with God. Nebuchadnezzar learned his lesson.¹⁸ Have you?

1-Dan 4:30; 2-Dan 4:17; 3-Dan 4:37b; 4-Prov 6:16-17; 5-2 Cor 12:7;
6-Dan 4:2-22; 7-2 Cor 4:4a; 8-Dan 4:16; 9-James 2:19; 10-Acts 2:38;
11-Matt 13:57a; 12-Psalm 10:4; 13-2 Tim 3:5a; 14-Dan 4:31,32; 15-Dan 4:27;
16-1 Peter 5:6; 17-2 Cor 5:19-21; 18-Dan 4:34-37.

DAY 18

THE HOLY SPIRIT OF PROMISE

The Bible teaches that the Holy Spirit is a person and is very actively involved in our lives. In fact, we would not be Christians if it hadn't been for the Spirit's conviction,¹ and we would not have a guarantee of our inheritance if it weren't for the Spirit's seal.² We have been baptized by the Spirit into the body of Christ.³ Just as the Holy Spirit brought order out of chaos in the creation account,⁴ so too He works in the life of the saints. The Holy Spirit is God,⁵ and His name is referred to in the "Great Commission".⁶

Not surprisingly, false teachers attempt to reduce the Spirit of God to a force or power. Some refer to Him as divine energy or influence, but the word of God does not say those things at all. The Holy Spirit has the attributes of a person. He has a mind⁷ that searches things out,⁸ and He has a will that is exercised in the distribution of every spiritual gift.⁹

He leads His children,¹⁰ and at times He forbids.¹¹ He speaks to us.¹² He loves us¹³ and when we shun His promptings and "do our own thing", He grieves.¹⁴ As God, He reflects the personality and attributes of God. He's everywhere;¹⁵ He's all-knowing;¹⁶ and He is all-powerful.¹⁷ The Eternal Spirit is His name!¹⁸

To think that He dwells inside of you and me is truly amazing.¹⁹ We "house" the Lord! What an awesome truth — clay pots filled with treasure.²⁰ You can be sure that if Jesus, as Son of Man, had "need" of the Holy Spirit to be upon Him,²¹ we certainly do. Before we go to evangelize, we first need to wait for the power that God's Spirit provides.²²

So, as we go about our Father's business today, may we consider that the will and ability to do the work, as well as the resulting fruit are attributable to none other than our blessed God the Spirit.²³

1-John 16:7-11; 2-Eph 1:13b-14, 2 Cor 1:22, 5:5; 3-1 Cor 12:13; 4-Gen 1:2;
5-Acts 5:3,4; 6-Matt 28:19; 7-Rom 8:27; 8-1 Cor 2:10; 9-1 Cor 12:11;
10-Rom 8:14; 11-Acts 16:6,7; 12-Acts 8:29; 13-Rom 15:30; 14-Eph 4:30;
15-Psalm 139:7; 16-1 Cor 2:10-11; 17-Rom 15:19; 18-Heb 9:14; 19-1 Cor 3:16,
6:19; 20-2 Cor 4:7; 21-Mark 1:10, Luke 4:18; 22-Luke 24:49; 23-Zech 4:6.

DAY 19

THE TRAGEDY OF A HARD HEART

In Mark 3, we have an account of a man in the synagogue on the Sabbath day, with a withered hand.¹ Note carefully that the attention of the crowd was not on the man with the withered hand, but on our Lord Jesus Christ.² According to their interpretation of the word of God, Jesus (or anyone else for that matter) had no business attempting to correct this man's condition on the Sabbath. By questioning them our Lord implies that God's will is to do good and save life, whereas their cold, rigid views were evil and lethal!³

How did this attitude of these "religious" people affect Jesus? He was angered and grieved by their hardness of heart!⁴ Whenever a religious system forbids the work of God's Spirit upon people, our Lord is grieved. Rather than rejoice in this man's wellness, the religious leaders were upset about the whole thing! If there are opportunities to help someone in need and we have the capacity to do it, but don't, the Lord is grieved⁵ because it actually displays a lack of love.⁶

Hardness of heart is the root of so many divorces.⁷ I don't know what we think we will gain by hardening our hearts toward the Lord. In fact, Job asked, "Who has hardened *himself* against Him and prospered?"⁸ This hardening of the heart is a spiritual disease that we all must fight because it is closely associated with unbelief.⁹ A hard heart heaps up "treasures" of wrath¹⁰ that often surface on our tongues.¹¹ How sad to see a person's heart become so cold that it cannot see and enjoy the miracles of God.¹² How pathetic it is to see some people harden their hearts to Christ.¹³

Saints, none of us are beyond hardening. We are told to exhort one another daily or we can be hardened by sin's deceitfulness.¹⁴ Since we are warned about hardening our hearts, it would seem that we can prevent that from happening. To keep short accounts with God¹⁵ and to continue in His word¹⁶ are two "anti-hardening" tools.

To sincerely love our Lord¹⁷ is the most important thing that each of us can do. May we, by God's grace, have soft hearts that are moved by God's Spirit rather than hardened by grievous attitudes. With so many "withered" people around us, saved and unsaved, let's not grieve God¹⁸ but give to Him our hearts through which He can move.

1-Mark 3:1; 2-Mark 3:2; 3-Mark 3:4; 4-Mark 3:5; 5-James 2:15-17;
6-1 John 3:17; 7-Matt 19:8; 8-Job 9:4; 9-Mark 16:14; 10-Rom 2:5;
11-Matt 12:34; 12-Mark 6:52; 13-Acts 19:8,9; 14-Heb 3:13; 15-1 John 1:9;
16-John 8:31; 17-Eph 6:24; 18-Eph 4:30.

DAY 20

THE CALL OF THE GOSPEL

Paul told the Thessalonian believers that they were called by the gospel.¹ The gospel means “good news”, and was the message given by the angel to the shepherds outside Bethlehem.² Notice that this good news is for all people and the source of great joy. The message that God uses to draw a person to Himself is the gospel, which is to be shared with every creature.³ Paul laid out the facts that constitute the gospel when he declared: “I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures”.⁴ This gospel is powerful⁵ because it’s a revelation of the grace of God that has sent salvation to us.⁶ You see, every religion is man’s effort to achieve salvation by reaching out to God. Only the Bible reveals a message that God reaches down to save man. “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”⁷

According to the Bible, to believe this gospel of peace constitutes obedience unto salvation,⁸ whereas to disbelieve this gospel (for whatever reason) constitutes disobedience resulting in damnation.⁹ Mankind is warned about receiving this message of the grace of God in vain,¹⁰ which means without it having any effect upon one’s life. You see, this gospel is regenerative;¹¹ it’s rebirth,¹² not rehabilitation.

The gospel that we preach is Christ-centered;¹³ in fact, it is Christ's gospel.¹⁴ If this gospel is hidden, it’s because the god of this world is blinding people to its truth and beauty.¹⁵ (Reader, is that you?) Beware of “substitute” gospels, which are not really “good news” at all!¹⁶ The gospel of Jesus Christ is not man-made;¹⁷ it’s the eternal purpose of the heart of God.¹⁸ The gospel is not trying harder or doing better, but it’s simply trusting Jesus Christ.¹⁹ We saints are to be “shod” with this peaceful message continually,²⁰ ready to answer those who ask us about our hope in Jesus.²¹

How does one respond to this gospel call? By faith.²² The gospel is for both the unrighteous and the self-righteous; in other words, sinners.²³ What is your reply?²⁴

1-2 Thess 2:14; 2-Luke 2:8-11; 3-Mark 16:15; 4-1 Cor 15:1-4; 5-Rom 1:16;
6-Titus 2:11; 7-John 3:16; 8-Rom 10:8-10,15b,16; 9-Mark 16:16; 10-2 Cor 6:1;
11-Titus 3:5; 12-John 3:3,5-7; 13-Mark 1:1; 14-2 Cor 2:12; 15-2 Cor 4:3-4;
16-Gal 1:6-9; 17-Gal 1:11,12; 18-Rev 14:6; 19-Eph 1:13a; 20-Eph 6:15;
21-1 Peter 3:15; 22-Heb 4:2; 23-1 Tim 1:15; 24-Rom 10:11-13.

DAY 21

YOU CANNOT SERVE GOD AND SELF

Jesus gave us this principle that is basic for anyone in the kingdom of God.¹ The Scripture teaches us that self-will is something with which each of us must contend.² We have a tendency to have an inflated view of ourselves.³ When a person is living for self, he thinks the whole world revolves around him and his particular needs. This is the very opposite of God's will for our lives.⁴ We can fall into this pit of self so easily — self-pity, self-defense, self-gratification. But, the more we feed self, the less there is of Christ. The crucified saint⁵ reveals Christ far more than the self-ruled saint. Mortification⁶ precedes exaltation.⁷ One of the enemy's greatest deceptions is that we can live okay while forgetting about or ignoring God.⁸ This is foolish thinking!⁹ A self-commending, self-promoting individual is never a Christ-approved individual.¹⁰

Self rules in the unsaved world and dictates how people live and think. Christ gave Himself to deliver us from this evil world system.¹¹ If we want to amount to anything in Christ's kingdom, we must first realize that we are nothing,¹² and have no ability to do His will apart from Him.¹³ While being yoked to Jesus lightens our load,¹⁴ whenever we're serving self even God's word and will become burdens or seem as intruders.

Saints, life in the Spirit is only difficult when we "play God" instead of submitting to Him. Of course there is pain involved, but that is the flesh rebelling against the Spirit.¹⁵ The walk of love is one where self is sacrificed,¹⁶ not fed.¹⁷ If Jesus loved the church so much that He would give Himself for it, can't you and I do the same?¹⁸ Self wants a reputation; servants don't.¹⁹ Self-exaltation is devilish,²⁰ and entangling oneself with this world is displeasing to the Lord!²¹ If we are to be fit for the Master's use, self must be purged,²² not pampered.

We've been redeemed from "self-service" for God's service!²³ Of course this life in the Spirit will create some opposition²⁴ because we choose to live an unspotted life.²⁵ To abide triumphantly as Jesus did, we must walk as He walked.²⁶ To be able to say from the heart, "Nevertheless, not what I will, but what You *will*", Lord²⁷ is the key to the abundant life.²⁸

In each battle, in each temptation, follow our Lord's pattern of submission — the garden, the cross, then the crown. It's the only way to serve God and defeat self.

1-Matt 6:24; 2-Titus 1:7; 3-Rom 12:3; 4-Rom 14:7,8; 5-Gal 2:20; 6-Col 3:5,8,9;
7-Matt 23:12; 8-Heb 3:12-13; 9-1:21,22; 10-2 Cor 10:18; 11-Gal 1:4;
12-Gal 6:3; 13-John 15:5; 14-Matt 11:29,30; 15-Gal 5:16,17; 16-Eph 5:2;
17-1 Peter 4:1-3; 18-Eph 5:25; 19-Phil 2:7; 20-Isaiah 14:12-14; 21-2 Tim 2:4;
22-2 Tim 2:21; 23-Titus 2:14; 24-2 Tim 3:12; 25-James 1:27; 26-1 John 2:6;
27-Mark 14:36; 28-John 10:10b.

DAY 22

TWO KINDS OF BLINDNESS

Mankind is spirit, soul and body.¹ That is, we're basically physical and spiritual in nature, and we need sight in both arenas. Our Lord Jesus is still the One who opens the eyes of the blind. It appears that when Jesus ministered on earth, whenever He heard the cry, "Have mercy on us", He responded.² Healing in both the physical and spiritual realms is God's business.³ That should be obvious.

Even though physical blindness is addressed and healed in the Scriptures,⁴ spiritual blindness is of even greater concern. The Pharisees may have had 20/20 vision physically, but they were "blind as bats" spiritually.⁵ Interestingly, after Jesus cleansed the temple in Matthew 21:12, He then stated its intended purpose as a place for prayer,⁶ and demonstrated its use as a place to open blind eyes.⁷ Satan is the one who blinds the minds of the unbelievers.⁸ Therefore, we must continue to do in our prayer lives what people did on earth 2,000 years ago, which is bring the blind to Jesus.⁹ Only the Lord can make them see.¹⁰

Blindness and unbelief go hand in hand,¹¹ as shown by Israel's rejection of Jesus as their Messiah.¹² Blindness and religion are Siamese twins.¹³ As Christians, it's vitally important for us to understand that hatred towards a fellow saint is spiritual darkness and blindness¹⁴ as well. If we are to mature in the Lord, we too must go to Jesus when we are in a state of heart hatred towards someone, and cry for mercy and healing.

Purity in heart precedes maturity in heart. Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal any blind spots in your life, and then allow the Master to change you through His written word and Spirit. When we truly see Jesus, others, and ourselves in the light of Scripture, life will be a whole lot different. Let us pray as the Psalmist: "Open my eyes, that I may see wondrous things from Your law."¹⁵

Excuse me please, I've got an eye appointment with Jesus.¹⁴ Won't you join me?

1-1 Thess 5:23; 2-Matt 9:27-30a, 20:30-34; 3-1 Cor 12:9; 4-Mark 8:22-25, Luke 7:21b; 5-Matt 15:14; 6-Matt 21:13; 7-Matt 21:14; 8-2 Cor 4:4; 9-Matt 15:30; 10-Psalm 146:8a; 11-Eph 4:18, Rom 11:25; 12-Matt 27:22-25; 13-2 Cor 3:14; 14-1 John 2:11; 15-Psalm 119:18; 16-Mark 2:17, Luke 4:18.

DAY 23

DEVELOPING FAITH

“Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”¹ Both faith unto salvation and faith unto spiritual development are the product of hearing the word of God. Of course, we readily see that this hearing is much more than audible, natural hearing. “He who has ears to hear, let him hear!”² is a reference to the hearing heart, or spirit of man. Whoever has ears to hear the word of God is any individual who receives the engrafted word,³ meditates on it,⁴ and then applies it.⁵

We must take the time to allow our spirit to “soak in” the word until it connects with our understanding.⁶ As we read our Bibles with this mindset, faith comes, or develops. “Hear Him” is the message from the Father.⁷ To not hear Jesus is the path to destruction.⁸ As believers “listen” to the voice of Scripture and establish a solid, doctrinal foundation, they experience the ongoing work of salvation in their lives.⁹

However, we must guard against developing a hard-heartedness to the word.¹⁰ We must purpose to “be swift to hear”.¹¹ We are truly blessed whenever we hear God’s word¹² through the teaching of the Holy Spirit.¹³ Saints, for God’s glory, let each of us take it to heart to hear God’s word;¹⁴ it will set us free.¹⁵ The man of wisdom hears God’s voice and sees in His word the Father’s name (nature) and rod (instruction).¹⁶ This develops faith. “Hear, O My people” is the heart cry of God¹⁷ because He knows that the just shall live, and only can live, by faith.¹⁸ When we do hear whatever God speaks, it produces not only faith, but peace.¹⁹

Oh, the sweetness of spending time with the Lord like Mary did,²⁰ hearing His word.²¹ What a way to start each day!²² Since we need faith to please God,²³ and this comes by hearing His word, a wise man will hear²⁴ this living word.²⁵

Yes, hearing and abiding in God’s word is the way to growing faith.²⁶

1-Rom 10:17; 2-Matt 11:15, 13:9; 3-James 1:21; 4-Psalm 1:1-3; 5-James 1:22;
6-Matt 13:13,14; 7-Matt 17:5, Acts 3:22; 8-Acts 3:23; 9-1 Tim 4:16;
10-Heb 3:7-8; 11-James 1:19; 12-Rev 1:3; 13-Rev 2:7a; 14-Mal 2:2;
15-John 8:31,32; 16-Micah 6:9; 17-Psalm 81:8; 18-Hab 2:4b, 2 Cor 5:7;
19-Psalm 85:8; 20-Luke 10:39; 21-Psalm 141:6b; 22-Psalm 143:8a;
23-Heb 11:6; 24-Prov 1:5; 25-Heb 4:12; 26-Prov 5:7.

DAY 24

HOW OFTEN SHOULD I FORGIVE?

The cross of Jesus Christ is the measure of forgiveness. The cry of Christ, “It is finished”,¹ means “paid in full”! Every sin was blotted out with that cry.² Recognizing and receiving forgiveness is a vital ingredient in a believer’s walk. But there’s another side to this coin. Sometimes, especially after we’ve been hurt by a fellow saint, we, like Peter, ask Jesus, “Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him?”³ Jesus then answers Peter and proceeds to teach a parable lesson about this matter of forgiveness.⁴ Take careful note of the parable because you and I are on these pages of Scripture.

Every believer has been given total and complete forgiveness in Christ.⁵ How blessed it is to be forgiven by God!⁶ Not just forgiven, but forgiven for all things!⁷ Having received forgiveness, as the parable goes on to show us, God will allow people to enter our lives who will ask us for forgiveness for things they may have said and/or done to us. Note carefully that if we do not forgive that person from our hearts,⁸ trouble lies ahead.⁹ Unforgiveness incurs the anger of the Lord. Perhaps right now you may have unforgiveness in your heart toward someone. Jesus would have you remember His cross, and His complete and unconditional forgiveness for you.¹⁰

What can an unforgiving person expect in their life? Torment.¹¹ Unforgiveness is tormenting and actually breeds fear because it is acting in an unloving way.¹² Love forgives not just one sin, but even a multitude of sins¹³ or, as Jesus said, 70 x 7 (implying that we shouldn’t be keeping count). If you are not a forgiving person, a time will come when you will need forgiveness and you will run into someone just like you. So forgive, and your forgiveness will return.¹⁴ Even if someone needs your forgiveness seven times in one day, forgiveness is not optional.¹⁵ After all, what could someone possibly do that you would not forgive them, in light of Jesus’ words on Calvary?¹⁶

Unforgiveness leaves Satan, the ultimate tormentor, an open door for attack.¹⁷ We must learn how to forgive following our Lord’s example.¹⁸ Forgiveness granted¹⁹ is the basis and building block of relationships. May each of us be as ready and willing to forgive each other²⁰ in proportion to our Lord’s great forgiveness towards us. Ask Jesus to forgive you for the sin of unforgiveness,²¹ and your ability to forgive others will rise up in your soul.

1-John 19:30; 2-Col 2:14; 3-Matt 18:21; 4-Matt 18:22-34; 5-Eph 4:32;
6-Rom 4:7,8; 7-Col 2:13; 8-Matt 18:35; 9-Mark 11:25,26; 10-Col 1:14,
Psalm 103:12; 11-Matt 18:34; 12-1 John 4:18; 13-1 Peter 4:8; 14-Luke 6:37;
15-Luke 17:3,4; 16-Luke 23:34a; 17-2 Cor 2:10,11; 18-Col 3:13;
19-John 3:16,17; 20-Psalm 86:5; 21-Hosea 14:2.

DAY 25

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

I get concerned whenever there is any movement for religious freedom under the umbrella of a secular government. Will fighting for constitutional rights really grant to born-again Christians religious freedom? Yes, we should do all that we can within the system to bring about moral changes, but you cannot legislate Christianity or morality. True freedom is found by having a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Both Paul¹ and Daniel² had as much religious freedom in prison, because of their faith, as they did out of prison, living their faith.

All government is set in place under the sovereign government of God,³ whether it be a republic, a monarchy, or a dictatorship ruling in a military state. The God of Scripture is the one who has ordained these governments, as He wills.⁴ When Peter exhorted His fellow believers to submit to their government⁵ and honor their king,⁶ he was referring to the cruel Roman government and its tyrant, Caesar! Christians should be model citizens until the government demands that they do something that would violate the law of God.⁷

Saints, our government's constitution is not our Bible. Our First Amendment protects the freedom of "religion", and that includes any cult whatsoever! Did it ever occur to you that a Christian in the Islamic state of Saudi Arabia has Romans 13 in their Bible and, like you and me, must submit to their government until it demands disobedience to God? I believe prayer is far more effective than picketing.⁸ Do you pray for our government leaders, as God says we should?

Consider how Jesus responded to his "tax bill".⁹ Remember how Jesus replied to the trick question about giving Caesar "his due".¹⁰ The only government that will truly succeed will be the Kingdom established when Jesus rules upon His throne,¹¹ during the millenium.¹² But what should we do as United States Christians, nothing? Absolutely not! We pray for our government; we exercise our constitutional rights, keeping in mind that any other religious group has a "right" to do the same. We vote, sign petitions, etc., to make our voice heard and our viewpoint known.¹³ Keep in mind, though, there is no such thing as a Christian nation; we are simply a nation with Christians in it.

If you want someone to experience religious freedom, give them the gospel. That will set everyone free.¹⁴ Governments may restrict liberty, but we need freedom from sin.¹⁵ And whosoever¹⁶ desires can have this free gift,¹⁷ no matter where they live¹⁸ and despite the government that is in place.

1-Phil 1:12-13; 2-Dan 6:16; 3-Dan 4:17,35; 4-Psalm 115:3, Rom 13:1;
5-1 Peter 2:13; 6-1 Peter 2:17; 7-Dan 6:4-10, Acts 4:18-20; 8-1 Tim 2:1-3;
9-Matt 17:24-27; 10-Matt 22:16-22; 11-Matt 19:28; 12-Rev 20:6;
13-Matt 5:14,15, Prov 29:2; 14-John 8:32,36; 15-Rom 6:18; 16-John 3:16;
17-Rom 6:23; 18-Matt 28:18,19.

DAY 26

GOOD FOR CHRIST or GOOD FOR NOTHING

Born-again Christians are ambassadors of the kingdom of God.¹ As those sent out on a life-long mission,² we represent Jesus Christ. Our feet are to be shod³ “with the preparation of the gospel of peace”.⁴

Two ingredients are necessary if we aim to be effective in serving the Lord. One is salt⁵ and the other is love.⁶ In the last two Scripture references, observe that without salt or love, we are good for nothing. Salt represents the moral preservative that a believer’s life should display. Love is to be the principle or motive behind each thing that we do in our lives.⁷

Our present world system is evil.⁸ The grace of God that brought salvation taught us that denying those lusts in the world⁹ is the salt, or flavor of heavenly living. Of course, salt stings the wound of sin, which is why the unsaved think we are strange.¹⁰ But the salt is good;¹¹ immorality is evil. Never get the two mixed up.¹²

When the salt is missing in our lives, the flavor of Christ is absent. We need salt if there is to be a difference between “us” and “them”. Biblical salt, or “salty saints” make a difference. How do you flavor your office? Young people, how do you flavor your school or college? Parents, how do you flavor your children or grandchildren? Is your speech salty,¹³ or is it a mixed fountain?¹⁴

The other element we need in our lives is love; not mere human love, but the love of Christ!¹⁵ His love is that which never fails¹⁶ and is ever present in our lives.¹⁷ A loveless life is so tragic; it refuses to cover a multitude of sins¹⁸ or, when necessary, confront them.¹⁹ Love is representative of God’s Spirit²⁰ and nature.²¹

May our Mighty God make each of us salt and fill us with the love of Christ that we need as His ambassadors²² because apart from them, we are good for nothing.

1-2 Cor 5:20; 2-Matt 28:19-20, 10:16; 3-Rom 10:15; 4-Eph 6:15; 5-Matt 5:13; 6-1 Cor 13:2; 7-2 Cor 5:14; 8-Gal 1:4; 9-Titus 2:11-14; 10-1 Peter 4:4; 11-Mark 9:50; 12-Isaiah 5:20; 13-Col 4:6; 14-James 3:11,12; 15-1 John 3:16; 16-1 Cor 13:8a; 17-Rom 8:38-39; 18-1 Peter 4:8; 19-Gal 2:11; 20-Gal 5:22; 21-1 John 4:7,8; 22-1 John 4:11.

DAY 27

RECEIVE ONE ANOTHER

There are many references to “one another” found in the New Testament. One is located in Romans 15:7 and is the title of today’s devotional. Notice that the same verse tells us that we are to receive (which means to take in, like a wide receiver takes in the football) one another as Christ received us. The Scriptures proclaim that Jesus received us when we were weak and ungodly, still sinners and His enemies!¹ Not only that, but we were “dead in trespasses and sins,” influenced by the devil, and enslaved to our own lusts.² This was the condition each of us were in when we became “born again”³ In the presence of Almighty God every person is either a publican or a Pharisee.⁴

Now, how does this tie in with receiving one another? Simply in this way: from personal experience and observation, many people in the body of Christ have, in effect, substituted the word “receive” with the word “tolerate”. To tolerate means “to put up with; stomach; endure”. Tell me, saint, is that how you see Jesus receiving you? Is He merely stomaching you; putting up with, and enduring you? No! He is merciful⁵ and long suffering⁶ with each of us. After all, each of us is “under construction” aren’t we?⁷ To my knowledge, none have arrived.⁸ No matter how long we’ve been walking with the Lord, each of us still has dark spots and rough edges that need the grace and power of God to forgive⁹ and change.

Are you a good listener? Do people in the body get refreshed by you, or do you drain others? I should receive you like Christ received me. I should forgive you as Christ forgave me.¹⁰ However, “should” and “do” are two different words, with two different outcomes. To receive one another unconditionally makes us “doers of the word, and not hearers only”.¹¹ Yes, there might be some friction¹² and a little “jabbing”¹³ from time to time, but since my Lord has received you, so can I. And you can do the same with me. This will require “Christ-likeness”,¹⁴ but that’s the beauty of it all.

To walk like Jesus¹⁵ requires my being able to receive all kinds of people. This is evidence of saving faith¹⁶ and a changed heart.¹⁷

1-Rom 5:6,8,10; 2-Eph 2:1-3; 3-John 3:5-7; 4-Luke 18:9-14; 5-2 Cor 1:3;
6-2 Peter 3:9; 7-Phil 2:13; 8-Phil 3:12; 9-1 John 1:7; 10-Eph 4:32;
11-James 1:22; 12-Prov 27:17; 13-Prov 27:6a; 14-Matt 11:29, Eph 4:2;
15-1 John 2:6; 16-Eph 1:13; 17-1 John 3:14a.

DAY 28

THE LORD MY STRENGTH

The Bible tells us what the last days will be like on earth,¹ and we certainly can see the growing display of these evils today. Of course, we all have to deal with temptation² and enemy attacks.³ However, in spite of all of this, the children of God are given the Holy Spirit to enable us to walk in victory.⁴

When Jehovah delivered Israel out of Egypt, Scripture says that He made them stronger than their enemies.⁵ Dear saints, no weapon formed against you shall prosper⁶ either. Our God is keeping us by His power.⁷ In fact, He is upholding each one of us right at this very moment.⁸ Of course there are struggles and

battles in this life;⁹ nevertheless, Jesus Christ is our strength to endure and overcome.¹⁰ He equips us with strength¹¹ in our inner man.¹² What a blessing to know that “the LORD is the strength of my life,”¹³ and when my strength level is low, He will replenish it.¹⁴

We must recognize the fact that unconfessed iniquity will cause us to be weak in spirit.¹⁵ But we can repent and, with fresh forgiveness,¹⁶ go forward in the Lord. As you wait patiently at the feet of Jesus, He will renew your strength - guaranteed.¹⁷ Without the Lord’s enabling, however, nothing can be done;¹⁸ but “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”¹⁹

Saint, are you in trouble? The strength of the Lord will sustain you.²⁰ Whatever you may be doing or wherever you may be going after you read this article, go in His strength.²¹ Oh how God loves to demonstrate His strength in our weaknesses!²² Put the little strength²³ that you have in the Master’s hands and acknowledge, along with the saints in glory, the strength of the Lamb in your life today.²⁴ Feed upon the strength of the Lord daily,²⁵ then go in the victory of faith in Jesus.²⁶

Each one of us can count on the LORD to supply the strength we need day by day.²⁷ Therefore, let us walk upon those high places of worship and fellowship with the Lord²⁸ each and every day.

1-2 Tim 3:1-5a; 2-1 Cor 10:13; 3-1 Peter 5:8; 4-1 John 4:4; 5-Psalm 105:24;
6-Isaiah 54:17; 7-1 Peter 1:5; 8-Heb 1:3; 9-John 16:33b; 10-Psalm 18:1-3;
11-Psalm 18:32; 12-Eph 3:16; 13-Psalm 27:1; 14-Psalm 29:11; 15-Psalm 31:10;
16-1 John 1:9; 17-Isaiah 40:29-31; 18-John 15:5; 19-Phil 4:13; 20-Psalm 37:39;
21-Psalm 71:16a; 22-2 Cor 12:9; 23-Rev 3:8; 24-Rev 5:12; 25-Micah 5:4a;
26-1 John 5:4; 27-Deut 33:25b; 28-Hab 3:19.

DAY 29

SAVED TO SERVE

A basic truth needs to be fully understood if we, as disciples of Jesus Christ, intend to mature in our walk, and that is this: we did not come to Christ that we may continue running our lives, nor did He grant us so great a salvation¹ so that we could go on serving ourselves.² Salvation is an exchanged life, a transfer of ownership. Whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord.³ He has paid the price for our eternal soul and it is He who owns us, not ourselves.⁴

Secondly, salvation is a call to service. Believers have been purged in their conscience from dead, meaningless, ritualistic works in order to serve the living God.⁵ Whereas many people believe that by their works God would save them, Scripture declares just the opposite.⁶ However, the effect of true salvation will be the service of God by good works.⁷

The Thessalonians were idolators who gave their hearts to Jesus and, as a result, began a life of serving their King.⁸ The Gentiles in Corinth also lived their lives, before Christ, serving idols,⁹ as did the Galatians.¹⁰ Jesus told Satan face to face that it has always been the purpose of man to serve his Creator only.¹¹ To serve God is not a duty, nor is it a punishment; rather, it's a divine opportunity to be like Jesus.¹² To serve Jesus daily requires following (imitating) Him, and will result in honor.¹³

Paul the apostle formerly served a religious system and tradition¹⁴ but, after meeting Christ, he then served Him.¹⁵ Can we say before God that we are servants¹⁶ of Jesus Christ unconditionally?¹⁷ We've been freed from self-service to Son-service.¹⁸ This love from above also changes our attitudes towards others, doesn't it? I no longer want to use you; I want to serve you.¹⁹

Saints, remove those shackles of "self" and realize that you serve the Lord Christ.²⁰ That service includes prayer for one another.²¹ With a motive of love,²² may we today "serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear."²³ A "faith" that fails to produce service is a fraud.²⁴

1-Heb 2:3; 2-2 Cor 5:15; 3-Rom 14:7-9; 4-1 Cor 6:19,20; 5-Heb 9:14;
6-Eph 2:8,9; 7-James 2:18,26; 8-1 Thess 1:9; 9-1 Cor 12:2; 10-Gal 4:8;
11-Matt 4:10; 10-Mark 10:44,45; 13-John 12:26; 14-Phil 3:4-6; 15-Acts 27:23;
16-Rom 1:9; 17-Phil 1:1a; 18-Rom 6:6, 11-13; 19-Gal 5:13; 20-Col 3:24b;
21-2 Tim 1:3; 22-2 Cor 5:14; 23-Heb 12:28; 24-Titus 2:13-14.

DAY 30

BABY or LORD?

For too many people, Christmas simply means the baby Jesus in a manger. This same Jesus, however, is known by numerous other titles, some of which are the following, Jesus is: Shiloh,¹ Passover² Lamb,³ Captain of the Lord's Host,⁴ Kinsman Redeemer (pictured by Boaz in the book of Ruth), Seed of David (typified by Solomon),⁵ Wonderful, Counselor, Prince of Peace,⁶ the Everlasting One,⁷ the Desire of all Nations,⁸ King of the Jews,⁹ the Word,¹⁰ God of all comfort,¹¹ Savior,¹² Chief Shepherd,¹³ Beloved Son,¹⁴ Lion of Judah.¹⁵ It is this Jesus that makes every day special!

As you can see, Jesus Christ is more than a baby, "away in a manger". To truly celebrate Christmas a person must know Christ. Without Christ, any day of the year is hopeless and just a frustrating exercise of existence.¹⁶ Of course, Jesus did come to this earth.¹⁷

Interestingly, some of the first people to see the One who is our Great Shepherd¹⁸ were lowly shepherds themselves.¹⁹ An angel of the Lord had declared that the arrival of this Baby was a message of great joy!²⁰ The joyful message is that through Him we would receive forgiveness of sins.²¹ Now, the door of salvation is opened to those who confess Him as Lord.²²

Indeed, the gift we receive through Christ is eternal life.²³ To miss out on this gift is to miss the greatest gift that a person could imagine.²⁴ My prayer is that whatever veil that is over your heart today would be removed so that you might come to know the One who loves you and laid down His life for you.²⁵

Jesus is the Father's gift to the world.²⁶ If you open your heart to Him today, with true repentance, you will never be the same²⁷ ... and neither will Christmas, or any other day.²⁸

1-Gen 49:10; 2-1 Cor 5:7b; 3-John 1:36; 4-Joshua 5:14; 5-2 Sam 7:12,13;
6-Isaiah 9:6; 7-Micah 5:2; 8-Haggai 2:7; 9-Matt 2:2; 10-John 1:1; 11-2 Cor 1:3;
12-1 Tim 1:15; 13-1 Peter 5:4; 14-2 Peter 1:17; 15-Rev 5:5; 16-Eccl 1:2,3;
17-John 3:17; 18-Heb 13:20; 19-Luke 2:15,16; 20-Luke 2:10; 21-Acts 13:38;
22-Rom 10:9,10; 23-Rom 6:23; 24-Psalm 32:1,2; 25-Heb 2:9; 26-John 3:16;
27-2 Cor 5:17; 28-Lam 3:22,23.

DAY 31

WHICH YOKE?

Almost one-third of the books in the Bible mention a yoke and often the reference is figurative or symbolic, necessitating the knowledge that a literal yoke is a wooden frame, fitted across the neck of two animals, that joins them together.

Man, by birth, is yoked to this fallen world system.¹ This system is symbolized by the nation of Egypt in the Old Testament.² Please observe that in the verse just quoted, God declares that fallen man is by nature a bondsman, or slave, to Egypt. The only way that we can become “unyoked” from the world is by coming to Jesus Christ and taking His yoke upon us.³

The Lord invites us to become joined with Him and receive the blessings of His kingdom.⁴ However, when we make foolish choices and compromises with the world, we often find ourselves yoked to it again with the result being spiritual hunger, thirst and emptiness.⁵ That is not the normal Christian walk.⁶ We are not called to flip-flop between two kingdoms! We are to wear either the yoke of the world, which is death, or the yoke of Christ, which is life.⁷

Whatever is our passion in life becomes our yoke. Some people are yoked to sports, others to music. “Lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God” is a yoke indicating that you and I are in the last days.⁸ Beware because a legalist will try to yoke you to commandments of men,⁹ while a “wolf in sheep’s clothing”¹⁰ will attempt to yoke you to doctrines of devils and seducing spirits.¹¹

What can remove and destroy these various yokes? The anointing of God’s Spirit.¹² God’s Spirit teaches us His word¹³ which, when received with meekness,¹⁴ produces the liberty that Jesus promised.¹⁵ And God’s deliverance is from every yoke!¹⁶

The earlier a person yokes to Christ the better.¹⁷ For those of you still unconverted, the love of Jesus is drawing you¹⁸ so that you may drop the yoke of bondage and enjoy the beauty of His goodness.¹⁹ Child of God, stand fast in the liberty of Christ.²⁰ Only HIS yoke is easy!²¹

Reader, which yoke do you wear? Which master do you serve?²²

1-Eph 2:1-3; 2-Lev 26:13; 3-Matt 11:28,29; 4-Luke 18:28-30; 5-Deut 28:48;
6-John 6:35; 7-John 10:10; 7-2 Tim 3:4; 9-Matt 15:9; 10-2 Peter 2:1;
11-1 Tim 4:1; 12-Isaiah 10:27; 13-1 John 2:20,27; 14-James 1:21;
15-John 8:31,32; 16-Isaiah 58:6; 17-Lam 3:27; 18-Hosea 11:4; 19-Psalm 34:8;
20-Gal 5:1; 21-Matt 11:30; 22-Matt 6:24.

NOTES

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