



DEVOTIONAL

Let Us Draw Near

By Pastor Ray Viola

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 it 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

PRAYING

“Lord, teach us to pray”!¹ How contemporary the word of God is. Although you and I may be in a different cultural situation than the disciples were when these words were uttered, we are still on the same battlefield² dealing with the evils of each day³ that cause us to cry out to our Lord for help.⁴ Thank God that we have access to Him⁵ because of Jesus’ victory on the cross.⁶ Isn’t it comforting to read in the Bible that when we talk to the Lord we can call Him “Father”?⁷ Think about it. The Almighty God of Genesis 1:1 is my Father, your Father.⁸ We do not crawl into His presence, but we come boldly,⁹ yet reverently.¹⁰

I’m sure that none of us can fully comprehend the value of prayer. We know that prayer doesn’t change God,¹¹ but it certainly changes us.¹² What happened to our Lord Jesus externally on the mountain is what happens to us internally¹³ as God’s Spirit begins to move in our hearts with His renewing power.¹⁴ Jesus valued time alone communing with His Father, and we can see the Lamb of God spending, or I should say ‘investing’, much time in prayer.¹⁵ He taught us to likewise get away from the crowd and get alone with the Father.¹⁶ Have you done that lately?

All of us must set aside “things” to seek the Lord. It’s vital to our spiritual health. It’s a top priority for those in ministry.¹⁷ It’s also a ‘must’ for anyone claiming to be a disciple of Jesus.¹⁸ Our prayers are to avail much.¹⁹ The apostle Paul said that God Himself could testify about his prayer life.²⁰ He prayed for others,²¹ and so should we.²² Once we get past the initial ‘interference’, we are told that prayer will build us up.²³ Remember, prayer is communication with the living God who desires a vibrant relationship with us.²⁴

There is no shortage of material from Scripture to assist us in our prayer lives. But let’s face it, none of us can plead ignorance, though some of us can indeed confess negligence. May each of us turn our hearts to the Lord, and in one accord pray: “Gracious Father, make us temples of unceasing prayer,²⁵ that Your will would be accomplished in our lives, families and church,²⁶ so that the whole world would know that You alone are God,²⁷ and You would be glorified.”²⁸

1-Luke 11:1; 2-Eph 6:12; 3-Matt 6:34b; 4-Psalm 5:2; 5-Eph 2:18; 6-1 Peter 3:18;
7-Luke 11:2; 8-Rom 8:14-16; 9-Heb 4:16; 10-Psalm 89:7; 11-Mal 3:6;
12-Luke 9:29; 13-2 Cor 3:18; 14-Isaiah 40:31; 15-Luke 6:12; 16-Matt 6:5,6;
17-Acts 6:4; 18-Luke 18:1-8; 19-James 5:15,16; 20-Rom 1:9; 21-2 Tim 1:3,
Philemon 4; 22-1 Tim 2:1; 23-Jude 20; 24-Matt 6:7-13; 25-1 Thess 5:17;
26-1 John 5:14,15; 27-1 Kings 8:60; 28-Matt 5:16.

DAY 2

WHAT I CAN DO WITHOUT CHRIST

As I was reading John 15:5, I began to sort of 'reverse meditate' upon the words of Jesus. That is, I began to think (and horrible the thought!) of all the things that I could do without Christ.

Apart from God the Holy Spirit controlling my life, I inevitably would fall back into a life of loving pleasures more than God.¹ Rather than live for the will of God, I would follow the lusts of men,² which is the way of the world.³ I could not escape the fact that I would exchange a life of victory⁴ for a life of vanity.⁵

It didn't take too long for me to realize just how wretched⁶ I am apart from His love and wonderful grace.⁷ We are indeed, apart from the Holy Spirit, by nature and choice children of wrath⁸ who follow the purposes of the god of this world.⁹ Whatever God wants for my life is oftentimes the opposite of my natural affections.¹⁰ The heartfelt exclamation of Paul, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord!"¹¹ took on fresh meaning for me.

Aren't you glad that Jesus sent another Helper (Comforter) to dwell in us forever?¹² He still convicts of sin,¹³ and in so doing spares us from death.¹⁴ He still, as a member of the Godhead,¹⁵ guides us into the truth.¹⁶ It is when we submit to Him that we can do all things.¹⁷

Face it, saints, we need the power of God in our lives. That comes through both Christ Himself¹⁸ and the Holy Spirit as well.¹⁹ We do not manufacture holiness; it's the fruit of abiding²⁰ in the Holy One.²¹ All of this brought me to a fresh understanding of what it means to be "poor in spirit".²²

On one hand I'm terrified by the potential of my 'Christ-less' flesh. On the other hand, His perfect love²³ promises me the supply of grace that I need,²⁴ for His strength is made perfect in my weakness.²⁵ I can't boast at all.²⁶ I can only drop to my knees and glory in His wonderful work for me on Calvary.²⁷ Thank You, Jesus, for never letting go!²⁸

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

DAY 3

HEAVENLY ACCOUNTING

Oh how blessed is the person to whom the Lord does not impute, or count, sin!¹ Our brother Paul the apostle said that this message of salvation was so wonderful that he no longer considered his own life dear to himself. Instead, his entire life was focused to follow Christ's course and proclaim "the gospel of the grace of God."²

Blessed accounting indeed! Counting ourselves dead to sin, but alive to God through Jesus Christ.³ In fact, Paul said he counted all things loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Him, and considered what he'd lost as rubbish by comparison.⁴ That's the language of commitment.

I'm on a mission of my Lord's design. I'm not allowing anything to impede my growth, including that "old man".⁵ To be a true disciple of the Lord, we must 'count the cost' and forsake all to follow Jesus.⁶ Realizing that we will never 'arrive' in this life will perpetually motivate us⁷ to diligently seek the Lord.⁸ To be counted worthy by God our Father⁹ to receive His Holy Spirit as "the guarantee of our inheritance" is a precious truth for sure.¹⁰

This heavenly 'accounting' makes submission in the workplace serious stuff.¹¹ It also enables us to look at life's trials quite differently.¹² We now count those blessed (literally, "happy") who endure,¹³ rather than enjoy, this world's pleasures.¹⁴ However, the unsaved miscount our Lord's present delay in returning, not realizing that He does not want them to perish,¹⁵ but to repent.¹⁶

Little children, may adherence to the basics of our faith¹⁷ deepen our relationship with our Lord, and with one another as well.¹⁸ The only way our lives really 'add up' to anything is when we remove the 'I' from the equation of our lives and replace it with Christ.¹⁹

God forbid²⁰ that we would do our 'bookkeeping' any other way.

1-Rom 4:8; 2-Acts 20:24; 3-Rom 6:11; 4-Phil 3:8; 5-Eph 4:22; 6-Luke 14:25-33;
7-Phil 3:13-14; 8-Heb 11:6; 9-2 Thess 1:11; 10-Eph 1:13,14; 11-1 Tim 6:1;
12-James 1:2; 13-James 5:11; 14-Heb 11:25; 15-2 Peter 3:9; 16-Acts 2:38;
17-Heb 6:1,2; 18-1 John 1:7; 19-Gal 2:20; 20-Gal 6:14.

DAY 4

A LIFE OF PURPOSE

When the apostle Paul wrote to young Timothy, he told the struggling child of God that he had fully known, among other things, Paul's purpose in life.¹

For every person on earth, that search for purpose exists. An individual will never find purpose by embracing the doctrine of evolution. How can they if they believe that man is an evolutionary accident, merely a mutation away from being a monkey? This foolishness darkens the heart and results in animalistic behavior.²

How refreshing to open the Word of God³ and find within its pages an eternal purpose⁴ designed by God.⁵ No, life is no accident,⁶ and neither are you.⁷ You see, Jesus Christ came to this earth, not to destroy you or make life miserable for you, but rather to destroy the works of the devil.⁸ God's desire is to be actively involved in your life.⁹

Jesus has revealed to us through His word the most important purposes in our lives.¹⁰ Fallen man may look at a committed believer's life as a waste, but God looks at it as a thing of beauty.¹¹ We are exhorted to cleave unto our Lord with purpose of heart.¹² Once we have done that, there dwells a deep assurance amidst life's storms that He has everything under control.¹³

When we are born again,¹⁴ we enter the life that God purposed for us to live.¹⁵ This life is indeed a holy calling¹⁶ and high privilege. Never forget that the life of purpose is found fully expressed in the Lord Jesus Christ.¹⁷ Only in living for Him does one find, not only purpose, but also peace.¹⁸ When life seems to have lost meaning and purpose, and we begin to get confused because of practical 'unsolved mysteries', it's because we've removed our hearts from the One who has told us to "walk by faith, not by sight."¹⁹

Being a 'know-it-all' is not the reason for our struggles. The struggle really comes in wrestling with the sole purpose for our existence, which is knowing Him.²⁰

1-2 Tim 3:10; 2-Rom 1:20-28; 3-2 Tim 3:16-17; 4-Eph 3:11; 5-2 Tim 1:9;
6-Gen 1:1; 7-Psalm 139:1-18; 8-1 John 3:8b; 9-Psalm 57:2, 138:8;
10-Matt 22:37-40; 11-Isaiah 52:7; 12-Acts 11:23; 13-Rom 8:28; 14-John 3:3-7;
15-Eph 1:11; 16-2 Tim 1:9; 17-Heb 10:5,7; 18-John 14:27; 19-2 Cor 5:7;
20-John 17:3, Phil 3:10.

DAY 5

SEEDS OF DRYNESS

One of the reasons for the record of Scripture is that we may benefit from the past.¹ As we look at the once great city of Nineveh in that light, we can surely draw some practical insights into the ingredients of a shipwrecked faith. Although the Ninevites had soundly repented during the ministry of Jonah² approximately 850 years before Christ, we find that nearly 200 years later the prophet Zephaniah paints a very different picture of Nineveh.³ The city became a desolate place and dry like a wilderness. Why? Two words tell it all. She became careless and self-confident.

Anytime we place our trust in the arm of the flesh, we are on very dangerous soil.⁴ Our sole trust is to be in the Lord, nothing else.⁵ We need to be on spiritual alert, fully clothed,⁶ never thinking we've 'arrived',⁷ keeping ourselves in shape⁸ with all diligence.⁹ If we do not give earnest heed to the Word of God, at any time we can become spiritual Ninevites.¹⁰ We can become careless in our praying,¹¹ careless in our speech,¹² careless in our fellowship,¹³ careless in using our God-given talents.¹⁴ The result? Dryness of spirit.

Equally dangerous is an unscriptural confidence in ourselves. We can misinterpret how God may choose to use us or bless us as rewards for 'being so diligent', and begin to get self-confident instead of Spirit-confident. We can think that we've reached a place of immunity from the deceitfulness of sin,¹⁵ forgetting the root that is within each of us.¹⁶ To have confidence in ourselves is to deny the Lord.¹⁷ How much better to continually acknowledge our need for the Lord.¹⁸

"In the fear of the Lord is strong confidence".¹⁹ May our wonderful Lord scale down the strength of any inferior source of confidence.²⁰ The source of our strength is in returning to and resting in the Lord.²¹ When we put all confidence in the Lord²² and none in our flesh,²³ we have the hope of remaining firm to the end.²⁴ Let not carelessness or self-confidence have any place in your walk.²⁵

1-1 Cor 10:11; 2-Jonah 3:1-10; 3-Zeph 2:13-15; 4-Jer 17:5; 5-Psalm 20:7, 1 Tim 6:17; 6-Eph 6:11-18; 7-Phil 3:13-14; 8-1 Cor 9:24-27; 9-Prov 4:23; 10-Heb 2:1; 11-Luke 18:1; 12-Eph 4:29; 13-Heb 10:25; 14-Matt 25:24,25; 15-Gal 6:1, Heb 3:13; 16-1 John 1:8; 17-Job 31:24-28; 18-Psalm 118:8,9; 19-Prov 14:26; 20-Prov 21:22; 21-Isaiah 30:15; 22-Prov 3:5,6; 23-Phil 3:3; 24-Heb 3:6; 25-Eph 5:27.

DAY 6

THE FIRST COMMANDMENT

Jesus declared that to love the Lord our God with our whole heart is the first and great commandment.¹ David declared that he praised the Lord with his whole heart.² Whole heart or no heart, it's that simple.

How it must please the Father when He sees us gathered together, singing praises to Him, lifting our hands and adoring Him as a congregation.³ We 'find' God only when we seek Him wholeheartedly.⁴ Having been born again,⁵ there is now one thing that we should desire,⁶ and that is fellowship with our God and Savior.⁷ For you see, divided aims and interests tend to weaken and distract a person. But our Lord said that we demonstrate our love for Him by being obedient to Him.⁸ This too, we are to do most earnestly.⁹

The thirsty deer seeking cool water¹⁰ is a picture of a redeemed soul seeking to know Jesus better.¹¹ You see, as far as the Lord is concerned, a token, half-hearted glance towards Him is inappropriate.¹² Although the people of Israel maintained their rituals,¹³ they did not really know their God, and because they turned away from Him, they fainted in their hearts.¹⁴

How we need our Lord to fill these new wineskins with His new wine!¹⁵ How we need to be searched by the Lord¹⁶ and cleansed from any leaven¹⁷ of the old life. As new creatures¹⁸ we now offer up our entire lives to God.¹⁹ We give ourselves both to God and to each other.²⁰

Our access to God through Jesus Christ is our source of confidence and boldness.²¹ Therefore, whatever we do, we are to do it heartily - that is, from our heart, sincerely and energetically - as for the Lord.²²

May we lovingly obey our Lord Jesus by storing up treasures in heaven,²³ thereby setting our affections on things above.²⁴ Indeed, a heaven-centered heart is a whole one.

1-Matt 22:37,38; 2-Psalm 9:1; 3-Psalm 111:1; 4-Jer 29:13; 5-1 Peter 1:23;
6-Psalm 27:4; 7-1 John 1:3; 8-John 14:15; 9-Psalm 119:33-38; 10-Psalm 42:1;
11-Phil 3:7-10; 12-Jer 3:10; 13-Isaiah 1:11; 14-Isaiah 1:3-5; 15-Mark 2:22;
16-Psalm 139:23-24; 17-1 Cor 5:7,8; 18-2 Cor 5:17; 19-Rom 12:1,2; 20-2 Cor 8:5;
21-Eph 3:12; 22-Col 3:23; 23-Matt 6:20,21; 24-Col 3:1.

DAY 7

CHARITY EDIFIES

The apostle Paul wrote in 1 Cor 8:1 that knowledge puffs up, but charity (“agape” in Greek, also translated “love”) edifies. Who does knowledge puff up? Me. Who does charity edify? You. When a church is walking in the fear of the Lord,¹ there will also be present the comfort of the Holy Spirit and edification.² The saints at Thessalonica were doing this.³ To edify means to build up, to stir up, or to urge onward. Rather than spending useless hours arguing over issues that cannot be resolved, we are to prefer “godly edification which is in faith.”⁴

In our personal lives we can fall right into a trap of fleshly thinking if we reduce our decision making on unclear issues to a matter of ‘right or wrong’. The question should be, “Is this edifying?”⁵ In other words, will this draw me closer to Jesus? Will this edify another saint?⁶ Each of us are to do our part to edify the Church.⁷

Some people never grow up in the Lord⁸ because to them the Church is either something they think exists for their benefit alone, or they think involvement is optional. No!⁹ Every one of us is a vital and necessary part of the Church,¹⁰ with individual gifts, talents and abilities that, when exercised, edify the rest of the body in love.¹¹ Even our speech is to be used for edification.¹²

May each of us pursue those things which will edify one other.¹³ Let’s look for ways to build each other up in the Lord¹⁴ - an encouraging phone call, for example, or an unexpected card with Scriptures to lift up a saint during a trial, etc. Charity edifies; benevolence builds people up.

The fruit of the Spirit of God is love,¹⁵ and if we are Spirit-filled, you can be sure that one inevitable effect of our lives upon others in the Church will be edification. But edification is not merely making someone ‘feel good’. Rather, it is the work of God the Holy Spirit in and through His temples,¹⁶ “both to will and do of His good pleasure”¹⁷ in the most ‘provocative’ way.¹⁸

1-Psalm 2:11; 2-Acts 9:31; 3-1 Thess 5:11; 4-1 Tim 1:4; 5-1 Cor 10:23;
6-1 Cor 10:24; 7-1 Cor 14:12; 8-Eph 4:14-15; 9-Rom 12:5, Heb 10:25;
10-1 Cor 12:4-28; 11-Eph 4:16; 12-Eph 4:29; 13-Rom 14:19; 14-Rom 15:2;
15-Gal 5:22; 16-1 Cor 6:19; 17-Phil 2:13; 18-Heb 10:24.

DAY 8

PREVENTING FIRES

When I was a young boy, there was a fire prevention ad that featured a character called “Smokey the Bear”. His punch line was, “You can prevent forest fires.” As I was looking at the third chapter of James in the Bible, that ad came to my mind.

The tongue lacking grace indeed starts a fire!¹ In fact, in contrast to the holy fire of Pentecost,² the spark for the flame of this fire is hell itself.³ This tongue is verbal poison.⁴ The tongue James refers to is full of “contentions, envy, wrath, strife, backbiting, whispering, conceit and tumults”.⁵ This type of language is the ‘sword of the flesh’.⁶ Proverbs calls this the “naughty”, or “wicked” tongue.⁷ These unbridled verbal missiles spread death to both the speaker and listener.⁸

What a contrast this kind of talk is to that of the virtuous woman (who some see as a type of the bride of Christ), in whose mouth is “the law of kindness”.⁹ Church, make your words count.¹⁰ Make them gracious and “seasoned with salt”.¹¹ More lives have probably been ruined by untrue, unkind words than by nuclear warheads. Study the Book of Proverbs and see what God says about the tongue, lips, mouth, flattery, lying, backbiting, etc.!

You see, not only does God’s Word teach us about the proper and improper use of the tongue, but the proper motive behind the words themselves. For example, we know that we are to speak the truth.¹² But how are we to speak the truth? In love.¹³ Not in anger, not in pride, but in love. A forgotten measure of maturity is the ability to bridle one’s tongue unless what is spoken is motivated by love, the absolute truth, and a message that conveys health to the hearer.¹⁴ Put away un-Christ-like speech.¹⁵

May our lips speak right things, just like our Lord’s.¹⁶ While righteous lips feed many,¹⁷ unrighteous lips are like a burning fire.¹⁸ Grievous words¹⁹ grieve God’s Spirit,²⁰ whereas pleasant words²¹ please the Lord.²²

May each of us take ‘tongue lessons’ from Scripture.²³ With the Lord guarding our mouths,²⁴ we can prevent forest fires.

1-James 3:5; 2-Acts 2:1-4; 3-James 3:6; 4-James 3:8; 5-2 Cor 12:20;
6-Prov 12:18a; 7-Prov 17:4; 8-Prov 26:18; 9-Prov 31:10,26; 10-Matt 12:36,37;
11-Col 4:6; 12-Eph 4:25; 13-Eph 4:15; 14-Prov 12:18b; 15-Prov 4:24;
16-Prov 8:6-9; 17-Prov 10:21a; 18-Prov 16:27; 19-Prov 15:1b; 20-Eph 4:29,30;
21-Prov 16:24; 22-Psalm 19:14; 23-Eccl 12:10; 24-Psalm 141:3.

DAY 9

TRYING TO FOOL GOD

Have you ever tried to fool God? Do we really think that the true¹ and living God² is unable to discern our true motives³ and intentions?⁴

The Bible records that a remnant from the Babylonian captivity asked Jeremiah the prophet to intercede with God on their behalf⁵ and, on the surface, they appeared to be resigned to whatever God decided to do.⁶ If we stop there, our estimation of their commitment to the Lord would not be in doubt at all, would it? I mean, they sound just like Job!⁷ However, it's one thing to sound holy and committed, but it's quite another thing to actually be committed.

You see, this remnant tried to pull the proverbial wool over God's eyes, but that's impossible to do. God knew that they had no desire to submit to His will.⁸ Honesty with the Lord is the best policy.⁹ Flowery, impressive prayers¹⁰ or intentions apart from the sincere desire to submit to the revealed will of God is meaningless.¹¹ To be honestly timid is far better than being dishonestly brave. To talk purity but walk in uncleanness is self-deception.¹²

Jesus wants us to be sincere¹³ before Him, even if it's painful. You see, He can change a sincere heart, but He can do nothing with a deceived heart. We are to serve the Lord in sincerity and truth,¹⁴ keeping the Feast of Passover "with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth."¹⁵ Simplicity and godly sincerity¹⁶ should be our motives in whatever we do.¹⁷ Though some may corrupt the gospel, may we be examples of sincerity.¹⁸ Our depravity rears its ugly head whenever we attempt to sound or appear more holy, devout, or faithful than we know we really are.

Only when we harmonize our lives with the will of God do we prove the sincerity of our love.¹⁹ There is one thing that God supplies to the person who is sincerely in love with His Son, and that is the grace to be whatever He's called you to be. No foolin'.²⁰

1-John 3:33; 2-John 6:69; 3-John 2:24-25; 4-Heb 4:12; 5-Jer 42:1-3; 6-Jer 42:5,6;
7-Job 13:15a; 8-Jer 42:20; 9-Psalm 139:23-24; 10-Matt 6:5,7; 11-Luke 6:46;
12-1 John 1:6; 13-Phil 1:10; 14-Joshua 24:14; 15-1 Cor 5:7,8; 16-2 Cor 1:12;
17-Col 3:17; 18-2 Cor 2:17; 19-2 Cor 8:8; 20-1 Cor 1:9.

DAY 10

O GIVE THANKS!

Giving thanks to the Lord is not a suggestion, it's a command in Scripture.¹ There is so much for us to be thankful for, isn't there? We certainly can thank God for His mercy that endures forever!² One of the ways we come before His presence is with thanksgiving,³ which is actually an offering from the heart of redeemed saints.⁴ Not only is thanking God a command, it is also good.⁵ Thanking God from a pure heart is more pleasing to our LORD than heartless, meaningless ritual.⁶

Our Lord Jesus expressed thanks for provision of food.⁷ He thanked His Father at the Passover for the cups of wine⁸ that symbolized sanctification, instruction, redemption and praise. Remember how Jesus responded with an additional blessing to the leper who expressed thanks for the work of God in his life?⁹

Rather than laughing at dirty jokes (or telling them!), our lips are to be filled with thanks.¹⁰ The Levites were to start and end every day thanking and praising the Lord,¹¹ and as God's "holy priesthood" today,¹² we should do the same. As we grow up in Christ through the Word of God and the power of His Holy Spirit, the result is an inevitable overflow of thanksgiving.¹³

O give thanks to our God for His victory through Jesus Christ our Lord,¹⁴ and for His triumph in Christ that makes Him known in our lives!¹⁵ As we stand in awe of our wonderful Savior and His infinite love for us,¹⁶ may our hearts respond today, tomorrow, and forever¹⁷ with thanks to the glory of God!¹⁸

1-1 Thess 5:18; 2-1 Chron 16:34; 3-Psalm 95:2; 4-Heb 13:15; 5-Psalm 92:1;
6-Psalm 69:30,31; 7-Matt 15:36; 8-Luke 22:17,20; 9-Luke 17:11-19; 10-Eph 5:4;
11-1 Chron 23:27-28,30; 12-1 Peter 2:5; 13-Col 2:6,7; 14-1 Cor 15:57;
15-2 Cor 2:14; 16-John 3:16; 17-Psalm 79:13; 18-2 Cor 4:15.

DAY 11

JEHOVAH RAPHA

This title means that the LORD is our Healer.¹ One of the spiritual gifts Paul recorded in a letter to the Corinthians is listed as “gifts of healing”.² Notice, it is “gifts”, not singular “gift”, because our God manifests healings to the spirit, soul, and body.³ Scripture tells us that God “heals the brokenhearted”,⁴ the oppressed,⁵ the possessed,⁶ the backslider.⁷ One of the benefits of being a believer is the assurance of healing of “all your diseases”⁸, sooner or later. Any and every physical, mental, emotional, or spiritual healing that you and I have experienced in our lives has come from our heavenly Father!⁹

Jesus Christ is the Son of Righteousness who has risen “with healing in His wings”.¹⁰ While Emmanuel ministered on earth, many who touched Him were made whole.¹¹ People suffering from leprosy,¹² withered hands,¹³ fevers,¹⁴ blindness,¹⁵ or demonic affliction¹⁶ were all healed immediately by the Lord our Savior. Jesus knew His critics would mockingly acknowledge His healing abilities by quoting the proverb to Him, “Physician,” or healer, “heal yourself!”¹⁷

Mark it well; only God is a healer. No man is a healer, although God does manifest the gift of healing through vessels of His choice.¹⁸ He gave this gift to the twelve apostles,¹⁹ and He said that this gift would accompany future Christians.²⁰ This does not mean that if you go to doctors or take medicine that your faith is inferior or that you are necessarily out of God’s will. Godly Timothy took medicine,²¹ and the Holy Spirit, through the apostle Paul, referred to Luke as the “beloved physician”.²² Is it coincidental that Paul had Luke by his side during his ministry?

God still heals today, but our greatest healing is yet to come!²³ Until then, may God’s Word minister to your needs today.²⁴

1-Ex 15:26; 2-1 Cor 12:9; 3-1 Thess 5:23; 4-Psalm 147:3; 5-Acts 10:38;
6-Luke 13:32; 7-Hosea 14:4; 8-Psalm 103:2,3; 9-James 1:17; 10-Malachi 4:2;
11-Mark 6:56; 12-Matt 8:2,3; 13-Matt 12:10a,13; 14-Matt 8:14,15;
15-John 9:1-7; 16-Luke 13:11-13,16; 17-Luke 4:23; 18-1 Cor 12:11;
19-Luke 9:1,2; 20-Mark 16:17-18, James 5:14-16; 21-1 Tim 5:23;
22-Col 4:14; 23-1 Cor 15:42-54; 24-Psalm 107:20.

DAY 12

CONQUEROR OR CAPTIVE?

Why did Israel find itself in captivity to the Assyrians as recorded in 2 Kings 17? There are many details given in this chapter that give us reasons for their captivity, but the root cause was turning their back on the LORD their God.¹ Forgetting their slavery in Egypt, and how Jehovah in His grace and mercy had delivered them, the nation began a series of compromises with the pagan nations around them.

One definition of sin means “to miss the mark”. When we forget, ignore, or despise the Lord who bought us out of the world,² it is only a matter of time before we will find ourselves back in the world again.³ Jesus said to each of the seven churches that they were to hear what the Spirit was saying to them.⁴ I don’t suppose that any of those people felt there was any need to be alarmed; after all, they were “Christians”!

Although a true child of God need never fear for his or her salvation, we must still “fight the good fight of faith”,⁵ lest at any time we drift away⁶ from that intimacy with Jesus.⁷ If only Israel had listened to the Word of God,⁸ they would have never fallen. Solomon asked for a “hearing” (or “understanding”) heart.⁹ Samuel simply said, “Speak, for Your servant hears.”¹⁰

Are you hearing the Lord as the Father told us to?¹¹ When we stop listening to God, we start listening to the world, the flesh, and the devil. The result? Captivity.¹² You see, compromise and captivity go hand in hand. Don’t be deceived in this matter!¹³

Have you been ripped off in your Christianity by a deceitful pleasure? Are you in bondage today? Have you “left your first love”?¹⁴ Even if you have, there is good news for you today! You can turn to Jesus Christ right now and receive forgiveness¹⁵ and restoration of joy.¹⁶ You see, there are two entities knocking on the door of the human heart with a desire to rule over it: sin,¹⁷ and Jesus.¹⁸ Depending upon which you invite in, the result will be life or death.¹⁹ You do have a choice, and your choice, just as with the Israelites of old, carries consequences.²⁰

So whether you are being drawn for the first time to salvation²¹ or are a stumbling child of God seeking deliverance, you can be assured that if you draw near to God, He will draw near to you.²² To be a conqueror²³ is far better than being a captive!²⁴

1-2 Kings 17:7; 2-Titus 2:14; 3-1 John 2:16; 4-Rev 2:7,11,17,29, 3:6,13,22;
5-1 Tim 6:12; 6-Heb 2:1; 7-1 Cor 1:9; 8-Psalm 81:13; 9-1 Kings 3:9;
10-1 Sam 3:10; 11-Matt 17:5; 12-Rom 6:16; 13-Gal 6:7,8; 14-Rev 2:4;
15-1 John 1:9; 16-Psalm 51:12; 17-Gen 4:7; 18-Rev 3:20; 19-John 10:10;
20-Deut 30:15-20; 21-John 6:44; 22-James 4:8; 23-Rom 8:37; 24-2 Peter 2:19b.

DAY 13

BEFORE ALL ELSE FAILS, PRAY!

Sadly, many of us do just the opposite of this, and thus prayer becomes to us nothing more than a desperate “911” call to God. We need the Lord to teach us to pray, as did His disciples.¹ The Holy Spirit is with us² to help us pray, for He knows our weaknesses.³ The Scriptures tell us that the prayers of the saints are like incense⁴ which ascends up to the throne of God.⁵ May the Lord reveal to us the destination of our prayers!⁶

We find that Jesus was a man of prayer.⁷ He prayed at His baptism,⁸ at His Transfiguration,⁹ in the Garden of Gethsemane,¹⁰ and even on the cross!¹¹ We are never more like Christ than when we are praying. There is no special time of day to pray,¹² although the morning seems to be the most popular for ‘quiet time’.¹³ No matter when we pray, God tells us that He will answer us.¹⁴ We might not get what we want, but we always get an answer. (After all, “No” and “Wait” are legitimate answers!)

Be assured that the One to whom we pray is none other than our heavenly Father.¹⁵ He listens to us and gives heed to our wholehearted requests.¹⁶ He is attentive to the prayers of the righteous.¹⁷ We know that whatever we ask in His name, He will do¹⁸ as long as it is according to His will.¹⁹

The disciples of Jesus and the early church were devoted to prayer.²⁰ A study on prayer, with follow-up application, is one of the most vital parts of the Christian walk. Wherever you are is a potential place of prayer.²¹ Heartfelt prayer, not showy or lengthy praying²² is what gets God’s attention.

In these last days, may each of us do our part in God’s prayer chain,²³ and remember - before all else fails, pray!²⁴

1-Luke 11:1; 2-John 14:16-17; 3-Rom 8:26; 4-Psalm 141:2; 5-Rev 5:8, 8:3,4;
6-Isaiah 6:1-4; 7-Heb 5:7; 8-Luke 3:21; 9-Luke 9:28,29; 10-Matt 26:36,39;
11-Luke 23:34; 12-Psalm 55:17, Dan 6:10; 13-Psalm 5:3; 14-Jer 33:3; 15-Matt 6:9;
16-Jer 29:12; 17-1 Peter 3:12; 18-John 14:13,14; 19-1 John 5:14; 20-Acts 1:13,14,
2:41,42; 21-1 Thess 5:17; 22-Matt 6:5-8; 23-1 Peter 4:7; 24-Luke 18:1-8.

DAY 14

SELF-DENIAL

The following is an excerpt from an actual letter written by a young communist to his fiancée, breaking off their engagement. The girl's pastor sent the letter to Billy Graham, who published it a number of years ago.

The communist student wrote:

We communists have a high casualty rate. We are the ones who get shot and hung and ridiculed and fired from our jobs and in every way made as uncomfortable as possible. A certain percentage of us get killed or imprisoned. We live in virtual poverty. We turn back to the party every penny we make above what is absolutely necessary to keep us alive. We communists do not have the time or the money for many movies, or concerts, or T-bone steaks, or decent homes, or new cars. We have been described as fanatics. We are fanatics. Our lives are dominated by one great overshadowing factor: the struggle for world communism. We communists have a philosophy of life which no amount of money can buy. We have a cause to fight for, a definite purpose in life. We subordinate our petty personal selves into a great movement of humanity; and if our personal lives seem hard or our egos appear to suffer through subordination to the party, then we are adequately compensated by the thought that each of us in his small way is contributing to something new and true and better for mankind.

There is one thing which I am in dead earnest about, and that is the communist cause. It is my life, my business, my religion, my hobby, my sweetheart, my wife, my mistress, and my bread and meat. I work at it in the daytime and dream of it at night. Its hold on me grows, not lessens, as time goes on; therefore, I cannot carry on a friendship, a love affair, or even a conversation without relating it to this force which both drives and guides my life. I evaluate people, looks, ideas, and actions according to how they affect the communist cause, and by their attitude toward it. I've already been in jail because of my ideals, and if necessary, I'm ready to go before a firing squad.

Although the theme of communism may be dated, the principle of self-denial is certainly a challenge to all of us.

Mark 12:30: And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength. This is the first commandment.

Luke 14:26: If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple.

:27 And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.

See also: 1 Cor 9:25-27 and Phil 3:7-8.

DAY 15

THE PRIVILEGE OF PARENTING

Our children are gifts from the Lord,¹ the fruit of the love of a husband and wife.² In other words, our children are on loan from the Lord. Our responsibility is to train them up³ in the nurture and admonition of our Lord.⁴

God knew that Abraham was a man of God by the way he would teach his offspring about the Lord.⁵ We are to diligently follow the Lord ourselves, and in turn, pass that on to our children⁶ throughout the day, every day.⁷ Parents, how important it is that we pass on to our children the things of the Lord.⁸ This will produce, by the Spirit and grace of God, those “olive plants” around our tables.⁹

Just as Jesus was obedient to Joseph and Mary,¹⁰ children are to be obedient to their parents.¹¹ The Holy Spirit moves powerfully in and through obedient children,¹² no matter what their chronological age. The command to honor parents is the first commandment that includes a promise.¹³ Children, none of God’s promises fail!¹⁴

Dads, we are cautioned against provocative childrearing.¹⁵ Nagging or pushy parenting is never Spirit-led, and it should go without saying that abusiveness is never acceptable. How we need to heed those ‘Elijah-like’ ministries that tell fathers to turn their hearts to their children.¹⁶

Remember parents, we are in the ministry of raising godly “arrows”¹⁷ whom God will direct to be the salt and light of the world.¹⁸ May we all do the best job possible in raising God’s children.

1-Psalm 127:3; 2-Gen 1:28; 3-Prov 22:6; 4-Eph 6:4b; 5-Gen 18:19; 6-Deut 4:9; 7-Deut 6:7; 8-Psalm 78:5-7; 9-Psalm 128:3; 10-Luke 2:51; 11-Eph 6:1, Col 3:20; 12-Acts 5:32; 13-Eph 6:2; 14-Joshua 21:45, 1 Kings 8:56; 15-Eph 6:4a; 16-Malachi 4:5,6; 17-Psalm 127:4; 18-Matt 5:13-16.

DAY 16

WORK AND THE WILL OF GOD

Work is not punishment from God as a result of man's fall in the garden, as some people mistakenly think. Work was given to Adam before the fall.¹ The Scriptures tell us that work is doing the will of God.² So, when we are gainfully employed, our lives are in harmony with the will of God "on earth as it is in heaven."³

As any other part of our Christian life, work is to be engaged in wholeheartedly⁴ and as unto the Lord.⁵ I say again⁶ that to work, unless of course you are medically disabled, is the will of God and is to be done as unto Christ,⁷ even if your employer is not the most reasonable person.⁸ The word of God tells us that whatever we do should be done for the glory of God.⁹

Whether you are a Christian employee or employer, you represent Jesus Christ, and your attitude and job performance should be a strong statement of your faith in Jesus Christ. 'Employment Evangelism' is how the Lord sprinkles His salt¹⁰ and shines His light¹¹ in a very large and practical part of our lives. If you only work hard when 'the boss' is around, you are a man-pleaser.¹² Honestly saints, your 'Boss' IS always around,¹³ and He has provided you with the strength and ability to perform that job which He gave you.

Christian, the world should be knocking on church doors to have you on its payroll! Of course, there are injustices and inequities that occur in the work place. That's why God reminds you that the real pay day is coming,¹⁴ and you will never regret that you served the Lord on your job. Work heartily!¹⁵ You have a lot of eyes on you.¹⁶

1-Gen 2:15; 2-Eph 6:5-6; 3-Matt 6:10; 4-Eph 6:6; 5-Eph 6:7; 6-2 Peter 1:12,13; 7-Eph 6:5; 8-1 Peter 2:18,19; 9-1 Cor 10:31; 10-Matt 5:13; 11-Matt 5:14-16; 12-Col 3:22; 13-Eph 6:9, Heb 4:13; 14-Eph 6:8; 15-Col 3:23; 16-Heb 12:1, 2 Chron 16:9a.

DAY 17

THE WELL OF BETHLEHEM

In I Chronicles 11 the story is told of the time when David was in the cave of Adullam, and the Philistine garrison was stationed in Bethlehem.¹ While in that situation of conflict, David longed for a drink of water from the well of Bethlehem.² Among the numerous practical insights we can draw from this chapter is David's longing for water in the midst of battle.

David, the man after God's own heart,³ thirsted for the waters of Bethlehem that he might be refreshed for whatever lie ahead. He wasn't thinking about the enemy. He was thinking about the Lord. Oh how David thirsted for his God.⁴ When he was in the wilderness and experiencing those "dry spells", more than ever his soul longed and thirsted for the Lord.⁵

Saints, we, like David, are hidden in the Rock,⁶ and our adversary the devil is roaming around⁷ seeking prey.⁸ So often we become preoccupied with the battle that we forget about the well of Bethlehem; we forget our Source of living water.⁹ The wisest thing to do in any battle is to stretch out our hands to Jesus Christ.¹⁰ We have no business fighting the good fight of faith¹¹ on an empty tank!

Church, the well is available for weary travelers and wounded warriors.¹² We can draw forth those waters for today from the wells of salvation.¹³ Jesus told the woman at the well that the fresh water that He offers is inexhaustible,¹⁴ available for the asking. We have not because we ask not.¹⁵

Are you weary today? Frustrated? Are the Philistines in your Bethlehem? Jesus said, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink."¹⁶ God's supply is above and beyond all that you need.¹⁷ Both the Rock we are hidden in, and the Source of the water of refreshment are Christ.¹⁸ This water is pure¹⁹ and cleansing.²⁰ Care to join me?

1-1 Chron 11:15,16; 2-1 Chron 11:17; 3-Acts 13:22; 4-Psalm 42:1;
5-Psalm 63:1; 6-2 Sam 22:2; 7-Job 2:2; 8-1 Peter 5:8; 9-John 4:10;
10-Psalm 143:6; 11-1 Tim 6:12; 12-Isaiah 55:1a; 13-Isaiah 12:2,3;
14-John 4:14; 15-James 4:2; 16-John 7:37; 17-Eph 3:20; 18-1 Cor 10:4;
19-Rev 22:1; 20-Eph 5:26.

DAY 18

"RECLAIMED FREIGHT"

Jesus told Simon Peter that Satan desired to reclaim him, that he wanted to sift him as wheat.¹ In other words, Satan's evil agenda² is to put us through various circumstances and situations in life with one goal in mind - devouring.³

Each of us must realize the reality of Satan and his forces of darkness that are on the attack.⁴ Spiritual warfare is real, it's not a game, and certainly nothing to toy with or joke about. Satan has his own doctrines, which his demons promote.⁵ He perverts the word of God.⁶ He and his minions oppose our prayers.⁷ The devil also "blinds" people's understanding about the truth of the gospel.⁸ He lays snares before us,⁹ and is called in Scripture, "the Tempter".¹⁰ His name means "Adversary" in Hebrew, which is normally translated in English as "Accuser."¹¹ In fact, another name for the devil is "Slanderer" because he lies.¹² Satan and the evil spirits that follow him seek to possess and destroy lives.¹³ They will be extremely active during Daniel's 70th week,¹⁴ as recorded in the Book of Revelation.¹⁵

Satan today is looking for vessels¹⁶ through whom he can steal, kill or devour. He thrives on hatred¹⁷ and fiery tongues.¹⁸ Never forget Satan's desire to use you and me as "reclaimed freight"!

Thank God for the gospel of Jesus Christ¹⁹ by which God has delivered us from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of His dear Son!²⁰

1-Luke 22:31; 2-John 10:10a; 3-1 Peter 5:8,9; 4-Eph 6:11-13; 5-1 Tim 4:1;
6-Gen 3:1-4; 7-Dan 10:12,13; 8-2 Cor 4:4; 9-2 Tim 2:26; 10-Matt 4:3;
11-Rev 12:10; 12-John 8:44; 13-Mark 5:2-9; 14-Dan 9:27; 15-Rev 6:1-8, 9:1-21;
16-Eph 2:2; 17-1 John 3:14b,15; 18-James 3:5-10; 19-1 Cor 15:1-4; 20-Col 1:13.

DAY 19

A BRIDE IN ARMOR

We as Christians are married to Jesus Christ,¹ and as His bride² we are to live as chaste virgins.³

As we look at the armor of God, it's evident that there is a spiritual battle in which we are engaged.⁴ Our adversary, the devil,⁵ is actively at work trying to get us to break our 'vows of marriage' to Christ and revert back to living after the world⁶ and its values.⁷ Thank God that He has provided protection for us! The armor of the past⁸ is replaced by "the armor of light",⁹ which is also "the armor of righteousness".¹⁰

For us to effectively stand for the Lord and in the Lord, we must be clothed with the whole, that is, the entire armor of God.¹¹ Saints, we are adequately equipped¹² for both the defensive and offensive aspects of spiritual warfare. We can always be victorious in Christ.¹³

Oh how wonderful to know that Jesus, like any good husband, is watching out for His bride with holy jealousy.¹⁴ So as we flee those things that would ensnare us,¹⁵ and we "fight the good fight of faith"¹⁶ keeping our wedding garments clean,¹⁷ the hurting world around us will 'see the light'¹⁸ and glorify our Master-Husband, Jesus.

1-Rom 7:4; 2-Eph 5:22,23; 3-2 Cor 11:2; 4-Eph 6:12; 5-1 Peter 5:8; 6-James 4:4; 7-1 John 2:15,16; 8-Luke 11:22; 9-Rom 13:12; 10-2 Cor 6:7; 11-Eph 6:11,13-18; 12-Phil 4:19; 13-2 Cor 2:14; 14-Ex 34:14; 15-1 Tim 6:9-11; 16-1 Tim 6:12; 17-James 1:27; 18-Matt 5:16.

DAY 20

TEAMWORK

The introduction to 1 Thessalonians reveals a vital element of any effective local church - team work. Note the listing of “Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy”, for all three brothers were active ingredients in the lives of the believers there.

Because we are one body¹ with many members² and gifts,³ it is an obvious conclusion that for us to be effective we must work together. None of us can say that we do not need each other, because we do.⁴ Some do the planting, others do the watering,⁵ but all do the praying!⁶ Paul recognized the danger of divisiveness⁷ and competitiveness.

When we do our job, we actually strengthen others in their job. Seven times in 1 Corinthians 14:1-26 the words “edification” and “edifies” are applied to the body of Christ. Romans 16:1-16 portrays a beautiful picture of each saint serving the Lord in the strength of God’s Spirit. Remember, servanthood is our holy calling⁸ and is the measure of greatness within the kingdom of Jesus Christ.⁹

Whenever a person is faithfully occupied in their own calling or ministry, their eyes will not be on the duties of others.¹⁰ To rightly respond to our Lord’s command to “Follow Me”¹¹ and to be a busybody¹² are as opposite as hot and cold! Personal holiness will affect others.¹³ Our lives must reflect the gospel that we proclaim.¹⁴ Selfish ambition and conceit¹⁵ are worldly activities. In contrast, the mind of Christ, which believers are to display, does not seek a reputation.¹⁶

May we all yield to the word of God and allow the Lord to continue His carpentry trade by framing us together¹⁷ with the only atmosphere that He can really move in - His love.¹⁸

1- Eph 4:4; 2-1 Cor 12:12,20; 3-1 Peter 4:10,11; 4-1 Cor 12:15-17,21,22;
5-1 Cor 3:8; 6-Eph 6:18; 7-1 Cor 1:11-13; 8-Rom 1:1; 9-Mark 10:44,45;
10-John 21:20-22; 11-Matt 4:19; 12-2 Thess 3:11; 13-1 Tim 4:16; 14-Phil 1:27;
15-Phil 2:3; 16-Phil 2:5-8; 17-Eph 2:21-22; 18-John 13:34,35.

DAY 21

THE EXEMPLARY CHURCH

The apostle Paul wrote that the local church in Thessalonica was a model church.¹ Indeed, the greatest witness for the Lord Jesus Christ is one that is free of pretense² and simply in love with the Lord. The Thessalonians had good fruit,³ which is why they were so effective in evangelism. Much like earlier believers,⁴ these laymen brought the good news of Jesus Christ wherever the Holy Spirit led their paths. They were undoubtedly ready to proclaim the Savior because they had made that complete turn from idols to Jesus.⁵ When we are set apart in our hearts for our Lord,⁶ the gospel of peace will be upon our lips.⁷

The church in Thessalonica knew about regeneration.⁸ They knew that they had been delivered⁹ from that terrible future time period known as “the wrath of God”.¹⁰ Evidently, there was a lot of agape in this church,¹¹ which Jesus tells us is the greatest witness any church can present to the world.¹²

In Israel’s sordid past¹³ we find a model for failure,¹⁴ but here in Thessalonians we see a model for fruitfulness.¹⁵ It would be a tragic oversight to omit the fact that moral purity and holiness¹⁶ are the exports of a healthy church. Servanthood¹⁷ and enduring afflictions¹⁸ are necessary ingredients for a model church.

As we walk with the Lord together, may each one of us follow the path that our brothers and sisters followed back in the first century. May our love abound,¹⁹ and may the knowledge of the promise of our Lord’s soon return encourage us!²⁰ May we edify one another,²¹ and put into practice in our own lives Paul’s practical exhortations to the Thessalonians.²²

Be assured that our faithful God²³ will provide each of us “the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ”²¹ in order to both do and be all that He requires of us.

1-1 Thess 1:6-8; 2-Eph 6:24; 3-1 Thess 1:3; 4-Acts 8:1,4; 5-1 Thess 1:9;
6-1 Peter 3:15; 7-Rom 10:15; 8-1 Thess 1:5; 9-1 Thess 1:10, 5:9; 10-Rev 16:1;
11-1 Thess 3:12; 12-John 13:34,35; 13-Acts 7:51-53; 14-1 Cor 10:11;
15-Gal 5:22-23; 16-1 Thess 4:1-7; 17-John 13:14,15; 18-Heb 10:32-34;
19-1 Thess 4:9; 20-1 Thess 4:13-17; 21-1 Thess 5:11; 22-1 Thess 5:14,15;
23-1 Thess 5:24; 24-1 Thess 5:28.

DAY 22

SAVED FROM WRATH

If a person does not believe in the atoning, redemptive work of Jesus Christ¹ and is not born again,² the wrath of God abides upon him/her.³ In fact, this aspect of God's wrath is revealed from heaven against any who proclaim knowledge of the truth of God, but deny that knowledge with an unholy lifestyle.⁴ There is also a future wrath from which we are to flee.⁵ By faith in the gospel of Jesus Christ,⁶ we escape that eternal wrath of God. In addition, there is another wrath recorded in Scripture that will take place during Daniel's 70th week.⁷ This will be God's wrath poured out upon the earth,⁸ also known as "the wrath of the Lamb".⁹ Who can stand before His wrath?¹⁰

To speak of God's wrath is no light matter. The Book of Revelation gives us great detail about His coming wrath. As the prophet Nahum wrote, at this period of time the Lord will come in fury and with a vengeance, but His wrath is reserved for His enemies.¹¹ This wrath is not for the Church, for we have been saved from this wrath by our Savior Jesus.¹² It is "the vine of the earth",¹³ the unregenerate 'earth-dwellers',¹⁴ who will be the recipients of this wrath.

Jesus told us that there is an escape from all these things.¹⁵ By seeking forgiveness of sins through Jesus Christ, we are placed 'in Him'.¹⁶ We will be hidden, so to speak, in Christ during this time of the LORD's anger.¹⁷ As God's wrath is being completed,¹⁸ the church will be at the judgment seat of Christ,¹⁹ for judgment begins at the house of God.²⁰ Saints, never confuse the wrath of man,²¹ or even the wrath of Satan,²² with God's wrath.

We do not come to Jesus for an easy life.²³ We come to Him as sinners in need of forgiveness.²⁴ Our Lord has promised those who come to Him deliverance from His wrath in any way He chooses. (Remember Noah's deliverance?²⁵) Your heartfelt response to Calvary and the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ will determine whether you meet Him in wrath or favor.²⁶ So don't run from Him; ²⁷ run to Him!²⁸

1-John 1:29; 2- John 3:3-7; 3-John 3:36; 4-Rom 1:18; 5-Matt 3:7; 6-1 Cor 15:1-4; 7-Dan 9:24-27; 8-Rev 16:1; 9-Rev 6:16; 10-Rev 6:17, Nahum 1:6; 11-Nahum 1:2; 12-Rom 5:9, 1 Thess 1:10, 5:9; 13-Rev 14:19; 14-Rev 13:8; 15-Luke 21:36; 16-Col 3:3; 17-Zeph 2:3; 18-Rev 15:1; 19-Rom 14:10, 2 Cor 5:10; 20-1 Peter 4:17; 21-James 1:20; 22-Rev 12:12; 23-Luke 9:23, Acts 14:22; 24-1 Tim 1:15; 25-Gen 7:23; 26-Prov 19:12; 27-Heb 3:15; 28-Matt 11:28.

DAY 23

SING, SING, SING !

“Sing to Him, sing psalms to Him”.¹ Anyone with an interest or background in music cannot read the Bible without concluding that music is one of its major elements.

When the children of Israel crossed the Red Sea, they broke out into a song of triumph.² In fact, God Himself is the song.³ The redeemed of the Lord are exhorted to sing to the Lord in thanksgiving for “all things”,⁴ not the least of which is His gift of salvation.⁵ As Israel was moving eastward in their journeys, the Lord provided for them much needed water, which birthed a new ‘hit song’ - “Spring up, O well!”⁶ After the Lord gave a great victory to Deborah and Barak, they sang a duet of praise to their Lord.⁷ Sometimes it was the songs of praise that even fueled military victories.⁸

Oh how wonderful it is to sing praises to the Lord Most High!⁹ Praise to the LORD should be rendered with all the skill we possess.¹⁰ Proclaiming both God’s power and mercy are indeed worthy of our songs.¹¹ Even life’s ‘prisons’ provide opportunities for praise and worship.¹²

The church in glory will be a singing church.¹³ The 144,000 will stand on Mt. Zion and belt out a song of praise.¹⁴ We’d better be comfortable saying “Hallelujah” because in glory that will be a very common word.¹⁵ Even babies and children give praise to Jesus.¹⁶ The exhortation of the Holy Spirit is for all people to praise the LORD,¹⁷ and to sing to Him both when we’re gathered together to worship with dance and music, and alone at rest.¹⁸

When you think about what Jesus did for us on Calvary,¹⁹ how could we not praise Him for His grace! The sacrifice of the “royal priesthood”²⁰ is one of praise.²¹ Indeed, to God alone “be praise and dominion forever and ever. Amen.”²²

1-1 Chron 16:9; 2-Ex 15:1; 3-Ex 15:2; 4-Eph 5:19,20; 5-Eph 2:8; 6-Num 21:16-17; 7-Judges 5:1-3; 8-2 Chron 20:22; 9-Psalm 9:2; 10-Psalm 33:2,3; 11-Psalm 59:16; 12-Acts 16:25; 13-Rev 5:9; 14-Rev 14:3; 15-Rev 19:1,3,4,6; 16-Matt 21:15-16; 17-Rom 15:11; 18-Psalm 149:1-5; 19-Col 2:14; 20-1 Peter 2:9; 21-Heb 13:15; 22-1 Peter 4:11.

DAY 24

WHAT IS BEAUTY?

The Kingdom of God and the kingdom of this world are opposites. The system of this world is only superficial, temporal, physical. In contrast, God's Kingdom is spiritual¹ and eternal.² We can see the conflict of kingdoms on so many issues, among them being beauty. What is true beauty?

In Psalm 45:11, Scripture tells us that God desires our beauty. Immediately we know that the beauty He desires is something other than physical.³ Peter wrote that a holy woman's true beauty lies within her.⁴ The physical attribute of beauty, apart from godliness, is a wasteful tragedy.⁵ In fact, physical beauty alone is, at best, fleeting.⁶

Our generation is bombarded by this beautification message. For those of us who don't measure up, the enemy has a real field day. Child of God, each one of you is very beautiful⁷ in the Lord's eyes. It's also true that the Lord looks at those who spread His gospel and declares them beautiful.⁸ Jehovah even said of Jacob's humble abode that it was beautiful⁹ simply because His child was living there.

Isn't it becoming increasingly evident that we must renew our minds?¹⁰ If we are not careful, we can get "pricked" by "thorny" values.¹¹ Our Lord Himself would never have been a "cover-boy" for GQ Magazine,¹² but there was never a One so beautiful on this earth.¹³

Beauty, physical beauty that is, and resulting pride are often inseparable.¹⁴ To desire or evaluate beauty simply after "the lust of the eyes"¹⁵ is worldly,¹⁶ and disastrous.¹⁷ Instead, may we seek to beautify ourselves with those virtues of which Paul speaks in Philippians 4:8.

By which kingdom do you evaluate life? The beauty of Christ stems from character not cosmetics; purity not power; grace not greed; virtue not vanity; servanthood not selfishness; contentment not covetousness.

"And let the beauty of the LORD our God be upon us".¹⁸

1-Rom 14:17; 2-2 Peter 1:11; 3-Psalm 29:2b; 4-1 Peter 3:4; 5-Prov 11:22;
6-Prov 31:30; 7-Song 1:15; 8-Rom 10:15; 9-Num 24:5; 10-Rom 12:2;
11-Luke 8:14; 12-Isaiah 53:2; 13-Isaiah 33:17a; 14-Ezek 28:17; 15-1 John 2:16;
16-Prov 6:25; 17-2 Sam 12:9-12; 18-Psalm 90:17.

DAY 25

WHICH FIRE?

Scripture makes a clear distinction between the fires of testing¹ and the fires of judgment,² which result from following after the solicitations of evil.³

For example, through the prophet Amos God decried some specific sins of Judah and its neighbors which were to result in a devouring fire.⁴ There is also a connection between lust and burning,⁵ and it is not possible for a person to commit adultery without being burned.⁶ Scripture also tells us that “an ungodly man digs up evil” and then verbally ‘fires’ away at another’s expense.⁷

Now make no mistake about it, saints. There is that natural ‘burning process’ that takes place during any temptation.⁸ There is a suffering in the flesh⁹ whenever we choose to please God rather than self.¹⁰ Additionally, fiery darts¹¹ are a part of our daily combat.¹² However, this fiery trial is not some strange thing that only some Christians face,¹³ but it’s a common part of our personal purging process.¹⁴

The purposes and effects of these two kinds of fire are contrary. God’s holy fire cleanses and empowers for service,¹⁵ whereas the flesh’s fire corrupts.¹⁶ The fires of testing actually enhance life, bringing spiritual light¹⁷ and warm fellowship,¹⁸ but the fires of sin bring destruction.¹⁹

As you walk with the Lord, learn to identify the source of the fires around you. The Bible states that “our God is a consuming fire”,²⁰ but that fire destroys only what is sinful or worthless.²¹ By contrast there’s a hellish fire which defiles us.²²

So, if you’re feeling the heat and the fire is coming from the flesh, resist!²³ But if you’re enduring the Lord’s cleansing fire, you can rejoice.²⁴

1-Isaiah 48:10; 2-Lam 2:3,4; 3-Eph 5:3-6; 4-Amos 1:3,4,6,7,9-14, 2:1,2;
5-Rom 1:27; 6-Prov 6:27-29; 7-Prov 16:27; 8-James 1:13-15; 9-1 Peter 4:1,2;
10-Heb 11:25; 11-Eph 6:16; 12-Eph 6:12; 13-1 Peter 4:12; 14-1 Peter 1:7;
15-Matt 3:11, Acts 2:3,4; 16-Gal 6:8; 17-2 Cor 4:6; 18-1 Cor 1:9; 19-Rom 6:23a;
20-Heb 12:29; 21-1 Cor 3:12-13; 22-James 3:6; 23-2 Tim 2:22a; 24-James 1:2.

DAY 26

THE PRISON OF EMOTIONS

We are to “walk by faith, not by sight”,¹ which means we need to focus on eternal matters.² To walk by sight, then, means to live only in the temporal, physical realm according to the five senses and our emotions, or ‘feelings’.

Our feelings in and of themselves are not evil, but they certainly are not dependable sources by which we follow the Lord. To follow Jesus³ means to be subject to the Word of God⁴ in spite of our feelings or emotions. Emotions can easily lead you astray from the truth. So many Christians have ‘felt led’ in a direction that God said to flee from in the Bible,⁵ the result being disappointment, sorrow, and pain.

We must be led by the Spirit,⁶ who will never lead us by sight. Lot walked by sight and ended up in Sodom; Abraham trusted God and ended up in the Promised Land.⁷ No matter how you or I feel, it doesn’t change the truth of God’s Word.⁸ The Word of God is eternally fresh,⁹ and always practical in the lives of those who receive it.¹⁰

An emotional hearer of God’s Word will never experience the peace of God in his or her life. Emotions are like the weather, health, or the economy - subject to change. Emotional tongues often get us into trouble.¹¹ An emotional attempt to steady the ark of God was deadly.¹² Emotional responses to the lust of the eyes¹³ is murderous.

We must remember that nowhere does Scripture instruct us to feel led, but we are to be led by God’s Spirit.¹⁴ Of course our High Priest considers the feelings of our infirmities,¹⁵ but not for the sake of delivering us up to them, but to deliver us from them.

To walk with Jesus is to walk with the Word, no matter what our emotions.¹⁶

1-2 Cor 5:7; 2-2 Cor 4:18; 3-Matt 4:19; 4-2 Tim 3:16,17; 5-1 Cor 6:18, 10:14, 1 Tim 6:10,11, 2 Tim 2:22a; 6-Rom 8:14; 7-Gen 13:1-18; 8-Psalm 119:151b, John 17:17b; 9-Heb 4:12; 10-1 Thess 2:13, Psalm 119:133; 11-Prov 18:6,7; 12-2 Sam 6:1-7; 13-2 Sam 11:1-17; 14-Gal 5:18; 15-Heb 4:15; 16-2 Tim 4:2.

DAY 27

THE IMPORTANCE OF FORGIVENESS

Sometimes in our thirst for spiritual growth, we explore nuggets of Scripture looking for that one truth that will catapult us into the state of maturity. However, it's oftentimes the application of the 'ABC's' of our faith on a daily basis that is the real cause of growth.

One fundamental truth that is taught repeatedly in Scripture is that of forgiveness.¹ Remember how beautifully Joseph forgave his brothers?² That act of Joseph is a correct practical application of our Lord's teaching found in Matt 18:21-35.

Now before you ho-hum and conclude, "I've read that a hundred times", let me ask you something. Do you have unforgiveness, resentment, or bitterness in your heart towards someone, anyone, right at this moment? That root of bitterness in your soul spreads defilement.³ That unforgiving disposition creates torment in your own life.⁴ The measure of our ability to forgive others is to be the same measure whereby you and I have been forgiven.⁵

Unforgiveness is a sin that must be repented of. The cross removes our sins against God,⁶ but there is an element of forgiveness tied in with our ability to forgive those who have wronged us.⁷ "Forgive, and you will be forgiven."⁸ It's not that God is withholding His forgiveness from us as a sort of bribe, but that we are unable to receive and fully appreciate His forgiveness as long as we remain unforgiving towards others.

Indeed, to be forgiven is a blessed thing,⁹ and it's also that very message of undeserved forgiveness that sets us free to forgive others. The greater our comprehension of God's forgiveness towards us,¹⁰ the more easily and quickly we'll be able to forgive and love others. Satan, however, will seek to take advantage of an unforgiving attitude.¹¹

God's Word exhorts us to forgive tenderheartedly, and for Jesus' sake.¹² Forgiveness erases differences amongst believers¹³ and exalts our Savior,¹⁴ but, unforgiveness needs to be confessed and repented of.¹⁵ Can we not forgive simply because Jesus asks us to?

1-1 Kings 8:33-39, Psalm 103:3, Luke 5:20-25, Col 2:13-14; 2-Gen 50:17-21;
3-Heb 12:15; 4-Matt 18:34; 5-Eph 4:32; 6-Eph 1:7; 7-Matt 6:12,14,15;
8-Luke 6:37; 9-Rom 4:7; 10-Luke 7:36-50; 11-2 Cor 2:10,11; 12-Eph 4:32;
13-Col 3:13; 14-Luke 23:33,34; 15-1 John 1:9.

DAY 28

HEAVY MEDDLE

The Book of Proverbs has a few things to say about meddling, including giving a warning that it could invite trouble.¹ Of course we know that there is parental 'meddling' involved in guiding our children. However, there is within some people an inordinate desire to get involved in other people's lives. I'm not speaking about the Biblical aspects of confronting issues of sin² which is always, when led by God's Holy Spirit, the loving thing to do.³ I'm talking about the times spent putting in our 'two cents' informing others within the body of Christ how they can (supposedly) get their lives together.

The word "meddle" means to mingle, intermix, associate with or traffic in someone else's life beyond Scriptural limits. Meddling and talebearing often go hand-in-hand.⁴ The New Testament companion word is "busybody,"⁵ which no disciple of Jesus should be. This word busybody describes, according to Strong's, someone who is "an inspector of another, meddling with other people's concerns".

Yes, we are a body, a family, but we also are individuals with personal responsibilities.⁶ There are burdens we must bear with others⁷ and burdens that we must bear alone.⁸ None of us can carry two crosses.⁹ A busybody, though, is one who is out of order,¹⁰ speaking things to others and about others which they ought not.¹¹ The Word of God clearly states that we are not to go around amongst our brethren gossiping about others.¹²

A talebearing, meddlesome person stirs up strife,¹³ but never offers a solution. Our society allows for this kind of behavior, but God says that 'heavy meddle' causes deep wounds,¹⁴ which are best avoided.

1-Prov 26:17; 2-Gal 2:11-14, 1 Tim 5:20; 3-James 5:19-20; 4-Prov 20:19;
5-1 Peter 4:15; 6-1 Thess 4:11-12; 7-Gal 6:2; 8-Gal 6:5; 9-Luke 9:23,24;
10-2 Thess 3:11; 11-1 Tim 5:13; 12-Lev 19:16a; 13-Prov 26:20; 14-Prov 26:22.

DAY 29

OBEDIENCE IS NOT LEGALISM

Somehow among some saints obedience and legalism have become connected. That is a tragic misunderstanding. Legalism is attempting to establish a right relationship with God based upon my efforts or religious system's demands, which is, of course, contrary to Scripture.¹ Paul clearly refutes the notion of legalism in his epistle to the Galatians.² Likewise, the writer to the Hebrews insists that religious rituals cannot bring about salvation, but only Christ's sacrifice.³ Another form of legalism is making areas of personal conviction Church doctrine for the entire family of God.⁴

However, obedience to God is not today, nor has it ever been, legalism. We are to be obedient children.⁵ The Greek word for obedient means "submissive". To call Jesus "Lord"⁶ implies a desire to submit to His will. Simply to call Him "Lord" means nothing apart from an obedient response to His Word.⁷

May we, as the Proverb states, be people with an obedient ear.⁸ There is no sense praying for God's will in your life if you only want to decide whether or not you will obey it. However, obedience will often bring good results.⁹ Spirit-filled living will be evidenced by obedience to both apostolic authority¹⁰ and employer assignments.¹¹ Who is our example of obedience? None other than our Lord Jesus Christ Himself.¹² He is "the Author of eternal salvation to all those who obey Him".¹³

There are Biblical commands for children to obey their parents,¹⁴ and for citizens to be obedient to the governing authorities.¹⁵ The Apostle Paul was perplexed about the Galatian Christians and asked, "Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth?"¹⁶ Jesus said that we prove ourselves to be His friends by our obedience.¹⁷ Obedience to God produces righteousness,¹⁸ despite the fleshly lusts¹⁹ that demand our 'obedience'.²⁰

Whenever there is a conflict, "We ought to obey God rather than men."²¹ This is the language of a redeemed soul that is walking in Jesus' footsteps.²²

1-Eph 2:8-9; 2-Gal 2:14-5:13; 3-Heb 9:1-10:23; 4-Rom 14:1-23; 5-1 Peter 1:14;
6-Luke 6:46; 7-Matt 7:21-23; 8-Prov 25:12; 9-Isaiah 1:19; 10-2 Cor 2:9;
11-Eph 6:5; 12-Phil 2:8; 13-Heb 5:9; 14-Eph 6:1; 15-Rom 13:1-7; 16-Gal 3:1;
17-John 15:14; 18-Rom 6:16; 19-1 Peter 2:11; 20-Rom 6:12; 21-Acts 5:29;
22-1 John 2:6.

DAY 30

OH JOY!

One of the purposes of our Lord Jesus' mission was to give to redeemed man the oil of joy.¹ David declared that the gladness that God put into his heart was beyond the best offered by the world.² Have we been so bogged down by our own trials and difficulties in life that we've forgotten that the coming of Christ our Savior into our world and lives brings glad tidings of great joy?³ Have we forgotten that an expression of the fruitful life in Christ is joy?⁴

Even while in prison Jeremiah was able to declare God's Word to be "the joy and rejoicing" of his heart.⁵ When the Thessalonians were born again, although in much affliction, there was a wonderful joy.⁶ As ambassadors of Jesus Christ,⁷ we are to bring the good news of salvation to others with joy.⁸ Our dear Savior encourages us to walk in fellowship with Him⁹ because in His presence¹⁰ there is fullness of joy.¹¹

Saints, right now, rejoice in your beloved Lord Jesus.¹² "Be glad in the LORD and rejoice, you righteous!"¹³ To look for joy in worldly success or things is vanity, futility.¹⁴ However, there is joy when we bring counsel of peace¹⁵ to others from the Prince of Peace.¹⁶ What joy there is when our lips are on fire from above!¹⁷ "Blessed are the meek"¹⁸ (humble), for their joy shall increase.¹⁹

Even when Habakkuk's world came tumbling down, his joy was never lost.²⁰ What is the basis of our joy? Our feelings or circumstances? No! Our salvation through the atonement of Jesus Christ.²¹ In Your salvation, Lord Jesus, we greatly rejoice.²² Yes, with joy we "draw water out of the wells of salvation."²³ Through Jesus Christ we can have cheer, here and now, even in the midst of our tribulations.²⁴ Our hope of being in glory with God is also a great source of joy.²⁵ Although I've never seen Jesus personally, I love Him and have in my heart a joy unspeakable²⁶ that enables me to "count it all joy"²⁷ when the 'heat is on'.

As we study and obey God's Word, may we continually experience a full measure of joy.²⁸

1-Isaiah 61:1-3; 2-Psalm 4:7; 3-Luke 2:10,11; 4-Gal 5:22; 5-Jer 15:16;
6-1 Thess 1:6; 7-2 Cor 5:20; 8-Isaiah 55:12; 9-1 John 1:3; 10-Acts 17:28;
11-Psalm 16:11; 12-Phil 3:1; 13-Psalm 32:11; 14-Eccl 2:10,11; 15-Prov 12:20b;
16-Isaiah 9:6; 17-Prov 15:23; 18-Matt 5:5; 19-Isaiah 29:19; 20-Hab 3:17-19;
21-Rom 5:8-11; 22-Psalm 21:1; 23-Isaiah 12:3; 24-John 16:33; 25-Rom 5:2;
26-1 Peter 1:8; 27-James 1:2; 28-John 15:10,11.

DAY 31

I WILL SEEK THE LORD

When King David was nearing the end of his days on earth, he gave to his son Solomon the exhortation to “set your heart and your soul to seek the LORD your God.”¹ What beautiful counsel the Holy Spirit² gives us through David!

How contemporary the Word of God is, because God’s Word is spirit and life.³ Every one reading this can apply the counsel of David to some area of his or her life. No matter what the need, the wisest thing we can be doing is seeking our Lord. When Jehoshaphat was facing overwhelming odds in battle, he fasted and set himself to seek the Lord.⁴ When Daniel received the prophetic word regarding the seventy weeks of Israel,⁵ it followed a time of Scripture reading and then seeking God in prayer and fasting.⁶

Dear saint, seek God today; seek His face and His strength continually.⁷ The wisdom that you and I need comes from the Lord.⁸ He will not withhold any good thing⁹ from any child of God that seeks Him diligently.¹⁰ Jesus Himself tells us that seeking the Kingdom of God should be our life’s priority.¹¹

So many people are led astray and spiritually defiled because of seeking anything other than the Lord.¹² When Israel fell into idolatry, Jehovah told them that the path of revival would be paved by seeking His face.¹³ If you seek Him, you will find Him.¹⁴ He does not forsake any that seek Him.¹⁵ Seeking God’s presence was David’s one desire,¹⁶ so no wonder he exhorted his son so strongly to seek Him.

As we seek the face of Jesus, may our hearts burst out with the joyous cry, “The LORD be magnified!”¹⁷ Oh saints, it is never the wrong time to seek the Lord. And be assured that in seeking Him you will never be ashamed or confounded.¹⁸ Half-hearted pursuit of God will not do.¹⁹

May each of us, like the bride in the Song of Solomon, declare, “I will seek Him whom my soul loves.”²⁰

1-1 Chron 22:19; 2-2 Peter 1:20,21; 3-John 6:63; 4-2 Chron 20:1-3; 5-Dan 9:24-27; 6-Dan 9:2,3; 7-1 Chron 16:11; 8-Prov 2:1-7; 9-Psalm 84:11; 10-Heb 11:6; 11-Matt 6:33; 12-Lev 19:31; 13-2 Chron 7:14; 14-2 Chron 15:2; 15-Psalm 9:10; 16-Psalm 27:4; 17-Psalm 40:16; 18-Psalm 69:6; 19-Psalm 119:2; 20-Song 3:2.

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2003