

Day 31 Treasure in clay pots

Bible Reading: 2 Corinthians 4:4-15

Memory verse: “We have this treasure in jars of clay to show that his all-surpassing power is from God and not from us” (2 Corinthians 4:7).

Paul wrote this to Christians in Corinth. The treasure is “the knowledge of the glory of God.” The treasure is His own power and authority. The clay pot is a picture of our frail human lives and bodies.

Men and women keep their treasures in bank vaults, but God trust His treasure to us. Why would God trust this treasure to weak men and women?

The treasure of men may be gold coins, bank notes, watches, jewelry and much more. So, too, God’s treasure may include many things to form a part of a whole.

What treasure has God entrusted to you? It is the knowledge of God which Christ brought to you by His Spirit. It is the light of God that dawned in your soul the moment you believed the truth. It is the Holy Spirit who came to live within your heart. It is the truth and wisdom of God that came to you through Christ the Word (John 1:1). Paul says all these are ‘light’ and ‘glory’ that God puts into our hearts.

At creation, all was dark and without order. Then God said, “let there be light” (Genesis 1:3). At once light flooded into the darkness and drove the darkness away.

When God created the first man and woman He gave them the light of conscience (Romans 2:15). God made man “in His image” and conscience is part of His image (Genesis 1:28). Conscience is like a moral compass, it directs us to do right and tells us when we do wrong.

In Christ God gave man “the light of His glory” or presence (John 8:12). When men and women repent of their sins and turn to God, they are born again (John 3:5,8). God forgives their sin and His Spirit comes to dwell in their hearts. The Holy Spirit fills them with “the light of the knowledge of the glory of God” (2 Corinthians 4:7).

Prayer: *Dear Lord. Please bless all who have used these “Daily Manna” notes. May Your words truly feed their spirits and make them strong to be Your witnesses in the world. In Jesus’ name. Amen.*

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DAILY MANNA

from

THE WORD

By Fred Morris

31 Studies one for each day



To the Reader: Use a “Daily Manna” devotional message each morning or evening to help you learn Bible verses.

Use them in your Sunday School class or in your church paper.

Share them with your friends.

Day 1

Daily Manna

Bible Reading: Exodus 16:4-5; 13-26

Memory Verse: "My God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:19 JKV).

The teacher asked the class, "What is Manna?"

No one knew what Manna was, but one boy thought he knew.

"Manners," he said, "is how to behave in public."

The teacher shook her head. "That is a different word," she said.

"God sent Manna for the people of Israel. They were walking through a desert and could not grow crops. So God sent them Manna from heaven every night. In the morning it lay on the ground, 'thin flakes like frost.'" (Exodus 16:13-15).

The people saw it and asked each other, "What is it?" That is the meaning of the Hebrew word for Manna.

For forty years, God gave the people of Israel Manna to eat. It was like a small white seed. The people ground it and made flour and then baked it to make cakes. So Manna was called "the bread of heaven" (Numbers 11:7-8).

God's word is like Manna. We are told to 'feast' on the word of God. We need to read it every day and learn from it. Then our spirits will be nourished and grow strong.

Manna was like Jesus "the living bread" who came down from heaven. Jesus gives life to our spirits. The Bible says we are "dead in trespasses and sins" (Ephesians 2:1). Natural man's body may be alive, but his spirit is dead. Only Jesus can give eternal life to our dead spirits. "For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

Jesus said, "My Father has given you the true bread from heaven. He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world" (John 6:22-23). "I tell you the truth, he who believes has everlasting life. I am the bread of life. Your forefathers ate Manna in the desert, yet they died..." (John 6:47-51).

Faith in Jesus Christ is the same as eating the living bread. Believe that He lived and died for you. Read the Bible and learn about Jesus and you will find peace and rest. He said, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the father (in heaven) except through Me" (John 14:6).

"Break Thou the bread of life, Dear Lord to me
As Thou didst break the loaves beside the sea
Beyond the sacred page, I seek Thee, Lord.
My spirit pants for Thee, O Living Word."

Prayer: *Father in heaven. Thank you for sending Jesus Christ into the world. I want Jesus to be my Saviour and Your word my 'food' for today. Amen.*

Wash your feet Day 30

Bible Reading: John 13:1-15

Memory Verse: Jesus said, "A person who has had a bath needs only to wash his feet; his whole body is clean" (John 13:10).

Jesus took a basin of water and a towel and started to wash the disciples' feet.

They had walked with Him many miles that day and their feet were tired and dirty. He would refresh them and leave them this last example of how to serve others.

When He came to Peter, Peter said, "No, You shall never wash my feet."

Peter pulled his feet away.

Jesus told Peter, "Unless I wash you, you have no part with Me."

"Then, Lord," Peter said quickly, "not just my feet but my hands and my head as well." Jesus replied, "A person who has had a bath needs only to wash his feet; his whole body is clean. "

The dirt on their feet was a picture of sin in their hearts. The "bath" Jesus spoke of was the cleansing work of His shed blood. When men believe, it is like taking a bath. They are made clean from head to foot. But each day, as we follow Jesus, our lives get dirty. We see evil things and we think wrong thoughts; our 'feet' need to be washed again at the end of the day (1 John 1:9).

After He had washed their feet, Jesus said to the disciples, "I, your Lord and Teacher have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet...No servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him" (John 13:13-16).

This means that Christians must have the mind of a servant and try to help others whenever they can. That is what Jesus did.

"You will be blessed if you do these things," Jesus said. No one who wants to serve Jesus is left without a ministry and a blessing (John 13:17).

Prayer: *Dear Heavenly Father, You want your children to be clean. And You promised to make us clean as we come to You. Help us see our need to come often to have our 'feet' washed by the washing of Your word (Ephesians 5:26). Amen.*

Bible Reading: Matthew 25:31-40

Memory Verse: “But the saints of the Most High (God) will receive the Kingdom and will possess it forever – yes, for ever and ever” (Daniel 7:18).

Everything we know on earth has an end. We may hear people say, “I don’t know when I will ever get to the end of this job.” But if they don’t stop willingly before completing the task, they will surely get to the end of the job they have started doing.

People grow old and come to the end of their lives. Garments grow old and are thrown away. The longest road in your town or country has an end.

Only in the heavens and in space do we find that there is no end.

And this is true of God’s Kingdom. It has no end. Daniel said, “The God of heaven will set up a Kingdom that will never be destroyed ...it will endure forever” (Daniel 2:44).

Jesus spoke to His disciples of the final judgment day. The King (Jesus Christ) will say to those who love Him, “Come, you who are blessed by My Father; take your inheritance, the Kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world” (Matthew 25:34).

When we enter heaven it will be forever, as there is no time nor space. To make sure Daniel and all the readers after him understood this, the Angel who spoke to Daniel said, “the saints will possess the Kingdom forever.” Then he added – “yes, for ever and ever.”

This means there will be no end to the joys of heaven.

A song about heaven says:

“When we’ve been there ten thousand years
Bright shining as the sun (Matthew 13:43).
We’ve no less days to sing God’s praise
Than when we’d first begun...”

Prayer: *Dear Lord, we live on the earth where everything has an end. Please teach us to count our days and live for You. We wait for You to come and call us into Your Kingdom, where we will be forever – yes, for ever and ever! I make this prayer in Jesus’ name. Amen.*

Bible Reading: 1 John 2:20-28

Memory Verse: “And now, dear children, continue in Him (Christ), so that when He appears you may not be ashamed” (1 John 2:28).

When I was in my teens, we lived on a farm. Once or twice mother and father left my brother and me and went off for a holiday. We didn’t mind the work that had to be done, but we did not like preparing food and cleaning the pots and dishes.

Sometimes, when we were tired or lazy we put the dirty pots and dishes in a tub under the table. At the next meal we found clean ones in the cupboard. After a day or two we washed the dirty pots, but the last day we were busy and forgot.

When mother and dad returned, mother found a lot of dirty pots under the table. We were ashamed we had not cleaned the pots.

Paul told the Christians to make sure held on to the truth he had taught them about Jesus Christ. What they had been told and believed brought them into fellowship with God, the Father and Jesus Christ, the Son. But to stay in fellowship, they must live holy lives and tell others about the Savior (1 John 2:23).

The Christian life is not easy. It is not to be lived to please ourselves, but in service to God. Paul urged the Christian at Rome to “offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God – this is your spiritual act of worship” (Romans 12:1)

When Jesus Christ comes again, we will be called to “give an account of himself to God” (Romans 14:12). We will give account of the things done while we lived in this body of flesh. Be alive for God. Worship and serve Him with all you mind, body and strength.

When He calls you home, you will hear Him say, “Well done! Good and faithful servant.”

“God is still on the throne
And He will remember His own.
His promise is true;
He will not forget you.
God is still on the throne.”

Prayer: *Dear Lord, please help me to give you the very best years of my life. I hold back nothing. Your word and Your will are my delight. Your promise is true; You will not forget those who have put their trust in You. Amen.*

Bible Reading: Philippians 4:8-10

Bible Verse: “You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor” (Exodus 20:16)

Uncle Jim was telling the children a story before their mother put them to bed. He told them about the famous Japanese carving he had seen in a temple at Nikko, Japan. The carving is of three monkeys. The monkeys are sitting side by side. One monkey has his hands over his ears. One has his hands covering his mouth and the third monkey has his hands over his eyes.

The Japanese people say the meaning of this carving is a warning: “Hear no evil; speak no evil; see no evil.”

“That is much easier to say than to do,” Uncle Jim said. The children agreed.

Then Uncle Jim opened his Bible to the New Testament book of Philippians and read from chapter 4, verse eight. “Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely...think about such things.”

They read the verse again and each person took one part...

Chris took “Whatever is true...” “I don’t always tell the truth,” he said, “but I know I should.”

“Truth is a wonderful thing,” Uncle Jim said. God’s word is truth. We can depend on His word of promise. Every promise God has made has come true.

When Joshua was old and had settled the tribes of Israel in the Promised Land, the Lord God gave them rest on every side. Joshua said to them, “Not one of all the Lord’s good promises to the house of Israel failed; every one was fulfilled” (Joshua 21:44).

The Bible calls people who tell lies “false witnesses.” God will not have liars and deceivers in His Kingdom.

Before Jesus was crucified, men told lies about Him at His trial. They bore false witness. Two false witnesses came forward and said, “This fellow said, ‘I am able to destroy the temple of God and rebuild it in three days.’” (Matthew 26:61). But Jesus did not answer their false witness.

Many of us have, at some time, not told the whole truth. At times this got our friends (or enemies) into trouble. Not telling the whole truth is the same as giving “false testimony.” God’s law was very direct: “You shall not give false testimony...” anytime, anywhere!

Prayer: *Heavenly Father. Please help me to tell the truth at all times. May I be a person of my word. You have trusted me with Your word. Help me to be a true witness, rightly speaking out the word of truth. Amen.*

Bible Reading: John 14:1-16

Memory Verse: Jesus said, “I will ask the Father and He will give you another Counselor to be with you forever – the Spirit of truth” (John 14:16).

It was the last and greatest day of the Feast. Jesus stood up and said in a loud voice, “Whoever believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him...By this He meant the Spirit” (John 7:8-39).

He told these disciples, “I will not leave you as orphans...” For three and a half years, Jesus had been their Counselor and friend (Isaiah 9:6).

Jesus had been like a brother to them, a leader who gave them wise council. They had been with Him day and night. Then He told them, “I am going (away) to prepare a place for you.” He would soon leave them.

The Father would send the Holy Spirit to take their Master’s place. The Holy Spirit would be even more intimate and powerful. He would live in them. He would give them victory over sin and power to tell the Good News of the gospel. The gospel they preached, the gospel of Jesus Christ, would turn their world upside down. The chief priests and rulers accused them of doing this (Acts 5:42; 17:6 KJV).

Satan countered the truth with error. Very soon, false teachers rose up among them. The Spirit helped Christ’s followers to discern the truth. Jesus said, “He is the Spirit of truth...He will lead you into all truth” (John 16:13).

As you recognize the Spirit’s life within, you will hunger for more and more of God’s truth. Many deceitful spirits are in the world. But God gives us His Spirit to help us hold to the truth.

Those who do not have God’s Spirit grope along in their own darkness. They are like the waves of the sea, tossed to and fro by every falsehood. They have no one to council or guide them.

Jesus said, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me” (John 14:6). “And whoever come to Me I will never drive away” (John 6:37).

“Open my ears that I may hear
voices of truth Thou sendest clear;
and while the wave notes fall on my ear,
everything false will disappear” – Clara H. Scott

Prayer: *Dear Lord: I thank You for sending the Holy Spirit into my heart to teach me Your truth. Help me to know what is true and what is false, and to share what I know with others. I pray in Jesus’ precious name. Amen.*

Day 27

Every eye will see Him

Bible Reading: 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

Memory Verse: "Look, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the peoples of the earth will mourn because of Him" (Revelations 1:7).

On that final Judgment Day all eyes will be fixed on the Messiah Christ. The writer of Revelation penned these words, "Look, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the peoples of the earth will mourn because of Him" (Revelations 1:7, Zechariah 12:10). The Lord Jesus Christ will come as Judge and Savior (Romans 2:16).

"All the nations of the earth will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory" (Matthew 24:30). Jesus said that His coming would be spectacular. It would be seen universally, "As the lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man" (Matthew 24:27).

Isaiah wrote, "And the glory of the Lord will be revealed, and all mankind together will see it" (Isaiah 40:5).

We all have two kinds of eyes, physical eyes and spiritual eyes also, known as the eyes of our hearts. These Pharisees saw Him with their physical eyes, but a veil shrouded the eyes of their hearts (2 Corinthians 3:14-15). Some of the priests and leaders believed on Him because they saw Him with spiritual eyes and believed (Acts 6:7).

God will open the eyes of all to see the Lord Christ coming to gather His own and judge sinners. Eyes that are alive by the Spirit as well as dead eyes, will all see the King.

"All the nations of the earth" will see Him. We believe this will happen in a split second of time (Matthew 24:30-31; 25:31).

Many will not be ready. Jesus said it will be as it was in the days of Noah when people will be living careless lives without thought of disaster.

It will be very much like when the Tsunami struck southeast Asia recently. There will be no time to get ready and no possibility of running away from God!

That is why God says to all, "Repent now!" This is the time of God's favor; this is the day of salvation. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and be saved now!

Prayer: *Dear Lord Jesus, please help me to watch and pray. Help my spiritual eyes to see what You want me to do. Please make my heart clean. I want to be ready when You come again for Your people. Amen.*

One Eternal God

Day 4

Bible Reading: Deuteronomy 6: 4- 9

Memory Verse: "The eternal God is your dwelling place, and underneath are the everlasting arms" (Deuteronomy 32:27).

Uncle Jim had promised to tell the children about the Kazari. The Kazari is like a wreath. It is a Japanese decoration used at New Year. People put a Kazari on the front door of the house. Men tie them to the radiator of their trucks and cars.

The children sat on the floor close to Uncle Jim and listened carefully.

"The first thing you notice about the Kazari," Uncle Jim said, "is its shape. It is made of evergreen leaves, usually from a pine tree, tied in a circle. Pine trees do not lose their leaves in winter, so we call them 'Evergreens'."

"The circle speaks to us about the eternal God and the evergreen leaves tell us that God is eternal. The Japanese Bible refers to God as "Ikeru Kamisama," the Living God.

Moses told the people of Israel, "Heart, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength" (Deuteronomy 6:5).

And he said to Joshua, "Do not be afraid...For the Lord your God goes with you; He will never leave you nor forsake you" (Deuteronomy 31:6).

We cannot fully understand God, who did not have a beginning and does not have an ending. Eternal means God is forever living. And He will answer us when we call on His name.

When we say "He is our dwelling place," we mean we can walk and talk with Him, We can pray to Him at any time and He hears us.

"And underneath are the everlasting arms." Everlasting means the same as eternal. God always was and always will be. "This is not easy for us to appreciate," Uncle Jim continued. "Because everything else that has life, has a birth and a death, a beginning and an end."

"God, our Father in heaven, sent Jesus, His only Son. Jesus came to tell us more about God's great love for us. Jesus brought the good news that we can be saved from our sins. One day God will take us to live with Him in heaven. But before that we can have His loving arms about us. These good things that have come to us in Jesus have no ending; they are like the Kazari."

The children agreed with Uncle Jim that God's love is the greatest love and His arms are the strongest arms. And they all bowed their heads to pray.

Prayer: *Dear Lord Jesus, please forgive us for all our sins. Help us to know more about the eternal God. When we feel weak, help us to feel His everlasting arms around us. We thank you for Your promise to never leave us nor forsake us. Amen.*

Day 5

All Things New

Bible verse: "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come" (2 Corinthians 5:17)

New Year is a special time. Many different people groups keep this day a holiday, but they celebrate New Year on different days in different months of the calendar.

Families visit each other and cousins meet, sometimes for the first time. We call these time "family reunions." They eat special food and sing songs and everyone is very happy.

Jesus said the angels in heaven are happy and sing when a person believes the gospel. The gospel is the Good News that Jesus preached. He said, "The time has come. The Kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news" (Mark 1:15). To repent means to tell God you are sorry for the wrong things you have done.

Many people in Palestine heard Jesus call them to repent of their sins. They stopped doing wrong things and followed Jesus. Some became His disciples. A disciple is a person who follows a teacher and learns from him.

Why would the angels rejoice? Because they know that men and women, boys and girls are lost and cannot go to heaven. They know that Jesus is the only one who can save men and women from their sins.

Jesus said, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father (God, who is in heaven) except through Me" (John 14:6).

Paul speaks of the change that comes to men and women, boys and girls when they believe and receive Christ as their Savior.

God in His great love and mercy gives them a new beginning. It is like a birthday or a New Year.

Every day I get e-mail from Ethiopia, Zambia and Kosovo telling the wonderful news that someone has been saved from their sins. They have become one of God's children.

We must pray for these people who have made a new start with Jesus as their Savior. Some face hard times. Some lose their jobs when they become Christians. Jesus said life would not be easy, but "be of good cheer, I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

Prayer: *Dear Heavenly Father: Help us stand firm. Let nothing move me from doing Your will. Please help me to always give myself fully to You and Your work (1 Corinthians 15:58). We each have a vital part to play, an important service to do. Let us be faithful in the place where You have set us. We ask all these things in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Do you have this hope? Day 26

Bible Reading: Hebrews 6:11-20

Memory Verse: "We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure" (Hebrews 6:19).

We watched the evening news. We saw refugees who had escaped war and famine. They were being herded on to ships to be sent back to the country they had come from.

They had paid their money or gold to the boat owners because they wanted to escape poverty and famine. They had hoped to find a better life.

They left their homeland in tiny, leaky boats and made it to the foreign shore. Only to be sent back to the poverty they had left.

As the boat pushed out into surging waves, they had hoped and prayed that they would live through the ordeal. Many did not!

Others were kept behind barbed wire, but they still hoped that one day they would be released. For many months they waited to hear what would happen to them. None of them wanted to go back to the place they had come from!

We watched, with tears in our eyes. We could not imagine how hopeless the refugees felt or the depths of despair or the fear in their hearts!

They had hoped for a better life, for freedom.

The poet said, "Hope springs eternal in the human breast." But was this hope, or optimism?

Where is your hope? What is your hope anchored on? Is your hope anchored to the whims and wishes of man? If it is you have only a false hope.

Our government adopts a new economic plan. It will boost the economy and create new jobs, they say. Should we put our hope in our government's plan?

The Christian HOPE is anchored in the promises of God. It is fixed in God's love and grace. These are like the two huge anchors.

Our HOPE must be set in the rock of God's justice and mercy.

"Hope thou in God," David wrote. Is there any better place to set our hope?

When life is hard, where can we turn? Our hope must be anchored in Jesus. "He is faithful as promised, and He also will do it."

Prayer: *Dear God. Please help all refugees and people who have been driven from their homes by war. Thank you for the blessings I have. Help me to be thankful and to share with others who are in trouble. In Jesus' name. Amen.*

Day 25 Costly Discipleship

Bible Reading: Luke 14:25-35

Memory Verse: Jesus said, “Anyone who does not carry his cross and follow Me cannot be My disciple” (Luke 14:27).

Large crowds followed Jesus. He turned to them and said, “If anyone comes to Me (to be My disciple) and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters – yes, even his own life – he cannot be My disciple. And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow Me cannot be My disciple” (Luke 14:25-27).

Did Jesus say His disciples must give up everything? Is that practical?

I feel sure our Lord wants us to use our common sense and not become a burden on society. He asks us to be willing to give 100% if God so directs. We hold back nothing, even to our own lives.

Paul urged the Christians in Rome to “offer yourselves as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God ... Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world...” (Romans 12:1-2).

Paul spoke to the believers on the subject of living sacrificially, not as men of this world:

- Offering our bodies and our minds to the Holy Spirit’s control.
- Standing firm against the pressures of the world around us.
- Asking God to help us think His thoughts.
- Being aware of our enemies – false pride and false humility.
- Knowing our gifts and how God wants to use them to build up the body of Christ.

God asked Abraham to sacrifice his only son, Isaac. Abraham obeyed and prepared an altar on which to offer Isaac. He was ready to give God 100% – everything that was near and dear to him.

But God did not require that 100% of Abraham.

An angel from heaven called to him, “Abraham, Abraham!”

“Here I am,” he replied.

“Do not lay a hand on the boy,” the angel said. “Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from Me your son, your only son” (Genesis 22:9-12).

God said David was not the man to build a Temple to His name. But He blessed David with the words, “you did well to have this in your heart” (2 Chronicles 6:8). God accepted Abraham’s ‘sacrifice’ and David’s willing heart rather than requiring the action.

Prayer: *Our Father in heaven, please help me to take up my cross, which means to put You first in my life. I seek to serve You first in everything. Help me to love as You loved and give as You gave. Amen.*

Assurance Day 6

Bible Reading: Ephesians 1:3-12

Memory verse: “In Him (Jesus Christ) we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins...which He (God) has freely given...” (Ephesians 1:5).

Paul wrote this in a letter to Christians. Many who heard the gospel of Jesus Christ had believed. Paul said they had redemption. They had been redeemed or ‘bought back’ by God. They had been slaves of sin and evil, but Jesus died to pay the price of their redemption and God had delivered them from Satan’s power.

God was free to be just and to forgive sin, because Jesus Christ’s blood, shed on the cross, paid the price to set us free from Satan’s power.

The ‘redemption’ God gives us is a free gift. We cannot do anything to earn it. We cannot get it from our father or mother. And we cannot get it by belonging to a church or by getting a good education.

The believers at Ephesus were some of the first to hear the Good News. Jesus began to preach it when He said, “The time has come. The Kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the Good News” (Mark 1:15). Paul preached the same gospel of Jesus Christ to the people at Ephesus.

This redemption became possible and available because of the Jesus Christ died on the cross. God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son to die for man’s sin. Jesus died for us and in our place. All who believe in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.

All men and women are lost in sin. God had said “the wages of sin is death...” (Romans 6:23). We must believe the truth of the gospel and be saved from death. Death here means separation from God forever.

The gospel offers sinners a pardon. God forgives all their sins. Without God’s forgiveness, all men and women are lost and bound for hell. We all need to be pardoned by the Judge of all the earth. Have you received God’s pardon?

We can know for sure that we are saved. Jesus said, “I tell you the truth, whoever hears My word and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life and will not be condemned...” (John 5:24). You don’t have to do anything to be condemned as a sinner. God said, “Whoever believes in the Son (Jesus Christ) has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God’s wrath remains on him (or her)” (John 3:36).

Prayer: *Dear God, I don’t want to be condemned as a sinner. Please help me to believe in Your Son Jesus Christ, that He died for me on the cross and that He waits to save me from my sins. Father God, I believe your word is true. Amen.*

Day 7 Encourage others

Bible Reading: Hebrews 3:13-19.

Memory Verse: “Encourage one another daily, as long as it is called ‘Today’...” (Hebrews 3:13).

In this present age we have the great privilege of hearing God speak to us. We can walk and talk to Him every day, every moment. God’s word tells us to encourage one another to do this more and more.

Several reasons are given: The Living God cares about you enough to speak to you. He wants to be in your company. He wants to have a close, personal relationship with you. Have you ever stopped to consider this amazing fact?

The Almighty Creator had you in His heart from eternity. He loved you and wanted you to be saved from your sins, so that He could have fellowship with you (Ephesians 1:4). When you trust Him, He wants to walk and talk with you every day. It is still ‘Today,’ a time when the Holy Spirit is speaking to us. The prophet Isaiah called this time in history, “the time of God’s favour” (Isaiah 61:2). God’s Spirit is abroad in the world calling men and women to come to Jesus and be saved from their sins. This ministry of the Holy Spirit will not continue indefinitely. So the warning is to take notice and listen to His voice now.

The writer said we need to “hold firmly (to our faith) until the end...” It is not just a matter of starting out well – that is what Israel did when they left Egypt. It is a matter of finishing well. Israel started well but unbelief overcame them and they perished in the wilderness (Hebrews 3:16). The whole life of the believer is in view here – it is to be a life-long loyalty and obedience to God’s Spirit and His word. Diligence is required of us. We must do our part to grow in grace and a knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18). Exercise your faith and serve the Lord with all your strength.

Saints of old talked with each other about the Lord “and the Lord listened and heard. A scroll of remembrance was written...concerning those who feared the Lord and honored His name” (Malachi 3:16). God took note of those who spoke about Him to others.

Your talk matters. Is it spiced with the words of God. They alone bring life, peace of mind and healing to others.

Prayer: *Lord, there is nothing more refreshing to our spirits than to join hands and pray for each other. Thank you for Your promise that, “where two or three come together in My name, I am with them” (Matthew 18:20).*

Amen.

Glory on Moses’ face Day 24

Bible Reading: 2 Corinthians 3:7-18

Memory Verse: “We, with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord’s glory” (2 Corinthians 3:18).

Paul tells of a "glory" that shone on the face of Moses whenever he met with God (2 Corinthians 3:7)

Moses came down from Mt Sinai. He had been with God and his face shone with a glory not its own. The glory of God was reflected in Moses’ face. This was a mark showing that he had been in the very Presence of God Almighty.

This glory was wonderful, but it was outward and passing. Moses hid its fading from the eyes of the people. How did he do this? He put a veil over his face.

The glory came on Moses’ face only as he spent time with God. It came from God and it faded from his face when he left God’s Presence. If we had been there we might have said to Moses, "Go back up the mountain, Moses, and get more of that glory."

What do you think Moses would have said to us? "I can't. I can only go when God calls for me to come."

When Moses asked to gaze at God’s majesty and glory God told him, "I will put you in a crack in the rock and cover you with My hand until I have passed by." (Exodus 33:22)

Marked on the Inside

God marks His children on the inside. His mark permanently changes them. I think of this "seal" of Ephesians 1:13 as internal – the glory of God carried around in our hearts. All His light and power shines out for others to see. (Matthew 5:16; 2 Corinthians 4:7)

The mark of the old covenant was on the outside, but the seal or mark of the New Covenant is "Christ in you." (Colossians 1:27)

God said of the New Covenant "I will put My law in their minds and write it on their hearts." (Jeremiah 31:33)

This new expression of 'law' is glorious! James calls it the "perfect law of liberty." (James 2:12) It is now in our hearts and minds (the same thing) for all time. God has written it there by His Spirit. It is the law of love...Christ’s love.

Prayer: *Dear Lord, please fill me with Your glory. That same glory that Moses showed in his face. And may others see Your glory in me and be drawn to worship You. In Jesus’ name. Amen.*

Bible Verse: “I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; so hear the word I speak and give them warning from Me” (Ezekiel 3:17).

God spoke these words to His prophet Ezekiel. God’s prophets spoke God’s words to the people. When God told them what to speak, they spoke “in the name of the Lord.” When God gave them no words to speak for Him, they were silent.

The prophets were like watchmen, who stood on the walls of a city. The watchmen kept the city safe. They looked out across the plains and warned the city of any enemy who might come to attack them. When they cried a warning, men closed the city gates so that no one could get in or go out.

Christians are like watchmen set on the walls of a city. Isaiah wrote to the watchmen (and all believers), “You who call on the Lord, give yourselves no rest, and give Him no rest...” (Isaiah 62:6). Isaiah told the people to pray to God. They were not to stop praying until their enemies were defeated and their city had rest.

Prayer is an important part of our lives. I believe we can achieve more through our prayers than by what we do for God! And what an amazing challenge the prophet gave us, “to give the Lord no rest!”

That means “to pray without ceasing.” Paul urged the believers at Ephesus, “And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests...always keep on praying for all the saints” (Ephesians 6:18).

I never could figure out how I could “pray for all the saints,” but that is what Paul said. “With all kinds of prayers and requests,” leaves the door open wide for your to ask God about anything and everything.

To pray more should be our first resolve. Pray as you have never prayed before! Pray all the time. You don’t have to let anyone except God know that you are praying. As thoughts and concerns come to mind I make them a prayer by saying aloud, “I ask this in the name of Jesus.”

Prayer: *Dear Father in heaven, I thank you for the great potential you have placed in every young life. Bless those I pray for and the thousands of others I don’t know. Help our young people to follow hard after You and to seek Your righteousness, as You commanded (Matthew 6:33). I ask these things in Jesus’ name. Amen.*

Bible Reading: Luke 6:37-38

Memory Verse: “Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you” (Ephesians 4:32).

“I forgive you!” Golden words, full of promise! Words that set men free! But words not often spoken.

Yes, we have all been sinned against at one time or another. We all have hurts, some great some small hurts. And we have all sinned against God. Our sin and guilt makes us unhappy. The guilt of our sin haunts us. If we don’t forgive those who have hurt us, bitterness takes root in our hearts!

Under the law, man’s sin was covered by the blood of sacrifice. Sin was not taken away, so people felt guilty. They came again and again to make sacrifice and ask God to forgive them.

The High Priest of Israel entered the Most Holy Place (the inner room of the Tabernacle) year after year. He carried the blood of goats and calves which could never take away sin. It only ‘covered’ sin so that God could have fellowship with His people (Hebrews 9:13). The blood he offered for the sins of the people cost him nothing.

Jesus Christ died on the cross to “take away” all sin, forever for those who put their trust in Him (John 1:29). He entered the Most Holy Place “once-for-all” bearing His own sinless blood (Hebrews 9:11-14). “How much more then will the blood of Christ...cleanse our consciences (hearts) from acts that lead to death.” Jesus Christ offered a perfect life, without sin or blemish, to the Father! The blood cost Him everything – a glorious home in heaven, His very own life!

His death means our life! God said, “the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ...” (Romans 6:23).

Under the New Covenant, the Holy Spirit writes God’s law of love on every heart that opens to Him by faith (Jeremiah 31:31-34; Hebrews 8:10). God promised, “I will forgive their wickedness and remember their sins no more” (Hebrews 8:12).

On the cross, Jesus cried out “It is finished!” His life was given for you! There is nothing more that you need to do or can do! Have you confessed your sin to God and let Him forgive and forget your sins forever? That is what He has promised to do. When your sins are forgiven and forgotten, no more sacrifice is needed (Hebrews 10:17-18). There is nothing more that you can do. God has done it all in Jesus Christ.

Accept God’s offer of forgiveness and be free! When you are free from guilt of sin, you will want to forgive others for things they have done to you.

Prayer: *Lord God, please forgive me for my sins and help me forgive those who have hurt me. When this is hard to do, please give me more grace. I know Your grace is sufficient for my every need. Amen.*

Day 9 God knows the future

Bible Reading: Isaiah 46:3-10

Memory verse: “I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come” (Isaiah 46:10).

You have fallen! You have spoiled your chances! You have lost the things you wanted most! You are disappointed! Pick yourself up, dust yourself off, and step into the future!

Nothing that has happened to you is new or strange. Many people have had the same things happen to them, but that does not change the hurt and disappointment you feel. Believe me, God know all about it. Things in your past are always ‘now’ to God. He shares your pain and He loves you still.

God knows the present: “Nothing in all creation is hidden from God’s sight” (Hebrew 4:13). Adam could not hide what he had done and neither can you. You may as well be honest with God and come clean. He is ready to forgive us if we confess our sins (1 John 1:9).

God is a very present help ...Reach out your hand and feel His strong hand waiting to grasp yours. He said, “Do not fear, for I am with you....I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with My righteous right hand” (Isaiah 41:10). His right hand is His authority and power at your side.

God knows the future: He controls the future and He can change it. Someone wrote, “Not only does God know the future of the planet, He knows your personal future and mine.”

We may go through the day thinking we are on top of things – a false sense of security. We have very little control over the things that happen to us, and we had better admit it. But God is in control of our future! He promises to guide, counsel and protect His children (Psalm 32:8).

God works only good for you. God can work miracles. We may not notice them, because God works quietly, in ways we don’t understand; in ways hidden from our eyes. Some scoff at this idea of God working only good. They point to the evil and tragedy in our world, but that is not God at work.

Whatever your situation, God has been there, in Christ, before you. We have an umpire “who has been tempted in every way – yet without sin” (Hebrews 4:15). He is able to save completely those who come to God through Him, because He always lives to intercede for them” (Hebrews 7:25).

What more could we ask? Jesus Christ our Savior and Lord interceding for us! “And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose” (Romans 8:28). He wants you to trust Him. He can change your future!

Prayer: *Dear Lord. My life is a mess and I am sad. Please take the burden I feel and give me Your joy. I believe you are near; help me to take Your hand. Amen*

You have great potential Day 22

Bible Reading: Psalm 32:1-11

Memory Verse: “I will instruct you and teach you in the way that you should go; I will counsel you and watch over you” (Psalm 32:8).

A young friend wrote, “It is okay about not knowing many young people. They are not that exciting these days anyway.”

I hastened to answer, “Rachael, the note you added to your letter really disturbed me – about young people not being that exciting these days. This is not true – they are more exciting than ever! And I pray for a long list of them by name every morning. I pray they will know the truth of what David wrote in Psalm 32:8. Make that your memory verse for today.

The young people I know have enormous potential and a lifetime of opportunity ahead of them. If they do not do the do wrong things and get messed up. And avoid being led astray by the low morals of this world.

And they have so many choices! This is where our Bible verse comes in! Read Psalm 32:8 every morning along with your regular Bible reading.

I live in a Retirement Center. I think of you young people at the beginning of life. Everyone here is at the end of their lives. In between the beginning and the end we have a time of enormous potential.

Time passes all too quickly. Ask God what He wants you to do each day and live your life according to His plan for you. You won’t be disappointed.

God has given each of us a time on earth...70 or 80 years (Psalm 90:10). He created us and He has chosen us to become like Jesus. When we yield our lives to Him, He will guide our steps and lead us to do His will.

God really cares about your time! He says to all His children, “Redeem the time...” Make the very best use of the time I have given you.

Solomon was the wisest man who ever lived. He said, “There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven...” (Ecclesiastes 3:1).

God said to Paul, “My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect in weakness” (2 Corinthians 12:9).

Prayer: *Lord, please help me know what I should be doing today, and help me do it with all my strength! I have little strength left, but You are strong in me. Thank you for Your strength. I pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.*

Bible Verse: "If anyone's name was not found written in the Book of Life, he was thrown into the lake of fire" (Revelations 20:15).

If every boy and girl born into the world has his or her name and birth date entered into a Register, it is not difficult to believe that the same happens in heaven for every new spirit God gives. "God forms the spirit of man" (Zechariah 12:1). Every name of every person ever born is written down in God's Register (Psalm 9:5; Luke 10:20; Revelations 20:15). And every spirit God forms goes back to Him when our body dies (Ecclesiastes 12:7).

Does God erase names from the Book of Life? Moses offered to have his own name blotted out of the Book of Life (Exodus 32:32-33), if only God would spare His people Israel and forgive their sin. God answered Moses, "Whoever has sinned against Me I will blot out of My Book."

Jesus spoke to the church at Sardis: "You have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their clothes. They will walk with Me ... for they are worthy. He who overcomes will, like them, be dressed in white. I will never blot out his name from the book of Life" (Revelations 3:4-5).

When I was conceived, God breathed into my substance the breath of life. He gave me spirit life as well as physical life. God was at work forming the body that would house my spirit.

I was born on October 7th, 1924 and 'my time' was reckoned from that day. God gave me a sliver of time; my parents identified it by naming me. Soon after, they went to the office of the Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages and recorded my name, the date my time began and to whom I was born.

Each and every person grows up with a choice to make. Will they trust Jesus Christ to be their Savior from sin, or will they go their own way. Some live to please God; others reject His offer of salvation to their dying day.

What happens to the names of those who totally reject God?

God knows every person who will finally reject His grace. He knew that Pharaoh's heart would become harder every time he refused to obey God's command. No man can reject God's voice without suffering the consequences.

Every time you stifle God's voice and reject His grace, your heart becomes harder. A callous develops which makes it harder for God to get your attention. No man or woman knows when their time will be up; when death will knock at the door. My times are in God's hands (Psalm 31:15). Wake up, you who are reading this. You don't know when that day will come.

Before your heart gets any harder, "Believe on Jesus Christ and be saved from your sins (Acts 16:31). If you do this, your name will be found in God's Book of Life on that last day (Revelations 20:15).

Prayer: *Heavenly Father, I thank you for giving me a name that only You know. Thank you that my name is written in Your Book of Life. Amen.*

Bible Reading: John 7:37- 44

Some years ago we bought land to make a campground, a place where people could bring their campers and tents and enjoy the outdoors.

The property had a river running along one side. Some years before we bought the property, people had come as squatters and camped by the river. The river was very beautiful in the summer and campers enjoyed swimming, fishing and sun bathing on the sandy beach.

In the spring the river overflowed its banks and in the winter it was completely frozen over.

The sad thing about the river was the water. It was not fit for drinking. Upstream cows bathed in it and it gathered all the filth of neighboring farms as it passed by them. So the campers had to carry in all the water they needed for drinking and cooking.

After we cut the jungle and tamed the wilderness part of the property, we had a man 'find' where the 'streams' of water flowed underground. A well driller brought his equipment and drilled down into the water – about 180 feet. When the driller hit the underground stream the water came up out of the top of the well, pure and sparkling with hydrogen gas.

After it came up out of the top of the well casing for a week or so, we began the job of putting down a submersible pump. We pushed the pump down inside the casing, but the water coming up was so strong that it pushed the pump out. We tried again and again until at last the pump was down to about 60 feet. We decided that was far enough and we began to tighten the steel cap. As we tightened it, the water squirted out horizontally in all directions. It refused to be held back. Of course we had to leave a drain pipe through which it came gushing out – and after 30 years it is still springing up inside the well and running out at the top. What a picture of the "living water" Jesus offered to the woman at the well.

Fish Creek, the river that flowed past our campground was polluted and unfit for drinking. It was like the water offered by the world which can never quench our soul's thirst.

The water that came out of the well was sparkling and clean, and what men and women needed to drink. It was like the "living water."

Jesus said, once you receive the Living Water of His Spirit, it will go on springing up within you forever. The "living water" is a picture of God's Spirit, which He gives to all who believe in His name (John 5:24).

Ask Jesus to save you from your sins, now, while His spirit is speaking to you. One day you will look for Him, but you will not find Him, for you will look too late!

Prayer: *Dear God. I am thirsty. I need the living water that You promised to give to anyone who asks. I ask in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Day 11 God Calls You to Repent

Bible Verse: “But now He (God) commands all people everywhere to repent....” (Acts 17:30).

In World War II I served in the Australian Navy. When my commanding officer gave an order, I obeyed. One night the duty alarm sounded, but I slept soundly and did not hear it. The next morning I was in trouble. I had not obeyed the call to duty.

When God gives a command, we had better take notice.

God calls on all men and women to repent of their sin and seek Him. He said all men and women need to repent “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23).

He does not ask us to do something we cannot do. And He has opened a way for all who repent to be forgiven. Jesus Christ died on the cross so that God could be just and the justifier of all who repent of their sins and believe in Jesus Christ.

Peter said God “is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9).

God’s patience waits for you. Do not resist His call any longer.

Answer “Yes, Lord,” while His invitation stands open. When the Master rises up to close the door of heaven, it will be too late!

“For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world (of men and women), but to save the world through Him” (John 3:17).

“What can wash away my stain?
Nothing but the blood of Jesus.
What can make me whole again?
Nothing but the blood of Jesus.
Oh, precious is the flow
That makes me white as snow
No other fount I know
Nothing but the blood of Jesus.” –

Prayer: *Dear Lord. I am not sure if I am saved or not. I am a sinner and ask You to forgive me. I accept the blood of Jesus that paid for my sin. I accept Your invitation to live with You in heaven when I die. Amen.*

Happiness Day 20

Bible Reading: Philippians 4:4-7

Memory verse: “Have no anxiety about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:6-7).

What is happiness? It is not a word we can understand by looking in the dictionary. And we don’t see happiness when we look in the mirror. In fact, none of the qualities of life can be learned from a book.

Happiness takes root in our lives as we learn to trust God with our troubles and our triumphs. His words show us the right attitude. We are to trust Him in everything and accept the results as His will for our lives.

Paul the apostle did not say be happy when things are going well. He said, “Rejoice in the Lord always” (Philippians 4:1-2). Paul rejoiced, even when he was in prison.

Once, Paul was thrown into prison with his friend Silas (Acts 16:22-34). About midnight they were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them. They were not complaining about the beating they had received, or the cold, dark cell. They were praising God for His great mercy and praying that He would release them.

Who do you turn to when trouble comes? The world offers many quick fixes, all the way from popping a pill to visiting an ‘Advisor.’ There is entertainment and song, all made to turn your mind away from your troubles.

But after the fun, you feel empty and hopeless. Only God can fill that emptiness in your heart. Friends cannot do it! They have their own share of trouble. Music may help for a moment, but it also fails to bring us lasting peace and joy.

Turn your life over to God. Ask Him to save you from your sins and give you a new beginning. Ask Him to forgive you for trusting in these empty things. Pray to Him in the name of Jesus. Thank Him that you have life. God has promised to give you His peace and joy. When all else fails, praying to God works!

Prayer: Lord, You did not promise happiness, but You did promise to give us Your peace. I rejoice in your love and give my life back to You to use as You wish. **Amen.**

Day 19 Christ's Throne in Heaven

Bible Verse: "After He (Jesus) had provided purification for sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven" (Hebrews 1:3b).

While His followers watched, Jesus "was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid Him from their sight" (Acts 1:9). His work on earth was finished and He returned to the Father in heaven. The writer said, "He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on High..."

The Old Testament writer said, "He will sit on the throne of His father David." God made this promise to David, "I will raise up your offspring to succeed you... I will establish his kingdom... I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever" (2 Samuel 7:12-13; Acts 2:30). The word throne is used in the Bible as a symbol of authority, majesty and dignity. Heaven is God's throne (Isaiah 66:1). Earth is His footstool (Matthew 5:34-35).

Jesus told His disciples, "When the Son of Man sits on His glorious throne, You who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Matthew 19:28). To the Church at Laodicea He said, "To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with Me on My throne, just as I have overcome and sat down with the Father on His throne" (Revelations 3:21).

There is but one center of authority and rule and it is God's throne in heaven. The apostle John had a vision of this majestic throne (Revelations 4:3-4).

Christ's throne is in heaven, yet He rules in the hearts of His people. In this sense, Christ has a throne in the heart of every believer. In this present age, God's dwelling is with the Christian Church. Jesus Christ, by His Spirit, rules in the hearts of His people. The Christian Church and the Kingdom of God are one and the same body of believers.

The song says: "I built a cathedral deep down in my heart
Where God holds communion with me
And no one on this earth can trouble me there
For I have the only known key."

"When He comes again, those who belong to Him will be caught up to meet Him in the clouds" (1 Thessalonians 4:16-18). "Then the end will come, when He hands over the Kingdom to God the Father after He has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. For He (Christ) must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet" (1 Corinthians 15:24-25).

His enemies are very real and threaten us. But His power in us is greater than Satan's. He will give you victory. His promise to you is in the words of Scripture: "The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to His heavenly Kingdom" (2 Timothy 4:18).

Prayer: Dear Lord, I thank You for ruling in my heart. I pray as David did, "Create in me a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within me." Fill me with Your Holy Spirit, that I may rejoice in You. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Tea Pots

Day 12

Bible Reading: Psalm 121:1-8

Memory Verse: "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Philippians 4:13),

Most people have seen or owned a tea pot. Tea pots are small or large. They can be fat or narrow and they can be pretty or dull brown. Tea pots are very useful for making tea. But tea pots are for pouring!

Tea pots are used to make hot tea, not just for putting on the shelf. But the tea is of no benefit unless it is poured out!

There are tea pots that never had tea made in them. They did not fulfill the purpose for which they were made.

The tea which people use comes in small paper-like bags. In one bag there is usually enough tea to make one full pot. Or the tea may come as loose tea leaves.

To make the tea you put tea leaves into the pot and add hot water to the tea. When the hot water covers the tea it brings out the rich flavor. Some people leave the tea to soak until it gets strong. Then they drink the tea. This is the purpose of the tea; you cannot use it any other way that I know of.

When we have Jesus as our Savior, God pours His Spirit into our lives. His Spirit is like the hot water going on to the tea. The Spirit changes us and makes us useful to God. He brings the 'flavor' out of our lives which can bless others. They see our lives of service and are refreshed by them. Without the Spirit of God our lives would be empty and cold. God wants us to 'pour out' the spiritual gifts He has given us, so that we will bless others.

The tea is of no use unless it is poured out. One morning I drank tea with a group of pastors in Kenya. They made the tea in a big tea pot. They poured the tea into cups and then added milk to the tea. We sat and talked and drank tea.

The milk is like God's word. New Christians need "the milk" of God's word. The Bible says, "Like newborn babies crave pure spiritual milk, so that you may grow up in your salvation" (1 Peter 2:2). Those who have grown in their faith can drink strong tea. The Holy Spirit works in their lives to bring out the best in them and make them. He makes their witness 'strong' for the Lord.

Let God make you strong to do His will. May He find you like 'good tea,' sweet and refreshing to bring His blessings to others.

**"Take my cup, Lord. I lift it up, Lord.
Come and fill this thirsty soul of mine..."**

Prayer: Lord, You have put Your grace and strength in my body. I am like a tea pot. Please help me to be poured out for You, so that others may be blessed by what you have put within. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Day 13

A Day of Joy

Bible Reading: Nehemiah 8:2-12

Memory verse: "The Lord your God goes with you; He will never leave you of forsake you" (Deuteronomy 31:6).

Nehemiah and Ezra said to the people, "This day is sacred to the Lord your God. Do not mourn or weep" (Nehemiah 8:9). The people felt they had lost God and now He was back with them again, but God is always near! He said, "I will never leave you of forsake you" (Deuteronomy 31:6).

For seventy long years the people of Judah had been exiles in Babylon. They had neither scroll nor priest to teach them God's law.

When Cyrus the Great gave his decree that the Jews were free to return to Judah and Jerusalem, Ezra the priest led a large group back to the land of their birth.

One day the people gathered to hear Ezra and other priests read the law of God to them. Fathers, mothers and children. They stood and listened carefully as Ezra read to them from the Book of the Law (Nehemiah 8:1-10).

The Levites explained the Law to the people, "so that the people could understand what was being read."

Then Nehemiah said to them, "Go and enjoy choice food and sweet drinks, and send some to those who have nothing prepared. This day is sacred to the Lord. Do not grieve, for the joy of the Lord is y our strength" (Nehemiah 8:10).

God is very gracious. He will forgive our sin when we repent and tell Him we are sorry. He said, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

All Israel fell on their faces and worshipped the living God. They understood that God Almighty is holy and cannot keep company with sinners.

"Let them praise Your great and awesome name..." David wrote. (Psalm 99:3). We do not need to fear God, but we must remember that HE IS HOLY.

Study the word of God for yourself and you, too, will see that God is holy and just. Be glad that you have a Bible in your language, and read it often.

Prayer: *Dear Lord Jesus. Please help me read and understand the Bible. I want to know what God's word means for myself, so that I can teach it to others. May Your Holy Spirit guide me in all truth, as You promised (John 16:13). I ask these things in the name of Jesus. Amen.*

People who sit on the fence Day 18

Bible Reading: Deuteronomy 30:15-20

Memory Verse: "I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live" (Deuteronomy 30:19).

Many people think of themselves as fence sitters! That usually means they have one leg on one side of the fence and one on the other. When it comes to religion they are not on one side or the other. They say they believe in God, but they do not live to honor Him!

"When it comes to religion I am neutral," a man told me.

"You may think you are a fence-sitter," I told him, "but there is no neutral ground when it comes to God. You are either for Jesus Christ or you are against Him.

Jesus told the Pharisees, "He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scattereth" (Matthew 12:30).

Moses spoke to a rebellious people. He made the people's choice very plain when he said, "This day I call heaven and earth to witness against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live..." (Deuteronomy 30:19-20).

There is no halfway house in God's economy. You are either in the kingdom of darkness ruled over by Satan or you are in God's Kingdom which is a Kingdom of love and light.

To the Christians at Colosse Paul wrote, "He (God) has rescued us from the kingdom of darkness and brought us into the Kingdom of the Son He loves..." (Colossians 1:13).

Satan's kingdom is a place of pleasing ourselves. This ends in eternal separation from God. The Bible says, "There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death" (Proverbs 14:12). Satan's kingdom is like being lost in a dark maze.

God's way leads to life forever in heaven. Jesus told how to cross over from death to life. He said, "Whoever hears My word and believes Him who sent Me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life" (John 5:24).

Prayer: *"Lord God, I thank you for Your great offer of life forever. Thank you that I can choose to have Your kind of life now and live with You in heaven when I die. Please help me to walk in Your way today. Thank you for loving me so much. I pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Day 17 Jesus Christ's Joy

Bible Reading: John 15:9-15

Memory Verse: "Let us fix our eyes on Jesus...who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, scorning the shame, and sat down on the right hand of the throne of God" (Hebrews 12:2).

Jesus shared some final teaching with His disciples just before He was taken prisoner by the Roman soldiers. He said to them, "I have told you this (or these things) so that MY JOY may be in you..." (John 15:11).

It is hard to think of Jesus being JOYFUL when He faced a criminal's death on a cruel cross. But Jesus was not thinking of the cross and its shame, but of the victory that lay beyond, the victory of the resurrection.

Because of that victory, Paul was able to shout:

"Where, O death, is your victory?

Where, O death, is your sting?"

The Bible says, "Death reigned from the time of Adam" over all creation." For the wages of sin is death..." (Romans 6:23). Adam's sin brought separation from the life of God, physical death and eternal damnation.

But Christ, in His death, "destroyed him who holds the power of death – that is, the devil – and set free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death" (Hebrews 2:14-15).

This was Christ's joy. That the promise God gave to Adam and Eve, would be fulfilled. That day God told Satan, "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; He will crush your head, and you will strike His heel" (Genesis 3:15).

From that day onward, Satan tried to destroy the woman's offspring. He knew that One, born of a woman, would defeat him. But he did not know how or when. So Satan used his 'children of darkness' to fight against God's children. Cain killed Abel, a man of faith (Genesis 4:8). The Pharaoh of Egypt killed the sons of Jacob, God's people (Exodus 1:16-18). When Jesus was born, Herod had all the baby boys in the region of Bethlehem killed.

In Jesus Christ, Satan met his match. Jesus Christ lived a perfect life, and died for the sins of the world. He offered His own sinless blood for us (Hebrews 9:12). "In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins..." (Ephesians 1:7).

Joy filled the Savior's heart, as He looked toward heaven. The same eternal bliss waits all those who put their faith in Jesus Christ. He told the disciples, "I am going there (to heaven) to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with Me that you also may be where I am" (John 14:2-3). Believe God's word and claim His promise for yourself.

Prayer: Lord, give us the joy of Your salvation and the hope of glory. Amen.

The woman would not stop Day 14

Bible Reading: Luke 18:1-8

Memory Verse: "Will God not bring about justice for His chosen ones who cry out to Him day and night" (Luke 18:7)?

There are two people in Jesus' parable: A judge or magistrate who "neither feared God nor cared about men. And a widow who had an adversary or someone who threatened and oppressed her.

This woman came to the judge and said, "Your honor! Grant me justice against my adversary." But because the judge cared not for justice or the woman, he threw her out of his chambers onto the street. But the woman came back to the judge again and again, each time with the same plea.

At last the judge said to himself, "Even though I don't fear God or care about men, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she will not ... wear me out with her coming."

After telling the parable, Jesus asked a question: "And will not God bring about justice for His chosen ones, who cry out to Him day and night? Will He keep putting them off?"

"I tell you, He will see that they get justice and quickly."

Jesus said that the lesson of this parable is that men and women should always pray and not give up (Luke 18:1).

We don't often see our prayers answered right away. But God says He answers them "even before we ask." God may answer our prayers in several ways – indeed, God is not limited to any particular way!

God may answer by granting our request. He may answer by NOT giving us what we asked for. And He may say, "Wait! Not yet." Sometimes God keeps us waiting so that our faith will grow stronger, or so that we will be like the widow and persist in our asking.

Are you having a down day? Do you feel that God does not hear you?

The prophet Isaiah said to the people of Israel, "Surely the arm of the Lord is not too short to save, nor His ear too dull to hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear" (Isaiah 59:1-2).

God wants to answer your prayers, but He wants you to come to Him with a clean heart and clean lips.

Prayer: Dear Lord. Help me keep clean lips and a clean heart. I trust Your Spirit to guide me into all truth, and to help me witness to others. Amen.

Day 15 Drifting Along

Bible Reading: Hebrews 2:1-4

Memory Verse: “We must pay more careful attention to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away” (Hebrews 2:1).

Have you ever been in a boat when you had no oars and no rudder? The boat just drifts wherever the wind and currents take it. It drifts further and further away from where you want to be!

When I was in the Navy during World War II I had that experience. I soon found myself far from the shore and in grave danger! The rough seas came over the boat and threatened to sink it.

I prayed and asked God to save me from drowning. He heard my prayer. After many hours, the boat ran onto a sand bar near to the shore.

The writer of Hebrews thought of Christians drifting away from God.

The Hebrew Christians had heard the gospel message. They had believed in Jesus Christ. They had been taught the basic truths of the Christian faith. But now they were in danger of drifting away from the truth (Hebrews 2:1-4).

The writer chose two words with special meaning: “Listen” was a word related to a sailor who secured the lines of the boat. If the sailor was careless and did not tie the rope to the wharf, his boat would break loose and drift away.

The second word is “drift.” This word speaks to us of not letting down an anchor. The ship that is not anchored drifts. To anchor our lives in God’s word we must listen to and obey it. Jesus said, “Do not be hearers only, but doers of the word” (James 1:23).

God gave the Law to Moses at Mt Sinai (Exodus 34:6-7). God’s law was “binding” on the people of Israel. God commanded them to obey the law. “Every disobedience received its just punishment.” But the message brought by Jesus Christ was much more binding on us who hear them. Christ’s words stand through all eternity to convict those who do not listen and obey them.

The Word became flesh and brought us salvation and Life. The writer asked, “How shall we escape if we ignore such a great salvation...which was first announced by the Lord (Jesus Christ)...” (Hebrews 2:3).

Those who refuse to believe God’s word and receive His forgiveness for their sins will not escape His judgment (John 3:36). And those who know the truth and drift away from it will suffer great loss.

Are you drifting in your spiritual life and getting further and further away from God? You may be drifting in your spiritual life without even noticing. It is time you got back to regular Bible study and prayer. Join a study group and learn together. As we learn and share, God draws us closer to each other and to Himself.

Prayer: Dear Lord, help me to listen and obey Your word. Amen.

A Living Hope Day 16

Bible Reading: 1 Peter 1:3-4

Memory Verse: “Christ, in His great mercy, has given us a new birth into a living hope...” (1 Peter 1:3).

When we believe that Jesus Christ died in our place, we are born again into God’s family. God forgive all our sins and His Spirit gives us a new birth. This is forever. It is a living hope, a hope that goes on and on.

Jesus talked with Nicodemus. He told Nicodemus, “No one can see the Kingdom of God unless he is born again...” (John 3:3).

Peter said, “Christ, in His great mercy, has given us new birth into a living hope...and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade – reserved in heaven for you...” (1 Peter 1:3-5). The believer’s faith in Christ gains for him or her “a living HOPE.” When God says to us, “All your sins are forgiven,” it is very wonderful. God receives all those who repent into His family. And He gives them an inheritance. Have you ever received an inheritance? You can! God will give you a glorious inheritance. And it is marked (reserved) especially for you!

It is the great hope which the gospel of Jesus Christ gives to all who trust in Him. It is the “good news” that Jesus preached (Mark 1:15; 1 John 2:2).

Believers are told to ‘come boldly’ into the Presence of Almighty God (Hebrews 4:16 KJV) and enjoy the love-relationship they have with the Almighty.

We can enjoy that part of our inheritance now while we live on this earth. We can come to Him often and drop the burdens of life at His feet. We have His assurance, “I will instruct you and guide you in the way you should go; I will counsel you and watch over you” (Psalm 32:8).

The HOPE of living a holy life becomes very real and entirely possible. I am talking about an inward, personal holiness.

You say, “Wait a minute! You don’t mean being holy here and now, do you?”

Yes, I do. Before the fall, Adam was righteous and holy. He walked and talked with God. This righteousness was part of God’s ‘image’ put upon him at creation.

In heaven we will enjoy the complete inheritance. There we will be with our Lord forever, as He promised (John 14:2-3).

Prayer: Dear God, Without You, there is no hope. Please forgive my sins and give me the hope of eternal life. This hope goes on and on. Help me to share this living hope with others who have no hope at all. I ask all these things in Jesus’ name. Amen.