# My Utmost for His Highest – 7/30/19

# The Teaching of Disillusionment



Jesus did not commit Himself to them…, for He knew what was in man. —[John 2:24-25](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=John+2%3A24-25)

Disillusionment means having no more misconceptions, false impressions, and false judgments in life; it means being free from these deceptions. However, though no longer deceived, our experience of disillusionment may actually leave us cynical and overly critical in our judgment of others. But the disillusionment that comes from God brings us to the point where we see people as they really are, yet without any cynicism or any stinging and bitter criticism. Many of the things in life that inflict the greatest injury, grief, or pain, stem from the fact that we suffer from illusions. We are not true to one another as facts, seeing each other as we really are; we are only true to our misconceived ideas of one another. According to our thinking, everything is either delightful and good, or it is evil, malicious, and cowardly.

Refusing to be disillusioned is the cause of much of the suffering of human life. And this is how that suffering happens— if we love someone, but do not love God, we demand total perfection and righteousness from that person, and when we do not get it we become cruel and vindictive; yet we are demanding of a human being something which he or she cannot possibly give. There is only one Being who can completely satisfy to the absolute depth of the hurting human heart, and that is the Lord Jesus Christ. Our Lord is so obviously uncompromising with regard to every human relationship because He knows that every relationship that is not based on faithfulness to Himself will end in disaster. Our Lord trusted no one, and never placed His faith in people, yet He was never suspicious or bitter. Our Lord’s confidence in God, and in what God’s grace could do for anyone, was so perfect that He never despaired, never giving up hope for any person. If our trust is placed in human beings, we will end up despairing of everyone.

**Wisdom From Oswald Chambers**

Jesus Christ is always unyielding to my claim to my right to myself. The one essential element in all our Lord’s teaching about discipleship is abandon, no calculation, no trace of self-interest. Disciples Indeed, 395 L

# CCEL – 7/30/19

**Seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.**—[COL. 3:1.](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Col.3.html" \l "Col.3.1)

Get wisdom, get understanding.—The wisdom that is from above.—The depth saith, It is not in me: and the sea saith, It is not with me.—We are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection.

Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us.—God . . . hath quickened us together with Christ, . . . and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

They that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country.—Seek ye the Lord, all ye meek of the earth, which have wrought his judgment; seek righteousness, seek meekness.

[Prov. 4:5](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Prov.4.html#Prov.4.5). -[Jas. 3:17](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Jas.3.html" \l "Jas.3.17). -[Job 28:14](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Job.28.html" \l "Job.28.14). -[Rom. 6:4,5](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Rom.6.html" \l "Rom.6.4).[Heb. 12:1](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Heb.12.html" \l "Heb.12.1). -[Eph. 2:4-6](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Eph.2.html" \l "Eph.2.4).[Heb. 11:14](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Heb.11.html" \l "Heb.11.14). -[Zeph. 2:3](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Zeph.2.html" \l "Zeph.2.3).

“And when he thought thereon, he wept.” **[Mark 14:72](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Mark.14.html" \l "Mark.14.72)**

It has been thought by some that as long as Peter lived, the fountain of his tears began to flow whenever he remembered his denying his Lord. It is not unlikely that it was so, for his sin was very great, and grace in him had afterwards a perfect work. This same experience is common to all the redeemed family according to the degree in which the Spirit of God has removed the natural heart of stone. We, like Peter, remember our boastful promise: “Though all men shall forsake thee, yet will not I.” We eat our own words with the bitter herbs of repentance. When we think of what we vowed we would be, and of what we have been, we may weep whole showers of grief. He thought on his denying his Lord. The place in which he did it, the little cause which led him into such heinous sin, the oaths and blasphemies with which he sought to confirm his falsehood, and the dreadful hardness of heart which drove him to do so again and yet again. Can we, when we are reminded of our sins, and their exceeding sinfulness, remain stolid and stubborn? Will we not make our house a Bochim, and cry unto the Lord for renewed assurances of pardoning love? May we never take a dry-eyed look at sin, lest ere long we have a tongue parched in the flames of hell. Peter also thought upon his Master's look of love. The Lord followed up the cock’s warning voice with an admonitory look of sorrow, pity, and love. That glance was never out of Peter’s mind so long as he lived. It was far more effectual than ten thousand sermons would have been without the Spirit. The penitent apostle would be sure to weep when he recollected the Saviour’s full forgiveness, which restored him to his former place. To think that we have offended so kind and good a Lord is more than sufficient reason for being constant weepers. Lord, smite our rocky hearts, and make the waters flow.

# Word Live – 7/30/19

# Lion or lamb?

## Prepare

‘For I take no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Sovereign Lord. Repent and live!’ ([Ezekiel 18:32](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ezekiel+18%3A32&version=NIV)). Come to the God who desires life, not death.



## Bible passage: Revelation 19:11–21

##### The Rider on the White Horse

11 I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and makes war. 12 His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns. He has a name written on him that no one knows but he himself. 13 He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God. 14 The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean. 15 Out of his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. “He will rule them with an iron scepter.” He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty. 16 On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written:

   KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.

17 And I saw an angel standing in the sun, who cried in a loud voice to all the birds flying in midair, “Come, gather together for the great supper of God, 18 so that you may eat the flesh of kings, generals, and mighty men, of horses and their riders, and the flesh of all people, free and slave, small and great.”

19 Then I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies gathered together to make war against the rider on the horse and his army. 20 But the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who had performed the miraculous signs on his behalf. With these signs he had deluded those who had received the mark of the beast and worshiped his image. The two of them were thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning sulfur. 21 The rest of them were killed with the sword that came out of the mouth of the rider on the horse, and all the birds gorged themselves on their flesh.

## Explore

**Truth about Jesus**

These aren’t John’s musings on what God might be like. This is truth about Jesus that the Holy Spirit wanted recorded so that the world might know. Gentle Jesus meek and mild? True, Jesus, the Lord of lords and King of kings (17:14), is the Lamb who suffers in silence. But he is also the Lamb who wages war and the Rider of verses 11–16.

**Nothing is hidden from his gaze**

The Jesus we worship is the one who came as a tiny baby. Who said, ‘Let the little children come to me.’ Who told us to love our enemies. Who healed the sick and the blind and the penitent. And who gave his life as ‘the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world’ ([John 1:29](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+1%3A29&version=NIV)). On the other hand nothing is hidden from his gaze (v 12). His law cannot be thrown aside without terrible consequence (v 15). Though there is no literal battle here – the victory is won by the word Jesus speaks (v 21) – we cannot avoid the fact that Jesus promises this judgement (eg [Matthew 25:26–30](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+25%3A26%E2%80%9330&version=NIV)).

[Dominic Smart](https://www.wordlive.org/Otherstuff/Contributors/R-S/3527737.id)

[Angus Moyes](https://www.wordlive.org/AboutWordLive/Contributors/M-P/3527733.id#.VknC1XbhCUk)

## Respond

‘“Aslan is a lion – the Lion, the great Lion.” “Ooh” said Susan. “Is he quite safe?” “Safe?” said Mr Beaver ... “Who said anything about safe? ’Course he isn’t safe. But he’s good. He’s the King, I tell you.”’ (CS Lewis, The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe)

## Deeper Bible study

The focus now falls on a rider on a white horse, who stands centre stage. Here is Jesus as we have never seen him before: Christ the Warrior King battling against evil, or Christ the Judge executing judgement. He has been there all along, but now he comes clearly into view. His three titles settle his identity, ‘Faithful and True’, the ‘Word of God’, ‘King of Kings and Lord of Lords’ (vs 11,13,16; the climax of the Hallelujah chorus in Handel’s Messiah). One more title remains hidden, for there are always limits to our knowledge. He is crowned, regal, authoritative, with blazing eyes that miss nothing and a commanding voice, bearing his battle scars in a bloodstained robe. Every eye shall see the Captain of the armies of heaven who has now come not to save, but to judge.

The armies of the world gather in opposition but there is no battle, for the outcome is already settled. Rather, they stand awaiting judgement and sentence. This is the great supper of God, on which the carrion birds of the air will feast. The forces of evil are disposed of in opposite order to their introduction. Babylon has gone, now the two beasts will be destroyed. The people see the beast of the sea and the false prophet being dispatched into the lake of fire where they are destroyed. They are judged by the rider on the white horse, using the sword in his mouth, for he will overcome evil by his Word. Then the birds swoop down and all evil is completely and irrevocably destroyed. History has been moving to this climax since sin entered in the Garden of Eden.

That is why throughout history God has called on people to repent while there is yet time. The message needs to be heard before it is too late. Seize the moment now!

What a difference between the marriage feast of the Lamb and the great supper of God! Read the menu carefully.

[Colin Sinclair](https://www.wordlive.org/Otherstuff/Contributors/R-S/3527737.id)

## Faithful and True



The vivid imagery described in Revelation can often be quite gruesome or dark, but moments like today’s passage tip the balance and bring in the light. It may not be rainbows and white fluffy clouds, but it encourages us to remember the strong, heroic, just, warrior aspects of God.   
  
As you read this, quite different, description of Jesus once more, what do the words inspire in you?  
  
Artist’s impression by Andrew Gray.

# Today in the Word – 7/30/19

# City of God

**Read:** [**Zechariah 14:10–16**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Zechariah+14%3a10%e2%80%9316)

10The whole land, from Geba to Rimmon, south of Jerusalem, will become like the Arabah. But Jerusalem will be raised up high from the Benjamin Gate to the site of the First Gate, to the Corner Gate, and from the Tower of Hananel to the royal winepresses, and will remain in its place. 11It will be inhabited; never again will it be destroyed. Jerusalem will be secure.

12This is the plague with which the Lord will strike all the nations that fought against Jerusalem: Their flesh will rot while they are still standing on their feet, their eyes will rot in their sockets, and their tongues will rot in their mouths. 13On that day people will be stricken by the Lord with great panic. They will seize each other by the hand and attack one another. 14Judah too will fight at Jerusalem. The wealth of all the surrounding nations will be collected—great quantities of gold and silver and clothing. 15A similar plague will strike the horses and mules, the camels and donkeys, and all the animals in those camps.

16Then the survivors from all the nations that have attacked Jerusalem will go up year after year to worship the King, the Lord Almighty, and to celebrate the Festival of Tabernacles.

Every year magazines like Money, Kiplinger, and U.S. News & World Report publish lists of the best places to live. They make their choices based on a variety of factors, including income rates, crime, taxes, and even the number of days of sunshine per year!

Glorious things are said of you, city of God. Psalm 87:3

If such a list were made during the thousand-year reign of Christ, one city would always make it to the top. Today’s reading describes the exaltation of Jerusalem over all the other cities on earth. This will literally be true as the topography of the region surrounding Jerusalem changes (v. 10). Mountainous regions will become a plain like the Arabah, which is the lowest spot on earth. Jerusalem will be “raised up high” and secured permanently (vv. 10–11). Jerusalem will attract worshipers from all over the world. Indeed, they will be compelled to go up to Jerusalem (v. 16). In vv. 12–15 Zechariah returns to the scene of the last battle as he describes the consequences of defeat for Jerusalem’s enemies. Their fate will parallel that of the Egyptians when Pharaoh opposed Moses or Sennecharib when his army besieged Jerusalem (Ex. 7–12; 2 Kings 19:35). This description of punishment is a sobering reminder of how dangerous it is to reject God. We now live in an age where God graciously invites those who have rejected Him to repent and turn to Christ. We should not misinterpret God’s patient waiting as disinterest or indulgence when it comes to our sin. As the prophet Isaiah says, “Seek the LORD while he may be found; call on him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake their ways and the unrighteous their thoughts. Let them turn to the LORD, and he will have mercy on them, and to our God, for he will freely pardon” (Isa. 55:6–7).

### Apply the Word

Is God your friend or your enemy? Only those who have put their trust in Jesus Christ may call God their friend. If you would like to talk to someone about Jesus Christ, call (800) NEED HIM. Don’t hesitate to make this call! It could change your life!

### Pray with Us

Please include in your prayers our Theology professors: David Finkbeiner, John Clark, Marcus Johnson, Michael McDuffee, and Sanjay Merchant. Ask for God’s hand on their work of equipping students to serve Christ and His

## BY Dr. John Koessler, Chair and Professor of Pastoral Studies

# Our Daily Bread – 7/30/19

# Ready for Restoration

**Read: Psalm 85[**[**a**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+85#fen-NIV-15273a)**]**

#### For the director of music. Of the Sons of Korah. A psalm.

1You, Lord, showed favor to your land;  
    you restored the fortunes of Jacob.  
2You forgave the iniquity of your people  
    and covered all their sins.[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+85" \l "fen-NIV-15274b" \o "See footnote b)]  
3You set aside all your wrath  
    and turned from your fierce anger.

4Restore us again, God our Savior,  
    and put away your displeasure toward us.  
5Will you be angry with us forever?  
    Will you prolong your anger through all generations?  
6Will you not revive us again,  
    that your people may rejoice in you?  
7Show us your unfailing love, Lord,  
    and grant us your salvation.

8I will listen to what God the Lord says;  
    he promises peace to his people, his faithful servants—  
    but let them not turn to folly.  
9Surely his salvation is near those who fear him,  
    that his glory may dwell in our land.

10Love and faithfulness meet together;  
    righteousness and peace kiss each other.  
11Faithfulness springs forth from the earth,  
    and righteousness looks down from heaven.  
12The Lord will indeed give what is good,  
    and our land will yield its harvest.  
13Righteousness goes before him  
    and prepares the way for his steps.

#### Footnotes:

1. [Psalm 85:1](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+85#en-NIV-15273) In Hebrew texts 85:1-13 is numbered 85:2-14.
2. [Psalm 85:2](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+85#en-NIV-15274) The Hebrew has Selah (a word of uncertain meaning) here.

Will you not revive us again, that your people may rejoice in you? [Psalm 85:6](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+85%3A6)

While stationed in Germany in the army I purchased a brand-new 1969 Volkswagen Beetle. The car was a beauty! The dark green exterior complemented the brown leatherette interior. But as the years took their toll, stuff began to happen, including an accident that ruined the running board and destroyed one of the doors. With more imagination, I could have thought, “My classic car was a perfect candidate for restoration!” And with more money, I could have pulled it off. But that didn’t happen.

Thankfully the God of perfect vision and unlimited resources doesn’t give up so easily on battered and broken people. Psalm 85 describes people who were perfect candidates for restoration and the God who is able to restore. The setting is likely after the Israelites had returned from seventy years of exile (their punishment for rebellion against God). Looking back, they were able to see His favor—including His forgiveness (vv. 1–3). They were motivated to ask God for His help (vv. 4–7) and to expect good things from Him (vv. 8–13).

Who among us doesn’t occasionally feel battered, bruised, broken? And sometimes it’s because of something we’ve done to ourselves. But because the Lord is the God of restoration and forgiveness, those who humbly come to Him are never without hope. With open arms He welcomes those who turn to Him; and those who do, find safety in His arms.

By [Arthur Jackson](https://odb.org/author/arthurjackson/)

#### Reflect & Pray

Are there signs in your life that restoration is in order? What’s your response to the God of restoration?

Lord, help me not to ignore the signs that restoration is needed in my life.

#### Insight

Psalm 85 begins with a reference to Jacob (v. 1). Some translations say “Israel,” since the songwriter is referring not just to the nation’s ancestral father but to his descendants as well. The psalmist’s word choice of “Jacob” is worth noting. When God’s people realized that once again they were in need of mercy, they often referred to themselves as “the house of Jacob.” As humbling as it was, the family likeness was the point. It was common knowledge that Jacob seemed to be destined to be remembered as an incurable liar and schemer until God changed his heart and renamed him Israel.

From the beginning, God Himself had taught His people to think of Him as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Genesis 50:24; Exodus 3:15; Acts 7:32). This was a way of reminding them that—then and now—their only hope was in a God good enough to forgive and change them.

# God Calling – 7/30/19

# Faith Rewarded

Think much of My servants of old. How Abraham believed in the promise (when as yet he had no child) that in his seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed.

How Moses led the Children of Israel through the desert, sure that, at last, they would gain the Promised Land.

Down through the ages there have always been those who obeyed, not seeing but believing, and their Faith was rewarded. So shall it be even with you.

For what saith the scriptures? Abraham believed God and it was counted unto him for righteousness. Romans 4:3

# My Utmost for His Highest – 7/31/19

# Becoming Entirely His



Let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing. —[James 1:4](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=James+1%3A4)

Many of us appear to be all right in general, but there are still some areas in which we are careless and lazy; it is not a matter of sin, but the remnants of our carnal life that tend to make us careless. Carelessness is an insult to the Holy Spirit. We should have no carelessness about us either in the way we worship God, or even in the way we eat and drink.

Not only must our relationship to God be right, but the outward expression of that relationship must also be right. Ultimately, God will allow nothing to escape; every detail of our lives is under His scrutiny. God will bring us back in countless ways to the same point over and over again. And He never tires of bringing us back to that one point until we learn the lesson, because His purpose is to produce the finished product. It may be a problem arising from our impulsive nature, but again and again, with the most persistent patience, God has brought us back to that one particular point. Or the problem may be our idle and wandering thinking, or our independent nature and self-interest. Through this process, God is trying to impress upon us the one thing that is not entirely right in our lives.

We have been having a wonderful time in our studies over the revealed truth of God’s redemption, and our hearts are perfect toward Him. And His wonderful work in us makes us know that overall we are right with Him. “Let patience have its perfect work….” The Holy Spirit speaking through James said, “Now let your patience become a finished product.” Beware of becoming careless over the small details of life and saying, “Oh, that will have to do for now.” Whatever it may be, God will point it out with persistence until we become entirely His.

**Wisdom From Oswald Chambers**

God does not further our spiritual life in spite of our circumstances, but in and by our circumstances.  Not Knowing Whither, 900 L

# CCEL – 7/31/19

**Endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ**—[II TIM. 2:3.](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iiTim.2.html" \l "iiTim.2.3)

I have given him for a witness to the people, a leader and a commander to the people.—It became him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through suffering.—We must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.

We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God.—We do not war after the flesh: (for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds.)

The God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.

[Isa. 55:4](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Isa.55.html#Isa.55.4). -[Heb. 2:10](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Heb.2.html" \l "Heb.2.10). -[Acts 14:22](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Acts.14.html" \l "Acts.14.22).[Eph. 6:12,13](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Eph.6.html" \l "Eph.6.12). -[II Cor. 10:3,4](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iiCor.10.html" \l "iiCor.10.3).[I Pet. 5:10](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iPet.5.html" \l "iPet.5.10).

“I in them.” **[John 17:23](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.John.17.html" \l "John.17.23)**

If such be the union which subsists between our souls and the person of our Lord, how deep and broad is the channel of our communion! This is no narrow pipe through which a thread-like stream may wind its way, it is a channel of amazing depth and breadth, along whose glorious length a ponderous volume of living water may roll its floods. Behold he hath set before us an open door, let us not be slow to enter. This city of communion hath many pearly gates, every several gate is of one pearl, and each gate is thrown open to the uttermost that we may enter, assured of welcome. If there were but one small loophole through which to talk with Jesus, it would be a high privilege to thrust a word of fellowship through the narrow door; how much we are blessed in having so large an entrance! Had the Lord Jesus been far away from us, with many a stormy sea between, we should have longed to send a messenger to him to carry him our loves, and bring us tidings from his Father’s house; but see his kindness, he has built his house next door to ours, nay, more, he takes lodging with us, and tabernacles in poor humble hearts, that so he may have perpetual intercourse with us. O how foolish must we be, if we do not live in habitual communion with him. When the road is long, and dangerous, and difficult, we need not wonder that friends seldom meet each other, but when they live together, shall Jonathan forget his David? A wife may when her husband is upon a journey, abide many days without holding converse with him, but she could never endure to be separated from him if she knew him to be in one of the chambers of her own house. Why, believer, dost not thou sit at his banquet of wine? Seek thy Lord, for he is near; embrace him, for he is thy Brother. Hold Him fast, for he is thine Husband; and press him to thine heart, for he is of thine own flesh.

# Word Live – 7/31/19

# Death of death

## Prepare

‘Death has been swallowed up in victory’ ([1 Corinthians 15:54](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Corinthians+15%3A54&version=NIV)). Rejoice in the fact that if you love Jesus you have only life to look forward to.



## Bible passage: Revelation 20:1–15

### The Thousand Years

20 And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key to the Abyss and holding in his hand a great chain. 2He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. 3He threw him into the Abyss, and locked and sealed it over him, to keep him from deceiving the nations anymore until the thousand years were ended. After that, he must be set free for a short time.

4I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony about Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years. 5(The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.) This is the first resurrection. 6Blessed and holy are those who share in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years.

### The Judgment of Satan

7When the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from his prison 8and will go out to deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth—Gog and Magog—and to gather them for battle. In number they are like the sand on the seashore. 9They marched across the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of God’s people, the city he loves. But fire came down from heaven and devoured them. 10And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

### The Judgment of the Dead

11Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. The earth and the heavens fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. 12And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. 13The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what they had done. 14Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. 15Anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire.

## Explore

**Different views**

There are many different views about how we should understand Revelation and a lot centre on this chapter and the question of how to interpret the ‘millennium’, or the ‘thousand years’ (v 3).

**What we can be sure about**

Let’s focus on what we can be sure about. All will be raised from death. For some this will be resurrection to eternal life and to sharing the reign of Jesus (vs 4–6). But others, as they stand before the judgement throne of God, will realise that their lives do not match up and they face the second death and exclusion from the presence of God (vs 11–15). This is disturbing but we note that judgement is for those who worshipped the beast and the dragon (see 13:8; 17:8), who have turned their backs on God. Before God’s throne there is nowhere for them to hide (v 11).

**Names in the book of life**

By contrast, for those whose names are in the book of life there is the certainty that death, the final enemy ([1 Corinthians 15:26](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Corinthians+15%3A26&version=NIV)), has been destroyed for ever and cannot touch them. We have the assurance that those who have put their faith in Jesus have their names in the book of life and will not face condemnation (v 15; see [Romans 8:1](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+8%3A1&version=NIV)). They only have life to look forward to.

[Dominic Smart](https://www.wordlive.org/Otherstuff/Contributors/R-S/3527737.id)

[Angus Moyes](https://www.wordlive.org/AboutWordLive/Contributors/M-P/3527733.id#.VknC1XbhCUk)

## Respond

Pray for those you know who do not yet know Jesus, that they may find life.

## Deeper Bible study

How do we understand the millennium and where does it fit? Christians differ on this matter. My approach has been to see the whole sweep of history presented again and again from different angles in increasing intensity; this passage starts us on the final spiral – so chapter 20 doesn’t follow chapter 19 chronologically but rewinds to the beginning of history. The 1,000 years retell the story since the first coming of Christ. Having foretold the fate of Babylon and the two beasts the focus now is on the dragon, the arch-enemy of God. In the Bible, ‘1,000’ is used to describe a very large number or a very long period of time. I take it here to describe the whole period between Christ’s first and second comings.

John describes a period in which, in the imagery of Jesus’ parable, the strong man is bound ([Mark 3:27](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+3%3A27&version=NIV)), the gospel is preached and people respond and find new life. This is the gospel age. Satan’s defeat at the cross is a New Testament truth, however difficult it can be to accept. During this time, the church has become truly international.

At the end of a period of advance for the church, there will be a time when it is opposed and curtailed. Persecution rather than expansion will be the norm. The gospel will be opposed and be under real attack by the forces of evil. However, victory has already been won and all the posturing of evil will come to nothing. Evil will be powerless and the devil, like his beasts, will be destroyed. Then the judgement of humankind will begin. Here, before the great white throne, the final separation will take place. All will be present as the books are opened. Our hope then is that Christ, our Saviour-Judge, has written our names in the book of life.

Lord, while Satan is bound, help us to work and pray to set others free through the gospel.

## Background: Millennialism

There are four major views about the millennium. The names of the positions relate to when the second coming of Christ will be in relation to the thousand year period mentioned in [Revelation 20](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Revelation%2020&version=NIV).  
  
**Classical pre-millennialism**This position, believed by some of the early church fathers, states that the coming of Christ will be preceded by an earthly millennium, which will end with the judgement of all at the great white throne of God, and then the eternal state.   
  
**Dispensationalism**This system of thought derives from John Nelson Darby (1800–1882), an early leader of the Brethren. It was popularised by the Scofield Reference Bible at the beginning of the twentieth century, and more recently by the Left Behind series of novels.   
  
Some of the features of this system of thought are:   
  
● belief in a radical disjunction between Israel and the church (God’s earthly and heavenly peoples)  
  
● a second coming that could happen at any moment  
  
● a ‘secret rapture’ of believers  
  
● a ‘great tribulation’ during which the Jews will believe  
  
● an earthly millennium which will involve the rebuilding of the temple and the offering of sacrifice   
  
● a major rebellion instigated by Satan at the end of the period  
  
There is an emphasis on literal (some would say literalistic) interpretation of Bible promises.  
  
**Post-millennialism**There are two varieties of this position. Traditionally, it was believed that the world would enjoy a very long period of prosperity and peace before the second coming. This view was popular in the nineteenth century, with a lot of naive optimism about the spread of the kingdom of God, much of which was dissipated by the First World War.   
  
Some new churches (in succession to the seventeenth century Puritans) interpret Old Testament promises with reference to the spread and purity of the worldwide church, despite growing darkness in society.   
  
**Amillennialism**This position holds that there will be no earthly millennium. The a- beginning indicates a negative, as in ‘amoral’.   
  
Another way of describing the position is ‘gospel age millennium’ – the period of Christ’s reign is during the present age, but in heaven not on earth. His reign is spiritual, not political. Old Testament references to future earthly peace and prosperity are either reinterpreted spiritually, or are believed to have their fulfilment on the new earth.  
  
Some people, of course, prefer to remain agnostic on this issue and describe themselves as ‘pan-millennialists’, since everything will ‘pan out’ all right in the end!  
  
Andrew Clark

## Crash and burn

<https://www.wordlive.org/uploads/wordlight/resources/W211210R2.mp3>

The lake of fire – fuel for film-makers and horror novelists alike. But what are we to make of it as believers looking ahead to the final judgement? In this audio meditation, Helen Paynter explores the main purpose of the lake of fire, as set out in [Revelation 20](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Revelation%2020&version=NIV).

# Today in the Word – 7/31/19

# We Are Holy to the Lord

**Read:** [**Zechariah 14:16–21**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Zechariah+14%3a16%e2%80%9321)

16Then the survivors from all the nations that have attacked Jerusalem will go up year after year to worship the King, the Lord Almighty, and to celebrate the Festival of Tabernacles. 17If any of the peoples of the earth do not go up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the Lord Almighty, they will have no rain. 18If the Egyptian people do not go up and take part, they will have no rain. The Lord[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Zechariah+14%3a16%e2%80%9321#fen-NIV-23087a)] will bring on them the plague he inflicts on the nations that do not go up to celebrate the Festival of Tabernacles. 19This will be the punishment of Egypt and the punishment of all the nations that do not go up to celebrate the Festival of Tabernacles.

20On that day holy to the Lord will be inscribed on the bells of the horses, and the cooking pots in the Lord’s house will be like the sacred bowls in front of the altar. 21Every pot in Jerusalem and Judah will be holy to the Lord Almighty, and all who come to sacrifice will take some of the pots and cook in them. And on that day there will no longer be a Canaanite[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Zechariah+14%3a16%e2%80%9321#fen-NIV-23090b)] in the house of the Lord Almighty.

#### Footnotes:

1. [Zechariah 14:18](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Zechariah+14%3a16%e2%80%9321#en-NIV-23087) Or part, then the Lord
2. [Zechariah 14:21](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Zechariah+14%3a16%e2%80%9321#en-NIV-23090) Or merchant

The nature versus nurture debate in psychology questions whether our behavior is inherited or learned. Do we behave the way we do because we have been wired to think and act a certain way from birth? Or is our behavior a result of a combination of learning and environment. Many feel both play a role.

But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do. 1 Peter 1:15

Holiness is another matter. Moral ideas and some moral practices may be learned. Our nature may make us more inclined to certain kinds of responses. But true holiness only comes from a work of God. It begins with God’s declaration that those who are “in Christ” are righteous. That gift is worked into our life and behavior as we learn from God’s Word and are empowered by His Spirit.

The closing verses of Zechariah describe what life will be like during the Millennium. It is proof that a perfect environment and good teaching do not guarantee belief. During the millennial period, there will be some who will reject the Messiah’s rule (vv. 16–18). A more comprehensive transformation must still take place. It is not spoken of by Zechariah but is described in Revelation (Rev. 21–22).

The reign of Jerusalem’s Messianic king will be unlike any other period in human history. Holiness will be this kingdom’s predominant feature. Ordinary life, even down to the cooking utensils, will be lived in a way that honors God (vv. 20–21). The mention of the Canaanites at the end of verse 21 may be symbolic rather than ethnic. It could be pointing to the absence of idolatry in the kingdom. However, some scholars point out that the literal meaning of the word is “trader.” They suggest it signifies purity of life and motives. Either way, the message is the same. Holiness will be the order of the day.

### Apply the Word

How should we respond to the message of Zechariah? Its promises are for the future, but its teaching on how to live is for today. Holiness does not have to wait for the Millennium. As 2 Peter 3:14 urges, “So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him.”

### Pray with Us

As we come to the end of our study of Zechariah this month, let’s thank the Lord for the wonderful prophecies in the Old Testament that reveal God’s love to His people. Let us also thank Him for His Son—the promised Messiah, the hope of the nations.

## BY Dr. John Koessler, Chair and Professor of Pastoral Studies

# Our Daily Bread – 7/31/19

# Who We Are

**Read:** [**Acts 9:13–16**](https://www.odb.org/2019/07/31/who-we-are-2)

13“Lord,” Ananias answered, “I have heard many reports about this man and all the harm he has done to your holy people in Jerusalem. 14And he has come here with authority from the chief priests to arrest all who call on your name.”

15But the Lord said to Ananias, “Go! This man is my chosen instrument to proclaim my name to the Gentiles and their kings and to the people of Israel. 16I will show him how much he must suffer for my name.”

This man is my chosen instrument to proclaim my name. [Acts 9:15](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts+9%3A15)

I’ll never forget the time I took my future wife to meet my family. With a twinkle in their eyes, my two elder siblings asked her, “What exactly do you see in this guy?” She smiled and assured them that by God’s grace I had grown to be the man she loved.

I loved that clever reply because it also reflects how, in Christ, the Lord sees more than our past. In Acts 9, He directed Ananias to heal Saul, a known persecutor of the church whom God had blinded. Ananias was incredulous at receiving this mission, stating that Saul had been rounding up believers in Jesus for persecution and even execution. God told Ananias not to focus on who Saul had been but on who he had become: an evangelist who would bring the good news to all the known world, including to the gentiles (those who weren’t Jews) and to kings (v. 15). Ananias saw Saul the Pharisee and persecutor, but God saw Paul the apostle and evangelist.

We can sometimes view ourselves only as we have been—with all of our failures and shortcomings. But God sees us as new creations, not who we were but who we are in Jesus and who we’re becoming through the power of the Holy Spirit. O God, teach us to view ourselves and others in this way!

By [Peter Chin](https://odb.org/author/peterwchin/)

#### Reflect & Pray

How can you begin to better view yourself and others in light of who you are in Christ today? How does it encourage you to know God isn’t through growing and refining you?

Heavenly Father, help me to find my full identity in You. Allow me to humbly see others through Your eyes of grace!

# God Calling – 7/31/19

# Gratitude

Give Me the gift of a brave and thankful heart.

Man proves his greatness by his power to see causes for thankfulness in his life.

When life seems hard, and troubles crowd, then very definitely look for causes for thankfulness.

The sacrifice, the offering of thanksgiving, is indeed a sweet incense going up to Me through the busy day. Seek diligently for the something to be glad and thankful about in every happening, and soon no search will be required.

The causes for joy and gratitude will spring to greet your loving hearts.

As the trumpeters and singers were as one, to make one sound to be heard in praising and thanking the Lord. 2 Chronicles 5:13

# My Utmost for His Highest – 8/1/19

# Learning About His Ways



When Jesus finished commanding His twelve disciples…He departed from there to teach and to preach in their cities. —[Matthew 11:1](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=Matthew+11%3A1)

**He comes where He commands us to leave.** If you stayed home when God told you to go because you were so concerned about your own people there, then you actually robbed them of the teaching of Jesus Christ Himself. When you obeyed and left all the consequences to God, the Lord went into your city to teach, but as long as you were disobedient, you blocked His way. Watch where you begin to debate with Him and put what you call your duty into competition with His commands. If you say, “I know that He told me to go, but my duty is here,” it simply means that you do not believe that Jesus means what He says.

**He teaches where He instructs us not to teach.** “Master…let us make three tabernacles…” ([Luke 9:33](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+9:33)).

Are we playing the part of an amateur providence, trying to play God’s role in the lives of others? Are we so noisy in our instruction of other people that God cannot get near them? We must learn to keep our mouths shut and our spirits alert. God wants to instruct us regarding His Son, and He wants to turn our times of prayer into mounts of transfiguration. When we become certain that God is going to work in a particular way, He will never work in that way again.

**He works where He sends us to wait.** “…tarry…until…” ([Luke 24:49](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+24:49)). “Wait on the Lord” and He will work ([Psalm 37:34](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+37:34)). But don’t wait sulking spiritually and feeling sorry for yourself, just because you can’t see one inch in front of you! Are we detached enough from our own spiritual fits of emotion to “wait patiently for Him”? ([Psalm 37:7](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+37:7)). Waiting is not sitting with folded hands doing nothing, but it is learning to do what we are told.

These are some of the facets of His ways that we rarely recognize.

**Wisdom From Oswald Chambers**

It is perilously possible to make our conceptions of God like molten lead poured into a specially designed mould, and when it is cold and hard we fling it at the heads of the religious people who don’t agree with us. Disciples Indeed, 388 R

# CCEL – 8/1/19

**The fruit of the Spirit is . . . faith.**—[GAL. 5:22.](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Gal.5.html" \l "Gal.5.22)

By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.—Without faith it is impossible to please him.—He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.—Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.

Whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him.—Faith worketh by love.—Faith without works is dead.

We walk by faith, not by sight.—I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.—Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory; receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.

[Eph. 2:8](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Eph.2.html" \l "Eph.2.8). -[Heb. 11:6](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Heb.11.html" \l "Heb.11.6). -[John 3:18](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.John.3.html" \l "John.3.18). -[Mark. 9:24](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Mark.9.html" \l "Mark.9.24).[I John 2:5](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iJohn.2.html" \l "iJohn.2.5). -[Gal. 5:6](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Gal.5.html" \l "Gal.5.6). -[Jas. 2:20](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Jas.2.html" \l "Jas.2.20).[II Cor. 5:7](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iiCor.5.html" \l "iiCor.5.7). -[Gal. 2:20](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Gal.2.html" \l "Gal.2.20). -[I Pet. 1:8,9](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iPet.1.html" \l "iPet.1.8).

“Let me now go to the field, and glean ears of corn.” **[Ruth 2:2](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ruth.2.html" \l "Ruth.2.2)**

Downcast and troubled Christian, come and glean today in the broad field of promise. Here are abundance of precious promises, which exactly meet thy wants. Take this one: “He will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax.” Doth not that suit thy case? A reed, helpless, insignificant, and weak, a bruised reed, out of which no music can come; weaker than weakness itself; a reed, and that reed bruised, yet, he will not break thee; but on the contrary, will restore and strengthen thee. Thou art like the smoking flax: no light, no warmth, can come from thee; but he will not quench thee; he will blow with his sweet breath of mercy till he fans thee to a flame. Wouldst thou glean another ear? “Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” What soft words! Thy heart is tender, and the Master knows it, and therefore he speaketh so gently to thee. Wilt thou not obey him, and come to him even now? Take another ear of corn: “Fear not, thou worm Jacob, I will help thee, saith the Lord and thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel.” How canst thou fear with such a wonderful assurance as this? Thou mayest gather ten thousand such golden ears as these! “I have blotted out thy sins like a cloud, and like a thick cloud thy transgressions.” Or this, “Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” Or this, “The Spirit and the Bride say, Come, and let him that is athirst come, and whosoever will let him take the water of life freely.” Our Master’s field is very rich; behold the handfuls. See, there they lie before thee, poor timid believer! Gather them up, make them thine own, for Jesus bids thee take them. Be not afraid, only believe! Grasp these sweet promises, thresh them out by meditation and feed on them with joy.

# Word Live – 8/1/19

# WOW!

## Prepare

‘Lord Jesus, help me to remember that you are the Sovereign Lord, the King of the universe.’



## Bible passage: Revelation 21:1–8

##### The New Jerusalem

1 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. 2 I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. 3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. 4 He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”

5 He who was seated on the throne said, “I am making everything new!” Then he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.”

6 He said to me: “It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To him who is thirsty I will give to drink without cost from the spring of the water of life. 7 He who overcomes will inherit all this, and I will be his God and he will be my son. 8 But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars—their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death.”

## Explore

**Astonished joy**

‘Sam gasped, “Is everything sad going to come untrue? What’s happened to the world?”’ (JRR Tolkien,The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King).The same sort of astonished joy, immeasurably more in fact, will be ours when Jesus makes everything new.

**Fulfilment of promises**

These verses echo the promises of God through the ages – ‘My dwelling place will be with them’, ‘the Sovereign Lord will wipe away the tears from all faces’, ‘he will swallow up death for ever’ (see [Ezekiel 37:26–28](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ezekiel+37%3A26%E2%80%9328&version=NIV); [Isaiah 25:6–8](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isaiah+25%3A6%E2%80%938&version=NIV)). This is the final fulfilment of all the covenant promises of God – this is the good news he promised his people in ages past: ‘I will put my dwelling-place among you … I will walk among you and be your God, and you will be my people’ (Leviticus 26:11,12). Finally, here it is!

**Good news**

How he will do it, we do not know. But most certainly, if the good news is good news at all, it means that the Maker of all things will one day make everything new. Let that sink in today. One day, the one on the throne will make everything sad come untrue.

[Dominic Smart](https://www.wordlive.org/Otherstuff/Contributors/R-S/3527737.id)

[Angus Moyes](https://www.wordlive.org/AboutWordLive/Contributors/M-P/3527733.id#.VknC1XbhCUk)

## Respond

What are the sad things in your life? What things in our broken world (that God calls us to make better) weigh heavily on you? Bring him now your pain and your fears, and put your trust in him, the Beginning and the End.

## Deeper Bible study

Much that begins in Genesis is completed in these last two chapters – a fitting ending to both Revelation and the Bible. We see two metaphors intermingled: the security of a city and the intimacy of a bride. Here is the goal to which we are heading, a new heaven and a new earth. The reference to ‘no longer any sea’ (v 1) relates to the sense of restlessness the sea engenders and the environment out of which the beast of the sea emerged. This is transformation on a scale beyond our comprehension.

We need to begin in negative terms, by listing what is missing: no more tears, death, mourning, crying or pain. Then, in positive terms, we are promised a restored relationship with God, with no barriers. Everything is new, refreshing, satisfying. The God who created now recreates. Instead of an innocent couple in a garden, there is a holy community in a city. At the heart is God himself in covenant relationship, as he had always promised. What we longed for wistfully, when we read of God walking in the garden in the cool of the day in Eden, is now restored. Here is the renewal and completion of all things: ‘I am making everything new!’ (v 5). What a hope! What a comfort! What a strength!

There is continuity and discontinuity. The roots of the new world and of our new bodies are in the old, but the transformation is beyond all expectation. When sin entered, our environment was spoiled; frustration and disappointment were built in; and we were alienated from God. These problems are addressed and resolved here. The passage ends with a list of eight groups of people who are excluded. For the new heaven and the new earth are about life and not death. All that diminishes life has no place in the new order.

The focus now is on life, not death, as we recall that eternal life is knowing God through Jesus Christ.

[Colin Sinclair](https://www.wordlive.org/Otherstuff/Contributors/R-S/3527737.id)

## Background: New heaven or new earth?

**New bodies**Often we talk loosely about the afterlife as ‘going to heaven’. But this does not do justice to the wealth of biblical teaching on the subject. The new existence will not be ethereal – like sitting on a cloud playing a harp for ever and ever!  
  
‘The promise of a new earth … makes sense of the promise of bodily resurrection since our new physical bodies will need a new earth to live on.’**1**The hope of new bodies was something distinctive about Christian teaching in contrast to Greek philosophy, which emphasised the immortality of the soul. The resurrected body of Jesus guides us as to what our new bodies will be like ([1 Corinthians 15:35–49](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=revelation%2022:16,17&version=NIV)).  
  
**Heaven on earth**In [2 Corinthians 5](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Corinthians+5&version=NIVUK) the so-called ‘intermediate state’ of Christians who have died but who have not yet received their new bodies is described. Paul describes us as ‘longing to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling’ (vs 2,4). This ‘eternal house in heaven’ (v 1) is what we long for, for to be ‘unclothed’ (v 4) is unnatural for us.   
  
But at the same time we need to recognise, as Paul does, that ‘the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God’ ([Romans 8:21](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans%208:21&version=NIV)). The new Jerusalem will come down, out of heaven, to the new earth ([Revelation 21:2,3](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Revelation%2021:2,3&version=NIV)).  
  
**The kingdom of God on earth**A recent book discussing the significance of the new earth for biblical theology is Tom Wright’s Surprised by Hope (SPCK, 2007). He writes (p214):   
  
‘God … is to become king, in accordance with his original intention in creation on the one hand and his original intention in the covenant on the other. To snatch saved souls away to a disembodied “heaven” would destroy the whole point. God is to become king of the whole world at last. And he will do this, not by declaring that the inner dynamic of creation (that it be ruled by humans) was a mistake, nor by declaring that the inner dynamic of his covenant (that Israel would be the means of saving the nations) was a failure, but by fulfilling them both.’  
  
Andrew Clark  
  
**1** David Lawrence, Heaven: it’s not the end of the world, SU, 1995 (rep 2003), p75

## Alpha and Omega



Can you picture infinity? When the Bible talks of God in such big terms as ‘the Alpha and Omega’ – the beginning and end, encompassing everything that ever has been or will be – how easy do you find it to imagine what that even is?   
  
Our illustrator, Andrew Gray, offers this artistic interpretation of God, referencing the spring of life-giving water, the stars of the heavens’ creation and Jesus’ cup of suffering. Is the figure drinking from the cup, or pouring himself out into it? He is both beginning, and end – Creator and redemption for those who have been created.  
  
Spend some time in prayer and worship, thanking our amazing God, who still calls us his children.

# Today in the Word – 8/1/19

# He Came to Serve as God

**Read:** [**Mark 1:1-15**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+1%3a1-15)

### John the Baptist Prepares the Way

1 The beginning of the good news about Jesus the Messiah,[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+1%3a1-15" \l "fen-NIV-24217a" \o "See footnote a)] the Son of God,[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+1%3a1-15#fen-NIV-24217b)] 2as it is written in Isaiah the prophet:

“I will send my messenger ahead of you,  
    who will prepare your way”[[c](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+1%3a1-15#fen-NIV-24218c)]—  
3“a voice of one calling in the wilderness,  
‘Prepare the way for the Lord,  
    make straight paths for him.’”[[d](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+1%3a1-15#fen-NIV-24219d)]

4And so John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. 5The whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem went out to him. Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River. 6John wore clothing made of camel’s hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. 7And this was his message: “After me comes the one more powerful than I, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. 8I baptize you with[[e](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+1%3a1-15#fen-NIV-24224e)] water, but he will baptize you with[[f](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+1%3a1-15#fen-NIV-24224f)] the Holy Spirit.”

### The Baptism and Testing of Jesus

9At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. 10Just as Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. 11And a voice came from heaven: “You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.”

12At once the Spirit sent him out into the wilderness, 13and he was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted[[g](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+1%3a1-15#fen-NIV-24229g)] by Satan. He was with the wild animals, and angels attended him.

### Jesus Announces the Good News

14After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. 15“The time has come,” he said. “The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!”

#### Footnotes:

1. [Mark 1:1](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+1%3a1-15#en-NIV-24217) Or Jesus Christ. Messiah (Hebrew) and Christ (Greek) both mean Anointed One.
2. [Mark 1:1](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+1%3a1-15#en-NIV-24217) Some manuscripts do not have the Son of God.
3. [Mark 1:2](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+1%3a1-15#en-NIV-24218) Mal. 3:1
4. [Mark 1:3](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+1%3a1-15#en-NIV-24219) Isaiah 40:3
5. [Mark 1:8](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+1%3a1-15#en-NIV-24224) Or in
6. [Mark 1:8](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+1%3a1-15#en-NIV-24224) Or in
7. [Mark 1:13](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+1%3a1-15#en-NIV-24229) The Greek for tempted can also mean tested.

The right start is important for a successful journey. This holds true whether you start your morning with a nutritional breakfast so you can have the mental capacity and energy for the rest of your day, or it can mean enrolling your child in the right school so they can become an outstanding learner and a productive, capable adult.

You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased. Mark 1:11

From the very first chapter of the Gospel of Mark, the disciple paints a portrait of Jesus that shapes the way we read and understand the rest of his gospel. In order to affirm Christ’s deity as the Son of God from the very beginning of His ministry, Mark begins with the fulfillment of prophecy and divine witness to the identity of Jesus Christ. Mark portrays the work of the One who has come to serve humankind as the work of God Himself.

Both Isaiah and Malachi prophesied the coming of John the Baptist, the one who would come before the Lord to make a way for His arrival (see Mal. 3:1; Isa. 40:3). John came from the wilderness. He baptized in order to “prepare the way” for the Lord to come to people and free their hearts from sin.

John baptized Jesus not because Jesus needed repentance, but so that He could stand in the place of “the many” in need of a ransom for sin (Mark 10:45). At that incredible moment, right at the very beginning of Jesus’ earthly ministry, Heaven responded with so much affirmation and excitement that the sky ripped open. The Holy Spirit alighted on Jesus, coming down like a dove, and the Father’s voice from Heaven audibly identified Jesus as His Son. This passage presents a beautiful picture of the Trinity, similar to the picture in Genesis 1 during Creation.

### Apply the Word

If you have time, begin your study of Mark’s Gospel by reading straight through the entire book. Mark’s account of Christ’s earthly ministry is brief and fast-paced. With a little discipline you can finish the whole book quickly and learn a great deal about our Savior who came to serve and who calls us to serve as well.

### Pray with Us

Thank you for joining us on this month’s journey of Bible study and prayer with Today in the Word! Let’s ask the Lord to give us a teachable spirit and open our hearts to the lessons He wants us to learn from our study of the Gospel of Mark.

## BY Eric C. Redmond

# Our Daily Bread – 8/1/19

# The Bulldog and the Sprinkler

**Read:** [**Ephesians 3:14–21**](https://www.odb.org/2019/08/01/the-bulldog-and-the-sprinkler)

### A Prayer for the Ephesians

14For this reason I kneel before the Father, 15from whom every family[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=+Ephesians+3%3A14%E2%80%9321#fen-NIV-29267a)] in heaven and on earth derives its name. 16I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, 17so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, 18may have power, together with all the Lord’s holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, 19and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

20Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, 21to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

#### Footnotes:

1. [Ephesians 3:15](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=+Ephesians+3%3A14%E2%80%9321#en-NIV-29267) The Greek for family (patria) is derived from the Greek for father (pater).

I pray that you . . . may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. [Ephesians 3:17, 19](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ephesians+3%3A17%2C+19)

Most summer mornings, a delightful drama plays out in the park behind our house. It involves a sprinkler. And a bulldog. About 6:30 or so, the sprinklers come on. Shortly thereafter, Fifi the bulldog (our family’s name for her) arrives.

Fifi’s owner lets her off her leash. The bulldog sprints with all her might to the nearest sprinkler, attacking the stream of water as it douses her face. If Fifi could eat the sprinkler, I think she would. It’s a portrait of utter exuberance, of Fifi’s seemingly infinite desire to be drenched by the liquid she can never get enough of.

There are no bulldogs in the Bible, or sprinklers. Yet, in a way, Paul’s prayer in Ephesians 3 reminds me of Fifi. There, Paul prays that the Ephesian believers might be filled with God’s love and “have power, together with all the Lord’s holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ.” He prayed that we might be “filled to the measure of all the fullness of God” (vv. 18–19).

Still today, we’re invited to experience a God whose infinite love exceeds anything we can comprehend, that we too might be drenched, saturated, and utterly satisfied by His goodness. We’re free to plunge with abandon, relish, and delight into a relationship with the One who alone can fill our hearts and lives with love, meaning, and purpose.

By [Adam Holz](https://odb.org/author/adamholz/)

#### Reflect & Pray

How does the experience of plunging into waves at a beach symbolize the immensity of God’s love for you? What barriers do you think potentially keep you from experiencing His love?

God, thank You for Your infinite and satisfying love. Please help us to know and experience the love You have for each one of us.

#### Insight

Ephesians 3:14–21 is an example of a biblical doxology. The word doxology comes from two Greek words: doxa (glory) and logia (saying). A doxology is a statement or saying that ascribes glory (importance, weight, significance) to God. Paul does that here in verse 20 where we read, “To him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus.” Notice how the word glory is found in several other New Testament doxologies. In Romans 11:33–36, God is given glory for His wisdom and the section concludes with: “To him be the glory forever!” In 1 Timothy 1:17, God is given glory for His eternal uniqueness: “Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever.” And in Jude 1:24–25, God’s glory is seen in His protection of His children: “To the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority.”

# God Calling – 8/1/19

# Blessed Bond

**Jesus, let Thy Beautiful Presence be always with us.**

"I will never leave you nor forsake you."

There is no bond of union on earth to compare with the union between a soul that loves Me -- and Me.

Priceless beyond all earth's imaginings is that Friendship.

In the merging of heart and mind and will a oneness results that only those who experience it can even dimly realize.

For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us.  Ephesians 2:14

# My Utmost for His Highest – 8/2/19

# The Teaching of Adversity



In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world. —[John 16:33](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=John+16%3A33)

The typical view of the Christian life is that it means being delivered from all adversity. But it actually means being delivered in adversity, which is something very different. “He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. No evil shall befall you, nor shall any plague come near your dwelling…” ([Psalm 91:1,10](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+91:1,10))— the place where you are at one with God.

If you are a child of God, you will certainly encounter adversities, but Jesus says you should not be surprised when they come. “In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.” He is saying, “There is nothing for you to fear.” The same people who refused to talk about their adversities before they were saved often complain and worry after being born again because they have the wrong idea of what it means to live the life of a saint.

God does not give us overcoming life— He gives us life as we overcome. The strain of life is what builds our strength. If there is no strain, there will be no strength. Are you asking God to give you life, liberty, and joy? He cannot, unless you are willing to accept the strain. And once you face the strain, you will immediately get the strength. Overcome your own timidity and take the first step. Then God will give you nourishment— “To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life…” ([Revelation 2:7](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Revelation+2:7)). If you completely give of yourself physically, you become exhausted. But when you give of yourself spiritually, you get more strength. God never gives us strength for tomorrow, or for the next hour, but only for the strain of the moment. Our temptation is to face adversities from the standpoint of our own common sense. But a saint can “be of good cheer” even when seemingly defeated by adversities, because victory is absurdly impossible to everyone, except God.

**Wisdom From Oswald Chambers**

There is nothing, naturally speaking, that makes us lose heart quicker than decay—the decay of bodily beauty, of natural life, of friendship, of associations, all these things make a man lose heart; but Paul says when we are trusting in Jesus Christ these things do not find us discouraged, light comes through them.  
The Place of Help

# CCEL – 8/2/19

**The Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.**—[REV. 13:8.](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Rev.13.html" \l "Rev.13.8)

Your lamb shall be without blemish, . . . and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening. And they shall take of the blood, and strike it on the two side posts and on the upper door post of the houses, wherein they shall eat it, . . . and when I see the blood, I will pass over you.—The blood of sprinkling.—Christ our passover is sacrificed for us.—Being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God.—According to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.

We have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins.

Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin; that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God.

[Exo. 12:5-7](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Exod.12.html#Exod.12.5),[13](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Exod.12.html" \l "Exod.12.13). -[Heb. 12:24](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Heb.12.html" \l "Heb.12.24). -[I Cor. 5:7](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iCor.5.html" \l "iCor.5.7). -[Acts 2:23](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Acts.2.html" \l "Acts.2.23). -[II Tim. 1:9](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iiTim.1.html" \l "iiTim.1.9).[Eph. 1:7](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Eph.1.html" \l "Eph.1.7).[I Pet. 4:1,2](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iPet.4.html" \l "iPet.4.1).

“Who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.” **[Ephesians 1:11](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Eph.1.html" \l "Eph.1.11)**

Our belief in God’s wisdom supposes and necessitates that he has a settled purpose and plan in the work of salvation. What would creation have been without his design? Is there a fish in the sea, or a fowl in the air, which was left to chance for its formation? Nay, in every bone, joint, and muscle, sinew, gland, and blood-vessel, you mark the presence of a God working everything according to the design of infinite wisdom. And shall God be present in creation, ruling over all, and not in grace? Shall the new creation have the fickle genius of free will to preside over it when divine counsel rules the old creation? Look at Providence! Who knoweth not that not a sparrow falleth to the ground without your Father? Even the hairs of your head are all numbered. God weighs the mountains of our grief in scales, and the hills of our tribulation in balances. And shall there be a God in providence and not in grace? Shall the shell be ordained by wisdom and the kernel be left to blind chance? No; he knows the end from the beginning. He sees in its appointed place, not merely the corner-stone which he has laid in fair colours, in the blood of his dear Son, but he beholds in their ordained position each of the chosen stones taken out of the quarry of nature, and polished by his grace; he sees the whole from corner to cornice, from base to roof, from foundation to pinnacle. He hath in his mind a clear knowledge of every stone which shall be laid in its prepared space, and how vast the edifice shall be, and when the top-stone shall be brought forth with shoutings of “Grace! Grace! unto it.” At the last it shall be clearly seen that in every chosen vessel of mercy, Jehovah did as he willed with his own; and that in every part of the work of grace he accomplished his purpose, and glorified his own name.

# Word Live – 8/2/19

# Union

## Prepare

How do you think about heaven?



## Bible passage: Revelation 21:9–27

9 One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and said to me, “Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb.” 10 And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God. 11 It shone with the glory of God, and its brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal. 12 It had a great, high wall with twelve gates, and with twelve angels at the gates. On the gates were written the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. 13 There were three gates on the east, three on the north, three on the south and three on the west. 14 The wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

15 The angel who talked with me had a measuring rod of gold to measure the city, its gates and its walls. 16 The city was laid out like a square, as long as it was wide. He measured the city with the rod and found it to be 12,000 stadia in length, and as wide and high as it is long. 17 He measured its wall and it was 144 cubits thick, by man’s measurement, which the angel was using. 18 The wall was made of jasper, and the city of pure gold, as pure as glass. 19 The foundations of the city walls were decorated with every kind of precious stone. The first foundation was jasper, the second sapphire, the third chalcedony, the fourth emerald, 20 the fifth sardonyx, the sixth carnelian, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, and the twelfth amethyst. 21 The twelve gates were twelve pearls, each gate made of a single pearl. The great street of the city was of pure gold, like transparent glass.

22 I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. 23 The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp. 24 The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it. 25 On no day will its gates ever be shut, for there will be no night there. 26 The glory and honor of the nations will be brought into it. 27 Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life.

## Explore

**Surprising things**

There are some surprising things about this city. For a start, it’s a vast cube – 12,000 stadia in length, width and height is almost 1,500 miles in each direction (v 16)! On the gates are the names of the 12 tribes of Israel (v 12) and on the foundations the names of the 12 apostles of the Lamb (v 14). The numbers are significant – 12,000 and 144 draw us back to chapter 7 and the great multitude gathered in worship around the Lamb’s throne. There is room in this vast cubical city for the whole people of God.

**Most surprising of all**

It’s surprising that it appears to be the ‘wife of the Lamb’ (v 9). And when we consider that this city represents us as the people of God, most surprising of all is that the city shines with the glory of God (v 11). Compare the descriptions of the city’s splendour (vs 11,18,21) with John’s vision of the throne of heaven in 4:3,6; the glory of this city shines more brightly. I have no glory. I am unholy. And yet this glorious city represents what God will do with me, and with you.

[Dominic Smart](https://www.wordlive.org/Otherstuff/Contributors/R-S/3527737.id)

[Angus Moyes](https://www.wordlive.org/AboutWordLive/Contributors/M-P/3527733.id#.VknC1XbhCUk)

## Respond

‘Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is’ ([1 John 3:2](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+John+3%3A2&version=NIV)). Turn John’s words into a prayer of praise.

## Deeper Bible study

Now the grand tour begins. An angel acts as guide to John, offering to show him the bride, the wife of the Lamb which is also the city, the New Jerusalem. What a vision! What a contrast with fallen Babylon! Here truly is a tale of two cities. The idea of a city can be off-putting to those with experience of earthly cities – with their noise, dirt, stress and loneliness. A city can be a crowded and cramped place.

From a high mountain, John saw the city descending in all its glory. Its gates and walls spoke of both security and openness. There were gates on each side, so that from whatever direction you came you could enter. Its size is extraordinary: in its width and length and height (1,400 miles each way). It is a cube, the shape of the holy of holies in the Old Testament tabernacle where God dwelt. It shone with the brilliance of a precious jewel. We are presented with a city that is huge, solid and beautiful, with gates of pearl and streets of gold.

All this is to be understood as symbolic language, describing the redeemed people of God as both a beautiful bride and a shining city. Here is a place of purity and security, where there is access and fellowship and in which everything is carefully planned and prepared. There is no need for a temple, for God is in the midst of the city; no need for sun or moon, since the glory of God lights it up. All that is beautiful and good and true of the cultural treasures of the world will enrich the New Jerusalem. Men and women will be fulfilled in their labour, in harmony with their neighbours and live together in a pleasant and well-suited environment. What is not to like!

It is strange to think of our future as a city. What a model to choose. But what a city!

[Colin Sinclair](https://www.wordlive.org/Otherstuff/Contributors/R-S/3527737.id)

## Background: Why no sea?

**What the sea represents**In [Revelation 21:1](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Revelation%2021:1&version=NIV) there is said to be ‘no longer any sea’ on the new earth. This, however, should not necessarily be taken as a major disappointment to beach lovers, as the meaning is probably metaphorical.   
  
Jews, who were not generally sailors, tended to be afraid of the sea. The sea in Israelite thought often represented forces of chaos. In [Luke 21:25](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke%2021:25&version=NIV) nations are said to be ‘in anguish and perplexity at the roaring and tossing of the sea’ before the second coming.   
  
Certainly in [Revelation 13:1](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Revelation%2013:1&version=NIV) it is from the sea that the beast comes (see [Daniel 7:2,3](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Daniel%207:2,3&version=NIV)). Here the sea seems to speak of the origin of cosmic evil (see [Revelation 4:6; 12:18; 15:2](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Revelation%204:6;%2012:18;%2015:2&version=NIV)).   
  
**The removal of all evil threats**There are various allusions to passages in Isaiah which should be recognised. In [Isaiah 51:10,11](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isaiah%2051:10,11&version=NIV) the removal of the waters of the Red Sea when God delivers his people is equated with the removal of sorrows at the end of the age. In [Isaiah 65:17,19](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isaiah%2065:17,19&version=NIV) weeping and crying will be no more in the new earth God will create.   
  
In the light of this, it is likely that the phrase in [Revelation 21:1](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Revelation%2021:1&version=NIV) is meant to be parallel to [21:4](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Revelation%2021:4&version=NIV), the beginning of which is closely parallel in the original Greek (‘any longer’, NIV). The image of the sea represents all the range of suffering and evil that previously threatened God’s people. When God makes all things new all this will be gone for ever.  
  
So don’t throw away your swimming trunks!  
  
Andrew Clark

# Today in the Word – 8/2/19

# Fishers of Men

**Read:** [**Mark 1:16-34**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+1%3a16-34)

### Jesus Calls His First Disciples

16As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. 17“Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will send you out to fish for people.” 18At once they left their nets and followed him.

19When he had gone a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John in a boat, preparing their nets. 20Without delay he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed him.

### Jesus Drives Out an Impure Spirit

21They went to Capernaum, and when the Sabbath came, Jesus went into the synagogue and began to teach. 22The people were amazed at his teaching, because he taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law. 23Just then a man in their synagogue who was possessed by an impure spirit cried out, 24“What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God!”

25“Be quiet!” said Jesus sternly. “Come out of him!” 26The impure spirit shook the man violently and came out of him with a shriek.

27The people were all so amazed that they asked each other, “What is this? A new teaching—and with authority! He even gives orders to impure spirits and they obey him.” 28News about him spread quickly over the whole region of Galilee.

### Jesus Heals Many

29As soon as they left the synagogue, they went with James and John to the home of Simon and Andrew. 30Simon’s mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they immediately told Jesus about her. 31So he went to her, took her hand and helped her up. The fever left her and she began to wait on them.

32That evening after sunset the people brought to Jesus all the sick and demon-possessed. 33The whole town gathered at the door, 34and Jesus healed many who had various diseases. He also drove out many demons, but he would not let the demons speak because they knew who he was.

In the opening chapter of J.R.R. Tolkien’s The Hobbit, we can read a memorable exchange between the novel’s hero Bilbo Baggins and Gandalf the wizard. Gandalf imposes an adventure upon Bilbo, the unsuspecting hobbit. Bilbo says, “I beg your pardon, I haven’t asked for anything!” Gandalf’s reply is direct and challenging, “Yes you have. Twice now. My pardon. I give it to you. In fact, I will go so far as to send you to this adventure. Very amusing for me, very good for you—and profitable too, very likely, if you ever get over it.”

“Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will make you fishers of men.” Mark 1:17

When Jesus called ordinary fishermen to become fishers of men, He gave them a kind and challenging invitation. The calling of these ordinary working men demonstrated the power of Christ that could change lives, even the most ordinary and cast down.

After the initial calling of the disciples, Jesus and the four fishermen encountered Simon’s mother-in-law who was ill. By the time they left, she was well and serving Christ and his followers. The rebuke of the demon in the synagogue and the healing of Peter’s mother-in-law drew all Capernaum to hear about Jesus, as they brought all their afflicted to Him. The disciples learned an important lesson—following Jesus would be the adventure of a lifetime.

In today’s Scripture reading, Mark challenges us as well: “Are you willing to follow Jesus wholeheartedly and let Him be in charge of your life?” Mark’s Gospel records Jesus’ calling of four men—Simon, Andrew, James, and John—away from their livelihoods. These former fishermen immediately witnessed that the scribes did not have innate authority to teach; they depended upon the authority of others. Jesus had all authority to teach and show the ways of God.

### Apply the Word

The challenges of daily life can dull us to the grand adventure to which Christ invites us. We are called to journey with the great King who promises His love both now and forever, in a kingdom without end! Our sins have been forgiven. His righteousness is ours. And we have power from the Spirit to live this life with joy! Hallelujah!

### Pray with Us

Please uphold in prayer MBI’s system administrators: Joseph Kessinger, Joseph Straw, Kyle Sparrow, Michael Paniak, Paul Walker, and William Eyerdom. In our time of digital communications, we couldn’t do without their computer expertise.

## BY Eric C. Redmond

# Our Daily Bread – 8/2/19

# From Trash to Treasure

**Read:** [**2 Corinthians 4:5–7**](https://www.odb.org/2019/08/02/filled-with-treasure)

5For what we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus’ sake. 6For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,”[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Corinthians+4%3A5%E2%80%937" \l "fen-NIV-28866a" \o "See footnote a)] made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God’s glory displayed in the face of Christ.

7But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us.

#### Footnotes:

1. [2 Corinthians 4:6](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Corinthians+4%3A5%E2%80%937#en-NIV-28866) Gen. 1:3

We have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. [2 Corinthians 4:7](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Corinthians+4%3A7)

The trash man’s house sits atop a steep street in a poor Bogota neighborhood. Not one thing about it looks special. Yet the unassuming abode in Colombia’s capital is home to a free library of 25,000 books—discarded literature that Jose Alberto Gutierrez collected to share with poor children in his community.

Local kids crowd into the house during weekend “library hours.” Prowling through every room, each packed with books, the children recognize the humble home as more than Señor Jose’s house—it’s a priceless treasury.

The same is true for every follower of Christ. We’re made of humble clay—marred by cracks and easily broken. But we’re entrusted by God as a home for His empowering Spirit, who enables us to carry the good news of Christ into a hurting, broken world. It’s a big job for ordinary, fragile people.

“We have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us” (2 Corinthians 4:7), the apostle Paul told his congregation in the ancient city of Corinth. They were a cross section of people from across this region, so many might have been tempted to “go around preaching about [them]selves,” Paul said (v. 5 nlt).

Instead, Paul said, tell others about the priceless One living inside of us. It’s Him and His all-surpassing power that turns our ordinary lives into a priceless treasury.

By [Patricia Raybon](https://odb.org/author/patriciaraybon/)

#### Reflect & Pray

What does it mean to you that you have a treasure, the Holy Spirit, inside you? How is it comforting to know that He enables us to share the good news?

Jesus, fill up my ordinary life with the power of Your Spirit.

#### Insight

Paul’s writing style often consists of long sentences where it can be difficult to connect his initial point with his final one. In today’s passage, he writes about the blessing of God’s light shining in our hearts and states that He made that light shine (2 Corinthians 4:6). The purpose of God’s light shining is so we may see His glory in the face of Jesus. What is the light, and how does God make it shine in us? In this passage, Paul doesn’t elaborate on those specifics. In the preceding verse (v. 4), however, he says that the light is the light of the gospel. God reveals the gospel (the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus) to our hearts.

# God Calling – 8/2/19

# Harvest

**My Lord, we seek Thy Blessing.**

I love to pour My blessings down in rich, in choicest measure. But like the seed-sowing -- the ground must be prepared before the seed is dropped in.

Yours to prepare the soil -- Mine to drop the seed-blessing into the prepared soil.

Together we share in, and joy in, the harvest.

Spend more time in soil-preparing. Prayer fertilizes soil. There is much to do in preparation.

So the Lord blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning.  Job 42:12

# My Utmost for His Highest – 8/3/19

# The Compelling Purpose of God



He…said to them, "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem…" —[Luke 18:31](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=Luke+18%3A31)

Jerusalem, in the life of our Lord, represents the place where He reached the culmination of His Father’s will. Jesus said, “I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me” ([John 5:30](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+5:30)). Seeking to do “the will of the Father” was the one dominating concern throughout our Lord’s life. And whatever He encountered along the way, whether joy or sorrow, success or failure, He was never deterred from that purpose. “…He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem…” ([Luke 9:51](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+9:51)).

The greatest thing for us to remember is that we go up to Jerusalem to fulfill God’s purpose, not our own. In the natural life our ambitions are our own, but in the Christian life we have no goals of our own. We talk so much today about our decisions for Christ, our determination to be Christians, and our decisions for this and that, but in the New Testament the only aspect that is brought out is the compelling purpose of God. “You did not choose Me, but I chose you…” ([John 15:16](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+15:16)).

We are not taken into a conscious agreement with God’s purpose— we are taken into God’s purpose with no awareness of it at all. We have no idea what God’s goal may be; as we continue, His purpose becomes even more and more vague. God’s aim appears to have missed the mark, because we are too nearsighted to see the target at which He is aiming. At the beginning of the Christian life, we have our own ideas as to what God’s purpose is. We say, “God means for me to go over there,” and, “God has called me to do this special work.” We do what we think is right, and yet the compelling purpose of God remains upon us. The work we do is of no account when compared with the compelling purpose of God. It is simply the scaffolding surrounding His work and His plan. “He took the twelve aside…” ([Luke 18:31](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+18:31)). God takes us aside all the time. We have not yet understood all there is to know of the compelling purpose of God.

**Wisdom From Oswald Chambers**

The great word of Jesus to His disciples is Abandon. When God has brought us into the relationship of disciples, we have to venture on His word; trust entirely to Him and watch that when He brings us to the venture, we take it.  Studies in the Sermon on the Mount, 1459 R

# CCEL – 8/3/19

**His mercy is on them that fear Him.**—[LUKE 1:50.](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Luke.1.html" \l "Luke.1.50)

Oh how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee; which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee before the sons of men! Thou shalt hide them in the secret of thy presence from the pride of man: thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues.

If ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear.—The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon him in truth. He will fulfil the desire of them that fear him: he also will hear their cry, and will save them.

Because thine heart was tender, and thou hast humbled thyself before the Lord, . . . and hast rent thy clothes, and wept before me; I also have heard thee, saith the Lord.—To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.—The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.

[Psa. 31:19,20](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.31.html#Ps.31.19).[I Pet. 1:17](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iPet.1.html" \l "iPet.1.17). -[Psa. 145:18,19](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.145.html" \l "Ps.145.18).[II Kgs. 22:19](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iiKgs.22.html" \l "iiKgs.22.19). -[Isa. 66:2](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Isa.66.html" \l "Isa.66.2). -[Psa. 34:18](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.34.html" \l "Ps.34.18).

“The Lamb is the light thereof.” **[Revelation 21:23](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Rev.21.html" \l "Rev.21.23)**

Quietly contemplate the Lamb as the light of heaven. Light in Scripture is the emblem of joy. The joy of the saints in heaven is comprised in this: Jesus chose us, loved us, bought us, cleansed us, robed us, kept us, glorified us: we are here entirely through the Lord Jesus. Each one of these thoughts shall be to them like a cluster of the grapes of Eshcol. Light is also the cause of beauty. Nought of beauty is left when light is gone. Without light no radiance flashes from the sapphire, no peaceful ray proceedeth from the pearl; and thus all the beauty of the saints above comes from Jesus. As planets, they reflect the light of the Sun of Righteousness; they live as beams proceeding from the central orb. If he withdrew, they must die; if his glory were veiled, their glory must expire. Light is also the emblem of knowledge. In heaven our knowledge will be perfect, but the Lord Jesus himself will be the fountain of it. Dark providences, never understood before, will then be clearly seen, and all that puzzles us now will become plain to us in the light of the Lamb. Oh! what unfoldings there will be and what glorifying of the God of love! Light also means manifestation. Light manifests. In this world it doth not yet appear what we shall be. God’s people are a hidden people, but when Christ receives his people into heaven, he will touch them with the wand of his own love, and change them into the image of his manifested glory. They were poor and wretched, but what a transformation! They were stained with sin, but one touch of his finger, and they are bright as the sun, and clear as crystal. Oh! what a manifestation! All this proceeds from the exalted Lamb. Whatever there may be of effulgent splendour, Jesus shall be the centre and soul of it all. Oh! to be present and to see him in his own light, the King of kings, and Lord of lords!

# Word Live – 8/3/19

# Warnings and promises

## Prepare

‘With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day’ ([2 Peter 3:8](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Peter+3%3A8&version=NIV)). Thank God for his patience.



## Bible passage: Revelation 22:1–21

### Eden Restored

22 Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb 2down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. 3No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. 4They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. 5There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever.

### John and the Angel

6The angel said to me, “These words are trustworthy and true. The Lord, the God who inspires the prophets, sent his angel to show his servants the things that must soon take place.”

7“Look, I am coming soon! Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy written in this scroll.”

8I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I had heard and seen them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who had been showing them to me. 9But he said to me, “Don’t do that! I am a fellow servant with you and with your fellow prophets and with all who keep the words of this scroll. Worship God!”

10Then he told me, “Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this scroll, because the time is near. 11Let the one who does wrong continue to do wrong; let the vile person continue to be vile; let the one who does right continue to do right; and let the holy person continue to be holy.”

### Epilogue: Invitation and Warning

12“Look, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to each person according to what they have done. 13I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.

14“Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city. 15Outside are the dogs, those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.

16“I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you this testimony for the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, and the bright Morning Star.”

17The Spirit and the bride say, “Come!” And let the one who hears say, “Come!” Let the one who is thirsty come; and let the one who wishes take the free gift of the water of life.

18I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this scroll: If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to that person the plagues described in this scroll. 19And if anyone takes words away from this scroll of prophecy, God will take away from that person any share in the tree of life and in the Holy City, which are described in this scroll.

20He who testifies to these things says, “Yes, I am coming soon.”

Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

21The grace of the Lord Jesus be with God’s people. Amen.

## Explore

**Incredible promise**

‘You have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you’ (Augustine, Confessions, Book 1:1). God made us for full access to ‘the tree of life’ ([Genesis 2:9](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis+2%3A9&version=NIV)). In the new Jerusalem that access is restored, with life, healing and light (vs 1,2,5). We will walk with God again ‘in the cool of the day’ ([Genesis 3:8](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis+3%3A8&version=NIV)) as we see him face to face (v 4; see [Exodus 24:9–11](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Exodus+24%3A9%E2%80%9311&version=NIV); [John 1:18](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Exodus+24%3A9%E2%80%9311&version=NIV)). This is the incredible promise of the gospel. Pondering these things and looking forward to that day!

**Warnings**

Yet let’s not ignore the warnings. The first is that sin destroys our vital connection to God ([Genesis 3:24](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis+3%3A24&version=NIV)). The free gift of life is on offer to all who would receive it (v 17). But to reject it is death (v 15). The other warns us not to tamper with the words of this book (vs 18,19). No one would claim Revelation is an easy book! But its vision of the plan of the ‘Alpha and the Omega’ (v 13), the ‘bright Morning Star’ (v 16) is fundamental to our understanding of the world.

**Let’s pray**

We long not only to find our own hearts’ rest in God, but for others to receive his healing also. Let’s pray, and let’s say with the Spirit and the church universal, come! Drink at the fountain of eternal life (v 17)!

[Dominic Smart](https://www.wordlive.org/Otherstuff/Contributors/R-S/3527737.id)

[Angus Moyes](https://www.wordlive.org/AboutWordLive/Contributors/M-P/3527733.id#.VknC1XbhCUk)

## Respond

Come, Lord Jesus!

## Deeper Bible study

Cities need gardens and green places, to be their lungs. This city is no different. In the centre flows the river of life, with its crystal-clear water, available at all times to the thirsty. Beside it grows the tree of life, from which humankind has been excluded since the fall. Now its fruit is there to be enjoyed. Its leaves have therapeutic qualities. The curse has been lifted. On another tree the curse was borne (Gal 3:13, AV). As well as the river and the tree, there is a throne. Here all life is under the rule of God and of the Lamb – and rightly so. The face that was hidden throughout history is now in plain view. We shall indeed see him as he is. Knowing God, our desire is to serve him and we will do so gladly and wholeheartedly, with no reserve.

The final section of this book provides an epilogue full of warnings and exhortations. John authenticates the book, affirming his words to be trustworthy and true. Those who read it are to keep it faithfully, unchanged until what is written comes to pass. Christ is coming and we need to use the time to get ready before the terrible separation takes place. Trust in Christ, whatever lies ahead. He is more than sufficient and has no peers, no rivals and no successors.

Stand up for him, witness to him and follow him wherever he leads, even if it be through death. Three times Jesus says, ‘I am coming soon’ (vs 7,12,20). While there is often a gap between promise and fulfilment, it is that state of readiness, of prayerful and practical expectation, that is needed to keep us on our toes. Christ has come, he will come again. Come, Lord Jesus, come!

One day the fall will be reversed. The promise will be fulfilled. Live now your future hope.

[Colin Sinclair](https://www.wordlive.org/Otherstuff/Contributors/R-S/3527737.id)

## Background: What do verses 18 and 19 mean?

**Old warnings revived**These verses contain a clear warning to John’s readers. They are best seen as alluding to warning passages in Deuteronomy (especially [4:1,2; 12;32; 29:19,20](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Deuteronomy%204:1,2;%2012;32;%2029:19,20&version=NIV)), with the implication that the church, the renewed Israel, must be faithful to God’s Word in Scripture just as old Israel was called to be.   
  
Just as in Deuteronomy, one particular danger in the context is idolatry (v 15). Life in the land/new earth is promised for obedience, but plagues are threatened on those who disobey.   
  
These include both the last judgement in the lake of fire and also penal inflictions on the ungodly prior to that time. There is a parallel with [Deuteronomy 29:20](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Deuteronomy%2029:20&version=NIV), where we read that ‘every curse that is written in this book’ will rest on the apostate.  
  
**The irony of divine judgement**The verses are framed in an eye-for-an-eye pattern: those adding to the book will have its plagues added to them, while those who take away from the book, will have the eternal blessings it describes taken away from them.   
  
**Don’t mess with God’s Word!**We may take these verses as a warning, not only not to change the book of Revelation, but by extension, not to change the whole of sacred Scripture, to which Revelation forms a conclusion. Instead we should study and obey its teaching.   
  
Andrew Clark

## Waiting

<https://www.wordlive.org/uploads/wordlight/resources/W241210R1.WAV>

Have you ever tried staring at a clock and following the second hand round in circles, only for time to seemingly stand still like an immovable mountain? Waiting can be the longest, loneliest and sometimes most painful part of our life, especially in a culture of ‘I want it now’.   
  
However, we are encouraged to immerse our hearts and minds in the vision of a perfect future, and to be comforted by its beauty, while we wait for the return of the Great King, who is deeply in love with us.   
  
As you wait, listen to, or read, this poem by Chijioke Ojukwu.  
  
This is where history ends;  
When the sun shrinks into a speck of dust  
And the stars flung wide into perpetual oblivion,  
Here He comes, the fairest of men, yet divine   
The King of Kings, yet gentle as a lamb  
He breaks the tyrant’s rod and brings  
Eternal justice to the poor.  
  
This is the culmination of time;  
The fulfillment of every promise and prophecy  
It is here my striving ends and  
The eternal longing of the heart satisfied,  
With just one drop of this river of Life.  
  
This is home; in the gaze of this faithful lover.  
It is in the light of His Glorious face  
That I see who I truly am.  
This is the final tear to flow  
From the eyes of a broken bride  
She will now sing her song forever  
In the embrace of everlasting arms.

# Today in the Word – 8/3/19

# A Prayer-Dependent Life

**Read:** [**Mark 1:35-45**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+1%3a35-45)

### Jesus Prays in a Solitary Place

35Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed. 36Simon and his companions went to look for him, 37and when they found him, they exclaimed: “Everyone is looking for you!”

38Jesus replied, “Let us go somewhere else—to the nearby villages—so I can preach there also. That is why I have come.” 39So he traveled throughout Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and driving out demons.

### Jesus Heals a Man With Leprosy

40A man with leprosy[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+1%3a35-45#fen-NIV-24256a)] came to him and begged him on his knees, “If you are willing, you can make me clean.”

41Jesus was indignant.[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+1%3a35-45" \l "fen-NIV-24257b" \o "See footnote b)] He reached out his hand and touched the man. “I am willing,” he said. “Be clean!” 42Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cleansed.

43Jesus sent him away at once with a strong warning: 44“See that you don’t tell this to anyone. But go, show yourself to the priest and offer the sacrifices that Moses commanded for your cleansing, as a testimony to them.” 45Instead he went out and began to talk freely, spreading the news. As a result, Jesus could no longer enter a town openly but stayed outside in lonely places. Yet the people still came to him from everywhere.

#### Footnotes:

1. [Mark 1:40](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+1%3a35-45#en-NIV-24256) The Greek word traditionally translated leprosy was used for various diseases affecting the skin.
2. [Mark 1:41](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+1%3a35-45#en-NIV-24257) Many manuscripts Jesus was filled with compassion

C. Dixon (1854–1925) was a pastor, a Bible expositor, and an evangelist. He published a book series called The Fundamentals with Moody Bible Institute president R. A. Torrey. Dixon wrote on the importance of prayer, “When we depend upon man, we get what man can do; But when we depend upon prayer, we get what God can do.”

Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place where he prayed. Mark 1:3

In today’s passage, we experience a day in the life of Jesus. Many were coming to hear and see Him. In fact, Mark records that “the whole town gathered at the door” (v. 33). Everyone in this town had come to see Jesus! What an overwhelming response to our Lord, a great revival of souls. It is the sort of response to Jesus we hope to see in our churches every week!

Yet, rather than relish this victory or even return immediately to revive many more souls, Jesus rose the next day to spend time alone with His Father in prayer. Here Jesus sets an important pattern for His disciples as they began the important work of fishing for men.

It was because of the needs of the people, and because of the demands of preaching and casting out demons that Jesus spent time alone in prayer. He prayed ahead of his schedule, when others were still sleeping, and in a place where He would not be interrupted. This was His practice of prayer, a model for His followers (Luke 5:16; 6:12; 9:18, 28; 11:1; 22:41–45).

As a result of His disciplined habit of prayer, Jesus was able to meet the coming demands of serving the most challenging needs. He would travel from town to town, preach in synagogue after synagogue, encounter crowds of people — including many possessed by demons. But the demands of preaching, crowds, and demons were no match for a God-infused, prayer-dependent life.

### Apply the Word

Our schedules may seem to fight against develop- ing a prayer habit like Jesus.’ And unfortunately, it may seem like we can accomplish much even without a faithful prayer life. However, serving others with love, wisdom, patience, kindness, faithfulness, forgiveness, and strength requires great power from God through great prayer.

### Pray with Us

Please include in your prayers Moody’s vice president of Human Resources, Debbie Zelinski. Her leadership, along with her team’s dedicated service, helps every employee use their professional expertise for God’s glory.

## BY Eric C. Redmond

# Our Daily Bread – 8/3/19

# For Love or Money

**Read:** [**Luke 19:1–10**](https://www.odb.org/2019/08/03/for-love-or-money)

### Zacchaeus the Tax Collector

19 Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. 2A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was wealthy. 3He wanted to see who Jesus was, but because he was short he could not see over the crowd. 4So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way.

5When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, “Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today.” 6So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly.

7All the people saw this and began to mutter, “He has gone to be the guest of a sinner.”

8But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, “Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount.”

9Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. 10For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.”

Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions. [Luke 12:15](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+12%3A15)

Irish poet Oscar Wilde said, “When I was young I thought that money was the most important thing in life; now that I am old I know that it is.” His comment was made tongue-in-cheek; he lived only to age forty-six, so he never truly was “old.” Wilde fully understood that life is not about money.

Money is temporary; it comes and it goes. So life must be about more than money and what it can buy. Jesus challenged the people of His generation—rich and poor alike—to a recalibrated value system. In Luke 12:15, Jesus said, “Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions.” In our culture, where there’s an abiding focus on more and newer and better, there’s something to be said both for contentment and for perspective about how we view money and possessions.

Upon meeting Jesus, a rich young ruler went away sad because he had many possessions he didn’t want to give up (see Luke 18:18–25), but Zacchaeus the tax collector gave away much of what he’d spent his life acquiring (Luke 19:8). The difference is embracing the heart of Christ. In His grace, we can find a healthy perspective on the things we possess—so they don’t become the things that have us.

By [Bill Crowder](https://odb.org/author/billcrowder/)

#### Reflect & Pray

What can’t you live without? Why? Is it something that lasts forever, or just for a moment?

Father, give me Your wisdom that I might keep the things of life in the right perspective—and have a value system that reflects eternity.

Listen to “God and Money” at [discovertheword.org/series/god-and-money/.](https://discovertheword.org/series/god-and-money/)

#### Insight

Zacchaeus, as a chief tax collector, was a wealthy man (Luke 19:2). In the New Testament, tax collectors were considered to be “sinners” (v. 7) and were largely disliked by society because many of them gained their wealth by cheating others. His offer to give half his possessions to the poor and repay those he’d cheated four times what he’d taken (v. 8) demonstrated his heart had truly changed. It showed what he was willing to give up for Jesus. Christ in turn honored Zacchaeus in front of the crowd by labeling him a “son of Abraham,” declaring salvation over him and his household (v. 9). Zacchaeus was lost, but he was sought out and saved by the Son of Man (v. 10).

By: [**Julie Schwab**](https://odb.org/author/jschwab95/)

# God Calling – 8/3/19

# Give Every Moment

My children, how dear to my Heart is the cry of Love that asks for all of Me, that wishes every action, thought, word and moment to be Mine. How poor the understanding of the one who thinks that money to be used in this good work or that, is the great gift to offer. Above all, I desire Love, true, warm, childlike Love, the trusting understanding Love, and then the gift I prize next is the gift of the moments, of all the moments.

I think even when Love's impetuous longing to serve Me has offered Me all Life, every day, every hour, I think even then it is a long, and not an easy lesson, to learn, what it means to give Me the moments.

The little things you planned to do, given up gladly at My suggestion, the little services joyfully rendered. See Me in all and then it will be an easy task

This is the priceless time of initiation, but remember that the path of initiation is not for all; but only for those who have felt the sorrow-cry of the world that needs a Savior and the tender plea of a Savior Who needs followers through whom He can accomplish His great work of Salvation joyfully.

Thus saith the Lord, Ye shall not go up, nor fight against your brethren the children of Israel; return every man to his house, for this thing is from me. 1 Kings 12:24

# My Utmost for His Highest – 8/4/19

# The Brave Friendship of God



He took the twelve aside… —[Luke 18:31](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=Luke+18%3A31)

Oh, the bravery of God in trusting us! Do you say, “But He has been unwise to choose me, because there is nothing good in me and I have no value”? That is exactly why He chose you. As long as you think that you are of value to Him He cannot choose you, because you have purposes of your own to serve. But if you will allow Him to take you to the end of your own self-sufficiency, then He can choose you to go with Him “to Jerusalem” ([Luke 18:31](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+18:31)). And that will mean the fulfillment of purposes which He does not discuss with you.

We tend to say that because a person has natural ability, he will make a good Christian. It is not a matter of our equipment, but a matter of our poverty; not of what we bring with us, but of what God puts into us; not a matter of natural virtues, of strength of character, of knowledge, or of experience— all of that is of no avail in this concern. The only thing of value is being taken into the compelling purpose of God and being made His friends (see [1 Corinthians 1:26-31](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Corinthians+1:26-31)). God’s friendship is with people who know their poverty. He can accomplish nothing with the person who thinks that he is of use to God. As Christians we are not here for our own purpose at all— we are here for the purpose of God, and the two are not the same. We do not know what God’s compelling purpose is, but whatever happens, we must maintain our relationship with Him. We must never allow anything to damage our relationship with God, but if something does damage it, we must take the time to make it right again. The most important aspect of Christianity is not the work we do, but the relationship we maintain and the surrounding influence and qualities produced by that relationship. That is all God asks us to give our attention to, and it is the one thing that is continually under attack.

**Wisdom From Oswald Chambers**

Am I becoming more and more in love with God as a holy God, or with the conception of an amiable Being who says, “Oh well, sin doesn’t matter much”?  Disciples Indeed, 389 L

# CCEL – 8/4/19

**It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.**—[JOHN 19:30.](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.John.19.html" \l "John.19.30)

Jesus the author and finisher of our faith.—I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.—We are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. And every priest standeth daily ministering an offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: but this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.—Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross.

I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again.—Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.

[Heb. 12:2](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Heb.12.html" \l "Heb.12.2). -[John 17:4](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.John.17.html" \l "John.17.4). -[Heb. 10:10-14](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Heb.10.html" \l "Heb.10.10). -[Col. 2:14](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Col.2.html" \l "Col.2.14).[John 10:17,18](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.John.10.html" \l "John.10.17). -[John. 15:13](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.John.15.html" \l "John.15.13).

“The people that do know their God shall be strong.” [Daniel 11:32](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Dan.11.html" \l "Dan.11.32)

Every believer understands that to know God is the highest and best form of knowledge; and this spiritual knowledge is a source of strength to the Christian. It strengthens his faith. Believers are constantly spoken of in the Scriptures as being persons who are enlightened and taught of the Lord; they are said to “have an unction from the Holy One,” and it is the Spirit’s peculiar office to lead them into all truth, and all this for the increase and the fostering of their faith. Knowledge strengthens love, as well as faith. Knowledge opens the door, and then through that door we see our Saviour. Or, to use another similitude, knowledge paints the portrait of Jesus, and when we see that portrait then we love him, we cannot love a Christ whom we do not know, at least, in some degree. If we know but little of the excellences of Jesus, what he has done for us, and what he is doing now, we cannot love him much; but the more we know him, the more we shall love him. Knowledge also strengthens hope. How can we hope for a thing if we do not know of its existence? Hope may be the telescope, but till we receive instruction, our ignorance stands in the front of the glass, and we can see nothing whatever; knowledge removes the interposing object, and when we look through the bright optic glass we discern the glory to be revealed, and anticipate it with joyous confidence. Knowledge supplies us reasons for patience. How shall we have patience unless we know something of the sympathy of Christ, and understand the good which is to come out of the correction which our heavenly Father sends us? Nor is there one single grace of the Christian which, under God, will not be fostered and brought to perfection by holy knowledge. How important, then, is it that we should grow not only in grace, but in the “knowledge” of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

# Word Live – 8/4/19

# Sing!

## Prepare

Thank God that your standing before him does not depend on your changing feelings, but on the finished work of Christ on the cross on your behalf.



## Bible passage: Psalm 63

##### A psalm of David. When he was in the Desert of Judah.

1 O God, you are my God,   
       earnestly I seek you;   
       my soul thirsts for you,   
       my body longs for you,   
       in a dry and weary land   
       where there is no water.

2 I have seen you in the sanctuary   
       and beheld your power and your glory.

3 Because your love is better than life,   
       my lips will glorify you.

4 I will praise you as long as I live,   
       and in your name I will lift up my hands.

5 My soul will be satisfied as with the richest of foods;   
       with singing lips my mouth will praise you.

6 On my bed I remember you;   
       I think of you through the watches of the night.

7 Because you are my help,   
       I sing in the shadow of your wings.

8 My soul clings to you;   
       your right hand upholds me.

9 They who seek my life will be destroyed;   
       they will go down to the depths of the earth.

10 They will be given over to the sword   
       and become food for jackals.

11 But the king will rejoice in God;   
       all who swear by God's name will praise him,   
       while the mouths of liars will be silenced.

## Explore

**Full of passion**

This is a psalm full of passion for God. Skim it again, and note each time David expresses intense desire for God. It’s worth asking how we could develop the same intense longing for God that David shows.

**Sing in worship**

This, of course, is a song. The longest book of the Bible, Psalms, is a book of songs. And the Bible contains over 50 commands to sing. Why? In part, the answer is because God has designed music to connect with our emotions. So when we sing in worship to God, music is there to get our feelings in line with the truths we express. ‘These people honour me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me’ ([Matthew 15:8](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+15%3A8&version=NIV)). David’s example is one worth following.

**Song of longing**

The words really matter. This is a song of longing for God. Spend some time thinking on the words David uses to describe the God he longs for: power and glory (v 2), love (v 3), help and support (vs 7,8); and the words of justice in verses 9–11. Why would we earnestly seek, thirst for and long for such a God?

[Dominic Smart](https://www.wordlive.org/Otherstuff/Contributors/R-S/3527737.id)

[Angus Moyes](https://www.wordlive.org/AboutWordLive/Contributors/M-P/3527733.id#.VknC1XbhCUk)

## Respond

Now pray this psalm as your own prayer. Or better still, sing it. For example, the modern version by Shane & Shane, ‘Better than Life’.

## Deeper Bible study

While doctors encourage us to drink more, few of us know what it is like to have a raging thirst and to feel utterly parched. As your tongue sticks to the roof of your mouth and your breathing becomes harder, the only focus of your thoughts and energy is the need to find water. I suspect most of us do not feel that way if we miss church one week! However, this is the picture the psalmist uses to indicate how important worship and prayer are to him and his desire to maintain communion with God. When deprived of the opportunity to worship, the psalmist senses a deep hunger in his life. What a contrast he provides with those who make churchgoing each week a choice to be made rather than a settled commitment. Surely it should not be an open decision but the driving force of our week. For this to happen, we need to make sure that our worship is not just a ritual but a reality, one that leads to an encounter with the living God.

Once you have seen God in his glory and discovered his love, nothing else will do; all alternatives are poor substitutes. When worship becomes less of a spectator sport (watching others) or a show to be scored (points for preaching or hymn choice) and, instead, something you actively participate in, then it takes on a different meaning altogether. You are caught up in ‘wonder, love and praise’1 and the impact will affect the rest of your week, both at home and at work. In bed at night the memory can bring peace and pleasure and can assist you in laying aside the cares of the day. Here the fears of life can be dealt with as we are content to leave our life and its outcome to God.

Lord, help me to get a bigger view of you so that I can trust you more.

1 Charles Wesley, 1707–88, ‘Love divine, all loves excelling’

[Colin Sinclair](https://www.wordlive.org/Otherstuff/Contributors/R-S/3527737.id)

# Today in the Word – 8/4/19

# Persistence Is Rewarded

**Read:** [**Mark 2:1-27**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+2%3a1-27)

### Jesus Forgives and Heals a Paralyzed Man

2 A few days later, when Jesus again entered Capernaum, the people heard that he had come home. 2They gathered in such large numbers that there was no room left, not even outside the door, and he preached the word to them. 3Some men came, bringing to him a paralyzed man, carried by four of them. 4Since they could not get him to Jesus because of the crowd, they made an opening in the roof above Jesus by digging through it and then lowered the mat the man was lying on. 5When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralyzed man, “Son, your sins are forgiven.”

6Now some teachers of the law were sitting there, thinking to themselves, 7“Why does this fellow talk like that? He’s blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?”

8Immediately Jesus knew in his spirit that this was what they were thinking in their hearts, and he said to them, “Why are you thinking these things? 9Which is easier: to say to this paralyzed man, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Get up, take your mat and walk’? 10But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins.” So he said to the man, 11“I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home.” 12He got up, took his mat and walked out in full view of them all. This amazed everyone and they praised God, saying, “We have never seen anything like this!”

### Jesus Calls Levi and Eats With Sinners

13Once again Jesus went out beside the lake. A large crowd came to him, and he began to teach them. 14As he walked along, he saw Levi son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax collector’s booth. “Follow me,” Jesus told him, and Levi got up and followed him.

15While Jesus was having dinner at Levi’s house, many tax collectors and sinners were eating with him and his disciples, for there were many who followed him. 16When the teachers of the law who were Pharisees saw him eating with the sinners and tax collectors, they asked his disciples: “Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?”

17On hearing this, Jesus said to them, “It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.”

### Jesus Questioned About Fasting

18Now John’s disciples and the Pharisees were fasting. Some people came and asked Jesus, “How is it that John’s disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees are fasting, but yours are not?”

19Jesus answered, “How can the guests of the bridegroom fast while he is with them? They cannot, so long as they have him with them. 20But the time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them, and on that day they will fast.

21“No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment. Otherwise, the new piece will pull away from the old, making the tear worse. 22And no one pours new wine into old wineskins. Otherwise, the wine will burst the skins, and both the wine and the wineskins will be ruined. No, they pour new wine into new wineskins.”

### Jesus Is Lord of the Sabbath

23One Sabbath Jesus was going through the grainfields, and as his disciples walked along, they began to pick some heads of grain. 24The Pharisees said to him, “Look, why are they doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath?”

25He answered, “Have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry and in need? 26In the days of Abiathar the high priest, he entered the house of God and ate the consecrated bread, which is lawful only for priests to eat. And he also gave some to his companions.”

27Then he said to them, “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.

In 2019, Marine veteran Micah Herndon ran the Boston Marathon to pay tribute to his fallen fellow Marines, Mark Juarez, Matthew Ballard, and Rupert Hamer. The three men had lost their lives during a bombing in Afghanistan in 2010. Herndon wore their names across his shoe laces as he ran. After 22 miles, Herndon’s legs began to give out. He continued to run, but his legs gave way near the finish line and the Marine collapsed. Yet Herndon, age 31, would not be stopped. He crawled the last several yards to cross the finish line.

The Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins. Mark 2:10

Persistence. For Micah Herndon, it meant finishing his third marathon. For the four men in today’s passage it meant helping their paralytic friend see Jesus. It would have been easy for these friends to give up when they saw the enormous crowd surrounding Jesus. But their persistence paid off, and Jesus healed their friend. Jesus also said something that surprised the people who were watching. To the paralytic man, Jesus said, “Son, your sins are forgiven” (v. 5).

The religious teachers who were scrutinizing everything Jesus said and did declared His words blasphemous. But throughout this passage, Jesus demonstrated that He was not about following religious tradition. Instead, He was doing something new. He was forgiving sin. He was calling a tax collector to be His disciple (vv. 13–17). He was eating with sinners. He and His disciples were not fasting like others.

Jesus clearly demonstrated that He was about something different. He was not limited to human tradition that would keep someone like the paralytic from coming to Him. With everything He said and did, He was presenting grace. Jesus refused to put the new wine of His truth into the old wineskins valued by the Jewish authorities.

### Apply the Word

Today, remember our country’s wounded and fallen veterans and their families, as well as those with physical health challenges. Pray for the grace, mercy, and strength of Christ to fill their lives. Ask God to give your church wisdom on how to serve wounded and physically challenged saints in your midst, so they can experience His love for them.

### Pray with Us

Today and tomorrow, please join us in prayer for the Human Resources staff. Today, we are thankful for the service of Peter Miller, Rachel Paul, and Erica Loring as they oversee employee benefits at Moody.

## BY Eric C. Redmond

# Our Daily Bread – 8/4/19

# Ask the Man Who Owns One

**Read:** [**Psalm 66:1**](https://www.odb.org/2019/08/04/ask-the-man-who-owns-one)

#### For the director of music. A song. A psalm.

1Shout for joy to God, all the earth!

**Read:** [**Psalm 66:8–20**](https://www.odb.org/2019/08/04/ask-the-man-who-owns-one)

8Praise our God, all peoples,  
    let the sound of his praise be heard;  
9he has preserved our lives  
    and kept our feet from slipping.  
10For you, God, tested us;  
    you refined us like silver.  
11You brought us into prison  
    and laid burdens on our backs.  
12You let people ride over our heads;  
    we went through fire and water,  
    but you brought us to a place of abundance.

13I will come to your temple with burnt offerings  
    and fulfill my vows to you—  
14vows my lips promised and my mouth spoke  
    when I was in trouble.  
15I will sacrifice fat animals to you  
    and an offering of rams;  
    I will offer bulls and goats.

16Come and hear, all you who fear God;  
    let me tell you what he has done for me.  
17I cried out to him with my mouth;  
    his praise was on my tongue.  
18If I had cherished sin in my heart,  
    the Lord would not have listened;  
19but God has surely listened  
    and has heard my prayer.  
20Praise be to God,  
    who has not rejected my prayer  
    or withheld his love from me!

Let me tell you what [God] has done for me. [Psalm 66:16](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+66%3A16)

In the early 1900s, the Packard Motor Car Company generated a slogan to entice buyers. “Ask the man who owns one” became a powerful tagline, one that contributed to the company’s reputation as manufacturing the dominant luxury vehicle in that era. What Packard seemed to understand is that personal testimony is compelling to the hearer: a friend’s satisfaction with a product is a powerful endorsement.

Sharing with others our personal experiences of God’s goodness to us also makes an impact. God invites us to declare our gratitude and joy not only to Him but also to those around us (Psalm 66:1). The psalmist eagerly shared in his song the forgiveness God granted him when he turned from his sins (vv. 18–20).

God has done amazing works in the course of history, such as parting the waters of the Red Sea (v. 6). He also does amazing work in each of our personal lives: giving us hope in the midst of suffering, giving us the Holy Spirit to understand His Word, and providing for our daily needs. When we share with others our personal experiences of God’s work in our lives, we’re giving something of much greater value than an endorsement of a particular purchase—we’re acknowledging God’s goodness and encouraging one another along the journey of life.

By [Kirsten Holmberg](https://odb.org/author/kirstenholmberg/)

#### Reflect & Pray

Who can you tell about God’s work in your life? What story can you share?

God, help me declare the many wonderful ways You’ve worked in my life!

#### Insight

The psalmist writes pointedly about God’s direct role in the bad things that happened to His people (Psalm 66:10–12). This is in no way an accusation against God; rather, it’s an acknowledgment of His love. God had orchestrated those things in order to gain their attention. Without that intervention, they would have continued in their destructive behavior. But before the psalmist makes this point, he invites “all the earth” (v. 1) and “all peoples” (v. 8) to sing God’s praises. In other words, this songwriter is calling on the whole world to join him in praising the One worthy of all praise. God’s plan all along had been for His people to point all peoples to Him.

# God Calling – 8/4/19

# Eternal Life

Oh Jesus, we love Thee so and long to serve Thee.

My children, you are both to do mighty things for Me. Glories and wonders unfold. Life is one glorious whole.

Draw into your beings more and more this wonderful Eternal Life. It is the flow of the Life Eternal through spirit, mind, and body, that cleanses, heals, restores, renews youth, and passes on from you to others, with the same miracle-working power.

"And this is Life Eternal that they may know thee. . . and Jesus Christ, whom Thou has sent." So seek by constant contact to know Me more and more.

Make Me the one abiding Presence of your day of which you are conscious all the time. Seek to do less and to accomplish more, to achieve more. Doing is action. Achievement is successful action.

Remember that Eternal Life is the only lasting life, so that all that is done without being done in the Power of My Spirit, My Life, is passing. All done in that Spirit-Life is undying.

"I give unto to them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand."  So Eternal Life means security too, safety. Dwell increasingly in the consciousness of that security, that safety.

He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.  1 John 5:12

# My Utmost for His Highest – 8/5/19

# The Bewildering Call of God



"…and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man will be accomplished."…But they understood none of these things… —[Luke 18:31, 34](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=Luke+18%3A31%2C+34)

God called Jesus Christ to what seemed absolute disaster. And Jesus Christ called His disciples to see Him put to death, leading every one of them to the place where their hearts were broken. His life was an absolute failure from every standpoint except God’s. But what seemed to be failure from man’s standpoint was a triumph from God’s standpoint, because God’s purpose is never the same as man’s purpose.

This bewildering call of God comes into our lives as well. The call of God can never be understood absolutely or explained externally; it is a call that can only be perceived and understood internally by our true inner-nature. The call of God is like the call of the sea— no one hears it except the person who has the nature of the sea in him. What God calls us to cannot be definitely stated, because His call is simply to be His friend to accomplish His own purposes. Our real test is in truly believing that God knows what He desires. The things that happen do not happen by chance— they happen entirely by the decree of God. God is sovereignly working out His own purposes.

If we are in fellowship and oneness with God and recognize that He is taking us into His purposes, then we will no longer strive to find out what His purposes are. As we grow in the Christian life, it becomes simpler to us, because we are less inclined to say, “I wonder why God allowed this or that?” And we begin to see that the compelling purpose of God lies behind everything in life, and that God is divinely shaping us into oneness with that purpose. A Christian is someone who trusts in the knowledge and the wisdom of God, not in his own abilities. If we have a purpose of our own, it destroys the simplicity and the calm, relaxed pace which should be characteristic of the children of God.

**Wisdom From Oswald Chambers**

Crises reveal character. When we are put to the test the hidden resources of our character are revealed exactly.  Disciples Indeed, 393 R

# CCEL – 8/5/19

**Walk in newness of life.**—[ROM. 6:4.](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Rom.6.html" \l "Rom.6.4)

As ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness.—I beseech you, . . . brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind.

If any man be in Christ he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.—In Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature. And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy.—This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind.—Ye have not so learned Christ; if so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus. Put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.

[Rom. 6:19](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Rom.6.html" \l "Rom.6.19). -[Rom. 12:1,2](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Rom.12.html" \l "Rom.12.1).[II Cor. 5:17](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iiCor.5.html" \l "iiCor.5.17). -[Gal. 6:15,16](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Gal.6.html" \l "Gal.6.15). -[Eph. 4:17](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Eph.4.html" \l "Eph.4.17). -[Eph. 4:20,21](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Eph.4.html" \l "Eph.4.20),[24](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Eph.4.html" \l "Eph.4.24).

“We know that all things work together for good to them that love God.” [Romans 8:28](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Rom.8.html" \l "Rom.8.28)

Upon some points a believer is absolutely sure. He knows, for instance, that God sits in the stern-sheets of the vessel when it rocks most. He believes that an invisible hand is always on the world’s tiller, and that wherever providence may drift, Jehovah steers it. That re-assuring knowledge prepares him for everything. He looks over the raging waters and sees the spirit of Jesus treading the billows, and he hears a voice saying, “It is I, be not afraid.” He knows too that God is always wise, and, knowing this, he is confident that there can be no accidents, no mistakes; that nothing can occur which ought not to arise. He can say, “If I should lose all I have, it is better that I should lose than have, if God so wills: the worst calamity is the wisest and the kindest thing that could befall to me if God ordains it.” “We know that all things work together for good to them that love God.” The Christian does not merely hold this as a theory, but he knows it as a matter of fact. Everything has worked for good as yet; the poisonous drugs mixed in fit proportions have worked the cure; the sharp cuts of the lancet have cleansed out the proud flesh and facilitated the healing. Every event as yet has worked out the most divinely blessed results; and so, believing that God rules all, that he governs wisely, that he brings good out of evil, the believer’s heart is assured, and he is enabled calmly to meet each trial as it comes. The believer can in the spirit of true resignation pray, “Send me what thou wilt, my God, so long as it comes from thee; never came there an ill portion from thy table to any of thy children.”

“Say not my soul, ‘From whence can God relieve my care?’

Remember that Omnipotence has servants everywhere.

His method is sublime, his heart profoundly kind,

God never is before his time, and never is behind.”

# Word Live – 8/5/19

# Promise keeper

## Prepare

‘Lord, I trust you have things in hand. I trust you see the beginning from the end and that your ways are perfect. Please help me with my impatience and doubt. Amen.’



## Bible passage: Ezra 1:1–11

### Cyrus Helps the Exiles to Return

1 In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, in order to fulfill the word of the Lord spoken by Jeremiah, the Lord moved the heart of Cyrus king of Persia to make a proclamation throughout his realm and also to put it in writing:

2“This is what Cyrus king of Persia says:

“‘The Lord, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and he has appointed me to build a temple for him at Jerusalem in Judah. 3Any of his people among you may go up to Jerusalem in Judah and build the temple of the Lord, the God of Israel, the God who is in Jerusalem, and may their God be with them. 4And in any locality where survivors may now be living, the people are to provide them with silver and gold, with goods and livestock, and with freewill offerings for the temple of God in Jerusalem.’”

5Then the family heads of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests and Levites—everyone whose heart God had moved—prepared to go up and build the house of the Lord in Jerusalem. 6All their neighbors assisted them with articles of silver and gold, with goods and livestock, and with valuable gifts, in addition to all the freewill offerings.

7Moreover, King Cyrus brought out the articles belonging to the temple of the Lord, which Nebuchadnezzar had carried away from Jerusalem and had placed in the temple of his god. 8Cyrus king of Persia had them brought by Mithredath the treasurer, who counted them out to Sheshbazzar the prince of Judah.

9This was the inventory:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| gold dishes | 30 |
| silver dishes | 1,000 |
| silver pans | 29 |
| 10gold bowls | 30 |
| matching silver bowls | 410 |
| other articles | 1,000 |

11In all, there were 5,400 articles of gold and of silver. Sheshbazzar brought all these along with the exiles when they came up from Babylon to Jerusalem.

## Explore

**Less comforting declaration**

One of the most beloved and misapplied verses in the Bible is [Jeremiah 29:11](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Jeremiah+29%3A11&version=NIV) – ‘“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares theLord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”’ We like to claim this as a promise that God will prosper us in our current area of struggle or stress, be it employment, housing, or relationships. The immediately preceding verse, however, is a less comforting declaration: exile in Babylon would last for 70 years.

**God’s plans are good**

The future and hope spoken about here was a long time coming – beyond the lifetime of many listening. But 70 years is now up, and true to his word, God opens the door to a return home for the exiles. The Babylonian empire has fallen to the Persians and the King of Persia is receptive to God’s voice. God’s plans are good and they do come to pass. We can be confident that our future is assured in the new heavens and new earth because ‘he who promised is faithful’ ([Hebrews 10:23](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Hebrews+10%3A23&version=NIV)).

[Jo Swinney](https://www.wordlive.org/Otherstuff/Contributors/R-S/3527737.id)

## Respond

God is not afraid to make us wait. What are you waiting for at the moment? How can you live faithfully, worshipfully and gracefully in this time? What truths about God can you hold onto with complete confidence?

## Introduction to Ezra

The book of Ezra does not declare its author but, according to Jewish tradition, the priest and scribe Ezra wrote both Ezra and Nehemiah. Indeed, the two books were considered one work in the Hebrew Bible. In addition, Ezra was also believed to have written the books we know as 1 and 2 Chronicles, which, like Ezra, view Israel’s history from a priestly perspective. The Temple (first built then destroyed in Chronicles, then rebuilt in Ezra) features prominently in both, with a strong emphasis on obedience to the Law and the appropriate worship of the Lord – as we would expect from a priest.

Ezra can be divided into two parts. Chapters 1–6 deal with a period of around twenty years (538–515 bc) covering the first return of Jews from their Babylonian exile and the rebuilding of the Temple at Jerusalem. Chapters 7–10 continue the story almost 60 years later, with Ezra in 458 bc leading a second wave of exiles back to Jerusalem and urging the Jews to live in covenant faithfulness to the Lord. Both these elements (Temple-centred worship and covenant loyalty) were essential to the returning Jews’ spiritual renewal, to prevent them from rebelling in the same way as had led to their exile in the first place.

Several major themes can be found in the book. One of the author’s concerns is to show that God acts providentially, sovereignly and internationally (in this case, through Persian kings) to create political circumstances for the accomplishment of his purposes. Another important message in Ezra is how God raises up faithful heralds of his Word (Zechariah, Haggai, Ezra) who stir and motivate his people to do his work and encourage them when the going gets tough. Temple restoration and spiritual reformation are essential components contributing to the re-establishment of God’s people in their ancient homeland. The Christian church must be no less concerned to evangelise (constructing the temple made of living stones) and maintain spiritual purity (constantly reforming) today.

[Andrew Heron](https://www.wordlive.org/Otherstuff/Contributors/G-H/3526467.id)

## Deeper Bible study

God often has wonderful ways of surprising us. In this case, it concerns the person he chose to facilitate the Jews’ return from captivity in Babylon in what constitutes a second exodus (the first being when Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt around nine hundred years earlier). That person was Cyrus king of Persia, who had taken over what was left of the Assyrian and Babylonian empires to become lord of all the peoples living in their territories, including the Jewish exiles.

In his decree to send the Jews back to Judah to rebuild the Temple of the Lord, Cyrus claims that God had specifically appointed him for that purpose (v 2). How astonishing that God should raise up a pagan king to accomplish this holy task! However, nearly 200 years before, the prophet Isaiah had promised that God would deliver his people through Cyrus ([Isa 45:1–13](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isa+45%3A1%E2%80%9313&version=NIV)), even though the Persian emperor did not know the Lord. More amazing still is the fact that God calls Cyrus his ‘anointed’ ([Isa 45:1](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isa+45%3A1+&version=NIV)), using the Hebrew title ‘messiah’ familiar to Jews and later to Christians as belonging to the ultimate Deliverer to come.

John Calvin in his commentary on Isaiah 451 rightly states that ‘God deigns to call him [Cyrus] his “Anointed”, not by a perpetual title, but because he discharged for a time the office of Redeemer’. The Persian emperor’s role in liberating the Jews and providing for their general welfare, as well as rebuilding God’s kingdom, makes him, in fact, a type of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour. God’s choice of Cyrus is surprising enough. How much more is the fact that eternal salvation for all who believe was accomplished via the death of an impoverished Jewish carpenter. Let us never cease to be amazed at the way God works!

Praise God for the way he often surprises and delights us in the fulfilment of his promises!

1 https://biblehub.com/library/calvin/commentary\_on\_isaiah\_volume\_3/isaiah\_45\_1-25.htm

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## Bible background: Ezra overview

**The background**

Jerusalem had been destroyed by the Babylonian army in 587 BC, and the people of Judah taken into exile. It was to be almost fifty years before the Babylonian empire was overthrown by the Persians. Their ruler Cyrus adopted a new policy of allowing exiles to return to their homes, giving them every assistance in rebuilding their temples, and in restarting their worship. Many Jews had become so comfortable in their exile that they did not wish to return to their native land.

Ezra opens with some Jews returning home in about 538 BC. Chapters [1–6](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ezra+1%E2%80%936&version=NIVUK) tell the story of those next 22 years when, led by Zerubbabel, they faced much discouragement, but eventually finished rebuilding the Temple. Ezra himself is not introduced until [7:1](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ezra+7%3A1&version=NIVUK). He led another group of exiles home in about 458 BC. Chapters [7–10](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ezra+7%E2%80%9310&version=NIVUK) tell of the way in which he rebuilt the people themselves into a people whose lives were pleasing to God. It should be noted that there is a period of almost sixty years of silence between [6:22](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ezra+6%3A22&version=NIVUK) and 7:1.

**The book**

The book of Ezra is part of a continuous story which runs from the beginning of 1 Chronicles to the end of Nehemiah.

Note:  
**1)** Ezra probably did not write the book himself although the second half draws on his diaries.  
**2)** There are sometimes difficulties in working out the various dates. The story of the opposition under Artaxerxes ([4:7–24](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ezra+4%3A7%E2%80%9324&version=NIVUK)) refers to a much later period than anything else in the first part of the book.  
**3)** Ezra is not just a historical record. The author uses history to teach us how God deals with his people. Those lessons are still relevant.

**Ezra**

Ezra was a scholar who became Secretary of State for Jewish affairs under Artaxerxes. His life which must have been very impressive at the court is marked by three characteristics: he was devoted to the study of the Scripture ([7:10](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ezra+7%3A10&version=NIVUK)); he displayed a daring trust in God ([8:21–23](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ezra+8%3A21%E2%80%9323&version=NIVUK)) and he humbly showed solidarity with his people ([9:6–15](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ezra+9%3A6%E2%80%9315&version=NIVUK)).

# Today in the Word – 8/5/19

# Family Disciples

**Read:** [**Mark 3:20-35**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+3%3a20-35)

### Jesus Accused by His Family and by Teachers of the Law

20Then Jesus entered a house, and again a crowd gathered, so that he and his disciples were not even able to eat. 21When his family[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+3%3a20-35#fen-NIV-24310a)] heard about this, they went to take charge of him, for they said, “He is out of his mind.”

22And the teachers of the law who came down from Jerusalem said, “He is possessed by Beelzebul! By the prince of demons he is driving out demons.”

23So Jesus called them over to him and began to speak to them in parables: “How can Satan drive out Satan? 24If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. 25If a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand. 26And if Satan opposes himself and is divided, he cannot stand; his end has come. 27In fact, no one can enter a strong man’s house without first tying him up. Then he can plunder the strong man’s house. 28Truly I tell you, people can be forgiven all their sins and every slander they utter, 29but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven; they are guilty of an eternal sin.”

30He said this because they were saying, “He has an impure spirit.”

31Then Jesus’ mother and brothers arrived. Standing outside, they sent someone in to call him. 32A crowd was sitting around him, and they told him, “Your mother and brothers are outside looking for you.”

33“Who are my mother and my brothers?” he asked.

34Then he looked at those seated in a circle around him and said, “Here are my mother and my brothers! 35Whoever does God’s will is my brother and sister and mother.”

#### Footnotes:

1. [Mark 3:21](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+3%3a20-35#en-NIV-24310) Or his associates

Society has little place for those deemed to be insane. The history of America’s mental institutions—“insane asylums,” as they used to be called— gives a small glimpse into the handling of those who have lost their abilities to reason soundly. John Hinkley Jr. was sentenced to an asylum for his attempt to assassinate President Ronald Reagan and spent 36 years in a mental institution.

Whoever does God’s will is my brother and sister and mother. Mark 3:35

So it is no small thing when Jesus’ family accused him of being “out of his mind” (v. 21). They believed the schedule He was keeping, which even prevented Him and His disciples from eating, was far too taxing. Eighteenth century English Baptist pastor and scholar, John Gill, says that Jesus’ family, in what they perceived as an act of kindness, wanted to take Him home and confine him as a madman! Some accused Jesus of being insane while others declared Him demonic.

The teachers of the Law said, “He is possessed by Beelzebub” (v. 22). They attributed the casting out of demons to the ruler of demons. Jesus responded to these accusations and recognized that acknowledging the true origin of His works is a matter of eternal importance. It distinguished true family members of Jesus from those who would be eternally condemned as blasphemous.

Jesus explained that He could not be demonic, for a kingdom cannot fight against itself and be victorious. With such a serious accusation, the teachers of the Law were ascribing the works of the Holy Spirit to Satan. Jesus gave immediate judgment to the teachers of the Law, members of the only generation who could accuse Jesus directly, but the force of His warning still applies today. It is important to understand that Jesus serves in the power of God. We need God’s power too, if we are to do His will.

### Apply the Word

Few understand the pain of loving someone with a brain injury or debilitating mental illness. Few are sensitive to the struggles faced daily by spouses, parents, children, siblings, and caregivers. One way to live out the truth of being a part of God’s family is to be a respite giver. Ask an affected family at church how you might serve them.

### Pray with Us

Please add the rest of the Human Resources team to your prayer list: Vecia Ricks, Mia Gale, Joseph Bolz, Karla Olson, and Darric Obinger. Ask God to bless them for the help and guidance they provide for MBI’s faculty and staff.

## BY Eric C. Redmond

# Our Daily Bread – 8/5/19

# Loaves and Fishes

**Read:** [**Matthew 14:13–21**](https://www.odb.org/2019/08/05/loaves-and-fishes)

### Jesus Feeds the Five Thousand

13When Jesus heard what had happened, he withdrew by boat privately to a solitary place. Hearing of this, the crowds followed him on foot from the towns. 14When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them and healed their sick.

15As evening approached, the disciples came to him and said, “This is a remote place, and it’s already getting late. Send the crowds away, so they can go to the villages and buy themselves some food.”

16Jesus replied, “They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat.”

17“We have here only five loaves of bread and two fish,” they answered.

18“Bring them here to me,” he said. 19And he directed the people to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the people. 20They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over. 21The number of those who ate was about five thousand men, besides women and children.

Jesus replied, “They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat.” [Matthew 14:16](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+14%3A16)

A young boy came home from church and announced with great excitement that the lesson had been about a boy who “loafed and fished all day.” He, of course, was thinking of the little boy who offered his loaves and fish to Jesus.

Jesus had been teaching the crowds all day, and the disciples suggested He send them into the village to buy bread. Jesus replied, “You give them something to eat” (Matthew 14:16). The disciples were perplexed for there were more than 5,000 to be fed!

You may know the rest of the story: a boy gave his lunch—five small loaves of bread and two fish—and with it Jesus fed the crowd (vv. 13–21). One school of thought contends that the boy’s generosity simply moved others in the crowd to share their lunches, but Matthew clearly intends us to understand that this was a miracle, and the story appears in all four gospels.

What can we learn? Family, neighbors, friends, colleagues, and others stand around us in varying degrees of need. Should we send them away to those who are more capable than we are? Certainly, some people’s needs exceed our ability to help them, but not always. Whatever you have—a hug, a kind word, a listening ear, a brief prayer, some wisdom you’ve gathered—give it to Jesus and see what He can do.

By [David H. Roper](https://odb.org/author/davidhroper/)

#### Reflect & Pray

What’s one need of another person that you may be able to meet? What can you give to Jesus to be used to bless others?

Jesus, give us eyes to see the ways we can care for others. Lead us and use us.

#### Insight

Christ’s feeding of a multitude with the loaves and fishes is a miracle in which the Creator works beyond His creation. It’s the only miracle of Jesus (aside from His resurrection) that’s recorded in all four gospels (Matthew 14:13–21; Mark 6:33–44; Luke 9:12–17; John 6:1–14). While each gospel writer includes distinct details, John’s account focuses on two disciples—Andrew and Philip—that rarely appear in Matthew, Mark, and Luke (apart from the listing of disciples’ names). In John’s version, Jesus actually tests Philip by asking him how to provide food for the multitude (v. 5). Andrew is singled out as the one who offers a solution—albeit a radically insufficient one—by bringing to Jesus a boy with his lunch (vv. 8–9). What all four gospels are presenting, however, is that the small amount available was more than enough when placed in Christ’s hands.

# God Calling – 8/5/19

# Hour Of Need

Lord, come to us and heal us.

I am your Healer, your Joy, your Lord. You bid Me, your Lord, come. Did you not know that I am here? With noiseless footfall I draw near to you.

Your hour of need is the moment of My Coming.

Could you know My Love, could you measure My Longing to help, you would know that I need no agonized pleading.

Your need is My Call.

Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved: for thou art my praise.  Jeremiah 17:14

Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit.  Ephesians 5:18