



A BROKEN VESSEL

By

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Dear Saints in Christ Jesus,

These notes were taken from our Old Testament 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 simply 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 blessing of God be shed upon you as you receive, with meekness, His engrafted Word.

Selah,

Pastor Ray

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DAY 1

JESUS, OUR EXAMPLE OF BEING A SERVANT

Foundation Texts: Mark 10:35-45

To begin with, it is important that we have a Biblical definition of the word servant, or “duolos” in the Greek, used here in verse 45: “One who gives himself up to another’s will; someone devoted to another to the disregard of one’s own interests.” A doulos then describes a person whose life is consecrated to Jesus Christ and then used by Christ in extending and advancing His cause among men.

It is interesting that in this section where the question is asked and then answered about greatness in the Kingdom, Jesus does not discourage the desire to be great; rather, He defines it.

So, in His teaching about greatness, we are really being taught a lesson on the nature of Jesus because He is, and always will be, the greatest in the Kingdom of God. In the Kingdom of God, the “power pyramid” of the world is inverted. The order is reversed. In the Kingdom of God, authority is on the bottom. In the kingdom of God, the greater the authority, the larger the towel.

So vital is this servant attitude, or the mind of Christ (**Phil 2:3-8**), that our lives will be borderline boring until we come to the place where we choose to imitate our Master and be the servant of all. (April 8th, “Our Daily Bread” lesson on serving.)

JESUS, OUR EXAMPLE OF SERVING:

Isaiah 42:1 Behold My Servant (*a servant of the Lord does not serve man*) whom I uphold (*a servant of the Lord is held up by His strength*), My elect, *in whom* My soul delights (*a servant of the Lord delights the heart of His Master*); I have put My Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth judgment to the Gentiles.

:2 He will not cry, nor lift up, nor cause His voice to be heard in the street (*a servant of the Lord does not draw attention to himself/herself*).

:3 A bruised reed He will not break, and smoking flax He will not quench; He will bring forth justice for truth (*the Lord’s servant is compassionate*).

:4 He will not fail nor be discouraged (*the Lord’s servant is optimistic*), till He has established justice in the earth; and the isles shall wait for His law.

DAY 2

ACTIVE FAITH AND A HEALTHY BODY

No doubt, Paul was a wonderful servant of the Lord Jesus. However, even Paul learned the valuable lesson that no child of God can ever walk with Jesus effectively as a “lone ranger”. We find in Acts 20:4 that other “living stones”¹ accompanied Paul on his journeys. At the end of some of his letters, he records a list of faithful brothers and sisters that made a vital impact on his life and ministry.²

Fellowship with our Lord³ and one another⁴ is vital for one’s spiritual health and well-being. The Church is a living body, composed of many parts⁵ and talents.⁶ Thus, terms like “superstar” or “hero” find no place in Holy Scripture, unless they point to our Lord Jesus Christ. In a practical sense, we need one another. There are no unnecessary parts in the body of Christ.⁷ So, you are an important part in the body. Your faithfulness to Jesus⁸ and a holy life⁹ enables the body to be healthy.

Never underestimate the power of your prayers¹⁰ or encouragement of others.¹¹ Every time saints gather together, there is the potential for a wonderful exchange of gifts.¹² Stir up that gift of God within you today, and do not let fear hold you back.¹³ Inasmuch as we do these things to one another, we’ve done it to Jesus.¹⁴ Seize those opportunities to do good to one another¹⁵ today.

1-1 Peter 2:5; 2-Rom 16:3-15, Col 4:7-14; 3-1 Cor 1:9; 4-1 John 1:3; 5-1 Cor 12:12; 6-1 Peter 4:10,11; 7-1 Cor 12:15,16,21; 8-1 Cor 4:2; 9-2 Cor 7:2; 10-James 5:16; 11-Acts 4:36, 9:26-28; 12-Heb 10:24; 13-2 Tim 1:6,7; 14-Matt 25:40; 15-Gal 6:10.

DAY 3

I HAVE PURCHASED YOU

Redemption is the theme of Scripture. From the early chapters in Genesis¹ right on through the Book of Revelation,² the thought of the guilty being set free at the expense of the innocent is clear.³

Take a look at how this theme of redemption is recorded in the book of Ruth, especially in chapter 4. Indeed, redemption is a romantic affair (as is also seen in the Song of Solomon). Boaz, a type of Christ, declared, "I purchased (Ruth) to be my wife".⁴ The word "purchase" implies a price was paid. Paul writes that we were bought with a price,⁵ and Jesus Himself declared that His very life would be the ransom payment.⁶ How vital it is to see that redemption is in Christ Jesus⁷ alone, and in nothing or no one else.⁸ "For there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."⁹

Because it is the work of God that places us in Christ, apart from our own works (good or bad),¹⁰ He receives all the glory.¹¹ It is by faith that we are the children of God,¹² and now we are His workmanship!¹³ Because Jesus paid the price for us,¹⁴ our lives belong to Him.¹⁵

May our remembrance of the cost for our forgiveness¹⁶ encourage us to adore and trust our Lord Jesus today for our present needs¹⁷ as well as for our future.¹⁸

1-Gen 3:15,21, 22:6-14; 2-Rev 5:9; 3-Heb 9:12-15; 4-Ruth 4:10;
5-1 Cor 6:20; 6-Mark 10:45; 7-Rom 3:24; 8-Psalm 49:7-9; 9-Acts 4:12;
10-2 Tim 1:9; 11-1 Cor 1:30,31; 12-Gal 3:26; 13-Eph 2:10;
14-1 Cor 6:20; 15-2 Cor 5:15; 16-2 Cor 5:21; 17-Titus 2:14;
18-Psalm 49:15.

DAY 4

“STAR-STRUCK”

Our society is stuck on stars, for example, rock stars, movie stars. Some people even “follow” the stars in the heavens to supposedly determine their futures (via horoscopes). How true God’s word is when it writes about people worshiping and serving the creature more than, or rather than, the Creator.¹ The stars in the heavens are the work of God’s fingers.² He even numbers each and every one of them³ and calls them by name.⁴

On the human level, history has had a parade of stars or heroes, some no doubt more worthy of honor and acclaim than others. However, there is one Star⁵ that shines brighter than them all, and that is the Bright and Morning Star, Jesus Christ.⁶ Other “lights” come and go; however, His light is necessary for life.⁷

To follow Jesus is to walk in His light, enjoying wonderful fellowship and cleansing from sin.⁸ So let’s set our “telescopes” once again upon Jesus Christ. While there’s nothing wrong with a scientific study of stellar constellations, may we even more diligently seek Him who made them all!⁹ May we remember the Star whose light delivered us out of darkness and death.¹⁰

In fresh surrender to Jesus, may our lives reflect His light and grace and bring Him the glory due His name.¹¹ “Come and let us walk in the light of the LORD.”¹²

1-Rom 1:25; 2-Psalm 8:3; 3-Psalm 147:3; 4-Isaiah 40:26; 5-Num 24:17; 6-Rev 22:16; 7-John 8:12; 8-1 John 1:7; 9-Job 9:9; 10-Matt 4:16; 11-Matt 5:16; 12-Isaiah 2:5.

DAY 5

LIFESTYLE EVANGELISM

We see in our texts today Paul's desire to "go the extra mile"¹ in order to win his fellow Jews to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.² In fact, Paul was willing to go to any length in order to share the gospel with anyone who would listen.³ Every member in the body of Christ is called to be a witness⁴ and winner of souls.⁵

However, if there is going to be substance to our message, our lives must reflect the message that we proclaim.⁶ Our lifestyle is to be a living example of the faith we claim to possess.⁷

To be salt and light⁸ requires a holy walk,⁹ which enables us to share our faith confidently with others. We need to constantly remind ourselves that being a soul-winner¹⁰ is a matter of both walk and talk.¹¹ To win others to Christ, we first must be won over by Jesus ourselves.

Is Jesus your first love?¹² Is Jesus your life?¹³ May we demonstrate a kingdom attitude¹⁴ that reflects a life that has been translated from darkness into His marvelous light.¹⁵ Then our "shining" in Christ will be used to turn others to righteousness¹⁶ through faith in Jesus.¹⁷

1-Matt 5:41; 2-1 Cor 9:19-20; 3-1 Cor 9:21-23; 4-Acts 1:8;
5-Matt 10:27; 6-Phil 1:27; 7-1 Tim 4:12; 8-Matt 5:13-16;
9-1 Peter 1:15; 10-Prov 11:30b; 11-Col 4:5,6; 12-Rev 2:4; 13-Col 3:4;
14-Matt 5:3-12; 15-1 Peter 2:9; 16-Dan 12:3; 17-Acts 26:15-18.

DAY 6

CONTRASTS IN CHRIST

Terminology is so important in the life of faith. For example, how do you apply the words of Jesus, “My yoke is easy and my burden is light”¹ to the life of the apostle Paul? Outwardly speaking, Paul’s life was anything but easy and light.²

You see, it is only by allowing Scripture to interpret Scripture that we can understand the Christian life. Our faith is a mysterious balance of joy and trials,³ grace and weakness,⁴ comfort and tribulation.⁵ Yet, in spite of all that the world throws at us, in Jesus Christ, we have this tremendous promise of peace.⁶

Life’s problems are inevitable, inescapable. However, life and blessings are likewise true. Each of us experience the various seasons of life,⁷ but it is vital for us to look beyond the temporal to the eternal.⁸ We need to “see” the invisible, as citizens of heaven,⁹ if we are to overcome this present evil world.¹⁰

Don’t be weary in well doing,¹¹ dear child of God. Repeatedly Jesus assures us that He is coming quickly.¹² Keep fighting that good fight of faith,¹³ and the Lord will fight for you.¹⁴

1-Matt 11:28-30; 2-2 Cor 11:23-28; 3-James 1:2; 4-2 Cor 12:9;
5-2 Cor 1:3,4; 6-John 16:33, 14:27; 7-Ecc 3:1-8; 8-2 Cor 4:16-18;
9-Heb 11:13; 10-Gal 1:4; 11-2 Thes 3:13, Gal 6:9; 12-Rev 22:7,12,20;
13-1 Tim 6:12; 14-Deut 3:22.

DAY 7

CHOSEN OF GOD

The dictionary says that the word chosen means, “selected from or preferred above others.” The Greek word means “elected or selected.” Each child of God is a chosen vessel, and every election or choosing for eternal life is in Jesus Christ.¹ You can be sure that no human being could or would be chosen outside of Christ, “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”² Furthermore, God’s redemptive plan predates time as we know it.³

We are chosen, but we are chosen in the Lord, as was brother Rufus.⁴ It is truly humbling to read about the people God chooses.⁵ It is even more amazing to read that we have been chosen to bear enduring fruit⁶ and to “proclaim the praises of Him who called (us) out of darkness into His marvelous light.”⁷

To be a chosen vessel⁸ means that our “exodus” is out of this fallen world system⁹ which is now being run by the wicked one himself.¹⁰ Consequently, we are now in a war¹¹ which requires us to be good soldiers.¹²

Our election is a total work of the grace of God.¹³ Have you chosen the way of truth?¹⁴ Have you chosen to live according to God’s precepts?¹⁵ To serve Jesus is a choice.¹⁶ To fear God is a choice.¹⁷ Praise God for His gift of eternal life!¹⁸

1-Eph 1:4; 2-Rom 3:23; 3-Rev 13:8; 4-Rom 16:13a; 5-1 Cor 1:27-28, James 2:5; 6-John 15:16; 7-1 Peter 2:9; 8-Acts 9:15; 9-John 15:19; 10-1 John 5:19; 11-1 John 2:15; 12-2 Tim 2:3,4; 13-2 Tim 1:9; 14-Psalm 119:30, John 14:6; 15-Psalm 119:173; 16-Joshua 24:15; 17-Prov 1:29; 18-Rom 6:23

DAY 8

WHAT GRACE TEACHES US

The Lord's Supper and grace go hand in hand. Jesus, by the grace of God, has tasted death for every man.¹ Jesus Christ, Grace Incarnate,² has shed His blood of redemption for us, according to the riches of His grace.³ Our salvation rests solely upon the grace⁴ and purpose⁵ of God.

Because of God's grace and by this grace believers receive the free gift of salvation, resulting in our justification.⁶ This means that God now sees us as if we had never sinned! But this is not true for those who deny Jesus and abuse His grace.⁷

Therefore, we must never interpret the freeness of God's grace as a license to sin so that grace may abound. God forbid!⁸ Grace doesn't teach us that sin is acceptable and not serious. On the contrary, grace reveals itself in a changed life.⁹ This is a process, a progressive change, no doubt,¹⁰ but a change none-the-less.¹¹

To see no change in a person's life after "receiving Jesus" could indicate that they have received the grace of God in vain.¹² I thank God for His promise that His grace is more than sufficient in spite of my human weaknesses!¹³ It is the empowering grace of God that enables me to walk with Jesus every day.¹⁴ His grace is there for you and me whenever we are in need.¹⁵

As we submit to the Lordship of Jesus Christ, He grants us His mighty grace.¹⁶ As we break bread together, may our gracious and compassionate Lord¹⁷ draw us closer to Him, and by doing so, enable us to walk in the way that grace teaches us to walk.¹⁸

1-Heb 2:9; 2-John 1:14,17; 3-Eph 1:7; 4-Eph 2:5-9; 5-2 Tim 1:9;
6-Rom 5:15,16; 7-Jude 4; 8-Rom 6:1,2; 9-2 Cor 5:17; 10-1 Thess 2:13;
11-Gal 6:14; 12-2 Cor 6:1; 13-2 Cor 12:9; 14-1 Cor 15:10;
15-Heb 4:16; 16-1 Peter 5:5,6; 17-Psalm 111:4; 18-Titus 2:11-13.

DAY 9

THE CALL TO BAPTISM

Scripture speaks of the doctrine of baptisms, plural.¹ One of those baptisms is by immersion into water, following one's profession of faith in Jesus Christ. First believe and then be baptized in water is the sacred order.² It's important to realize that baptism, in and of itself, doesn't save us.

The 3,000 on Pentecost repented and were saved before they were water baptized,³ as was the case of Cornelius' household.⁴ In baptism, there is the symbolizing of death to the old life of sin⁵ and a resurrection into a new life in Jesus Christ.⁶ Thus, infant baptism is not the time of a person's new birth, as some believe, because there can be no repentance or sense of need on the part of the infant for the saving grace of Jesus Christ.

Yes, there is to be a childlike demeanor when we enter the kingdom of God,⁷ but we do not enter the kingdom of God as infants biologically. As heart circumcision proved physical circumcision to be valid,⁸ so does the regenerating work of God's Holy Spirit⁹ make the act of water baptism valid.¹⁰

Believe and be baptized,¹¹ then teach this pattern wherever you go.¹²

1-Heb 6:2; 2-Acts 8:37,38; 3-Acts 2:38; 4-Acts 10:44-48; 5-Rom 6:3-7;
6-2 Cor 5:17; 7-Matt 18:2-4; 8-Rom 2:28-29; 9-Titus 3:5;
10-1 Peter 3:21; 11-Mark 16:16; 12-Matt 28:19.

DAY 10

GUIDANCE THROUGH PRAYER

If Paul was left to minister according to his own understanding, I doubt he would have been as fruitful as he was.¹ Paul was convinced that if anybody could reach his fellow Jews, it was he. After all he had the top notch Rabbinic Scholar as his mentor.² Nobody could have fit the Orthodox mold more than Paul.³

Yet, Jesus had other plans for Paul as far as ministry was concerned.⁴ It was no accident that Paul was a man of prayer; so much so that he could call “God to the stand” as a witness to his prayer life.⁵ In his prayer closet,⁶ Jesus revealed to Paul His purpose for him in ministry.⁷

How vital it is for us to remember the exhortation to seek the Lord’s face in prayer.⁸ It is in seeking the Lord, that we find His will for our lives.⁹ It is in seeking the Lord¹⁰ that we obtain the mind of the Spirit.¹¹ Jesus is still building His Church,¹² so we must continue to seek His face.¹³

Be careful not to contend with the One¹⁴ without whom we can do nothing.¹⁵ We are most effective when God’s ability flows through our availability to enact His eternal plans and purposes. The most important ingredient in prayer is listening for and attending to the Lord’s voice.¹⁶

1-Prov 3:5; 2-Acts 22:3; 3-Phil 3:4-6; 4-Acts 9:15,16; 5-Rom 1:9;
6-Matt 6:6; 7-Rom 1:1, Eph 3:7,8; 8-Psalm 27:8; 9-Matt 7:7,8;
10-Isaiah 55:6; 11-Rom 8:27; 12-Matt 16:18; 13-2 Chron 7:14;
14-Job 40:2; 10-John 15:5; 16-John 10:27.

DAY 11

GUESS WHO'S LOOKING?

Scripture reveals an amazing audience observing the activity of man upon the earth. Hebrews speaks about a great cloud of witnesses.¹ The unequally yoked wife is being observed by her unsaved husband.² Our employers, both saved and unsaved are watching.³ The devil is looking for someone to sift⁴ and devour.⁵ The Lord God is looking for true worshipers⁶ and those who will be about His business.⁷

Whew! On top of that, God's Word itself leaves us naked and open before Him!⁸ Is it any wonder that we are exhorted to consider our ways?⁹ Can it be that we are, in many ways, the least inclined to watch our steps? Every day there is so much at stake. Every day there are many choices that we make in the way we think and in the things we say and do.

In all of this, there is an audience observing our ways. Biblically, it is impossible for a person to be alone. Yes, we may have those seasons when we experience the absence of human companionship, but we are never unobserved. Our activity attracts attention. Fleshly activity and the corrupting work of the devil go hand in hand. Spirit-filled activity and the fruit of the Spirit¹⁰ do the same.¹¹

May we purpose to walk with God today.¹² May we purpose to walk by faith and not by sight.¹³ Put on Christ today.¹⁴ If you're not looking for Jesus,¹⁵ you're looking for trouble.¹⁶

1-Heb 12:1; 2-1 Peter 3:1-2; 3-1 Peter 2:18,19; 4-Luke 22:31;
5-1 Peter 5:8; 6-John 4:20-24; 7-Isaiah 6:8; 8-Heb 4:12,13;
9-Haggai 1:5; 10-Gal 5:22-23; 11-Gal 6:7,8; 12-Micah 6:8;
13-2 Cor 5:7; 14-Rom 13:11-14; 15-Titus 2:11-14; 16-Luke 12:45-46.

DAY 12

BE OF GOOD CHEER

Paul had probably gone through one of the most frustrating ministry times in his life when Jesus appeared to him and told him, “Be of good cheer”.¹ In other words what Jesus was saying was: “Don’t condemn yourself, Paul, because things did not go the way you thought they should. Don’t let depression and frustration get the best of you.” What a comforting, compassionate Lord we serve! In the midst of a total “bummer” moment, Jesus showed up with a word not only of encouragement, but also of further ministry directive.

Failure and frustration are inevitable in the Christian life. We may feel like throwing in the proverbial towel, but may these words of Jesus to Paul minister to your heart today. Be of good cheer! The word cheer can also mean courage. Jesus is “on the scene” today, saints. He is right there with you in the midst of your valley,² your trouble,³ your need.⁴

Is your heart troubled today?⁵ Jesus would say to you, “I am here; be of good cheer.” Jesus is working in you in a most wonderful way.⁶ Worship Him throughout your day⁷ and thank Him for His eternal purpose in your life.⁸ In spite of conflicting emotions or challenging circumstances, choose to be of good cheer. Abide under the shadow of the Almighty.⁹

May His might¹⁰ be your source of strength¹¹ and cheer¹² each and every day.

1-Acts 23:11; 2-Psalm 23:4; 3-Psalm 46:1; 4-Heb 4:16; 5-John 14:1;
6-Rom 8:28; 7-Heb 13:15; 8-Jer 29:11; 9-Psalm 91:1; 10-Psalm 93:4;
11-Phil 4:13; 12-John 16:33.

DAY 13

THE SACRIFICE THAT UNITES

As we break bread together today, may we not overlook the fact that we do so as one body.¹ Paul told the church at Corinth that they were part of the one body of Christ.² There is only one body,³ and one Head⁴ over this body⁵ and that is Jesus Christ. The primary focus of the Lord's table is Jesus Christ, symbolized by the bread and the cup.⁶

However any atmosphere of division, heresy, or carnality⁷ within the body can have devastating effects.⁸ Division within the body⁹ grieves the Spirit of God.¹⁰ Envy and strife within the body also grieve the Spirit of God.¹¹

Therefore, each of us needs to examine our own heart concerning attitudes towards others before we eat of the bread and drink the cup.¹² A divided body is sure to fall.¹³

Communion provides us the opportunity to “nip in the bud” those seeds or roots of division. May we be cleansed afresh today¹⁴ from all filthiness of flesh and spirit.¹⁵ May that precious unity¹⁶ in Jesus¹⁷ flow in and through every heart today. Oh, that God's Spirit would knit together each prayer, gift, and deed to “glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”¹⁸

May God's love and vision enable each of us to display that precious unity that Jesus died for!

1-1 Cor 10:17; 2-1 Cor 12:13; 3-Eph 4:4; 4-Col 1:18; 5-Eph 1:22-23;
6-1 Cor 11:24,25; 7-1 Cor 11:18-22; 8-1 Cor 11:29,30; 9-1 Cor 1:10-13;
10-Eph 4:29-32; 11-1 Cor 3:3,4; 12-1 Cor 11:28; 13-Matt 12:25;
14-1 John 1:7; 15-2 Cor 7:1; 16-Psalm 133:1; 17-John 17:18-26;
18-Rom 15:6.

DAY 14

SOVEREIGN PROTECTION

I am glad that I do not know everything that lies ahead. I'd much rather walk by faith than by sight.¹ A couple of days ago in the book of Acts, we saw Jesus encouraging Paul to be of good cheer.² Not only were those words of Jesus spoken to encourage Paul because of what had happened to him, but also to prepare him for what was ahead. Paul's enemies wanted to kill him, but Jesus had a plan of protection that Paul could never have concocted.

Your Lord Jesus is for you, so who can be against you?³ That is the truth! No matter what odds appear to be against you, the living God of heaven and earth⁴ is your shield.⁵ He declares the end from the beginning, and assures us, "My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure."⁶ He governs the heart of man⁷ to show to His servants⁸ a token of favor for good.⁹ Your future is as bright as the promises of God, "For all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us."¹⁰

Yes, we have an adversary that is out to devour us,¹¹ but for the abiding,¹² obedient child of God,¹³ we have a Captain of Protection¹⁴ standing before us!

1-2 Cor 5:7; 2-Acts 23:11; 3-Rom 8:31; 4-Joshua 2:11; 5-Gen 15:1;
6-Isaiah 46:10; 7-Prov 21:1; 8-Rom 1:1; 9-Psalm 86:17; 10-2 Cor 1:20;
11-1 Peter 5:8; 12-John 15:4-11; 13-1 Peter 1:14; 14-Joshua 5:13-15.

DAY 15

THE INSTRUCTION OF WISDOM

Scripture tells us that God's wisdom cries out to mankind every day.¹ The instruction of this wisdom is to fear the Lord and to walk in humility.² Jesus modeled both of these qualities as Son of Man.³ The effect of this wisdom is in stark contrast to the unsanctified wisdom of this world's systems.⁴

Once again, we see the wisdom that we speak of being found exclusively in the person of Jesus Christ.⁵ So, it is wise to walk as Jesus walked.⁶ Jesus put this truth plainly when He said, "Follow Me."⁷ Although it is unquestionably wise to follow Jesus, and Jesus is the Word made flesh,⁸ it is unwise for us to walk after our flesh. Instead, wisdom dictates that we walk in the Spirit,⁹ as Jesus did.¹⁰

May each of us be filled afresh today with "the Spirit of wisdom"¹¹ in following Jesus.¹² May each of us realize that walking in obedience to God is our wisdom and understanding.¹³ Lord Jesus, "teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom."¹⁴ Yes, "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom."¹⁵ Only a fool would despise God's holy wisdom.¹⁶

Are you lacking wisdom today?¹⁷ Call upon the Lord and He will give it to you.¹⁸ A wise person is a happy person.¹⁹ "Happy *are* the people whose God *is* the Lord!"²⁰

1-Prov 8:1-4; 2-Prov 15:33; 3-Heb 5:7-8, Matt 11:29; 4-James 3:15-18; 5-1 Cor 1:30; 6-1 John 2:6; 7-Matt 8:22; 8-John 1:1,14; 9-Gal 5:16-25; 10-Luke 4:1; 11-Isaiah 11:2; 12-Exodus 28:3; 13-Deut 4:5,6; 14-Psalm 90:12; 15-Psalm 111:10; 16-Prov 1:7; 17-James 1:5; 18-Prov 2:6; 19-Prov 3:13; 20-Psalm 144:15.

DAY 16

OUR SHEPHERD REDEEMER

Jesus is both Shepherd¹ and sacrifice² for Christians. Such love is beyond human comprehension. God sending Jesus to die for my sin,³ Jesus willingly laying down His life for His sheep.⁴ All mankind, like lost sheep, have gone astray; “we have turned, every one, to his own way.”⁵

But God, “who is rich in mercy because of His great love with which He loved us,”⁶ has come down to us in the person of His son Jesus⁷ to pay the ransom price necessary for us to be delivered from the debt⁸ and slavery of sin.⁹

May our hearts ponder the greatness of the love and mercy of our Shepherd Redeemer Jesus. Jesus, our Shepherd Lord¹⁰ is the Bread of Life¹¹ for all of His children. Therefore, with joy today, may we draw living water¹² out of the wells of salvation.¹³

May we observe the Lord’s table today by looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith,¹⁴ with fresh confidence and assurance that the plan of redemption is finished,¹⁵ and Jesus is with us always!¹⁶

1-Heb 13:20; 2-John 10:11; 3-1 John 4:10; 4-John 10:15; 5-Isaiah 53:6; 6-Eph 2:4; 7-Phil 2:6-8; 8-Mark 10:45; 9-Rom 6:16-18; 10-Psalm 23:1; 11-John 6:48; 12-John 4:10,13-14; 13-Isaiah 12:1-3; 14-Heb 12:2; 15-John 19:30; 16-Matt 28:20

DAY 17

GOD'S TIMING

Felix, the Roman governor was intrigued by the apostle Paul's testimony; so much so that he sent for him to hear more about his faith in Jesus Christ.¹ Never underestimate the power of God's word, saints!² The Lord's voice is indeed mighty.³ Yet, apart from the sovereign moving of God's Spirit⁴ along with a heart ready to receive the truth,⁵ change is impossible.

I wonder how many Christians suffer from "Felix-itis?" What is that, you ask? In Acts 24:25, it is clear that Felix had heard enough. The conviction was making him feel uncomfortable. In essence he said to Paul, "Go away until I have room for you in my schedule."

Learn this — whatever time the Holy Spirit delivers God's truth to our heart, that is the time for you and me to receive it.⁶ We may not like it, but that is not the issue. God deals with each of us in the present tense. "Come now",⁷ and, "Today, if you will hear His voice",⁸ is the way God speaks. We need to clear the clutter of our heart to hear what He is saying to us.⁹ We need to shake off the lethargy or indifference¹⁰ if we intend to move on to maturity in Christ.¹¹

May God's clock tick in our hearts every moment in order that His timing and ours are one and the same. When that happens, it's a beautiful thing.¹²

1-Acts 24:24; 2-Heb 4:12; 3-Psalm 29:3-9; 4-Zech 4:6; 5-Psalm 51:10; 6-Heb 3:15; 7-Isaiah 1:18; 8-Psalm 95:7; 9-Rev 3:22; 10-Rom 13:11; 11-Heb 5:12-14; 12-Ecc 3:11a.

DAY 18

PRIORITIES

How sad for us human beings that it often takes a tragedy to get our priorities right. Haven't you found after the events of 9/11 things that you and I thought were very important have become insignificant? What is our purpose on earth? What is really important?

As Christians, there is just one answer and it is quite simple: "For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain."¹ Our lives are not to be spent for self, but for Jesus.² We are to love our Lord with all that we've got!³ Jesus is jealous for that intimacy with His children,⁴ so much so that He reprimands those who have left their first love.⁵

We have all been moved by the attack on our nation. However, in what direction have we been moved? The recent events, saints, are primarily not a call for patriotic restoration, but for a spiritual return to our first love, Jesus.⁶ I love our nation, but lighting candles and singing "God Bless America" apart from a radical change in our priorities and lifestyles, will amount to nothing.

It is time for the Bride of Christ to wake up.⁷ It is time for us to clean up our house first.⁸ Only then can we be of true help to the many that are hurting all around us.⁹ We've been shaken up. There is a desperation in our prayers, attitudes, and priorities. I pray that it never fades away because that is the attitude we need to maintain.¹⁰

1-Phil 1:21; 2-2 Cor 5:15; 3-Matt 22:37,38; 4-Exodus 34:14; 5-Rev 2:4; 6-Joel 2:12-13; 7-Rom 13:11-14, Eph 5:14-16; 8-1 Peter 4:17; 9-Psalm 51:10,12,13; 10-Psalm 73:25,26.

DAY 19

SIGNS AND JESUS

In a study of Jesus' Olivetti Discourse about the end of the world, we take note of particular signs that will precede His return.¹ If we are not careful, we can become trapped watching for signs instead of being secure by looking at the Son.² As unbelievers are scratching their heads and having heart failure³ because of the recent tragedy in our nation, we need to be keeping our eyes on Jesus Christ.⁴ This is a time for prayer⁵ and patience⁶ and harvest.⁷ The greatest tragedy of all is when a person steps into a Christless eternity.⁸

The study of prophecy is very practical.⁹ We must be about our Father's business,¹⁰ not building bigger barns.¹¹ Are we honoring Christ in our marriage? On our jobs? In our schools or colleges? Only by abiding in Jesus¹² can we be the salt and light He has called us to be.¹³

Church, we have a mission¹⁴ and a message¹⁵ that the world must¹⁶ hear. Will we answer the call?¹⁷ If we keep our eyes on Jesus and walk in His wonderful love and grace, He will use us all in a mighty way. The ultimate purpose for the signs Jesus speaks of are to cause us to get ready for His return.¹⁸

1-Matt 24:3-8; 2-Isaiah 26:3,4; 3-Luke 21:26; 4-Heb 12:2;
5-1 Peter 4:7; 6-James 5:7,8; 7-John 4:35; 8-Matt 25:41, 2 John 5:12;
9-Luke 19:13; 10-Luke 2:49; 11-Luke 12:18; 12-John 15:4-9;
13-Matt 5:13-16; 14-Matt 28:19-20; 15-Rom 1:16,17; 16-Acts 4:12;
17-Isaiah 6:8; 18-Rev 19:7-8.

DAY 20

FERVENT FAITH

As we have been studying Jesus' teaching on signs leading up to His return, I'm sure that we have been challenged to walk closer to Him. A word that is used in Scripture that could label the kind of faith needed for these last days is fervent.

Paul tells the church at Rome that they were not to be slothful in business, but "fervent in spirit, serving the Lord".¹ Indeed, each of us must be fervently about our Father's business.² Working with Jesus for the care of others is holy business.³ Oh how important it is for us to be Spirit filled⁴ and diligent.⁵ Apollos was an example of holy fervency and diligence.⁶ Epaphras is another example of a fervent servant of Jesus Christ,⁷ who, among other things, was cited as being fervent in prayer.⁸

Love may wax cold in the world,⁹ but as the end draws near, our love for one another should be purer and more fervent.¹⁰ This fervent love is Christ-like in that it covers a multitude of sins.¹¹ With the approaching end of the world prophesied to be a most intense event,¹² we need to draw near to God¹³ and look up, for our redemption draws near.¹⁴

1-Rom 12:11; 2-Luke 2:49; 3-Acts 6:3; 4-Eph 5:18; 5-Prov 22:29;
6-Acts 18:24-25; 7-Col 4:12; 8-James 5:16; 9-Matt 24:12;
10-1 Peter 1:22; 11-1 Peter 4:8; 12-2 Peter 3:10-12; 13-James 4:8;
14-Luke 21:28.

DAY 21

INTIMATE ABIDING

When the writer to the Hebrews exhorted them to draw near to God “with a true heart in full assurance of faith”,¹ he was communicating the very heart of God. How easy it is to drift away from that precious truth!

Out of all the commandments, the most important is loving the Lord with our whole being.² Certainly loving our Lord is displayed by obedience,³ but if that obedience lacks love⁴ it’s nothing more than a form of godliness,⁵ certainly not a reflection of Jesus Christ.

The love of Christ is to be the motive for our service.⁶ However, the only way that we can display the fruit of love⁷ is by being intimate with the Vine.⁸

May we take God’s invitation to draw near to Him seriously.⁹ Loving fellowship with our precious Father and Lord Jesus¹⁰ is what our faith is all about.

1-Heb 10:22; 2-Matt 22:37,38; 3-John 14:15; 4-1 Cor 13:1-8a,13;
5-2 Tim 3:5; 6-2 Cor 5:14,15; 7-Gal 5:22,23; 8-John 15:1-10;
9-Zech 1:3, James 4:8-10; 10-1 John 1:3b.

DAY 22

CHOICES

When our children were younger, we would often tell them about the importance of making prayerful, Biblical choices. We took a line from a Christian video, “You win or lose by the way you choose.” The ability to choose is given to every human being. You have chosen to read this devotional!

The Lord tells us in His Word to choose life.¹ Choosing life means loving Jesus with all of our heart, obeying His voice, and cleaving to Him.² You see, we reap whatever we sow.³ You sow wheat seeds and in due time you reap wheat. Have you chosen to serve the Lord today?⁴ Have you chosen the fear of the Lord?⁵ Have you chosen the worst of the kingdom of God over the best that the world offers you?⁶ There are many choices – thought choices,⁷ companionship choices,⁸ “eye” choices.⁹ Lord, help us to choose wisely!

Spiritual warfare in and of itself is intense.¹⁰ Do not compound the battle with fleshly choices “which war against the soul”.¹¹ Remember, child of God, you are a chosen vessel!¹² As such, you need to consistently choose to obey your Lord. The alternative choice of disobedience is unthinkable!¹³ Choose to listen or choose to lose; the choice is yours.¹⁴

1-Deut 30:19; 2-Deut 30:20; 3-Gal 6:7,8; 4-Joshua 24:15; 5-Prov 1:29;
6-Heb 11:25; 7-Phil 4:8; 8-Psalm 1:1, 1 Cor 15:33; 9-Job 31:1;
10-Eph 6:11,12; 11-1 Peter 2:11; 12-John 15:16a, Rev 17:14;
13-Prov 1:24-32; 14-Prov 4:20-22.

DAY 23

DELIGHTFULLY DILIGENT

God “is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.”¹ Diligence begins by keeping our heart² in the love of God.³ Never settle for the nominal Christian life that is nothing more than going to a church building and occasional times of reading Scripture and worship. There is no reward in that kind of faith.

To walk in diligence before Jesus means that we will love Him supremely, walk in all of His ways, keep His commandments, and serve Him with all of our heart and soul.⁴ After receiving Jesus Christ⁵ as Messiah/Savior,⁶ we are to diligently add to our faith successively and progressively virtue, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love.⁷

This diligence makes one’s fellowship with Jesus Christ rich.⁸ This diligence makes one’s faith precious.⁹ Peter, when speaking about our looking for the new heavens and new earth, exhorts us to be diligent in the pursuit of peace, and “without spot and blameless”.¹⁰ After all, God has been and is continually extremely diligent on our behalf.¹¹

Diligently hearken to¹² and obey the Lord,¹³ and you will be rewarded “in due season.”¹⁴

1-Heb 11:6; 2-Prov 4:23; 3-Jude 21; 4-Joshua 22:5; 5-John 1:12;
6-John 4:42; 7-2 Peter 1:5-8; 8-Prov 10:4b; 9-Prov 12:27b;
10-2 Peter 3:13,14; 11-Rom 8:32; 12-Isaiah 55:2b; 13-Zech 6:15c;
14-Gal 6:9.

Day 24

PREPARING FOR ETERNITY

The Lord told king Hezekiah to set his house in order for he was going to die.¹ The prophet Amos declared, “Prepare to meet thy God.”²

Eternal preparation necessitates practical application. Step one for eternal preparation is repentance from our sins³ and believing the record⁴ God has declared regarding the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ.⁵ After our new birth we must desire the Word of God⁶ and all that it has to say to us about Kingdom living.⁷ The result of this “feeding on God’s Word” will be a life of abiding in Christ⁸ and fellowshiping with Him.⁹

This life in Christ Jesus¹⁰ is not to be lived by our own human strength, but in the power of God the Holy Ghost.¹¹ We are not simply practicing Christianity, we are now living in Christ.¹² Today, you and I are going to be planting seeds, good or bad, for eternity.¹³ In light of that fact may we choose to walk in the ways of the LORD,¹⁴ for only He has words of eternal life.¹⁵ And let us never forget that eternal life is knowing the only true God and Jesus Christ.¹⁶

Are you making preparations for eternity? Is your life a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God?¹⁷ Are you feeding daily on the Holy Scriptures?¹⁸ Are you walking in holiness?¹⁹ Are you growing in your most holy faith?²⁰ The time to start is NOW!

1-Isaiah 38:1; 2-Amos 4:12c; 3-Mark 1:15; 4-Isaiah 53:1;
5-1 Cor 15:1-4; 6-1 Peter 2:2; 7-2 Tim 3:16,17; 8-John 15:4,5;
9-1 Cor 1:9; 10-Eph 2:13; 11-Acts 1:8; 12-Col 3:3,4; 13-Gal 6:7,8;
14-Deut 10:12-13; 15-John 6:63b,68; 16-John 17:3; 17-Rom 12:1;
18-Rom 1:2; 19-1 Peter 1:15-16; 20-Jude 20.

DAY 25

USELESS RELIGION

The faith that is given to us as Christians is more than empty words. Israel had all of the religious routine (and then some) down pat, but it was lip service only.¹ Jesus used the religious Pharisees as an example of how not to pray, fast or give unto the Lord!² Through the psalmist God declared that there was a deeper purpose behind the prescribed sacrifices than cold ritual.³

When ritual and heart faith converge, as in communion or baptism, it is a wonderful experience of worship. However, if we are not careful, we can begin to slip into “cruise control” in worship, serving and living. Apostolic saints “live on the edge”. Our faith in Jesus is a continuous act of devotion⁴ and thanksgiving.⁵ However, a faith that leaves a tongue unbridled⁶ or is void of works is dead.⁷ Faith in Jesus Christ is a resurrection into newness of life.⁸

We are to be dead to sin and alive to God.⁹ His mission becomes our vision.¹⁰ With every breath, we praise His Holy Name.¹¹ We resolve to yield every thought to His purposes.¹² Toss away the fruitless alibis of disobedience for holy living.¹³ May the love, grace, and power of Jesus Christ shatter heartless, useless faith with explosive living faith.¹⁴

1-Matt 15:8; 2-Matt 6:1-6,16-18; 3-Psalm 50:8-15; 4-Rom 12:1,2;
5-Heb 13:15; 6-James 1:26; 7-James 2:14-26; 8-Rom 6:4; 9-Rom 6:11;
10-Luke 4:18-19; 11-Psalm 150:6; 12-2 Cor 10:5; 13-1 Thess 4:7;
14-Col 3:23-24.

DAY 26

JESUS HAS TRIUMPHED GLORIOUSLY!

Exodus 15:1-21 is a beautiful Old Testament picture of the glorious gospel of salvation through Jesus Christ. Israel was delivered from Egypt, a type of the world, by the powerful blood of the Passover Lamb.¹ That deliverance was the glorious victory of Jehovah for His people.²

He has also gone to battle on our behalf³ and finished the work of redemption.⁴ Jesus has dashed in pieces the enemy⁵ and has given us His victory.⁶ Our victory in this life is through Jesus Christ,⁷ who always causes us to triumph.⁸ However, Satan doesn't take defeat sitting down. He is on the prowl, seeking to sift⁹ and devour¹⁰ the children of God.

So as we break bread together, remember that the sacrifice of Calvary, which we commemorate with communion,¹¹ has served the death blow to Satan. We are a blood-bought,¹² heaven bound army!¹³ We too can "sing unto the LORD, for He has triumphed gloriously!"¹⁴

Defeat is not an option for the child of God who walks by faith and not by sight.¹⁵ We have overcome by the blood of the Lamb and the testimony¹⁶ that Jesus Christ is Lord¹⁷

1-Ex 12:1-13,21-32, 1 Cor 5:7b, 1 Peter 1:18-19; 2-Ex 15:1;
3-Ex 14:14; 4-John 19:30, Heb 12:2; 5-Col 2:15; 6-1 John 5:4;
7-1 Cor 15:57; 8-2 Cor 2:14; 9-Luke 22:31; 10-1 Peter 5:8;
11-1 Cor 11:23-26; 12-Eph 1:7; 13-2 Tim 2:3, Rev 19:14; 14-Ex 15:21;
15-2 Cor 5:7; 16-Rev 12:11; 17-Phil 2:10-11.

DAY 27

THE EYE OF THE LORD

God is forever watching over us.¹ Forget about “hiding” from Him.² Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.³ Righteous living, by the grace of God, always catches the Lord’s eye.

God told Israel to walk in obedience to Him and do that which was right in His eyes.⁴ How we need to remind ourselves constantly as believers in Jesus that we are to be motivated always to speak and to do the things that are right in His eyes. The Lord’s eyes are “scanning the globe” for people whose hearts are perfect towards Him,⁵ for those who are true living sacrifices.⁶

Make no mistake about it, a person is either doing things that are right in the eyes of the Lord⁷ or evil.⁸ Never try to create a third option! “The eye of the Lord *is* upon them that fear Him, upon them that hope in His mercy”.⁹ His eyes are upon the righteous and He hears our cries.¹⁰

Yes indeed saints, Jesus is watching us.¹¹ In fact, He is watching everyone.¹² Does that bother you or bless you? What is the Lord looking for? People who will do justly, and love mercy, and walk humbly with Him.¹³ That is what life is all about.¹⁴

1-Psalm 33:13,14; 2-Heb 4:13; 3-Gen 6:8; 4-Deut 13:18;
5-2 Chron 16:9a; 6-Rom 12:1,2; 7-2 Chron 14:2; 8-2 Chron 21:6;
9-Psalm 33:18; 10-Psalm 34:15; 11-Prov 5:21; 12-Prov 15:3;
13-Micah 6:8; 14-Eccl 12:13.

DAY 28

DON'T FORGET HEAVEN

The promise to those persecuted for Christ's name sake is that their reward would be great in heaven.¹ Jesus said that "the kingdom of heaven is at hand";² or near. Our citizenship as Christians is in heaven.³ Our "passports" have been eternally stamped by the blood of Jesus Christ.⁴ How important it is to remind ourselves often that heaven, not earth, is our true home.⁵

In remembering that thought we should realize that the will of God, as it is in heaven, is what we are to desire on earth.⁶ Jesus, our example, lived out the will of the Father here on earth for He was the true bread who came down from heaven for that express purpose.⁷ Living for heaven and looking forward to heaven is the practical sum of the Christian life. Viewing our lives through the lens of eternity enables us to have the right perspective and priorities in this life.

From heaven our Savior will return for us.⁸ In heaven is where our eternal hope lies.⁹ May we seek that heavenly mindset in this present evil world¹⁰ for we have reservations¹¹ at the head table of the marriage supper of the Lamb.¹²

1-Matt 5:10-12; 2-Matt 4:17; 3-Phil 3:20; 4-Eph 1:7; 5-Heb 12:22-24; 6-Matt 6:10; 7-John 6:32-51; 8-1 Thess 4:13-18; 9-Col 1:5; 10-Gal 1:4; 11-1 Peter 1:4; 12-Rev 19:1,7-9.

DAY 29

CHRISTMAS IS A MESSAGE OF ADOPTION

How sad that in a “Christian” nation, the heavenly purpose of Christ’s birth is often overshadowed by veiled references to God or “Seasons Greetings”. (What does that mean?) Jesus came to crush the head of Satan,¹ the number one enemy of man² on Jehovah God’s terrorist list. Jesus came to pay the price for the sin of the world.³ He also came to purchase⁴ the precious souls of whomever believes on His holy name.⁵

Our sonship is all of grace⁶ by faith in Jesus Christ.⁷ Every soul that has looked to the Messiah Jesus is a part of heaven’s family.⁸ Each believer has been adopted by God through Christ, whereby we call Him, “Abba, Father!”⁹

To miss the message of adoption during the Christmas season, is to miss the true meaning of the Incarnation.¹⁰ God’s gift to man is eternal life through Jesus Christ.¹¹ All praise, glory, and honor be to our glorious Savior and Lord Jesus¹² who has reconciled us to the Father,¹³ and in doing so has enabled us to be forever accepted.¹⁴

1-Gen 3:15; 2-1 Peter 5:8; 3-John 1:29, 1 Peter 1:18-19; 4-1 Cor 6:20a; 5-1 John 5:11-13; 6-Heb 2:9,10; 7-Gal 3:26; 8-Eph 3:14-15; 9-Gal 4:4-6; 10-John 1:14, 3:16; 11-Rom 6:23; 12-Rev 5:12; 13-2 Cor 5:19-21; 14-Eph 1:6.

DAY 30

REFLECTING ON WHAT LIES AHEAD

As we come to the end of another year, may we thank our Lord Jesus once again for His faithfulness towards us. His mercies have sustained us¹ and His grace has enabled us to do His will.²

As we reflect on the chapter of 2001 in our lives, hopefully we have seen progress in our intimacy with Jesus³ and practical expressions of faith in Jesus.⁴ But that chapter is just about over. May we learn whatever lessons the Lord laid before us, and may we afresh set our hearts in the direction of obedience to the will of God. This we know for sure, Jesus is closer to making His glorious appearance⁵ than ever before.

How much more vital it is then for us to be gathering together⁶ and sharpening one another in the things of the Lord.⁷ How critical it is for us to look at the fields⁸ and get the good news out.⁹ We can't go forward by looking backwards.¹⁰

We've won and we've lost; we've cried and we've laughed in 2001. We've seen some go to heaven, and we've dedicated others as new gifts from heaven.¹¹ Much has changed, but yet Jesus remains the same.¹² Look to Him¹³ as chapter 2002 begins, for your times are in His Hands.¹⁴

1-Lam 3:22,23; 2-1 Cor 15:10; 3-1 John 1:3; 4-Eph 2:10;
5-1 Thess 4:13-18; 6-Heb 10:24-25 ; 7-Prov 27:17; 8-John 4:35;
9-Mark 16:15; 10-Phil 3:13-14; 11-Psalm 127:3; 12-Heb 13:8;
13-Isaiah 45:22; 14-Psalm 31:15.

DAY 31

GOD'S WILL

As we begin another year, we embark into uncharted and uncertain territory in the pursuit of the will of God. Face it, even though we belong to Jesus, we have no absolute certainty of what each new day will bring.¹ Generally speaking, “*there is* nothing new under the sun.”² Jesus tells us that “sufficient for the day *is* its own trouble.”³

However, in spite of the uncertainty on our part, there is no such thing in the plans of God.⁴ He has promised to instruct and guide us,⁵ provided that we “walk by faith and not by sight.”⁶

Even though we do not know our future, we know that our times⁷ are in wonderful hands.⁸ By continuing in the truth of God, we will walk in freedom.⁹ Knowing that our faith will be tested,¹⁰ we must purpose to “put on the whole armor of God”¹¹ and “fight the good fight of faith.”¹²

Press on, saints,¹³ and keep your eyes on Jesus.¹⁴ Walk in obedience¹⁵ and live in the expectancy of our Lord’s soon return.¹⁶

1-Prov 27:1; 2-Eccl 1:9; 3-Matt 6:34; 4-Jer 29:11-13; 5-Psalm 32:8,9;
6-2 Cor 5:7; 7-Psalm 31:15; 8-John 10:28,29; 9-John 8:31,32;
10-1 Peter 1:7; 11-Eph 6:10-18; 12-1 Tim 6:12; 13-Phil 3:14;
14-Heb 12:1-2; 15-1 Peter 1:14-16; 16-Luke 21:28, Rom 13:11-14,
Rev 22:12,21.

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