

Our Daily Bread

2009

And JESUS answered him, saying, It is written that man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of GOD.

St. Matthew 4 : 4

St. Luke 4 : 4

Deuteronomy 8 : 2-3

Dedicated to
our Saviour and Lord
JESUS CHRIST

Preface

The purpose of this small e-book is to turn many to the righteousness of GOD.

“And they that turn many to the righteousness shall shine as the stars for ever and ever.”

Daniel 12 : 3

Acknowledgement

Our grateful thanks are due to the services rendered by the RBC, Radio Bible Class, Ministries, for strengthening us with the word of God each day through e-mail.

May the grace of Lord Jesus Christ be with the ministers of RBC.

October 10, 2009

Speaking The Truth

READ: [2 Chron. 24:15-22](#)

He sent prophets to them, . . . but they would not listen. —2 Chronicles 24:19

In the novel *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Atticus Finch is a respected small-town lawyer in the segregated South during the 1930s. When he takes on a case that pits an innocent black man against two dishonest white people, Atticus knows he will face terrible prejudice from the jury. But his conscience compels him to speak the truth boldly in the face of opposition.

The Old Testament prophets were often sent to preach the truth to a stubborn people. “[God] sent prophets to them, to bring them back to the Lord; and they testified against them, but they would not listen” (2 Chron. 24:19). Their message often resulted in persecution and sometimes even death (Heb. 11:32-38).

During Christ’s ministry on earth, His message also resulted in angry opposition (Luke 4:21-30). Yet, in the sovereignty of God, the terrible miscarriage of justice that sentenced Jesus to death on the cross purchased our redemption. Now, as representatives of the risen Christ in this world, we are to promote reconciliation, justice, and integrity (Mic. 6:8; 2 Cor. 5:18-21). And in so doing, this may mean speaking the truth in the face of opposition. This is the charge to every believer until that day when Christ sets all things right (Rev. 20:11-15). —Dennis Fisher

The life that counts must toil and fight,
Must hate the wrong and love the right;
Must stand for truth, by day, by night—
This is the life that counts. —Anon.

It’s better to declare the truth and be rejected than to withhold the truth just to be accepted.

October 11, 2009

Go Beyond Reading

READ: [Colossians 3:12-17](#)

As the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness . . . longsuffering.
—Colossians 3:12

Pastor, where are the *Our Daily Bread* devotionals?” The words came harshly—almost in anger. The latest edition had not yet been placed in the rack outside the church auditorium. This led at least one reader to confront the pastor about their absence. Although it was not his responsibility to distribute the booklets, he felt terrible about the way this parishioner had reprimanded him for not making sure the devotional guides were there on time.

When I heard this, I was struck by the irony of this situation. Devotional booklets are meant to encourage Christian growth and godly grace. And as followers of Christ who read devotional materials, we hope we are moving toward spiritual maturity that leads to “tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering”—qualities Paul says we should “put on” (Col. 3:12).

Our spiritual disciplines—reading God’s Word along with accompanying study or devotional materials, prayer, and worshiping together—should not be ends in themselves. Instead, those actions are means to becoming more Christlike, more godly, more Spirit-led. Our spiritual practice should lead to having the “Word of Christ dwell in [us] richly” (3:16). That will show in everything we do and say. —Dave Branon

I want my heart to be in tune with God,
In every stage of life may it ring true;
I want my thoughts and words to honor Him,
Exalting Him in everything I do. —Hess

Bible study is not merely to inform us— it’s meant to transform us.

October 13, 2009

Olympic Extravaganza

READ: [1 Kings 10:4-10](#)

Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven. —Matthew 5:16

The opening ceremony of the Beijing Summer Olympics on August 8, 2008, impressed the world. I saw it on TV as more than 90,000 people watched it live in the Bird's Nest Stadium in Beijing. It was inspiring to hear about China's 5,000 years of history and the inventions she had contributed to the world: paper- making, movable-type printing, the compass, and fireworks.

The Queen of Sheba was greatly impressed by what she saw during her visit with Solomon (1 Kings 10:4-5). The sights of Jerusalem so overwhelmed her that she exclaimed, "The half was not told me" (v.7). Above all, she was impressed with Solomon's wisdom (vv.6-7). She was convinced that the subjects of Solomon were happy because they continually stood before him and heard his wisdom (v.8). She concluded by praising Solomon's Lord for making him king so he would "do justice and righteousness" (v.9).

Solomon's impact on his people made me wonder about our contribution to the world. We're not concerned about impressing others with our possessions or abilities, but we all should want to make a difference in the lives of people. What if there was one thing each of us did today that caused people to praise the Lord? —C. P. Hia

This is the wish I always wish,
The prayer I always pray:
Lord, may my life help others
It touches on the way. —Anon.

Christians are windows through which Jesus can shine.

October 15, 2009

Conflict Resolution

READ: [Philippians 4:1-9](#)

I implore Euodia and I implore Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. —
Philippians 4:2

Today is observed in many countries as International Conflict Resolution Day. Its purpose is to encourage people to use mediation and arbitration rather than the legal system to settle their differences. Because we as followers of Christ are not immune to conflict, we need to learn how to resolve our disagreements in ways that honor the Lord.

It has been said that “church fights are the worst fights,” perhaps because they break out among people who profess to believe in unity and love. Many Christians have been so hurt by a fellow believer that they walk away from the church and never return.

Euodia and Syntyche are mentioned by name in the Bible and urged to resolve their differences: “Be of the same mind in the Lord” (Phil. 4:2). Instead of leaving them alone to settle their dispute, Paul appealed to a trusted fellow worker to “help these women who labored with me in the gospel” (v.3). In this same context, Paul urged the Philippians to bring their requests to God, noting that prayer brings the peace of God (v.7) and a sense of His abiding presence (v.9).

Fractured relationships in a Christian community are a community responsibility. In the midst of hurts and differences, we can encourage, listen, and pray. —David McCasland

For Further Study

For biblical advice on reconciling relationships, read What Do You Do With A Broken Relationship? on the Web at www.discoveryseries.org/q0703

Forgiveness is the glue that repairs broken relationships.

On Shoulders Of Giants

READ: [Joshua 1:1-9](#)

As I was with Moses, so I will be with you. —Joshua 1:5

Giants hold a special place in our lore—both historical and literary. From the real giant Goliath to the fictional giant of *Jack and the Beanstalk* fame, we are fascinated by these larger-than-life characters.

Sometimes we use the word giant to honor ordinary-size people who have done extraordinary things. One example is the 17th-century physicist Sir Isaac Newton. A committed Christian, he credited his success to other “giants” who had gone before. “If I have seen a little further,” he said, “it is by standing on the shoulders of giants.” Indeed, Newton became a giant on whose shoulders later scientists stood—even as they used his observations in the conquest of space flight.

When God commanded Joshua to lead the Israelites into the Promised Land, Joshua certainly had a giant’s shoulders to stand on. He had watched Moses’ leadership for 40 years, and now he would put what he had learned into action.

Joshua had another advantage—his walk with God sustained his life’s mission. Therefore, he had both Moses’ example and God’s promised presence as he led Israel.

Looking for help as you face the future? Look for a giant to follow. And never underestimate the importance of your walk with God. —Dennis Fisher

There is a destiny that makes us brothers:
None goes his way alone;
All that we send into the lives of others
Comes back into our own. —Markham

A good example is someone who knows the way, goes the way, and shows the way.

October 16, 2009

The Defeat Of Death

READ: [1 Thess. 4:15-18](#)

Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. —1 Corinthians 15:57

Christian faith ought to make a difference in how we live from day to day. But the final test of our trust in the gospel is how we react in the face of death. When we attend a memorial service for a departed friend who loved the Lord Jesus, we gather to honor a believer whose stalwart trust has richly blessed the lives of those who knew him. The words spoken are more an expression of praise to God than a tribute to an admired fellow pilgrim. The service is a God-glorifying testimony to our Savior's victory over death and the grave (1 Cor. 15:54-57).

How different from the funeral service of Charles Bradlaugh, a belligerent British atheist. Writer Arthur Porritt recalls: "No prayer was said at the grave. Indeed, not a single word was uttered. The remains, placed in a light coffin, were lowered into the earth in a quite unceremonious fashion as if carrion were being hustled out of sight. . . . I came away heart-frozen. It only then dawned on me that loss of faith in the continuity of human personality after death gives death an appalling victory."

Christians, however, believe in a face-to-face fellowship with our Lord after death and the eventual resurrection of our bodies (1 Cor. 15:42-55; 1 Thess. 4:15-18). Does your faith rejoice in victory over death? —Vernon Grounds

From earth's wide bounds and ocean's farthest coast,
Through gates of pearl stream in the countless host,
Singing to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost— Alleluia! Alleluia! —How

Because Christ is alive, we too shall live.

October 18, 2009

Teach Your Children Well

READ: [Deuteronomy 11:13-21](#)

You shall teach [God's Word] to your children . . . when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. —Deut. 11:19

The *Sleeping Beauty Waltz*, the *1812 Overture*, and *The Nutcracker Suite* were all part of the music of my childhood.

Sometimes a narrator told stories or—as in the case of Tubby the Tuba and Peter and the Wolf—introduced my sisters and me to the sounds of different instruments. In their desire to pass on their love for music, my parents used this method as a teaching tool. It worked! Weaving the classic tales with classical tunes made a powerful impact on us.

When an adult wants to impart important information to a child, it's often best related in a story because it is more easily understood and enjoyed. Telling children the stories in God's Word is especially crucial because the Bible's enduring truth can shape character and show consequences of actions (1 Cor. 10:11). Tiny seeds of faith can be cultivated in fertile soil and help children to see how God has worked in the lives of His followers throughout history. Bible stories also show how God is intimately involved in our lives.

What we have seen God do for us and what He has done for His people throughout history must be passed on to the next generation (Deut. 11:1-21). Their future depends on it. Teach your children well. —Cindy Hess Kasper

Tell me the story of Jesus, Write on my heart every word;
Tell me the story most precious,
Sweetest that ever was heard! —Crosby

The character of your children tomorrow depends on what you put into their hearts today.

October 19, 2009

Retirement Time

READ: [Matthew 16:24-28](#)

Whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. —Matthew 16:25

After working for 40 years as a teacher, Jane Hanson retired. She and her husband were looking forward to the arrival of their first grandchild.

Retirement is that time of life when many people simply relax, travel, or enjoy hobbies. But Jane heard about a ministry to at-risk youth in a city near her home, and she knew she had to get involved. “I realized there are kids just waiting, and I could make a difference,” she said. She began teaching English to a young Liberian man who had been forced to flee his home country because of civil war. Though he was in a safe environment, he didn’t understand the new language. Of this ministry opportunity, Jane said with a smile, “I could just go shopping to stay busy, but what fun would that be?”

Jane is making a difference. Perhaps she has learned a little of what Jesus meant when He said, “Whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it” (Matt. 16:25). Giving ourselves to the Lord through helping others takes self-denial, yet one day Jesus will reward that effort (v.27).

Let’s follow Jane’s example of love for God and others—no matter what our stage of life may be. —Anne Cetas

Oh, let us be faithful to Jesus,
The faith we confessed let’s renew,
And ask Him this question each morning:
“Lord, what will You have me to do?” —Pangborn

Work for the Lord—His retirement plan is out of this world.

October 21, 2009

Who Goes There?

READ: [John 10:1-6](#)

When he brings out his own sheep, he goes before them; and the sheep follow him. —
John 10:4

Last fall my wife, Carolyn, and I were driving up a winding mountain road near our home in Idaho when we came across a large flock of sheep moving down the road toward us. A lone shepherd with his dogs was in the vanguard, leading his flock out of summer pasture into the lowlands and winter quarters.

We pulled to the side of the road and waited while the flock swirled around us. We watched them until they were out of sight, then I wondered: Do sheep fear change, movement, new places?

Like most older folks, I like the “fold”—the old, familiar places. But all is shifting and changing these days; I’m being led out, away from familiar surroundings and into a vast unknown. What new limits will overtake me in the coming days? What nameless fears will awaken? Jesus’ words from John 10 come to mind: “When he brings out his own sheep, he goes before them” (v.4).

We may well be dismayed at what life has for us this year and next, but our Shepherd knows the way we’re taking. And He goes before. He will not lead us down paths too dangerous or too arduous where He cannot help us. He knows our limits. He knows the way to green pasture and good water; all we have to do is follow. —David Roper

Child of My love, fear not the unknown morrow,
Dread not the new demand life makes of thee;
Thy ignorance doth hold no cause for sorrow
Since what thou knowest not is known to Me. —Exley

Our unknown future is secure in the hands of our all-knowing God.

October 22, 2009

Failing Memory

READ: [Psalm 119:33-40](#)

Turn away my eyes from looking at worthless things, and revive me in Your way. —
Psalm 119:37

A *New York Times* article linked the increase of computer storage with the decrease of data in the human mind. Our electronic aids now remember phone numbers, driving directions, and other information we used to learn by repeated use. In schools, memorization and oral recitation are disappearing from the curriculum. We have become, according to the *Times*, “products of a culture that does not enforce the development of memory skills.”

Yet never have we as followers of Christ been in greater need of hiding God’s Word in our hearts (Ps. 119:9-11). Scripture memory is more than a helpful mental exercise. The goal is to saturate our minds with God’s truth so that our lives will conform to His ways. The psalmist wrote: “Teach me, O Lord, the way of Your statutes, and I shall keep it to the end. . . . Turn away my eyes from looking at worthless things, and revive me in Your way” (Ps. 119:33,37).

Why not begin committing Scripture to memory? Daily consistency and review are keys to success. And just like physical exercise, this spiritual discipline is enhanced when done with a small group or with a friend.

Let’s not forget to remember and follow the life-giving wisdom of God’s Word. —David McCasland

God’s Word will change your life
If you will do your part
To read, to study, and obey,
And hide it in your heart. —Sper

Let the Bible fill your mind, rule your heart, and guide your life.

October 23, 2009

Close On His Heels

READ: [Matthew 4:18-25](#)

Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men. —Matthew 4:19

Stan and Jennifer were speaking at a mission conference in Marion, North Carolina, after their first term of service on the field.

Jennifer told of a Bible study she had held with one woman. The two were discussing Matthew 4:19, and the woman told Jennifer about a word in her native language, which means follow. She said, “It is the word for following closely, not at a distance.”

To illustrate, Jennifer held up slippers used by the native women, showing one far behind the other. Then she moved one slipper right up against the back of the other one, and said that the word means “to follow right on one’s heels.” It suggests that we are to follow Jesus as closely as possible.

Later, when Jennifer was reading over the journal she had been keeping, she was surprised to see that she had often questioned, “Is Jesus enough?” She had been working her way through culture shock, loneliness, illness, and childlessness. At times she had felt far from Christ. But when through prayer and faith she had drawn as close to Him as she could, walking “right on His heels,” He had calmed her soul, restored her strength, and given her peace.

Are you feeling far from the Lord—empty, weak, and afraid? It’s time to follow close on His heels. —Dave Egner

God, give me the faith of a little child!
A faith that will look to Thee—
That never will falter and never fail,
But follow Thee trustingly. —Showerman

The closer we walk with God, the clearer we see His guidance.

October 24, 2009

Secrets Exposed

READ: [Psalm 32:1-7](#)

I acknowledged my sin to You, and my iniquity I have not hidden. . . . And You forgave the iniquity of my sin. —Psalm 32:5

For many years, Lake Okeechobee hid its secrets in thick waters and layers of muck. But in 2007, drought shrank the Florida lake to its lowest level since officials began keeping records in 1932, unveiling hundreds of years of history. Raking through the bottom of the lake, archaeologists found artifacts, pottery, human bone fragments, and even boats.

After King David committed adultery with Bathsheba and planned the death of her husband, Uriah, he covered his sins by denying them and not confessing them. He probably went many months conducting business as usual, even performing religious duties. As long as David cloaked his sinful secrets, he experienced God's crushing finger of conviction and his strength evaporated like water in the heat of summer (Ps. 32:3-4).

When the prophet Nathan confronted David about his sin, God's conviction was so great that David confessed his sins to God and turned away from them. Immediately the Lord forgave David and he experienced His mercy and grace (2 Sam. 12:13; Ps. 32:5; Ps. 51).

Let's be careful not to hide our sin. When we uncover our sins by confessing them to God, we are covered with His forgiveness. —Marvin Williams

Lord, help me to expose my sin,
Those secret faults that lurk within;
I would confess them all to Thee;
Transparent I would always be. —D. De Haan

Give God what He desires most— a broken and repentant heart.

October 25, 2009

Five People You Meet In Heaven

READ: [2 Corinthians 5:6-11](#)

We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ. —2 Corinthians 5:10

Mitch Albom, author of *The Five People You Meet in Heaven*, said that he got the idea for his book when he speculated: What would heaven be like if it were a place where some of the people you impacted on earth explained your life when you met them in heaven?

Albom's book does give insight into how we unintentionally affect others' lives. But for the Christian, our ultimate joy in eternity does not stem from other people but from our Lord and Savior. Heaven is a real place that Jesus is now preparing for us. And when we get there, we'll rejoice to meet the living Christ (John 14:2-3; 2 Peter 3:13).

This encounter with Jesus, however, will also include accountability for the life we lived on earth. Believers are told: "We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad" (2 Cor. 5:10). His wise and just evaluation will show us how well we have loved God and our neighbor (Matt. 22:37-40).

We don't know who will be the first five people we meet in heaven. But we do know who the first One will be—the Lord Jesus. —Dennis Fisher

When we stand with Christ in glory,
Looking o'er life's finished story,
Then, Lord, shall I fully know—
Not till then—how much I owe. —McCheyne

To be with Jesus forever is the sum of all happiness.

October 26, 2009

Is That Jesus?

READ: [Romans 8:26-29](#)

Whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. —Romans 8:29

As I walked into church one Sunday morning, a little boy looked at me and said to his mother, “Mom, is that Jesus?” Needless to say, I was curious to hear her response. “No,” she said, “that’s our pastor.”

I knew she would say no, of course, but I still wished she could have added something like, “No, that’s our pastor, but he reminds us a lot of Jesus.”

Being like Jesus is the purpose of life for those of us who are called to follow Him. In fact, as John Stott notes, it is the all-consuming goal of our past, our present, and our future. Romans 8:29 tells us that in the past we were “predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son.” In the present, we “are being transformed into the same image” (the likeness of Christ), as we grow from “glory to glory” (2 Cor. 3:18). And, in the future, “we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is” (1 John 3:2).

Being like Jesus is not about keeping the rules, going to church, and tithing. It’s about knowing His forgiveness, and committing acts of grace and mercy on a consistent basis. It’s about living a life that values all people. And it’s about having a heart of full surrender to the will of our Father.

Be like Jesus. You were saved for it! —Joe Stowell

Be like Jesus—this my song—
In the home and in the throng;
Be like Jesus all day long!
I would be like Jesus. —Rowe

Live in such a way that others see Jesus in you.

October 27, 2009

“Light” Of Creation

READ: [Job 37:1-18](#)

[God] does great things, and unsearchable, marvelous things without number. —Job 5:9

Among the wonders of Jamaica is a body of water called Luminous Lagoon. By day, it is a nondescript bay on the country’s northern coast. By night, it is a marvel of nature.

If you visit there after dark, you notice that the water is filled with millions of phosphorescent organisms. Whenever there is movement, the water and the creatures in the bay glow. When fish swim past your boat, for example, they light up like waterborne fireflies. As the boat glides through the water, the wake shines brightly.

The wonder of God’s creation leaves us speechless, and this is just a small part of the total mystery package of God’s awesome handiwork as spelled out in Job 37 and 38. Listen to what the Lord’s role is in nature’s majesty: “Do you know how God controls the clouds and makes His lightning flash?” (37:15 niv); “What is the way to the abode of light? And where does darkness reside?” (38:19 niv). God’s majestic creations—whether dazzling lightning or glowing fish—are mysteries to us. But as God reminded Job, all of the wonders of our world are His creative handiwork.

When we observe God’s amazing creation, our only response can be that of Job: These are “things too wonderful for me” (42:3). —Dave Branon

All things bright and beautiful,
All creatures great and small,
All things wise and wonderful;
The Lord God made them all. —Alexander

When we cease to wonder, we cease to worship.

October 28, 2009

Almost-Perfect Disguise

READ: [Revelation 12:7-12](#)

The accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down. —Revelation 12:10

Radovan Karadzic, once the leader of the Bosnian Serbs and accused of genocide, had been one of the most wanted men in the world. By growing a long, white beard, carrying false papers, and practicing alternative medicine, he fooled everyone—for a while. After 13 years in hiding, he was finally arrested.

The Bible tells us that Satan is also in the business of fooling people with disguises. Right from the beginning of human history, he pretended to be an enlightened advisor, telling Eve that God was not honest with her (Gen. 3:4). He “masquerades as an angel of light” (2 Cor. 11:14 niv), but the Lord Jesus Christ has unmasked him as “a liar and the father of it” (John 8:44).

People often err at two extremes in their view of Satan. Some dismiss him while others attribute more power to him than he deserves. Let us not be deceived. Satan is powerful as the “god of this age” (2 Cor. 4:4). But Christians need not cower before him in fear, because “He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world” (1 John 4:4). The day is coming when Satan will be cast into the lake of fire (Rev. 20:10).

Until that day, let’s not be deceived but rather live godly lives that reflect the image of Christ, for He is “a man of truth; there is nothing false about Him” (John 7:18 niv). —C. P. Hia

In our day-to-day existence,
Evil often wears a mask;
Trust the Lord for true discernment—
He gives wisdom when we ask. —Hess

Satan offers nothing but tricks and deceit.

October 30, 2009

Be A Stander

READ: [2 Timothy 4:9-18](#)

A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity. —Proverbs 17:17

Western novelist Stephen Bly says that in the days of America's Old West there were two types of friends (and horses): runners and standers. At the first sign of trouble, the runner would bolt—abandoning you to whatever peril you were facing. But a stander would stick with you no matter the circumstances. Unfortunately, you wouldn't know which kind of friend you had until trouble came. And then it was too late—unless your friend was a stander.

Rather than being concerned with what kind of friends we have, however, we ought to consider what kind of friends we are. In the final days of Paul's ministry, as he awaited death, some who had ministered with him turned into runners and abandoned him to face execution alone. In his last letter, he listed some (like Demas) who had run off, then simply stated, "Only Luke is with me" (2 Tim. 4:11). Luke was a stander. While undoubtedly disappointed by those who had deserted him, Paul must have been deeply comforted to know he was not alone.

Proverbs tells us that "a friend loves at all times" (17:17). During times of adversity, we need friends we can rely on. When the people we know face trouble, what kind of friend will we be—a runner or a stander? —Bill Crowder

Dear Lord, help us to be the kind of friend who doesn't run when our friends are in need. Give us the courage to stand by them, the wisdom to know what to say, and the ability to serve them. Amen.

A true friend stands with us in times of trial.

October 31, 2009

Hallowing Halloween

READ: [2 Timothy 2:19-26](#)

He will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work. —2 Timothy 2:21

The word *hallow* isn't used much anymore, and when it is, the uses have a broad range of meaning. Christians use the word when we say the Lord's prayer, as in "Hallowed be Thy name." Often the word is associated with the last day of October, which we in the US refer to as Halloween, a shortened form of All Hallows' Eve.

In Scripture, the word hallow is a synonym for the word sanctify. When we hallow or sanctify something, we set it apart as being holy.

The name of God is not the only thing that we are to hallow. We too are to be hallowed. Paul urged Timothy to be a vessel sanctified and useful for God by pursuing "righteousness, faith, love, [and] peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart" and by avoiding "foolish and ignorant disputes, knowing that they generate strife" (2 Tim. 2:21-23).

On this last day of October, children in the US will be carrying bags filled with sweets. Thinking of them can remind us to ask: "What is filling the vessel of my life? Is it a bitter attitude that leads to foolish disputes and strife, or is it a sweet spirit that leads to righteousness, faith, love, and peace?"

We can hallow today, and every day, by setting ourselves apart for God to be used by Him. —Julie Ackerman Link

Lord, may our lives be set apart
And useful in Your hands,
Pursuing righteousness and faith
As we fulfill Your plans. —Sper

A Christian's greatest joy is to be used by God.

November 2, 2009

Prisoners Of Sin

READ: [Galatians 3:19-29](#)

The Scripture has confined all under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. —Galatians 3:22

A 2008 report from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime said, “At any given time there are more than 10 million people imprisoned worldwide.” Since some prisoners are being released while new ones are being sentenced every day, there are more than 30 million total prisoners worldwide each year. Statistics like these have caused many people to work for prison reform and a reexamination of sentencing laws.

From a spiritual perspective, the Bible offers an even more staggering statistic: “The Scripture declares that the whole world is a prisoner of sin” (Gal. 3:22 niv). In what is sometimes considered a difficult passage to understand, Paul says that although the Old Testament law could not impart life (v.21), it was an effective teacher in showing us that we need a Savior who can give life (v.24). The bad news is that “the Scripture has confined all under sin,” and the good news is “that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe” (v.22).

When we give our lives to Christ, who has fulfilled the requirements of the law, we are no longer imprisoned by sin. Instead, we enter a fellowship of people from every nationality and social status.

In Christ, we are free indeed! —David McCasland

The law reveals the mind of God,
The prophets too made clear His will;
But Christ alone brings life and peace,
His words our deepest needs fulfill. —D. De Haan

Deliverance from sin is the greatest of all freedoms.

November 4, 2009

Seeds And Faith

READ: [Galatians 6:7-10](#)

Whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. —Galatians 6:7

I read a fable about a man who was browsing in a store when he made the shocking discovery that God was behind a sales counter. So the man walked over and asked, “What are You selling?” God replied, “What does your heart desire?” The man said, “I want happiness, peace of mind, and freedom from fear . . . for me and the whole world.” God smiled and said, “I don’t sell fruit here. Only seeds.”

In Galatians 6, Paul stressed the importance of sowing seeds of God-honoring behavior, for “whatever a man sows, that he will also reap” (v.7). We can’t expect to experience the fruit of God’s blessings if we don’t recognize the importance of doing our part.

It helps to follow the example of others who have sown good seed. Author Samuel Shoemaker said that a good example can either inspire us or cause us to say, “Oh yes, he (or she) is like that. He is not troubled by temper or nerves or impatience or worry as I am; he is just a happier temperament.” Shoemaker continued, “It may not occur to us that perhaps he had to fight for his serenity, and that we might win if we would do the same.”

Are you weary of the way you are? Ask God for His help and begin sowing seeds of new actions and responses today. In due season the Spirit will give the increase. —Joanie Yoder

We’re always sowing seeds in life
By everything we do and say,
So let’s make sure the fruit we reap
Comes from the good we do each day. —Hess

The seeds we sow today determine the kind of fruit we’ll reap tomorrow.

November 5, 2009

A Good Grooming

READ: [Psalm 139:1-10, 23-24](#)

Examine me, O Lord, and prove me; try my mind and my heart. For Your lovingkindness is before my eyes. —Psalm 26:2-3

Our dog, Dolly, is a 7-year-old West Highland Terrier. She loves to dig in the dirt, which means she gets very dirty. We bathe her every week or so at home, but occasionally she gets so grimy and tangled that we have to take her to a professional groomer.

She used to hate to go to the groomer because the woman was always in a rush and inclined to be bad-tempered and harsh. Getting Dolly through the door was a struggle. Just the sight of the shop made her want to run away.

Last year we decided to try another groomer and discovered that our dog, though not always overjoyed at the prospect, was less reluctant to go. That's because the groomer is kind to her even though she must wash Dolly thoroughly, causing discomfort.

When sin and defilement accumulate in our hearts, we need to be cleansed. Like the psalmist David, we must ask God to “examine” and “try” our minds and hearts, and to point out our wicked thoughts, attitudes, and ways (Ps. 139:23-24). Our Lord may cause discomfort, for exposure is often difficult, but we can approach Him without fear.

The Lord's examination of us, though sometimes painful, is gentle and kind. —David Roper

Search me, O God, and know my heart today;
Try me, O Savior, know my thoughts, I pray.
See if there be some wicked way in me;
Cleans me from every sin and set me free. —Orr

Repentance is the hurt that leads to healing.

November 7, 2009

How Was I To Know?

READ: [1 Thess. 4:1-12](#)

Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. —Ephesians 4:30

It was high-school concert season, and the music students were preparing for the big Christmas extravaganza. The teacher had clearly communicated every detail to the students and to the parents—on two different occasions—and the time for mandatory rehearsal was clearly spelled out.

But on rehearsal day one panicky mother called during practice to see what time her teenager was supposed to show up. Another called to say, “Oh, we’re taking Tommy to Grandma’s. It’s okay if he misses rehearsal, right?” When the teacher reminded the parents that this required practice had already started, she heard, “Why didn’t somebody tell me? How was I to know?”

Just as this teacher was troubled that her clear instructions were ignored, is it possible that God is troubled by our tendency to ignore His clear instructions? In 1 Thessalonians, Paul reminds us that his God-inspired message tells us “how to live in order to please God” and that those instructions have “the authority of the Lord Jesus” (4:1-2 niv). The Lord is grieved, Paul explains, when we ignore His teaching and live our own way (Eph. 4:30–5:2).

Let’s make a point to read God’s instructions and then live by them—with no excuses. — Dave Branon

God’s Word was given for our good
And we are to obey,
Not choose the parts that we like best,
Then live in our own way. —Hess

There is no good excuse for ignoring God.

November 9, 2009

The Heat Of Our Desire

READ: [Psalm 42](#)

As the deer pants for the water brooks, so pants my soul for You, O God. —Psalm 42:1

Pastor A. W. Tozer (1897–1963) read the great Christian theologians until he could write about them with ease. He challenges us: “Come near to the holy men and women of the past and you will soon feel the heat of their desire after God. They mourned for Him, they prayed and wrestled and sought for Him day and night, in season and out, and when they had found Him the finding was all the sweeter for the long seeking.”

The writer of Psalm 42 had the kind of longing for the Lord that Tozer spoke about. Feeling separated from God, the psalmist used the simile of a deer panting with thirst to express his deep yearning for a taste of the presence of God. “As the deer pants for the water brooks, so pants my soul for You, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God” (vv.1-2). The heat of his desire for the Lord was so great and his sorrow so intense, he did more weeping than eating (v.3). But the psalmist’s longing was satisfied when he placed his hope in God and praised Him for His presence and help (vv.5-8).

O that we would have a longing and thirsting for Him that is so intense that others would feel the heat of our desire for Him! —Marvin Williams

My heart’s desire is to know You, Lord,
To walk close beside You today;
To know Your grace, Your love, Your power,
For You are my life and my way. —Cetas

Only Jesus, the Living Water, can satisfy the thirsty soul.

November 10, 2009

God's Embrace

READ: [Romans 12:3-11](#)

Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another. —Romans 12:10

Soon after her family left for the evening, Carol started to think that her hospital room must be the loneliest place in the world. Nighttime had fallen, her fears about her illness were back, and she felt overwhelming despair as she lay there alone.

Closing her eyes, she began to talk to God: “O Lord, I know I am not really alone. You are here with me. Please calm my heart and give me peace. Let me feel Your arms around me, holding me.”

As she prayed, Carol felt her fears beginning to subside. And when she opened her eyes, she looked up to see the warm, sparkling eyes of her friend Marge, who reached out to encircle her in a big hug. Carol felt as if God Himself were holding her tightly.

God often uses fellow believers to show us His love. “We, being many, are one body in Christ. . . . Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them” (Rom. 12:5-6). We serve others “with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 4:11).

When we show love and compassion in simple, practical ways, we are a part of God's ministry to His people. —Cindy Hess Kasper

Teach me to love, this is my prayer—
May the compassion of Thy heart I share;
Ready a cup of water to give,
May I unselfishly for others live. —Peterson

We show our love for God when we love His family.

November 12, 2009

Fragile Existence

READ: [Job 1:8-22](#)

We should not trust in ourselves but in God. —2 Corinthians 1:9

The geological features at Yellowstone National Park fascinate me. But when I walk among the geysers, I'm aware of how close I am to danger. I am walking atop one of the largest, most active volcanoes in the world.

When I read the book of Job, I feel as if I'm walking through Yellowstone on a day when the volcano erupts, exploding the earth's fragile crust and bringing disaster.

Like tourists at Yellowstone, Job was enjoying life. He was unaware that only a hedge separated him from disaster (Job 1:9-10). When God removed that hedge and allowed Satan to test Job, his life exploded (vv.13-19).

Many believers live in circumstances where it seems as if God, for some reason, has removed His hedge of protection. Others, also for reasons unknown, live in relative calm, seemingly unaware of their fragile existence. Like Job's friends, they assume that nothing bad will happen unless they do something to deserve it.

As we learn from Job, however, God sometimes allows bad things to happen to good people. Although disaster can strike at any moment, nothing has the power to destroy those who trust Christ (2 Cor. 4:9). No disaster can separate us from God's love. —Julie Ackerman Link

Though darker, rougher, grows the way
And cares press harder day by day,
With patience in His love I'll rest,
And whisper that He knoweth best. —Pentecost

God's love still stands when all else has fallen.

November 13, 2009

No Deal!

READ: [Luke 4:1-13](#)

It is written, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.” —Luke 4:4

We’ve all seen and heard advertisements that entice us to take shortcuts to happiness. Buy our product and make no payments for one year! Instant gratification!

When the devil tempted Jesus (Luke 4:1-13), he offered a shortcut to “satisfaction.” He tried to tempt Jesus to take matters into His own hands rather than trust His Father.

When Jesus was hungry from 40 days of fasting (v.2), Satan suggested that He use His power to turn stones into bread. Had the Lord done so, He would have been using His powers for His own benefit, but He refused.

Why didn’t Jesus accept the devil’s offer of ruling all the kingdoms of the world right away? (vv.5-7). He could have avoided the cross. But that would have gone against God’s plan for Him—to give His life on the cross, to be resurrected, and to sit at the Father’s right hand in His kingdom. Satan’s offer of a shortcut was no deal at all.

Beware of enticements that seem to cost little for the present. Satan hopes to get you to do things his way. And he doesn’t give up easily. Even after Jesus overcame a third temptation, Satan left only “until an opportune time” (v.13).

Whenever you are offered a shortcut to happiness, watch out to see who’s behind the cashier’s counter! —C. P. Hia

Lord, help me see the devil’s offers for what they are—enticements to sin. Help me to keep my eyes focused on You and Your Word, and my ears attentive to You in prayer. Amen.

The best way to escape temptation is to run to God.

November 14, 2009

Joy In The Midst Of Grief

READ: [Ezra 3:10-13](#)

The people could not discern the noise of the shout of joy from the noise of the weeping.
—Ezra 3:13

After only a few art lessons, 10 year-old Joel decided to try his hand at painting a flower. By looking at a color photograph of a Rose of Sharon, Joel was able to paint a beautiful mixture of blue, purple, red, green, and white. This made the flower, which had been photographed on the day Joel's aunt died, seem to come to life. To the family, his painting symbolized a bittersweet mixture of feelings. While it provided a lasting reminder of the loss they had suffered, it also carried a celebration of Joel's newly discovered artistic gift. The painting gave joy in the midst of grief.

When the people of Judah returned to Jerusalem from captivity in Babylon, they too had a bittersweet experience. As they began rebuilding Solomon's temple, many in the crowd sang songs of praise. At the same time, some older people, who had seen the beauty of the original temple that had been destroyed by war, wept aloud. We are told that "the people could not discern the noise of the shout of joy from the noise of the weeping" (Ezra 3:13).

Grieving can be like that. While there is sadness in looking back, it also includes a promise of joy in trusting God for the future. Even in a devastating loss, we have this hope: The Lord provides joy in the midst of grief. —Dennis Fisher

We sorrow not as others do,
Whose hopes fade like the flowers;
There is a hope that's born of God,
And such a hope is ours. —McNeil

Even in the bleakest times, Christians have the brightest hope.

November 16, 2009

The Problem With Self-Sufficiency

READ: [Revelation 3:14-22](#)

I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot.
—Revelation 3:15

The city of Laodicea had a water problem. One nearby town had fabulous hot springs and another had cold, clear water. Laodicea, however, was stuck with tepid, mineral-laden water that tasted like sulphur. Not hot. Not cold. Just gross.

Given those facts, the words of Jesus to the Laodicean believers in Revelation 3 must have stung. Jesus rebuked them for being “neither cold nor hot” (v.15). And when He thought of them, He felt like vomiting (v.16)—like the effect of their drinking water.

What was their problem? It was the sin of self-sufficiency. The Laodiceans had become so affluent that they had forgotten how much they needed Jesus (v.17).

When we say we have everything we need, but Jesus isn't at the top of the list, He is deeply offended. Self-sufficiency distracts us from pursuing the things we really need that only He can give. If you'd rather have cash than character, if your credit cards are maximized and your righteousness is minimized, if you've become smart but aren't wise, then you've been shopping in all the wrong places. Jesus offers commodities that are far better (v.18).

He's knocking at your heart's door (v.20). Let Him in. He will give you all you really need! —Joe Stowell

We must be careful to avoid
All self-sufficiency;
If sinful pride gets in the way,
God's hand we will not see. —Sper

We always have enough when God is our supply.

November 18, 2009

God Works In Mud

READ: [Genesis 2:1-7](#)

The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being. — Genesis 2:7

In a 1950s novel, there is a scene in which four village men confess their sins to one another. One of the men, Michelis, cries out, “How can God let us live on the earth? Why doesn’t He kill us to purify creation?” “Because, Michelis,” one of the men answered, “God is a potter; He works in mud.”

This is literally what the Lord did in Genesis. The sovereign Creator formed and shaped humanity by unique design. This process involved fashioning a man from the dust of the ground. The word formed in Genesis 2:7 describes the work of an artist. Like a potter, molding and fashioning mud into a pot or some other earthen vessel, so the Lord God formed humanity from clay.

God’s work with dust and mud continued by breathing into man the breath of life, changing his form into a living soul. This made man a spiritual being, with a capacity to serve and fellowship with the Lord.

After Adam and Eve sinned, God continued working in and with mud, sending His Son Jesus to die for humanity and then regenerating those who receive Him so that we can enjoy fellowship with Him. In gratitude, let’s use our hands to do good works for His glory. —Marvin Williams

In His own image God created man,
He formed his body from the dust of earth;
But more than that, to all who are in Christ
He gives eternal life by second birth. —Hess

God is the only One who can make the dirty clean.

December 24, 2009

God's Special Place

[Mary] brought forth her firstborn Son, . . . and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. —Luke 2:7

As a young girl in the late 1920s, Grace Ditmanson Adams often traveled with her missionary parents through inland China. Later, she wrote about those trips and the crowded places where they stayed overnight—village inns full of people coughing, sneezing, and smoking, while babies cried and children complained. Her family put their bedrolls on board-covered trestles in a large room with everyone else.

One snowy night, they arrived at an inn to find it packed full. The innkeeper expressed his regret, then paused and said, "Follow me." He led them to a side room used to store straw and farm equipment. There they slept in a quiet place of their own.

After that, whenever Grace read that Mary "brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn" (Luke 2:7), she saw the event differently. While some described the innkeeper as an example of uncaring, sinful mankind who rejected the Savior, Grace said, "I truly believe that Almighty God used the innkeeper as the arranger for a healthier place than the crowded inn—a place of privacy."

Through eyes of faith, we see God's provision for Mary. Look for the ways He provides for you. —David McCasland

Wait on the Lord from day to day,
Strength He provides in His own way;
There's no need for worry, no need to fear,
He is our God who is always near. —Fortna

Those who let God provide will be satisfied.

December 27, 2009

Good Riddance!

My grace is sufficient for you. —2 Corinthians 12:9

A shredder ate hundreds of pieces of paper and other items in New York City on December 28 last year. Organizers of the second annual “Good Riddance Day” encouraged people to bring to Times Square their bad memories and suffering of 2008 and feed them into the industrial-strength shredder or toss them into an extra-large dumpster.

Some participants shredded pieces of paper with the words “the stock market” or “cancer.” Others destroyed bank statements, and one person shredded a printed e-mail from a boyfriend who broke up with her.

We long to “shred” memories of bad things that others have done to us or difficult circumstances we’re going through. The apostle Paul wanted relief from his present suffering, an infirmity that made him feel weak (2 Cor. 12:7-10). But God said to him, “My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.” God didn’t take away the problem. Instead, He gave Paul the grace to live with it.

Difficulties burden us as we mull them over in our minds, affecting our relationships and our outlook on life. We as believers in Christ have a place to take these burdens. First Peter 5:7 tells us, “[Cast] all your care upon [the Lord], for He cares for you.” —Anne Cetas

Whenever life's burdens oppress you
And trials seem too much to face,
Remember God's strength in your weakness;
He'll give you His power and grace. —Sper

God gives enough grace for whatever we face.

December 28, 2009

Power To Persevere

You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end intended by the Lord—that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful. —James 5:11

Professional golfer Paula Creamer had worked all year long to earn a berth in the 2008 ADT Championship, the year's final tournament on the LPGA tour. When the event began, however, Creamer was suffering from peritonitis, a painful inflammation of the abdominal wall. Throughout the four days of the tournament, she was in constant pain and unable to eat. She even spent a night in the hospital because of the condition. Still, she persevered to the end and, amazingly, she finished third. Her determination earned her many new fans.

The challenges and crises of life can tax us to the very end of our strength, and in such times it is easy to want to give up. But James offers followers of Christ another perspective. He says that while life is a battle, it is also a blessing: "Indeed we count them blessed who endure. You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end intended by the Lord—that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful" (James 5:11).

In Job's example, we find encouragement and the power to persevere in life's darkest hours—power rooted in God, who is compassionate and merciful. Even when life is painful and hard, we can persevere because God is there. His mercy endures forever (Ps. 136). —Bill Crowder

I searched with all my heart to know
If God was really there;
He graciously revealed Himself,
His mercy, love, and care. —Cetas

God provides the power we need to persevere.

December 29, 2009

In Which Realm Do You Live?

The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. —Romans 8:2

I was working with a petroleum company in Singapore when an inspector from another country visited. He came to check on a cargo of oil destined for his country, which was at war. When he heard the shriek of fighter planes overhead, he instinctively ran for cover. Embarrassed, he explained, "Sorry, I thought I was back home." He did what he would have done had he been in his war-torn country.

For the Christian, it's easy to dive back into old ways of sin out of sheer habit because of the many temptations in this world. Even though we are "in Christ Jesus" as Romans 8:1 says, we sometimes live as if we are "in sin."

God paid a very heavy price to take us out of the realm of sin. He did so by "sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering" (v.3 niv). We are now to be governed by "the law of the Spirit of life," not by "the law of sin and death" (v.2). The apostle Paul urges us to "set" our mind according to "the things of the Spirit" (v.5). This means that we take our direction from God's Word as guided by His Spirit.

When you're tempted to dive back into old sinful ways, will you instead allow the Holy Spirit who resides in you to help you live more consistently with your standing "in Christ"? —C. P. Hia

Born of the flesh, conceived in sin,
Then born of the Spirit, new life to begin;
I've been washed in Christ's blood and this will suffice,
Praise God I'm His child, I've been born twice! —Brandt

When you are born again, you become a citizen of heaven.

December 30, 2009

Bad Idea?

Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith. —Hebrews 10:22

The former athlete had neglected his body for too long, so he began an exercise routine. The first day, he did several push-ups and went for a light jog. The next day, more push-ups, a few sit-ups, and a longer run. Day 3: exercises and a mile-and-a-half run. On Day 4, our ex-athlete in re-training woke up with a sore throat.

Then he did one more exercise: He jumped to the conclusion that exercising was a bad idea. If all he got out of his huffing and puffing was sickness, it wasn't for him.

Let's examine another scenario. A Christian, realizing he has neglected his relationship with God, begins a new spiritual routine of Bible-reading and prayer. But after just a few days, some problems arise in his life. What does he conclude? Like the ex-athlete, should he decide that his spiritual quest was a bad idea and that it didn't do any good? Certainly not.

We don't pray and read the Bible to get a perfect, trouble-free life. Pursuing God is not cause and effect. We do it because it draws us closer in our relationship with the One who is perfect. The pursuit of godliness will not exempt us from trouble (2 Tim. 3:12). But a life dedicated to loving and pursuing God (Heb. 10:22) is always a good idea—no matter what happens. —Dave Branon

The time we spend with God each day
Through prayer and reading of His Word
Will help us face what comes our way
And draw us closer to the Lord. —Sper

The roots of stability come from being grounded in God's Word and prayer.