# My Utmost for His Highest – 8/6/18

# The Cross in Prayer



In that day you will ask in My name… —[John 16:26](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=John+16%3A26)

We too often think of the Cross of Christ as something we have to get through, yet we get through for the purpose of getting into it. The Cross represents only one thing for us— complete, entire, absolute identification with the Lord Jesus Christ— and there is nothing in which this identification is more real to us than in prayer.

“Your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him” ([Matthew 6:8](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+6:8)). Then why should we ask? The point of prayer is not to get answers from God, but to have perfect and complete oneness with Him. If we pray only because we want answers, we will become irritated and angry with God. We receive an answer every time we pray, but it does not always come in the way we expect, and our spiritual irritation shows our refusal to identify ourselves truly with our Lord in prayer. We are not here to prove that God answers prayer, but to be living trophies of God’s grace.

“…I do not say to you that I shall pray the Father for you; for the Father Himself loves you…” ([John 16:26-27](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+16:26-27)). Have you reached such a level of intimacy with God that the only thing that can account for your prayer life is that it has become one with the prayer life of Jesus Christ? Has our Lord exchanged your life with His vital life? If so, then “in that day” you will be so closely identified with Jesus that there will be no distinction.

When prayer seems to be unanswered, beware of trying to place the blame on someone else. That is always a trap of Satan. When you seem to have no answer, there is always a reason— God uses these times to give you deep personal instruction, and it is not for anyone else but you.

**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

# CCEL – 8/6/18

**Whom the Lord loveth he correcteth.**—[PROV. 3:12.](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Prov.3.html" \l "Prov.3.12)

See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no god with me: I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal: neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand.—I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.—My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord.

I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her.—As a man chasteneth his son, so the Lord thy God chasteneth thee.—Now no chastening for the present, seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.—Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time.

I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me.

[Deut. 32:39](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Deut.32.html" \l "Deut.32.39). -[Jer. 29:11](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Jer.29.html" \l "Jer.29.11). -[Isa. 55:8](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Isa.55.html" \l "Isa.55.8).[Hos. 2:14](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Hos.2.html" \l "Hos.2.14). -[Deut. 8:5](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Deut.8.html" \l "Deut.8.5). -[Heb. 12:11](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Heb.12.html" \l "Heb.12.11). -[I Pet. 5:6](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iPet.5.html" \l "iPet.5.6).[Psa. 119:75](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.119.html" \l "Ps.119.75).

“Watchman, what of the night?” [Isaiah 21:11](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Isa.21.html" \l "Isa.21.11)

What enemies are abroad? Errors are a numerous horde, and new ones appear every hour: against what heresy am I to be on my guard? Sins creep from their lurking places when the darkness reigns; I must myself mount the watch-tower, and watch unto prayer. Our heavenly Protector foresees all the attacks which are about to be made upon us, and when as yet the evil designed us is but in the desire of Satan, he prays for us that our faith fail not, when we are sifted as wheat. Continue O gracious Watchman, to forewarn us of our foes, and for Zion’s sake hold not thy peace.

“Watchman, what of the night?” What weather is coming for the Church? Are the clouds lowering, or is it all clear and fair overhead? We must care for the Church of God with anxious love; and now that Popery and infidelity are both threatening, let us observe the signs of the times and prepare for conflict.

“Watchman, what of the night?” What stars are visible? What precious promises suit our present case? You sound the alarm, give us the consolation also. Christ, the polestar, is ever fixed in his place, and all the stars are secure in the right hand of their Lord.

But watchman, when comes the morning? The Bridegroom tarries. Are there no signs of his coming forth as the Sun of Righteousness? Has not the morning star arisen as the pledge of day? When will the day dawn, and the shadows flee away? O Jesus, if thou come not in person to thy waiting Church this day, yet come in Spirit to my sighing heart, and make it sing for joy.

“Now all the earth is bright and glad

With the fresh morn;

But all my heart is cold, and dark and sad:

Sun of the soul, let me behold thy dawn!

Come, Jesus, Lord,

O quickly come, according to thy word.”

# Word Live – 8/6/18

# First things first

## Prepare

How is your heart towards God? Take a few moments to give it a check-up. Is it soft, hardened, broken, aching, distracted, full? Remember God has a pure, burning love and he is the master heart-surgeon.



## Bible passage: Ezra 2:68–3:13

68When they arrived at the house of the Lord in Jerusalem, some of the heads of the families gave freewill offerings toward the rebuilding of the house of God on its site. 69According to their ability they gave to the treasury for this work 61,000 darics of gold, 5,000 minas of silver and 100 priestly garments.

70The priests, the Levites, the musicians, the gatekeepers and the temple servants settled in their own towns, along with some of the other people, and the rest of the Israelites settled in their towns.

### Rebuilding the Altar

3 When the seventh month came and the Israelites had settled in their towns, the people assembled together as one in Jerusalem. 2Then Joshua son of Jozadak and his fellow priests and Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel and his associates began to build the altar of the God of Israel to sacrifice burnt offerings on it, in accordance with what is written in the Law of Moses the man of God. 3Despite their fear of the peoples around them, they built the altar on its foundation and sacrificed burnt offerings on it to the Lord, both the morning and evening sacrifices. 4Then in accordance with what is written, they celebrated the Festival of Tabernacles with the required number of burnt offerings prescribed for each day. 5After that, they presented the regular burnt offerings, the New Moon sacrifices and the sacrifices for all the appointed sacred festivals of the Lord, as well as those brought as freewill offerings to the Lord. 6On the first day of the seventh month they began to offer burnt offerings to the Lord, though the foundation of the Lord’s temple had not yet been laid.

### Rebuilding the Temple

7Then they gave money to the masons and carpenters, and gave food and drink and olive oil to the people of Sidon and Tyre, so that they would bring cedar logs by sea from Lebanon to Joppa, as authorized by Cyrus king of Persia.

8In the second month of the second year after their arrival at the house of God in Jerusalem, Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, Joshua son of Jozadak and the rest of the people (the priests and the Levites and all who had returned from the captivity to Jerusalem) began the work. They appointed Levites twenty years old and older to supervise the building of the house of the Lord. 9Joshua and his sons and brothers and Kadmiel and his sons (descendants of Hodaviah) and the sons of Henadad and their sons and brothers—all Levites—joined together in supervising those working on the house of God.

10When the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the Lord, the priests in their vestments and with trumpets, and the Levites (the sons of Asaph) with cymbals, took their places to praise the Lord, as prescribed by David king of Israel. 11With praise and thanksgiving they sang to the Lord:

“He is good;  
    his love toward Israel endures forever.”

And all the people gave a great shout of praise to the Lord, because the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid. 12But many of the older priests and Levites and family heads, who had seen the former temple, wept aloud when they saw the foundation of this temple being laid, while many others shouted for joy. 13No one could distinguish the sound of the shouts of joy from the sound of weeping, because the people made so much noise. And the sound was heard far away.

## Explore

**Open invitation**

King Cyrus’ declaration was an open invitation to return to Jerusalem, specifically to rebuild the temple. Sadly, those ‘whose heart God had moved’ (1:5) were in the minority.

**Place of worship**

Those who did go, however, were highly motivated to achieve their mission of temple rebuilding and had an implicit grasp of the ultimate goal of the project. In fact, before they had even begun to dig the new foundations, they built an altar on the building site and began to carry out the unbuilt-temple’s purpose as a place of worship and sacrifice.

**Living sacrifice**

Life for most of us is busy. We have long lists of Very Important Tasks to accomplish before lunch and if we aren’t careful we can forget that our primary purpose is worship. We are individually and together a temple of the Holy Spirit – people filled with the presence of a holy God who deserves the living sacrifice of our lives.

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

## Respond

Meditate on [Romans 12:1](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+12%3A1&version=NIV) – ‘I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God –   
this is your true and proper worship.’

## Deeper Bible study

With King Cyrus’ assistance, a remnant of the Jews exiled in Babylon return to Judah, led by Sheshbazzar, Zerubbabel and Joshua, although most remained scattered across the empire (see the book of Esther). Their primary task is to rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem, destroyed by Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar nearly 50 years previously. Sinful rebellion against God caused their exile. They are now being given a fresh start and know they must not repeat the sins of the past.

With this in mind, the first thing they do is build an altar. This is so appropriate, because in so doing, they acknowledge that their renewed relationship with the Lord must be founded on obedience to his Word through the offering of sacrifices for the forgiveness of sins and the maintenance of fellowship with him. Those offerings prefigure the sacrifice of the Lamb of God, which does away with all previous sacrifices and alone enables us to be reconciled with our Creator and walk in communion with him. There is no other way to come to (and return to) God except through the finished work of Jesus Christ.

Only after rebuilding the altar do the Jews begin to lay the foundation of the new Temple. On that day of great celebration for most, many of the older among them weep because they remember the glorious splendour of the former Temple. It is legitimate to remember the good old days when they help us trust God for his help to face present challenges. Yet, if we dwell in the past and lament that things are no longer as they used to be, our moaning can pour cold water on the enthusiasm of those who see the challenges not as obstacles but as opportunities. Is anything too hard for the Lord?

What do you need to ‘lay on the altar’ to experience the fullness of God’s blessing and perfect rest for your soul?

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

# Today in the Word – 8/6/18

# Good Growing Soil

**Read:** [**Mark 4:1-20**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+4%3a1-20)

### The Parable of the Sower

4 Again Jesus began to teach by the lake. The crowd that gathered around him was so large that he got into a boat and sat in it out on the lake, while all the people were along the shore at the water’s edge. 2He taught them many things by parables, and in his teaching said: 3“Listen! A farmer went out to sow his seed. 4As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. 5Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. 6But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. 7Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants, so that they did not bear grain. 8Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up, grew and produced a crop, some multiplying thirty, some sixty, some a hundred times.”

9Then Jesus said, “Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear.”

10When he was alone, the Twelve and the others around him asked him about the parables. 11He told them, “The secret of the kingdom of God has been given to you. But to those on the outside everything is said in parables 12so that,

“‘they may be ever seeing but never perceiving,  
    and ever hearing but never understanding;  
otherwise they might turn and be forgiven!’[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+4%3a1-20#fen-NIV-24336a)]”

13Then Jesus said to them, “Don’t you understand this parable? How then will you understand any parable? 14The farmer sows the word. 15Some people are like seed along the path, where the word is sown. As soon as they hear it, Satan comes and takes away the word that was sown in them. 16Others, like seed sown on rocky places, hear the word and at once receive it with joy. 17But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away. 18Still others, like seed sown among thorns, hear the word; 19but the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things come in and choke the word, making it unfruitful. 20Others, like seed sown on good soil, hear the word, accept it, and produce a crop—some thirty, some sixty, some a hundred times what was sown.”

#### Footnotes:

1. [Mark 4:12](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+4%3a1-20#en-NIV-24336) Isaiah 6:9,10

How casually we listen to the Word of God! If we don’t like a biblical teaching on spiritual gifts, remarriage, submission, reconciliation, justice, election, or the like, we reject the teaching as false, insensitive, not applicable to our situation, or only half of what the Word of God is saying.

Others, like seed sown on good soil, hear the word, accept it, and produce a crop—some thirty, some sixty, some a hundred times what was sown. Mark 4:20

In Jesus’ time, everyone was interested in what He had to say, so much so that Jesus had to step into a boat in order to teach with enough spatial clearance for everyone to hear him (v. 1). But Jesus realized that having a crowd of followers did not mean He had a crowd of true listeners. Not everyone was ready to fully understand or to follow faithfully.

The Parable of the Sower focuses on the different soils rather than the seed or the sower. Notice that the seed and sower remain the same in each scenario. Jesus distinguishes the purposes of the parables in verse 11. “The secret of the kingdom of God has been given to you.” Some simply do not have the soil of a good heart necessary to receive and understand the word of God.

This parable is instructive for us today: We have an enemy who seeks to snatch away what the Word of God will produce in our lives almost as soon as the Word is heard! Persecution has the potential to lead us to fall away from our initial, joyous reception of the Word of God (v. 17).

Daily cares and concerns and the deceitful promises of money and material goods fight against the Word and limit the production of Christlikeness in us. Only a heart that receives the Word of God in meekness will yield the fruitful, maturing Christian life the Lord intends and desires for each of us, producing a crop of “some thirty, some sixty, some a hundred times what was sown” (v. 20).

### Apply the Word

Prepare your heart even today to receive the preached Word of God. If your pastor is preaching through a book of the Bible, read the coming passage every day this week, asking Jesus to speak to you and your church. Or, reread daily the passage you heard preached last Sunday, asking the Lord to impress His truth on your heart.

### Pray with Us

Join us in prayer for professors in the Bible department: Andrew Schmutzer, Benjamin Wilson, Eric Redmond, and Ernest Gray. May the Lord strengthen them as they train Christian leaders of tomorrow, with their love, wisdom, and dedication to teaching.

## BY Eric C. Redmond

# Our Daily Bread – 8/6/18

# Will You Come Back?

[Hosea 3:1–5](https://www.odb.org/2019/08/06/will-you-come-back)

### Hosea’s Reconciliation With His Wife

3 The Lord said to me, “Go, show your love to your wife again, though she is loved by another man and is an adulteress. Love her as the Lord loves the Israelites, though they turn to other gods and love the sacred raisin cakes.”

2So I bought her for fifteen shekels[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Hosea+3%3A1%E2%80%935#fen-NIV-22131a)] of silver and about a homer and a lethek[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Hosea+3%3A1%E2%80%935#fen-NIV-22131b)] of barley. 3Then I told her, “You are to live with me many days; you must not be a prostitute or be intimate with any man, and I will behave the same way toward you.”

4For the Israelites will live many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or sacred stones, without ephod or household gods. 5Afterward the Israelites will return and seek the Lord their God and David their king. They will come trembling to the Lord and to his blessings in the last days.

#### Footnotes:

1. [Hosea 3:2](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Hosea+3%3A1%E2%80%935#en-NIV-22131) That is, about 6 ounces or about 170 grams
2. [Hosea 3:2](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Hosea+3%3A1%E2%80%935#en-NIV-22131) A homer and a lethek possibly weighed about 430 pounds or about 195 kilograms.

Love [your wife] as the Lord loves the Israelites, though they turn to other gods. [Hosea 3:1](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Hosea+3%3A1)

Ron and Nancy’s marriage was deteriorating rapidly. She had an affair, but after some time she admitted her sin to God. She knew what He wanted her to do, but it was difficult. She shared the truth with Ron. Instead of asking for a divorce, Ron chose to give Nancy a chance to win his trust back by showing that she’d changed. In a miraculous way God restored their marriage.

Ron’s actions are a picture of God’s love and forgiveness shown toward sinners like you and me. The prophet Hosea understood this well. He was commanded by God to marry an unfaithful woman as a way to show Israel their status of unfaithfulness before Him (Hosea 1). If that wasn’t heartbreaking enough, when Hosea’s wife left him, God told him to ask her to come back. He said, “Show your love to your wife again, though she is loved by another man and is an adulteress” (3:1). After all their disobedience, God longed for a close relationship with His people. Just as Hosea loved his unfaithful wife, pursued her, and sacrificed for her, so God loved His people. His righteous anger and jealousy were motivated by His great love.

This same God longs for us today to be near Him. As we come to Him in faith, we can trust that in Him we will find complete fulfillment.

By [Estera Pirosca Escobar](https://odb.org/author/esteraescobar/)

#### Reflect & Pray

How will you respond to God’s love today? Is there someone you can share His great love with?

God in heaven, how great and amazing is Your love, even for a sinner like me! For all the wrong I’ve done, I don’t deserve Your love. Thank You for forgiving me, for buying me back, for restoring our relationship.

#### Insight

Hosea 14:1 captures the theme of the book of Hosea, “Return, Israel, to the Lord your God.” This verse includes a key word of the book—return. Again and again in Hosea we see God, who is faithful and true to His covenant, calling unfaithful Israel to return to Him. The Hebrew word translated “return” (šûb, pronounced shoob) is a common Old Testament term. The verb form appears more than 1,050 times (the twelfth most frequently used verb in the Old Testament), and eighteen times in Hosea. The most theologically rich usages of it concern Israel’s turning to the Lord in repentance, as we see in Hosea 3:5: “Afterward the Israelites will return and seek the Lord their God and David their king.”

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

# God Calling – 8/6/18

# Dwell Apart

Rest more with Me. If I, the Son of God, needed those times of quiet communion with My Father, away, alone, from noise, from activity -- then surely you need them too.

Refilling with the Spirit is a need. That dwelling apart, that shutting yourself away in the very secret place of your being -- away alone with Me.

From these times you come forth in Power to bless and heal.

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

# My Utmost for His Highest – 8/7/18

# Prayer in the Father’s House



…they found Him in the temple….And He said to them, "…Did you not know that I must be about My Father’s business?" —[Luke 2:46, 49](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=Luke+2%3A46%2C+49)

Our Lord’s childhood was not immaturity waiting to grow into manhood— His childhood is an eternal fact. Am I a holy, innocent child of God as a result of my identification with my Lord and Savior? Do I look at my life as being in my Father’s house? Is the Son of God living in His Father’s house within me?

The only abiding reality is God Himself, and His order comes to me moment by moment. Am I continually in touch with the reality of God, or do I pray only when things have gone wrong— when there is some disturbance in my life? I must learn to identify myself closely with my Lord in ways of holy fellowship and oneness that some of us have not yet even begun to learn. “…I must be about My Father’s business”— and I must learn to live every moment of my life in my Father’s house.

Think about your own circumstances. Are you so closely identified with the Lord’s life that you are simply a child of God, continually talking to Him and realizing that everything comes from His hands? Is the eternal Child in you living in His Father’s house? Is the grace of His ministering life being worked out through you in your home, your business, and in your circle of friends? Have you been wondering why you are going through certain circumstances? In fact, it is not that you have to go through them. It is because of your relationship with the Son of God who comes, through the providential will of His Father, into your life. You must allow Him to have His way with you, staying in perfect oneness with Him.

The life of your Lord is to become your vital, simple life, and the way He worked and lived among people while here on earth must be the way He works and lives in you.

**Wisdom From Oswald Chambers**

The life of Abraham is an illustration of two things: of unreserved surrender to God, and of God’s complete possession of a child of His for His own highest end. Not Knowing Whither, 901 R

# CCEL – 8/7/18

**The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name.**—[JOHN 14:26.](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.John.14.html" \l "John.14.26)

If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.—If ye . . . being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?—Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.—Ye have not, because ye ask not.

When . . . the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you.

They rebelled, and vexed his Holy Spirit: therefore he was turned to be their enemy, and He fought against them.

[John 4:10](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.John.4.html" \l "John.4.10). -[Luke 11:13](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Luke.11.html" \l "Luke.11.13). -[John 16:23,24](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.John.16.html" \l "John.16.23). -[Jas. 4:2](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Jas.4.html" \l "Jas.4.2).[John 16:13,14](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.John.16.html" \l "John.16.13).[Isa. 63:10](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Isa.63.html" \l "Isa.63.10).

“The upright love thee” [Song of Solomon 1:4](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Song.1.html" \l "Song.1.4)

Believers love Jesus with a deeper affection than they dare to give to any other being. They would sooner lose father and mother than part with Christ. They hold all earthly comforts with a loose hand, but they carry him fast locked in their bosoms. They voluntarily deny themselves for his sake, but they are not to be driven to deny him. It is scant love which the fire of persecution can dry up; the true believer’s love is a deeper stream than this. Men have laboured to divide the faithful from their Master, but their attempts have been fruitless in every age. Neither crowns of honour, nor frowns of anger, have untied this more than Gordian knot. This is no every-day attachment which the world’s power may at length dissolve. Neither man nor devil have found a key which opens this lock. Never has the craft of Satan been more at fault than when he has exercised it in seeking to rend in sunder this union of two divinely welded hearts. It is written, and nothing can blot out the sentence, “The upright love thee.” The intensity of the love of the upright, however, is not so much to be judged by what it appears as by what the upright long for. It is our daily lament that we cannot love enough. Would that our hearts were capable of holding more, and reaching further. Like Samuel Rutherford, we sigh and cry, “Oh, for as much love as would go round about the earth, and over heaven—yea, the heaven of heavens, and ten thousand worlds—that I might let all out upon fair, fair, only fair Christ.” Alas! our longest reach is but a span of love, and our affection is but as a drop of a bucket compared with his deserts. Measure our love by our intentions, and it is high indeed; 'tis thus, we trust, our Lord doth judge of it. Oh, that we could give all the love in all hearts in one great mass, a gathering together of all loves to him who is altogether lovely!

# Word Live – 8/7/18

# Frustration

## Prepare

‘Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty.I will say of the Lord, “He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust”’ ([Psalm 91:1,2](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+91%3A1%2C2&version=NIV)).



## Bible passage: Ezra 4:1–5,24

### Opposition to the Rebuilding

4 When the enemies of Judah and Benjamin heard that the exiles were building a temple for the Lord, the God of Israel, 2they came to Zerubbabel and to the heads of the families and said, “Let us help you build because, like you, we seek your God and have been sacrificing to him since the time of Esarhaddon king of Assyria, who brought us here.”

3But Zerubbabel, Joshua and the rest of the heads of the families of Israel answered, “You have no part with us in building a temple to our God. We alone will build it for the Lord, the God of Israel, as King Cyrus, the king of Persia, commanded us.”

4Then the peoples around them set out to discourage the people of Judah and make them afraid to go on building. 5They bribed officials to work against them and frustrate their plans during the entire reign of Cyrus king of Persia and down to the reign of Darius king of Persia.

24Thus the work on the house of God in Jerusalem came to a standstill until the second year of the reign of Darius king of Persia.

## Explore

**Refusing an offer of help**

The rebuilding of the Temple was God-ordained, it had the blessing of the King of the Persian empire, it had enough workers and enough resources to take it to completion and it must have seemed that nothing could halt the momentum. And yet refusing what seems to have been a well-intentioned offer of help (albeit from erstwhile enemies) caused years of disruption and set back.

**Frustration and incredulity**

You can imagine the stress, frustration and incredulity that must have been expressed to God: ‘Lord, this whole thing is for you. You parted seas, fed our people with manna from the sky, toppled a walled city at the sound of trumpets. Can’t you deal with a few corrupt officials and defend us from false accusations?’

**No easy explanations**

Frustration and opposition are unpleasant facts of life. As children, if my siblings or I complained about unfairness, my parents would say, ‘Life’s not fair!’ A harsh lesson, but helpful in the long run. There are no easy explanations for why we come up against road blocks even when we are devotedly focused on working for God. All we can do is determine that in our anger we will not sin ([Ephesians 4:26](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ephesians+4%3A26&version=NIV)).

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

## Respond

Who or what is causing you frustration at the moment? How are you handling your emotions? What has been your response? Ask God to give you patience and help you to forgive.

## Deeper Bible study

When the Temple foundation was laid, the rejoicing of those eager to rebuild mixed with the weeping of those nostalgic for the days of the previous Temple, producing a strange cacophony that ‘was heard far away’ ([Ezra 3:13](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ezra+3%3A13&version=NIV)). Among the hearers were the co-inhabitants of Palestine of mixed heritage – people born as the result of intermarriage between foreigners planted in the land after the Assyrian conquest of Israel and Israelites left behind by the invader. They were the ancestors of the New Testament Samaritans and practised a syncretistic system of religion, intermingling Israelite and pagan beliefs.

The returning exiles’ refusal to let these people of mixed origin join them in rebuilding the Temple seems rather narrow-minded and exclusionary in our modern pluralistic world. However, the fact that the Jews’ neighbours then schemed deliberately and successfully (v 24) to halt the reconstruction project demonstrates that they had no genuine desire to worship the Lord in the way he had prescribed. Their plan was clearly to undermine the re-establishment of Israelite religion in its purest, God-ordained form. We could describe their attitude by using a corruption of a well-known idiom – ‘if you can’t join ’em, beat ’em!’

The norm, in the free world at least, is that all are equal and should strive for tolerance. Inclusivity and political correctness are twin buzzwords. There are undoubtedly positive benefits from insistence upon these things, but they face Christians with a dilemma when the authority of the Bible is called into question. In desiring to reach out to their non-Christian contemporaries, Christ’s followers do not want to appear outlandishly different, but, like the Jews in Zerubbabel’s day, let us be careful that we do not become compromised by worldliness and syncretism! Our faith and worship stand on Scripture alone!

What a challenge it is to be culturally sensitive while remaining faithful to Scripture! Lord, please help us to rise to this challenge!

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

# Today in the Word – 8/7/18

# The Hidden Kingdom

**Read:** [**Mark 4:21-41**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+4%3a21-41)

### A Lamp on a Stand

21He said to them, “Do you bring in a lamp to put it under a bowl or a bed? Instead, don’t you put it on its stand? 22For whatever is hidden is meant to be disclosed, and whatever is concealed is meant to be brought out into the open. 23If anyone has ears to hear, let them hear.”

24“Consider carefully what you hear,” he continued. “With the measure you use, it will be measured to you—and even more. 25Whoever has will be given more; whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them.”

### The Parable of the Growing Seed

26He also said, “This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man scatters seed on the ground. 27Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how. 28All by itself the soil produces grain—first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head. 29As soon as the grain is ripe, he puts the sickle to it, because the harvest has come.”

### The Parable of the Mustard Seed

30Again he said, “What shall we say the kingdom of God is like, or what parable shall we use to describe it? 31It is like a mustard seed, which is the smallest of all seeds on earth. 32Yet when planted, it grows and becomes the largest of all garden plants, with such big branches that the birds can perch in its shade.”

33With many similar parables Jesus spoke the word to them, as much as they could understand. 34He did not say anything to them without using a parable. But when he was alone with his own disciples, he explained everything.

### Jesus Calms the Storm

35That day when evening came, he said to his disciples, “Let us go over to the other side.” 36Leaving the crowd behind, they took him along, just as he was, in the boat. There were also other boats with him. 37A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped. 38Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him and said to him, “Teacher, don’t you care if we drown?”

39He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, “Quiet! Be still!” Then the wind died down and it was completely calm.

40He said to his disciples, “Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?”

41They were terrified and asked each other, “Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!”

In the classic fairytale Jack and the Beanstalk, a poor boy named Jack acquires magic beans in exchange for his family’s cow. His mother, upset by the trade, throws down the bean in anger. But that night, a great beanstalk grows, enabling Jack to climb it where he finds and steals golden coins, enough to provide for his family’s needs.

Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith? Mark 4:40

Those small beans, that seemed ordinary at first glance, held amazing potential. In today’s reading, seeds are used to illustrate the kingdom of God. For now, the kingdom of God is hidden from our full sight and understanding. We are able to see glimpses of it in the works of believers, but the final and full expression is invisible to us.

In the second half of chapter 4, Mark records Jesus’ parables focused on the kingdom of God. The kingdom is compared to an ordinary seed, planted in the ground (v. 26). In a mysterious transformation, that seed sprouts and grows “all by itself” (v. 28). Jesus also compared the kingdom to a mustard seed, which when planted, became the “largest of all garden plants” (v. 32). Scripture tells us that while the parables were confusing to most of those who listened, Jesus privately explained their meaning to His disciples.

If the disciples had any concern over the nature of the kingdom, their fears quickly were laid to rest. Jesus, asleep in their boat, suddenly and dramatically revealed Himself as the awesome God of power and might (vv. 39–41). In that moment when Jesus calmed the storm, they were shown what the kingdom held for them. God’s promises of righteousness, peace, and joy are certain (see Rom. 14:17). One day we’ll experience God’s kingdom in its fullness, and it will far outstrip the seed of its currently unseen presence.

### Apply the Word

When Scripture says, “What no eye has seen, what no ear has heard, and what no human mind has conceived” about the things God has prepared for those who love Him, it promises us that we will not be disappointed by our future hope in any way! Today we understand the future in part; only at the return of Christ will we understand completely.

### Pray with Us

Please continue to mention in your prayers the Bible department faculty at Moody: John Goodrich, Matthew Monkemeier, Michael Wechsler, Ronald Sauer, and Steven Sanchez. We honor their faithful ministry to the students!

## BY Eric C. Redmond

# Our Daily Bread – 8/7/18

# Back in the Battle

 **Read:** [**2 Samuel 12:26–31**](https://www.odb.org/2019/08/07/back-in-the-battle)

26Meanwhile Joab fought against Rabbah of the Ammonites and captured the royal citadel. 27Joab then sent messengers to David, saying, “I have fought against Rabbah and taken its water supply. 28Now muster the rest of the troops and besiege the city and capture it. Otherwise I will take the city, and it will be named after me.”

29So David mustered the entire army and went to Rabbah, and attacked and captured it. 30David took the crown from their king’s[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Samuel+12%3A26%E2%80%9331#fen-NIV-8317a)] head, and it was placed on his own head. It weighed a talent[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Samuel+12%3A26%E2%80%9331#fen-NIV-8317b)] of gold, and it was set with precious stones. David took a great quantity of plunder from the city 31and brought out the people who were there, consigning them to labor with saws and with iron picks and axes, and he made them work at brickmaking.[[c](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Samuel+12%3A26%E2%80%9331#fen-NIV-8318c)] David did this to all the Ammonite towns. Then he and his entire army returned to Jerusalem.

#### Footnotes:

1. [2 Samuel 12:30](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Samuel+12%3A26%E2%80%9331#en-NIV-8317) Or from Milkom’s (that is, Molek’s)
2. [2 Samuel 12:30](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Samuel+12%3A26%E2%80%9331#en-NIV-8317) That is, about 75 pounds or about 34 kilograms
3. [2 Samuel 12:31](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Samuel+12%3A26%E2%80%9331#en-NIV-8318) The meaning of the Hebrew for this clause is uncertain.

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. [1 John 1:9](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+John+1%3A9)

As a child, she had hurled vicious words at her parents. Little did she know that those words would be her last interaction with them. Now, even after years of counseling, she can’t forgive herself. Guilt and regret paralyze her.

We all live with regrets—some of them quite terrible. But the Bible shows us a way through the guilt. Let’s look at one example.

There’s no sugarcoating what King David did. It was the time “when kings go off to war,” but “David remained in Jerusalem” (2 Samuel 11:1). Away from the battle, he stole another man’s wife and tried to cover it up with murder (vv. 2–5, 14–15). God stopped David’s downward plunge (12:1–13), but the king would live the rest of his life with the knowledge of his sins.

While David was rising from the ashes, his general, Joab, was winning the battle David should have been leading (12:26). Joab challenged David, “Now muster the rest of the troops and besiege the city and capture it” (v. 28). David finally got back to his God-appointed place as the leader of his nation and his army (v. 29).

When we permit our past to crush us, in effect we’re telling God His grace isn’t enough. Regardless of what we’ve done, our Father extends His complete forgiveness to us. We can find, as David did, grace enough to get back in the battle.

By [Tim Gustafson](https://odb.org/author/timgustafson/)

#### Reflect & Pray

What regrets gnaw at your soul? Who in your life might be a safe person to talk to for the reassurance of God’s grace?

Father, may we truly realize Your love defines us.

#### Insight

The book of 2 Samuel appears to portray David’s exploitation of Bathsheba and murder of her husband Uriah as connected to his failures as a king. The account emphasizes David’s guilt and portrays Uriah and Bathsheba as victims of an abuse of power (2 Samuel 12:1–17). In addition, the narrative seems to connect David’s actions to his failure as king to lead his troops. Instead, David remains in the comforts of Jerusalem and sends Joab (11:1–2)—a practice Joab appears strongly critical of in 12:27–28. It’s only after finding out that Bathsheba was the wife of Uriah (11:3–4)—a member of the king's trusted inner circle (23:24, 39)—that David sent for her, perhaps knowing that with her husband in battle she was defenseless. The king had been called to care for God’s people (5:12), but instead he used his power to abuse and betray.

# God Calling – 8/7/18

# All is Well

Our, Lord, bless us and keep us, we beseech Thee.

My Keeping Power is never at fault, but only your realization of it. Not whether I can provide a shelter from the storm, but your failure to be sure of the security of that shelter.

Every fear, every doubt, is a crime against My Love.

Oh! children, trust. Practice daily, many times a day, saying "All is well."

Say it until you believe it, know it.

Oh how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee; which thou has wrought for them that trust in thee.  Psalm 31:19

# My Utmost for His Highest – 8/8/18

# Prayer in the Father’s Honor



…that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God. —[Luke 1:35](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=Luke+1%3A35)

If the Son of God has been born into my human flesh, then am I allowing His holy innocence, simplicity, and oneness with the Father the opportunity to exhibit itself in me? What was true of the Virgin Mary in the history of the Son of God’s birth on earth is true of every saint. God’s Son is born into me through the direct act of God; then I as His child must exercise the right of a child— the right of always being face to face with my Father through prayer. Do I find myself continually saying in amazement to the commonsense part of my life, “Why did you want me to turn here or to go over there? ‘Did you not know that I must be about My Father’s business?’ ” ([Luke 2:49](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+2:49)). Whatever our circumstances may be, that holy, innocent, and eternal Child must be in contact with His Father.

Am I simple enough to identify myself with my Lord in this way? Is He having His wonderful way with me? Is God’s will being fulfilled in that His Son has been formed in me (see [Galatians 4:19](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Galatians+4:19)), or have I carefully pushed Him to one side? Oh, the noisy outcry of today! Why does everyone seem to be crying out so loudly? People today are crying out for the Son of God to be put to death. There is no room here for God’s Son right now— no room for quiet, holy fellowship and oneness with the Father.

Is the Son of God praying in me, bringing honor to the Father, or am I dictating my demands to Him? Is He ministering in me as He did in the time of His manhood here on earth? Is God’s Son in me going through His passion, suffering so that His own purposes might be fulfilled? The more a person knows of the inner life of God’s most mature saints, the more he sees what God’s purpose really is: to “…fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ…” ([Colossians 1:24](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Colossians+1:24)). And when we think of what it takes to “fill up,” there is always something yet to be done.

**Wisdom From Oswald Chambers**

The life of Abraham is an illustration of two things: of unreserved surrender to God, and of God’s complete possession of a child of His for His own highest end.  
Not Knowing Whither

# CCEL – 8/8/18

**The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.**—[PROV. 4:18.](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Prov.4.html" \l "Prov.4.18)

Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.—Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord.

Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.—We all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.—When that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.—For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.—Beloved, now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.

[Phi. 3:12](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Phil.3.html" \l "Phil.3.12). -[Hos. 6:3](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Hos.6.html" \l "Hos.6.3).[Matt. 13:43](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Matt.13.html" \l "Matt.13.43). -[II Cor. 3:18](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iiCor.3.html" \l "iiCor.3.18). -[I Cor. 13:10](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iCor.13.html" \l "iCor.13.10),[12](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iCor.13.html" \l "iCor.13.12). -[I John. 3:2,3](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iJohn.3.html" \l "iJohn.3.2).

“They weave the spider’s web.” [Isaiah 59:5](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Isa.59.html" \l "Isa.59.5)

See the spider’s web, and behold in it a most suggestive picture of the hypocrite’s religion. It is meant to catch his prey: the spider fattens himself on flies, and the Pharisee has his reward. Foolish persons are easily entrapped by the loud professions of pretenders, and even the more judicious cannot always escape. Philip baptized Simon Magus, whose guileful declaration of faith was so soon exploded by the stern rebuke of Peter. Custom, reputation, praise, advancement, and other flies, are the small game which hypocrites take in their nets. A spider’s web is a marvel of skill: look at it and admire the cunning hunter’s wiles. Is not a deceiver’s religion equally wonderful? How does he make so barefaced a lie appear to be a truth? How can he make his tinsel answer so well the purpose of gold? A spider’s web comes all from the creature’s own bowels. The bee gathers her wax from flowers, the spider sucks no flowers, and yet she spins out her material to any length. Even so hypocrites find their trust and hope within themselves; their anchor was forged on their own anvil, and their cable twisted by their own hands. They lay their own foundation, and hew out the pillars of their own house, disdaining to be debtors to the sovereign grace of God. But a spider’s web is very frail. It is curiously wrought, but not enduringly manufactured. It is no match for the servant’s broom, or the traveller’s staff. The hypocrite needs no battery of Armstrongs to blow his hope to pieces, a mere puff of wind will do it. Hypocritical cobwebs will soon come down when the besom of destruction begins its purifying work. Which reminds us of one more thought, viz., that such cobwebs are not to be endured in the Lord’s house: he will see to it that they and those who spin them shall be destroyed forever. O my soul, be thou resting on something better than a spider’s web. Be the Lord Jesus thine eternal hiding-place.

# Word Live – 8/8/18

# Under authority

## Prepare

‘The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom’ ([Proverbs 9:10](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Proverbs+9%3A10&version=NIV)). Consider the power, the majesty, the glory of God.



## Bible passage: Ezra 5:1–17

### Tattenai’s Letter to Darius

5 Now Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the prophet, a descendant of Iddo, prophesied to the Jews in Judah and Jerusalem in the name of the God of Israel, who was over them. 2Then Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel and Joshua son of Jozadak set to work to rebuild the house of God in Jerusalem. And the prophets of God were with them, supporting them.

3At that time Tattenai, governor of Trans-Euphrates, and Shethar-Bozenai and their associates went to them and asked, “Who authorized you to rebuild this temple and to finish it?” 4They also asked, “What are the names of those who are constructing this building?” 5But the eye of their God was watching over the elders of the Jews, and they were not stopped until a report could go to Darius and his written reply be received.

6This is a copy of the letter that Tattenai, governor of Trans-Euphrates, and Shethar-Bozenai and their associates, the officials of Trans-Euphrates, sent to King Darius. 7The report they sent him read as follows:

To King Darius:

Cordial greetings.

8The king should know that we went to the district of Judah, to the temple of the great God. The people are building it with large stones and placing the timbers in the walls. The work is being carried on with diligence and is making rapid progress under their direction.

9We questioned the elders and asked them, “Who authorized you to rebuild this temple and to finish it?” 10We also asked them their names, so that we could write down the names of their leaders for your information.

11This is the answer they gave us:

“We are the servants of the God of heaven and earth, and we are rebuilding the temple that was built many years ago, one that a great king of Israel built and finished. 12But because our ancestors angered the God of heaven, he gave them into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar the Chaldean, king of Babylon, who destroyed this temple and deported the people to Babylon.

13“However, in the first year of Cyrus king of Babylon, King Cyrus issued a decree to rebuild this house of God. 14He even removed from the temple of Babylon the gold and silver articles of the house of God, which Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the temple in Jerusalem and brought to the temple in Babylon. Then King Cyrus gave them to a man named Sheshbazzar, whom he had appointed governor, 15and he told him, ‘Take these articles and go and deposit them in the temple in Jerusalem. And rebuild the house of God on its site.’

16“So this Sheshbazzar came and laid the foundations of the house of God in Jerusalem. From that day to the present it has been under construction but is not yet finished.”

17Now if it pleases the king, let a search be made in the royal archives of Babylon to see if King Cyrus did in fact issue a decree to rebuild this house of God in Jerusalem. Then let the king send us his decision in this matter.

## Explore

**Ultimate authority**

Sixteen years went by after opposition halted construction and the Jews who had come back to Israel settled into life back home, albeit still under the rule of the Persian kings and their representatives. And then two prophets speak the word of God to the Jews about restarting work: ‘Is it a time for you yourselves to be living in your panelled houses, while this house remains a ruin?’ ([Haggai 1:4](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Haggai+1%3A4&version=NIV)). These prophets were under God ([Ezra 5:1](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ezra+5%3A1&version=NIV)) and so the people got to work, without the necessary bureaucratic green light. They answered to their ultimate authority – the Lord.

**Acts of submission**

Western culture in the 21st century is very uneasy about the whole concept of authority. We conceive of ourselves as autonomous individuals, masters of our own destinies. And yet Christian discipleship involves conscious, deliberate, continuous acts of submission to God, to our church leaders, within our marriages, to the laws of our countries (when they don’t conflict with God’s law). We need to search our hearts and be honest about who we answer to.

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

## Respond

When was the last time you were obedient to authority out of principle at personal cost? Were you consciously choosing this path out of ultimate obedience to God? Pray that the Holy Spirit would teach you about godly submission.

## Deeper Bible study

Opposition from the Jews’ enemies had halted work on rebuilding the Temple. Now the work recommences under the prophetic ministries of Haggai and Zechariah, nearly 20 years later. Their preaching assuaged Jewish fears and inspired fresh courage. Their message rekindled the zeal of the returned exiles’ leaders, reassuring them this was a God-ordained endeavour. However, the regional governor Tattenai’s response threatened to throw a spanner in the works.

Tattenai’s reaction had more to do with national security than with religious persecution. In most countries today, permits are required from local authorities before new building projects can be pursued. This ensures compliance with minimum health and safety standards. Such construction standards did not exist in Tattenai’s day. Rather, his question about the Jewish project’s authorisation came from his need to know that it was not the early signs of a local rebellion against the imperial order he represented. He was doing his duty!

How the Jews deal with this potential setback sets a shining example. They appeal to the empire’s highest authority, King Darius himself, acknowledging God’s involvement in their project, but also citing a previous king’s documented authorisation for and collaboration with the enterprise. The present threat is real, but their polite and non-confrontational approach allows them to firmly state their case while remaining on the right side of the law. As such, their conduct was already complying with a principle that would be established much later for Christians in the New Testament – submission to the ruling authorities (see [Mark 12:13–17; Rom 13:1–7; 1 Pet 2:13–17](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+12%3A13%E2%80%9317%3B+Rom+13%3A1%E2%80%937%3B+1+Pet+2%3A13%E2%80%9317&version=NIV)). This does not mean we must always approve our government’s actions, but it does urge us to be careful how we speak of and respond to our rulers. And let us always take courage in this – God is sovereign over them all!

Do what ‘is good and pleases God our Saviour’ ([1 Tim 2:3](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Tim+2%3A3&version=NIV)) by praying now in line with the exhortation given in [1 Timothy 2:1,2](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Timothy+2%3A1%2C2&version=NIV)!

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

## Background: Darius the Mede

**Who was Darius?**

Darius the Mede ([Daniel 5:31](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Daniel%205:31&version=TNIV)) is otherwise unknown to history. There have therefore been various suggestions as to his identity. These include:  
  
● He is a literary construct, not a historical person.  
● Darius was another name for the general who captured Babylon, variously named Ugbaru, Gubaru or Gobyras.  
● Darius is another name for Cyrus the Persian. This is supported by a possible translation of Daniel 6:28, where the Hebrew word translated ‘and’ could also be translated ‘that is’ (a waw explicativum): ‘… Darius, that is, the reign of Cyrus …’  
  
**Arguments that Darius = Cyrus**

● There are similar examples of the waw explicativum in [1 Chronicles 5:26](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Chronicles%205:26&version=TNIV) and [Daniel 4:13](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Daniel%204:13&version=TNIV).  
● Since Cyrus took over the Median Empire and had a Median mother (see [Daniel 9:1](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Daniel%209:1&version=TNIV)) he could be called a Mede.  
● We know that Cyrus was about 62 when he took Babylon (see [Daniel 5:31](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Daniel%205:31&version=TNIV)).  
● The Greek historian Xenophon states that that a few months after the capture of Babylon Cyaxeres (whom he equates with the ‘king of the Medes’) gave Cyrus the throne of Media as well as his daughter in marriage.  
● Most major figures in Daniel have two or more designations.  
● It is highly unlikely that the author was unaware of biblical references to Cyrus as the conqueror of Babylon (eg [Isaiah 45:1](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isaiah%2045:1&version=TNIV); [2 Chronicles 36:20–23](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2%20Chronicles%2036:20-23&version=TNIV); [Ezra 1:2–4](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ezra%201:2-4&version=TNIV)).  
  
**Verdict**

There remains a problem, namely that Darius’ father is said to be Ahasuerus ([Daniel 9:1](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Daniel%209:1&version=TNIV)), whereas Cyrus’ father was Cambyses. DJ Wiseman suggested that Ahasuerus was an old Akkadian royal title (see [Esther 1:1](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Esther%201:1&version=TNIV), NIV footnote).  
  
At the end of the day this explanation may be regarded as probable, but not proven.**1**Andrew Clark  
  
**1** I am indebted for the above to Ernest C Lucas, Daniel, AOTC; IVP, 2002, pp134–137

# Today in the Word – 8/8/18

# Tell Your Story

**Read:** [**Mark 5:1-20**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+5%3a1-20)

### Jesus Restores a Demon-Possessed Man

5 They went across the lake to the region of the Gerasenes.[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+5%3a1-20" \l "fen-NIV-24366a" \o "See footnote a)] 2When Jesus got out of the boat, a man with an impure spirit came from the tombs to meet him. 3This man lived in the tombs, and no one could bind him anymore, not even with a chain. 4For he had often been chained hand and foot, but he tore the chains apart and broke the irons on his feet. No one was strong enough to subdue him. 5Night and day among the tombs and in the hills he would cry out and cut himself with stones.

6When he saw Jesus from a distance, he ran and fell on his knees in front of him. 7He shouted at the top of his voice, “What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? In God’s name don’t torture me!” 8For Jesus had said to him, “Come out of this man, you impure spirit!”

9Then Jesus asked him, “What is your name?”

“My name is Legion,” he replied, “for we are many.” 10And he begged Jesus again and again not to send them out of the area.

11A large herd of pigs was feeding on the nearby hillside. 12The demons begged Jesus, “Send us among the pigs; allow us to go into them.” 13He gave them permission, and the impure spirits came out and went into the pigs. The herd, about two thousand in number, rushed down the steep bank into the lake and were drowned.

14Those tending the pigs ran off and reported this in the town and countryside, and the people went out to see what had happened. 15When they came to Jesus, they saw the man who had been possessed by the legion of demons, sitting there, dressed and in his right mind; and they were afraid. 16Those who had seen it told the people what had happened to the demon-possessed man—and told about the pigs as well. 17Then the people began to plead with Jesus to leave their region.

18As Jesus was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon-possessed begged to go with him. 19Jesus did not let him, but said, “Go home to your own people and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you.” 20So the man went away and began to tell in the Decapolis[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+5%3a1-20#fen-NIV-24385b)] how much Jesus had done for him. And all the people were amazed.

#### Footnotes:

1. [Mark 5:1](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+5%3a1-20#en-NIV-24366) Some manuscripts Gadarenes; other manuscripts Gergesenes
2. [Mark 5:20](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+5%3a1-20#en-NIV-24385) That is, the Ten Cities

When something incredible happens to you, who do you tell first? Maybe you rush home to report the good news to your family. Or maybe you pick up the phone to call your best friend. Some of us snap a photo and declare the good news on social media.

Go home to your family and tell them how much the Lord has done for you. Mark 5:19

It’s natural to want to share the good things in our life with those we love. And in today’s passage, we read an incredible story of life transformation, one too amazing to keep quiet for long. When Jesus encountered the Gerasenes demoniac, he met a man who was being torn apart from both outside and inside. He had been living in the dark among the tombs (v. 3). He displayed uncontrollable strength (vv. 3–4). Daily, he screamed for relief and was a danger to himself (v. 5). He was living with thousands of demons inside him (v. 9). He was an outcast as a threat to society, and Jesus now was his only hope.

Jesus received the man and cast the demons out of him. But the townspeople were not happy about it. Mark described the people as pleading with Jesus to leave their region in the same vein as the demons begged Jesus to go into the pigs rather than be cast into a far country. Certainly, the demons thought, Jesus would leave them alone to possess pigs. Certainly, the townspeople thought, Jesus would leave the town alone. He could welcome and heal the wretched elsewhere.

Interestingly, the healed man also begged Jesus—that he might remain with Him. But the same way Jesus deals with everyone whose life He transforms, He sent the man away to live righteously. The man received by Jesus, now in his right mind, would proclaim what Jesus had done.

### Apply the Word

It’s important to tell your faith story to others. The demoniac left the presence of Jesus to tell people in ten cities how Jesus had changed his life! Those cities heard a man formerly possessed by thousands of demons tell them how Jesus rescued him. Ask the Lord to give you opportunities to share your story with people in your own city.

### Pray with Us

Janet Stiven, vice president and general counsel at Moody, welcomes your prayers for the team she leads at the Legal department. Ask the Lord to grant them wisdom and insight as they advise the MBI leadership on legal and public policy issues.

## BY Eric C. Redmond

# Our Daily Bread – 8/8/18

# A Legacy of Faith

 **Read:** [**2 Timothy 1:5–14**](https://www.odb.org/2019/08/08/a-legacy-of-faith)

5I am reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also.

### Appeal for Loyalty to Paul and the Gospel

6For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands. 7For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline. 8So do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord or of me his prisoner. Rather, join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God. 9He has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, 10but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. 11And of this gospel I was appointed a herald and an apostle and a teacher. 12That is why I am suffering as I am. Yet this is no cause for shame, because I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him until that day.

13What you heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching, with faith and love in Christ Jesus. 14Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you—guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us.

I am reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice. [2 Timothy 1:5](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Timothy+1%3A5)

Long before the decisive moment when Billy Graham came to faith in Christ at age sixteen, his parents’ devotion to Jesus was evident. They’d both come to faith while growing up within a family of believers. After their marriage, Billy’s parents continued that legacy by lovingly nurturing their children, including praying and reading Scripture and attending church faithfully with them. The solid foundation Graham’s parents laid for Billy was part of the soil God used to bring him to faith and, eventually, to his calling as a bold evangelist.

The apostle Paul’s young protégé Timothy also benefited from a strong spiritual foundation. Paul wrote, “Your sincere faith . . . first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice” (2 Timothy 1:5). This legacy helped prepare and steer Timothy’s heart toward faith in Christ.

Now Paul urged Timothy to carry on this faith tradition (v. 5), to “fan into flame the gift of God” within him through the Holy Spirit, who “gives us power” (vv. 6–7). Because of the power of the Spirit, Timothy could fearlessly live for the gospel (v. 8). A strong spiritual legacy doesn’t guarantee we’ll come to faith, but the example and mentoring of others can help prepare the way. And after we receive Jesus as Savior, the Spirit will guide us in service, in living for Him, and even in nurturing the faith of others.

By [Alyson Kieda](https://odb.org/author/akieda/)

#### Reflect & Pray

Who or what did God use to help to lay the foundation for your faith? How can you help to do this in someone’s life today?

God, thank You for the believers who helped shape my faith. Help me to rely on Christ’s Spirit for the strength to boldly witness for You.

#### Insight

Paul’s second New Testament letter to Timothy represents some of the apostle’s last recorded words. Imprisoned in Rome for preaching the gospel and declaring Jesus as Lord rather than Caesar, Paul believed his execution was near (2 Timothy 1:8, 11–12; 2:8–9; 4:6). Sensing his days were numbered, his words reflect his confidence in God, his care for the body of Christ, and his affections for a spiritual son—Timothy—who Paul described as a most trusted co-worker (Philippians 2:19–22).

# God Calling – 8/8/18

# Empty Yourself

Rely on Me alone. Ask no other help. Pay all out in the Spirit of trust that more will come to meet your supply.

Empty your vessels quickly to ensure a Divine Supply.

So much retained by you, so much the less will be gained from Me. It is a Law of Divine Supply.

To hold back, to retain, implies a fear of the future, a want of trust in Me.

When you ask Me to save you from the sea of poverty and difficulty you must trust wholly to Me.  If you do not, and your prayer and faith are genuine, then I must first answer your prayer for help as a rescuer does that of a drowning man who is struggling to save himself.

He renders him still more helpless and powerless until he is wholly at the will and mercy of the rescuer.  So understand My leading.  Trust wholly. Trust completely.

Empty your vessel.  I will fill it.  You ask both of you to understand Divine Supply. It is a most difficult lesson for My children to learn.  So dependent have they become on material supply they fail to understand.  You must live as I tell you.

Depend on Me.

I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety.  Psalm 4:8

# My Utmost for His Highest – 8/9/18

# Prayer in the Father’s Hearing



Jesus lifted up His eyes and said, "Father, I thank You that You have heard Me." —[John 11:41](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=John+11%3A41)

When the Son of God prays, He is mindful and consciously aware of only His Father. God always hears the prayers of His Son, and if the Son of God has been formed in me (see [Galatians 4:19](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Galatians+4:19)) the Father will always hear my prayers. But I must see to it that the Son of God is exhibited in my human flesh. “…your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit…” ([1 Corinthians 6:19](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Corinthians+6:19)), that is, your body is the Bethlehem of God’s Son. Is the Son of God being given His opportunity to work in me? Is the direct simplicity of His life being worked out in me exactly as it was worked out in His life while here on earth? When I come into contact with the everyday occurrences of life as an ordinary human being, is the prayer of God’s eternal Son to His Father being prayed in me? Jesus says, “In that day you will ask in My name…” ([John 16:26](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+16:26)). What day does He mean? He is referring to the day when the Holy Spirit has come to me and made me one with my Lord.

Is the Lord Jesus Christ being abundantly satisfied by your life, or are you exhibiting a walk of spiritual pride before Him? Never let your common sense become so prominent and forceful that it pushes the Son of God to one side. Common sense is a gift that God gave to our human nature— but common sense is not the gift of His Son. Supernatural sense is the gift of His Son, and we should never put our common sense on the throne. The Son always recognizes and identifies with the Father, but common sense has never yet done so and never will. Our ordinary abilities will never worship God unless they are transformed by the indwelling Son of God. We must make sure that our human flesh is kept in perfect submission to Him, allowing Him to work through it moment by moment. Are we living at such a level of human dependence upon Jesus Christ that His life is being exhibited moment by moment in us?

**Wisdom From Oswald Chambers**

To those who have had no agony Jesus says, “I have nothing for you; stand on your own feet, square your own shoulders. I have come for the man who knows he has a bigger handful than he can cope with, who knows there are forces he cannot touch; I will do everything for him if he will let Me. Only let a man grant he needs it, and I will do it for him.” The Shadow of an Agony, 1166 R

# CCEL – 8/9/18

**Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee.**—[SONG 4:7.](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Song.4.html" \l "Song.4.7)

The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment.—We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags.—I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing.

Ye are washed, . . . ye are sanctified, . . . ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.—The King's daughter is all glorious within.—Perfect through my comeliness, which I had put upon thee, saith the Lord GOD.

Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us.

These are they which . . . have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.—A glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but . . . holy and without blemish.—Ye are complete in him.

[Isa. 1:5,6](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Isa.1.html" \l "Isa.1.5). -[Isa. 64:6](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Isa.64.html" \l "Isa.64.6). -[Rom. 7:18](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Rom.7.html" \l "Rom.7.18).[I Cor. 6:11](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iCor.6.html" \l "iCor.6.11). -[Psa. 45:13](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.45.html" \l "Ps.45.13). -[Ezek. 16:14](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ezek.16.html" \l "Ezek.16.14).[Psa. 90:17](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.90.html" \l "Ps.90.17).[Rev. 7:14](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Rev.7.html" \l "Rev.7.14). -[Eph. 5:27](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Eph.5.html" \l "Eph.5.27). -[Col. 2:10](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Col.2.html" \l "Col.2.10).

“The city hath no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it.” [Revelation 21:23](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Rev.21.html" \l "Rev.21.23)

Yonder in the better world, the inhabitants are independent of all creature comforts. They have no need of raiment; their white robes never wear out, neither shall they ever be defiled. They need no medicine to heal diseases, “for the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick.” They need no sleep to recruit their frames—they rest not day nor night, but unweariedly praise him in his temple. They need no social relationship to minister comfort, and whatever happiness they may derive from association with their fellows is not essential to their bliss, for their Lord’s society is enough for their largest desires. They need no teachers there; they doubtless commune with one another concerning the things of God, but they do not require this by way of instruction; they shall all be taught of the Lord. Ours are the alms at the king’s gate, but they feast at the table itself. Here we lean upon the friendly arm, but there they lean upon their Beloved and upon him alone. Here we must have the help of our companions, but there they find all they want in Christ Jesus. Here we look to the meat which perisheth, and to the raiment which decays before the moth, but there they find everything in God. We use the bucket to fetch us water from the well, but there they drink from the fountain head, and put their lips down to the living water. Here the angels bring us blessings, but we shall want no messengers from heaven then. They shall need no Gabriels there to bring their love-notes from God, for there they shall see him face to face. Oh! what a blessed time shall that be when we shall have mounted above every second cause and shall rest upon the bare arm of God! What a glorious hour when God, and not his creatures; the Lord, and not his works, shall be our daily joy! Our souls shall then have attained the perfection of bliss.

# Word Live – 8/9/18

# A role for everyone

## Prepare

‘You are the God who fed thousands with a handful of fishes and bread. I offer you the insignificant gifts I have. Please use them to your glory. Amen.’



## Bible passage: Ezra 6:1–22

### The Decree of Darius

6 King Darius then issued an order, and they searched in the archives stored in the treasury at Babylon. 2A scroll was found in the citadel of Ecbatana in the province of Media, and this was written on it:

Memorandum:

3In the first year of King Cyrus, the king issued a decree concerning the temple of God in Jerusalem:

Let the temple be rebuilt as a place to present sacrifices, and let its foundations be laid. It is to be sixty cubits high and sixty cubits wide, 4with three courses of large stones and one of timbers. The costs are to be paid by the royal treasury. 5Also, the gold and silver articles of the house of God, which Nebuchadnezzar took from the temple in Jerusalem and brought to Babylon, are to be returned to their places in the temple in Jerusalem; they are to be deposited in the house of God.

6Now then, Tattenai, governor of Trans-Euphrates, and Shethar-Bozenai and you other officials of that province, stay away from there. 7Do not interfere with the work on this temple of God. Let the governor of the Jews and the Jewish elders rebuild this house of God on its site.

8Moreover, I hereby decree what you are to do for these elders of the Jews in the construction of this house of God:

Their expenses are to be fully paid out of the royal treasury, from the revenues of Trans-Euphrates, so that the work will not stop. 9Whatever is needed—young bulls, rams, male lambs for burnt offerings to the God of heaven, and wheat, salt, wine and olive oil, as requested by the priests in Jerusalem—must be given them daily without fail, 10so that they may offer sacrifices pleasing to the God of heaven and pray for the well-being of the king and his sons.

11Furthermore, I decree that if anyone defies this edict, a beam is to be pulled from their house and they are to be impaled on it. And for this crime their house is to be made a pile of rubble. 12May God, who has caused his Name to dwell there, overthrow any king or people who lifts a hand to change this decree or to destroy this temple in Jerusalem.

I Darius have decreed it. Let it be carried out with diligence.

### Completion and Dedication of the Temple

13Then, because of the decree King Darius had sent, Tattenai, governor of Trans-Euphrates, and Shethar-Bozenai and their associates carried it out with diligence. 14So the elders of the Jews continued to build and prosper under the preaching of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah, a descendant of Iddo. They finished building the temple according to the command of the God of Israel and the decrees of Cyrus, Darius and Artaxerxes, kings of Persia. 15The temple was completed on the third day of the month Adar, in the sixth year of the reign of King Darius.

16Then the people of Israel—the priests, the Levites and the rest of the exiles—celebrated the dedication of the house of God with joy. 17For the dedication of this house of God they offered a hundred bulls, two hundred rams, four hundred male lambs and, as a sin offering for all Israel, twelve male goats, one for each of the tribes of Israel. 18And they installed the priests in their divisions and the Levites in their groups for the service of God at Jerusalem, according to what is written in the Book of Moses.

### The Passover

19On the fourteenth day of the first month, the exiles celebrated the Passover. 20The priests and Levites had purified themselves and were all ceremonially clean. The Levites slaughtered the Passover lamb for all the exiles, for their relatives the priests and for themselves. 21So the Israelites who had returned from the exile ate it, together with all who had separated themselves from the unclean practices of their Gentile neighbors in order to seek the Lord, the God of Israel. 22For seven days they celebrated with joy the Festival of Unleavened Bread, because the Lord had filled them with joy by changing the attitude of the king of Assyria so that he assisted them in the work on the house of God, the God of Israel.

## Explore

**All necessary resources**

The scroll with King Cyrus’ edict is located and King Darius gets on board with the Temple project in Jerusalem. The Jews have the backing of the empire and all the materials and resources necessary to complete the build.

**United and energized**

In the account of this final stage there is a variety of roles. There are the governor and the elders of the Jews running things (v 7); the priests carrying out the daily sacrifices and prayers (v 9); Haggai and Zechariah preaching (v 14); people bringing back the gold and precious items taken from the original Temple, and other people labouring to get the walls up. When it is finally finished, the dedication party is wildly joyful and the exiles are united and energised by what they have accomplished together for God.

**A role for us all**

As a church, we have the daunting task of meeting the needs of the world on behalf of Jesus. We might be tempted to sit on the sidelines, paralysed and overwhelmed by inadequacy. But there is a role for us all, and a celebration worth labouring for, planned and prepared by God.

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

## Respond

Let these words from [1 Corinthians 15:58](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Corinthians+15%3A58&version=NIV) shape your prayers today: ‘Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labour in the Lord is not in vain.’

## Deeper Bible study

The new Temple is finally completed. We learn that the Jews’ success was not because of their own dogged determination but achieved at God’s command via the help of Persian kings (v 14). That God accomplished his will by using pagan monarchs as his instruments forcefully demonstrates his sovereign rule over the affairs of the nations. In the current turmoil of international affairs, we take great comfort from remembering that he has never relinquished that authority.

Soon after its dedication, the Temple hosts its first Passover. Look who is there – not only Israelites but also some of their Gentile neighbours who now worship the Lord, having forsaken their former pagan ways (v 21)! The barring of non-Jews from joining in the rebuilding project ([Ezra 4](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ezra+4&version=NIV)) may offend certain twenty-first-century sensitivities, in spite of the former’s impure motives. Here now we see that none are excluded from belonging to God’s people if they align themselves with God’s revealed word and ways.

Throughout Israel’s history, God’s covenant promises were always accessible to Gentiles who turned to the Lord. At his calling, Abram was told ‘all peoples on earth will be blessed through you’ ([Gen 12:3](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Gen+12%3A3&version=NIV)). Israel’s function as ‘a kingdom of priests’ ([Exod 19:5,6](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Exod+19%3A5%2C6&version=NIV" \t "_blank)) included the idea of their worldwide witness. Ultimately, that witness became focused in Messiah Jesus, whom faithful Simeon recognised as ‘a light for revelation to the Gentiles’ ([Luke 2:32](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+2%3A32&version=NIV)). Christ’s genealogy prominently featured women of Gentile birth or association (Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, Bathsheba) ([Matt 1](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matt+1&version=NIV)). He is the foundation and cornerstone ([1 Cor 3:11; Eph 2:20](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Cor+3%3A11%3B+Eph+2%3A20&version=NIV)) of the New Testament house of God, composed of believers of both Jewish and Gentile origin and foreshadowed by the previous Jerusalem Temples. God is not only sovereign over all, but also Saviour of all who trust in him.

Eternal life is available to ‘whoever believes’ in God’s one and only Son ([John 3:16](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+3%3A16&version=NIV)). What is the difference between saving faith and intellectual assent?

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

# Today in the Word – 8/9/18

# Healing Faith

**Read:** [**Mark 5:21-43**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+5%3a21-43)

### Jesus Raises a Dead Girl and Heals a Sick Woman

21When Jesus had again crossed over by boat to the other side of the lake, a large crowd gathered around him while he was by the lake. 22Then one of the synagogue leaders, named Jairus, came, and when he saw Jesus, he fell at his feet. 23He pleaded earnestly with him, “My little daughter is dying. Please come and put your hands on her so that she will be healed and live.” 24So Jesus went with him.

A large crowd followed and pressed around him. 25And a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years. 26She had suffered a great deal under the care of many doctors and had spent all she had, yet instead of getting better she grew worse. 27When she heard about Jesus, she came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, 28because she thought, “If I just touch his clothes, I will be healed.” 29Immediately her bleeding stopped and she felt in her body that she was freed from her suffering.

30At once Jesus realized that power had gone out from him. He turned around in the crowd and asked, “Who touched my clothes?”

31“You see the people crowding against you,” his disciples answered, “and yet you can ask, ‘Who touched me?’ ”

32But Jesus kept looking around to see who had done it. 33Then the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell at his feet and, trembling with fear, told him the whole truth. 34He said to her, “Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering.”

35While Jesus was still speaking, some people came from the house of Jairus, the synagogue leader. “Your daughter is dead,” they said. “Why bother the teacher anymore?”

36Overhearing[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+5%3a21-43#fen-NIV-24401a)] what they said, Jesus told him, “Don’t be afraid; just believe.”

37He did not let anyone follow him except Peter, James and John the brother of James. 38When they came to the home of the synagogue leader, Jesus saw a commotion, with people crying and wailing loudly. 39He went in and said to them, “Why all this commotion and wailing? The child is not dead but asleep.” 40But they laughed at him.

After he put them all out, he took the child’s father and mother and the disciples who were with him, and went in where the child was. 41He took her by the hand and said to her, “Talitha koum!” (which means “Little girl, I say to you, get up!”). 42Immediately the girl stood up and began to walk around (she was twelve years old). At this they were completely astonished. 43He gave strict orders not to let anyone know about this, and told them to give her something to eat.

#### Footnotes:

1. [Mark 5:36](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+5%3a21-43#en-NIV-24401) Or Ignoring

When someone we love is ill, we want them to get the very best treatment possible. We may travel a long distance to find exactly the right doctor and give hope to our loved one. Such was the case in Jesus’ time when many who followed Him were seeking healing.

Don’t be afraid; just believe. Mark 5:36

Here Mark intertwines two stories, a dying girl and a sick woman. The woman had heard about Jesus’ miracles and most likely understood Him to be the Messiah. She had the simple faith to believe that power of God was not limited by clothing and reached out to touch his cloak (v. 27).

Jesus asked who had touched Him and sought out the woman who displayed such faith. He told her, “your faith has healed you” (v. 34). But there was another desperate person in the crowd. The passage began with Jairus, who requested healing for his 12-year-old dying daughter (v. 23). In a great act of submission, he fell at the feet of Jesus even though he was the ruler of the synagogue (v. 22).

After Jesus healed the woman, the news came that Jairus’s daughter had died. Jesus took into the house only those who needed to witness the power of God (v. 38), possibly due to their future roles in the church. He also excluded those who did not have faith, possibly so that they would not become scoffers at the resurrection of the little girl.

Mark seems intentional in intertwining the 12 years of life of the girl and the 12 years of illness of the woman. These two stories show how simple faith sustains us during great suffering, even in the face of death. When others doubt the power of God, we should keep trusting Him to do the impossible.

### Apply the Word

We don’t like our schedules to be delayed or interrupted. Imagine how Jairus felt when his request to Jesus was interrupted by the woman seeking healing. Even so, it did not prevent the Lord from saving his daughter. Trust today that God hears your prayers and sees your situation. Give thanks for His timing to answer prayers!

### Pray with Us

As we read today about Jesus’ healing ministry in Mark’s Gospel, let us thank the Lord for His compassion for the sick and the suffering, then and now. Let’s also pray for patience to wait for God’s timing and to accept it with gratitude.

## BY Eric C. Redmond

# Our Daily Bread – 8/9/18

# Indestructible Love

 **Read:** [**Song of Songs 8:6–7**](https://www.odb.org/2019/08/09/indestructible-love)

6Place me like a seal over your heart,  
    like a seal on your arm;  
for love is as strong as death,  
    its jealousy[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Song+of+Songs+8%3A6%E2%80%937#fen-NIV-17647a)] unyielding as the grave.  
It burns like blazing fire,  
    like a mighty flame.[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Song+of+Songs+8%3A6%E2%80%937" \l "fen-NIV-17647b" \o "See footnote b)]  
7Many waters cannot quench love;  
    rivers cannot sweep it away.  
If one were to give  
    all the wealth of one’s house for love,  
    it[[c](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Song+of+Songs+8%3A6%E2%80%937#fen-NIV-17648c)] would be utterly scorned.

#### Footnotes:

1. [Song of Songs 8:6](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Song+of+Songs+8%3A6%E2%80%937#en-NIV-17647) Or ardor
2. [Song of Songs 8:6](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Song+of+Songs+8%3A6%E2%80%937#en-NIV-17647) Or fire, / like the very flame of the Lord
3. [Song of Songs 8:7](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Song+of+Songs+8%3A6%E2%80%937#en-NIV-17648) Or he

Many waters cannot quench love; rivers cannot sweep it away. [Song of Songs 8:7](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Song+of%C2%A0Songs+8%3A7)

When we first saw the stream in our backyard, it was just a thin vein of water trickling through a bed of rocks in the heat of the summer. Heavy wooden planks served as a bridge we could easily cross. Months later, torrents of rain pounded our area for several days in a row. Our tame little creek swelled into a quick-moving river four-feet deep and ten-feet wide! The force of this water heaved the bridgeboards up and deposited them several feet away.

Rushing water has the potential to overwhelm almost anything that stands in its path. Yet there’s something that’s indestructible in the face of a flood or other forces that might threaten to destroy it—love. “Many waters cannot quench love; rivers cannot sweep it away” (Song of Songs 8:7). Love’s persistent strength and intensity is often present in romantic relationships, but it’s only fully expressed in the love God has for people through His Son, Jesus Christ.

When the things we consider to be sturdy and dependable are swept away, our disappointment can open the door to a new understanding of God’s love for us. His affection is higher and deeper and stronger and longer lasting than anything on earth. Whatever we face, we face with Him beside us—holding us up, helping us along, and reminding us that we’re loved.

By [Jennifer Benson Schuldt](https://odb.org/author/jenniferbschuldt/)

#### Reflect & Pray

How can you be sure God will always love you? What’s the outcome of God’s love in your life?

Heavenly Father, thank You for comforting me with Your love during times of rejection or loss. Help me to believe I can depend on You to meet every need in my soul.

#### Insight

Over the centuries, the Song of Solomon (Song of Songs) has been a challenge to Bible scholars, resulting in a variety of interpretations of this unique portion of Scripture. Because of the intimacy of this inspired poetry, some Jewish scholars have read it as an allegory describing the relationship between God and Israel. As such, parts of Song of Solomon are read today at Passover—the spring feast celebrating God’s rescuing love for Israel. Some Christian scholars (beginning with early church father Origen) have understood it to be picturing Christ and the church. Today, some scholars see the Song more literally—celebrating the love shared by a husband and wife within the framework of marriage. It’s a mysterious book that celebrates the beauty of love.

# God Calling – 8/9/18

# Effort And Rest

Come to Me, talk to Me, dwell with Me and then you will know My Way is a sure way, My Paths are safe paths.

Come very near to Me.

Dig deep down into the soil of the Kingdom. Effort and rest -- a union of the two.

Unto thee, O God, do we give thanks, unto thee do we give thanks: for that thy name is near thy wondrous works declare.  Psalm 75:1

# My Utmost for His Highest – 8/10/18

# The Holy Suffering of the Saint



Let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to Him in doing good… —[1 Peter 4:19](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=1+Peter+4%3A19)

Choosing to suffer means that there must be something wrong with you, but choosing God’s will— even if it means you will suffer— is something very different. No normal, healthy saint ever chooses suffering; he simply chooses God’s will, just as Jesus did, whether it means suffering or not. And no saint should ever dare to interfere with the lesson of suffering being taught in another saint’s life.

The saint who satisfies the heart of Jesus will make other saints strong and mature for God. But the people used to strengthen us are never those who sympathize with us; in fact, we are hindered by those who give us their sympathy, because sympathy only serves to weaken us. No one better understands a saint than the saint who is as close and as intimate with Jesus as possible. If we accept the sympathy of another saint, our spontaneous feeling is, “God is dealing too harshly with me and making my life too difficult.” That is why Jesus said that self-pity was of the devil (see [Matthew 16:21-23](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+16:21-23)). We must be merciful to God’s reputation. It is easy for us to tarnish God’s character because He never argues back; He never tries to defend or vindicate Himself. Beware of thinking that Jesus needed sympathy during His life on earth. He refused the sympathy of people because in His great wisdom He knew that no one on earth understood His purpose (see [Matthew 16:23](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+16:23)). He accepted only the sympathy of His Father and the angels (see [Luke 15:10](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+15:10)).

Look at God’s incredible waste of His saints, according to the world’s judgment. God seems to plant His saints in the most useless places. And then we say, “God intends for me to be here because I am so useful to Him.” Yet Jesus never measured His life by how or where He was of the greatest use. God places His saints where they will bring the most glory to Him, and we are totally incapable of judging where that may be.

**WISDOM FROM OSWALD CHAMBERS**

Jesus Christ can afford to be misunderstood; we cannot. Our weakness lies in always wanting to vindicate ourselves.  The Place of Help, 1051 L

# CCEL – 8/10/18

**I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but thou shouldest keep them from the evil.**—[JOHN 17:15.](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.John.17.html" \l "John.17.15)

Blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world.—Ye are the salt of the earth, . . . the light of the world.—Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is heaven.

I also withheld thee from sinning against me.

The Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you, and keep you from evil.—So did not I, because of the fear of God.—Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father.—Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.

[Phi. 2:15](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Phil.2.html" \l "Phil.2.15). -[Matt. 5:13,14](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Matt.5.html" \l "Matt.5.13). -[Matt. 5:16](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Matt.5.html" \l "Matt.5.16).[Gen. 20:6](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Gen.20.html" \l "Gen.20.6).[II Thes. 3:3](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iiThess.3.html" \l "iiThess.3.3). -[Neh. 5:15](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Neh.5.html" \l "Neh.5.15). -[Gal. 1:4](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Gal.1.html" \l "Gal.1.4). -[Jude 24,25](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Jude.1.html" \l "Jude.1.24).

“Christ, who is our life.” [Colossians 3:4](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Col.3.html" \l "Col.3.4)

Paul’s marvellously rich expression indicates, that Christ is the source of our life. “You hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins.” That same voice which brought Lazarus out of the tomb raised us to newness of life. He is now the substance of our spiritual life. It is by his life that we live; he is in us, the hope of glory, the spring of our actions, the central thought which moves every other thought. Christ is the sustenance of our life. What can the Christian feed upon but Jesus’ flesh and blood? “This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die.” O wayworn pilgrims in this wilderness of sin, you never get a morsel to satisfy the hunger of your spirits, except ye find it in him! Christ is the solace of our life. All our true joys come from him; and in times of trouble, his presence is our consolation. There is nothing worth living for but him; and his lovingkindness is better than life! Christ is the object of our life. As speeds the ship towards the port, so hastes the believer towards the haven of his Saviour’s bosom. As flies the arrow to its goal, so flies the Christian towards the perfecting of his fellowship with Christ Jesus. As the soldier fights for his captain, and is crowned in his captain’s victory, so the believer contends for Christ, and gets his triumph out of the triumphs of his Master. “For him to live is Christ.” Christ is the exemplar of our life. Where there is the same life within, there will, there must be, to a great extent, the same developments without; and if we live in near fellowship with the Lord Jesus we shall grow like him. We shall set him before us as our Divine copy, and we shall seek to tread in his footsteps, until he shall become the crown of our life in glory. Oh! how safe, how honoured, how happy is the Christian, since Christ is our life!

# Word Live – 8/10/18

# Study, live, teach

## Prepare

‘Be good to your servant while I live, that I might obey your word. Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law’ ([Psalm 119:17,18](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+119%3A17%2C18&version=NIV)).



## Bible passage: Ezra 7:1–10

### Ezra Comes to Jerusalem

7 After these things, during the reign of Artaxerxes king of Persia, Ezra son of Seraiah, the son of Azariah, the son of Hilkiah, 2the son of Shallum, the son of Zadok, the son of Ahitub, 3the son of Amariah, the son of Azariah, the son of Meraioth, 4the son of Zerahiah, the son of Uzzi, the son of Bukki, 5the son of Abishua, the son of Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the chief priest— 6this Ezra came up from Babylon. He was a teacher well versed in the Law of Moses, which the Lord, the God of Israel, had given. The king had granted him everything he asked, for the hand of the Lord his God was on him. 7Some of the Israelites, including priests, Levites, musicians, gatekeepers and temple servants, also came up to Jerusalem in the seventh year of King Artaxerxes.

8Ezra arrived in Jerusalem in the fifth month of the seventh year of the king. 9He had begun his journey from Babylon on the first day of the first month, and he arrived in Jerusalem on the first day of the fifth month, for the gracious hand of his God was on him. 10For Ezra had devoted himself to the study and observance of the Law of the Lord, and to teaching its decrees and laws in Israel.

## Explore

**Beacon of faithfulness**

Ezra is a beacon of faithfulness to God. Many generations earlier, his ancestor Aaron, Moses’ brother, was present to see the Law given to the chosen nation and Ezra is now its champion.

**Studying the law**

There are three ways Ezra relates to the Law that we are told about in today’s passage. First, Ezra is ‘well versed’ in the Law (v 6) because he has ‘devoted himself’ to studying it (v 10). As people of the New Covenant, we live by grace, with the Law written on our hearts and minds by the Holy Spirit ([Hebrews 10:16](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Hebrews+10%3A16&version=NIV)). But we are to take the Bible as seriously as Jesus did ([Matthew 5:17](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+5%3A17&version=NIV)).

**Ready to take action**

Secondly, Ezra was devoted to the ‘observance of the Law of theLord’ (v 10). It wasn’t dry, academic study; it was life-shaping. When we read the Bible, we should be ready to take action in response.

**Worshipful obedience**

Thirdly, Ezra taught the Law to the people of Israel (vs 6,10). Knowing it and living it, he was able to convey it clearly and persuasively so that it would call an entire culture to worshipful obedience.

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

## Respond

Who is your Scripture-shaped life teaching? Are you taking the opportunities open to you to explain and apply the Bible? Pray that God would use you to grow his kingdom through your understanding and modelling of his Word.

## Deeper Bible study

At last, around 80 years after the first exiles returned and nearly 60 years since the Temple’s completion, Ezra appears on the scene, leading a new wave of exiles to Jerusalem, with the assistance of the Persian king Artaxerxes (v 6). Once more we see God’s sovereign hand at work behind the scenes, guiding the decisions of pagan authorities in favour of his own people. In Ezra’s case, this is all the more remarkable considering that Artaxerxes’ father, King Ahasuerus (Xerxes), had authorised a death warrant for the destruction of all Jewry in his empire ([Esther 3:12,13](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Esther+3%3A12%2C13&version=NIV)), until God raised up Queen Esther to prevent that happening. Otherwise, the Jewish race, including Ezra, would have been obliterated, and the Messiah’s human line cut off. What further glorious proof that the sovereign Lord’s plans cannot and will not be thwarted! Hallelujah!

Ezra comes with amazing credentials – an impeccable lineage (descended from Moses’ brother Aaron) and an encyclopaedic knowledge of Scripture. His pedigree and intellect are not what made him such an effective spiritual leader, however. It was rather a heart in tune with God! ‘Ezra had devoted himself [literally, prepared his heart] to the study and observance of the Law of the Lord, and to teaching its decrees and laws in Israel’ (v 10).

Every church needs spiritual leaders like Ezra – godly men and women who not only know the Bible but live it out, so that their transmission of it to others is less a matter of ‘Do what I say’ than ‘Do what I do’. For that reason, James 3:1 issues this warning, ‘Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers and sisters, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly.’ (James 3:1, TNIV) There was no hypocrisy in Ezra’s life. May we and our spiritual overseers display none in ours!

Lord, please help me to be a doer of your word, not a hearer only (see [James 1:22](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=James+1%3A22&version=NIV)).

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

# Today in the Word – 8/10/18

# Rough Terrain

**Read:** [**Mark 6:1-29**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+6%3a1-29)

### A Prophet Without Honor

6 Jesus left there and went to his hometown, accompanied by his disciples. 2When the Sabbath came, he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were amazed.

“Where did this man get these things?” they asked. “What’s this wisdom that has been given him? What are these remarkable miracles he is performing? 3Isn’t this the carpenter? Isn’t this Mary’s son and the brother of James, Joseph,[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+6%3a1-29" \l "fen-NIV-24411a" \o "See footnote a)] Judas and Simon? Aren’t his sisters here with us?” And they took offense at him.

4Jesus said to them, “A prophet is not without honor except in his own town, among his relatives and in his own home.” 5He could not do any miracles there, except lay his hands on a few sick people and heal them. 6He was amazed at their lack of faith.

### Jesus Sends Out the Twelve

Then Jesus went around teaching from village to village. 7Calling the Twelve to him, he began to send them out two by two and gave them authority over impure spirits.

8These were his instructions: “Take nothing for the journey except a staff—no bread, no bag, no money in your belts. 9Wear sandals but not an extra shirt. 10Whenever you enter a house, stay there until you leave that town. 11And if any place will not welcome you or listen to you, leave that place and shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them.”

12They went out and preached that people should repent. 13They drove out many demons and anointed many sick people with oil and healed them.

### John the Baptist Beheaded

14King Herod heard about this, for Jesus’ name had become well known. Some were saying,[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+6%3a1-29" \l "fen-NIV-24422b" \o "See footnote b)] “John the Baptist has been raised from the dead, and that is why miraculous powers are at work in him.”

15Others said, “He is Elijah.”

And still others claimed, “He is a prophet, like one of the prophets of long ago.”

16But when Herod heard this, he said, “John, whom I beheaded, has been raised from the dead!”

17For Herod himself had given orders to have John arrested, and he had him bound and put in prison. He did this because of Herodias, his brother Philip’s wife, whom he had married. 18For John had been saying to Herod, “It is not lawful for you to have your brother’s wife.” 19So Herodias nursed a grudge against John and wanted to kill him. But she was not able to, 20because Herod feared John and protected him, knowing him to be a righteous and holy man. When Herod heard John, he was greatly puzzled[[c](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+6%3a1-29#fen-NIV-24428c)]; yet he liked to listen to him.

21Finally the opportune time came. On his birthday Herod gave a banquet for his high officials and military commanders and the leading men of Galilee. 22When the daughter of[[d](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+6%3a1-29#fen-NIV-24430d)] Herodias came in and danced, she pleased Herod and his dinner guests.

The king said to the girl, “Ask me for anything you want, and I’ll give it to you.” 23And he promised her with an oath, “Whatever you ask I will give you, up to half my kingdom.”

24She went out and said to her mother, “What shall I ask for?”

“The head of John the Baptist,” she answered.

25At once the girl hurried in to the king with the request: “I want you to give me right now the head of John the Baptist on a platter.”

26The king was greatly distressed, but because of his oaths and his dinner guests, he did not want to refuse her. 27So he immediately sent an executioner with orders to bring John’s head. The man went, beheaded John in the prison, 28and brought back his head on a platter. He presented it to the girl, and she gave it to her mother. 29On hearing of this, John’s disciples came and took his body and laid it in a tomb.

#### Footnotes:

1. [Mark 6:3](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+6%3a1-29#en-NIV-24411) Greek Joses, a variant of Joseph
2. [Mark 6:14](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+6%3a1-29#en-NIV-24422) Some early manuscripts He was saying
3. [Mark 6:20](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+6%3a1-29#en-NIV-24428) Some early manuscripts he did many things
4. [Mark 6:22](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+6%3a1-29#en-NIV-24430) Some early manuscripts When his daughter

On March 20, 2019, Turkish Airlines Flight 1 hit severe air turbulence while about 40 minutes away from landing in New York City. The airlines said the flight “encountered an unusual turbulence” and some 30 people were severely injured after being lifted out of their seats and hitting the ceiling. For the passengers, everything seemed smooth on the flight from Istanbul to New York . . . until turbulence hit.

I have set the Lord always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Psalm 16:8

The newly-appointed ministry of the disciples had been without significant incident to this point. Jesus had granted them authority over unclean spirits and the ability to heal the sick. They were told to “take nothing for the journey” (v. 8), to leave the place that would not listen to them, and to shake the dust off their feet “as a testimony against them” (v. 11). It seemed, as they preached a message of repentance, they found success. Mark tells us that they “drove out many demons and anointed many sick people with oil and healed them” (v. 12).

Despite these successes, turbulence arose in Jesus’ ministry too. The beheading of John the Baptist was certainly a sobering wake-up call. John’s ministry was as faithful as the disciples’ ministry. He had proclaimed a message of righteousness to king Herod. Yet because of the king’s pride and cowardice, John lost his life.

There are seasons in life when serving the Lord seems fairly smooth. We see fruit in the lives of those we are serving, volunteers are plentiful, budgets are strong, and team morale is high. Other times can be extremely challenging: An unforeseen enemy arises within the leadership circle, numbers decline, and we may feel threatened by a culture hostile to our proclamation of Christ. Both the smooth and the rough times are from Christ, and for His glory.

### Apply the Word

The disciples retrieved the body of John the Baptist and placed him in a tomb, even at risk of being identified by Herod. Today, consider how you can serve someone who is going through a difficult time. Can you pray for them or offer simple words of encouragement? Your visible presence in their life can help bring a sense of calm and peace.

### Pray with Us

Lord Jesus, give us wisdom and insight to help a person who is going through a difficult time. Help us to be a calming and reassuring presence for a friend, a family member, or a coworker who is experiencing “turbulence” in their life.

## BY Eric C. Redmond

# Our Daily Bread – 8/10/18

# The Power of Encouragement

 **Read:** [**Acts 15:12–21**](https://www.odb.org/2019/08/10/the-power-of-encouragement)

12The whole assembly became silent as they listened to Barnabas and Paul telling about the signs and wonders God had done among the Gentiles through them. 13When they finished, James spoke up. “Brothers,” he said, “listen to me. 14Simon[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts+15%3A12%E2%80%9321#fen-NIV-27457a)] has described to us how God first intervened to choose a people for his name from the Gentiles. 15The words of the prophets are in agreement with this, as it is written:

16“‘After this I will return  
    and rebuild David’s fallen tent.  
Its ruins I will rebuild,  
    and I will restore it,  
17that the rest of mankind may seek the Lord,  
    even all the Gentiles who bear my name,  
says the Lord, who does these things’[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts+15%3A12%E2%80%9321#fen-NIV-27460b)]—  
18    things known from long ago.[[c](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts+15%3A12%E2%80%9321#fen-NIV-27461c)]

19“It is my judgment, therefore, that we should not make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to God. 20Instead we should write to them, telling them to abstain from food polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from the meat of strangled animals and from blood. 21For the law of Moses has been preached in every city from the earliest times and is read in the synagogues on every Sabbath.”

#### Footnotes:

1. [Acts 15:14](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts+15%3A12%E2%80%9321#en-NIV-27457) Greek Simeon, a variant of Simon; that is, Peter
2. [Acts 15:17](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts+15%3A12%E2%80%9321#en-NIV-27460) Amos 9:11,12 (see Septuagint)
3. [Acts 15:18](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts+15%3A12%E2%80%9321#en-NIV-27461) Some manuscripts things’— / 18the Lord’s work is known to him from long ago

The whole assembly became silent as they listened to Barnabas and Paul telling about the signs and wonders God had done. [Acts 15:12](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts+15%3A12)

When he was a young boy, Benjamin West attempted to draw a picture of his sister, but he succeeded only in making a mess. His mother saw his creation, kissed him on the head, and remarked, “Why, it’s Sally!” He would later say that it was that kiss that made him an artist—and the great American painter he would become. Encouragement is a powerful thing!

Like a child learning to paint, Paul didn’t have much credibility early on in his ministry, but Barnabas affirmed his calling. It was through Barnabas’s encouragement that the church accepted Saul as a fellow believer (Acts 9:27). Barnabas would also encourage the fledgling church of Antioch, helping it to become one of the most influential in the book of Acts (11:22–23). And it was through Barnabas’s encouragement, as well as Paul’s, that the Jerusalem church embraced the gentile believers as Christians (15:19). So, in many ways, the story of the early church is really a story of encouragement.

The same should apply to our own lives. We might think encouragement is merely saying something nice to someone. But if we think that way, we fail to recognize the lasting power it possesses. It’s one of the means by which God shapes our individual lives as well as the life of the church.

Let’s thank God for the moments we receive encouragement and strive to pass it along to others.

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

#### Reflect & Pray

How has encouragement shaped your life story in some way? Who encouraged you, and how did they do it? How will you encourage someone in your life this week?

Father, help me encourage others as You have encouraged me.

#### Insight

A little detail mentioned in Acts 15:12—“the whole assembly became silent”—is significant. A “sharp dispute and debate” had arisen (v. 2), with Paul and Barnabas on one side and certain believers on the other. These believers insisted that non-Jewish Christians had to adhere to Jewish law and be circumcised. The text tells us, “After much discussion, Peter got up and addressed them” (v. 7). We can imagine how heated that discussion must have been, but Peter outlined a rational defense of the gentiles’ faith (v. 7). He noted how they too had the Holy Spirit, just as the Jewish believers did (v. 8). Peter added, “We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we [Jewish believers] are saved, just as they [gentile believers] are” (v. 11). Peter’s calm response to the dispute, along with the testimony of Paul and Barnabas, preserved and enhanced unity in the church.

# God Calling – 8/10/18

# Stray Sheep

Oh Jesus, guide our footsteps lest we stray.

For straying, My children, there is no cure except to keep so close to Me that nothing, no interest, no temptation, no other -- can come between us.

Sure of that you can but stay at My Side, knowing that, as I am the very Way itself, nothing can prevent your being in the Way, nothing can cause you to stray.

I have promised Peace but not leisure, heartrest and comfort, but not pleasure. I have said, "In the world ye shall have tribulation"; so do not feel, when adverse things happen, that you have failed or are not being guided, but I have said, "In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."

So learn of Me the overcoming Power of one who, though spat upon, scourged, misunderstood, forsaken, crucified, could yet see His Work had not been affected by these things, and cry triumphantly from His Cross, "It is finished."

Not the pain, the mocking, the agony, but His Task.

Let this thought comfort you. Amid failure, discord, contumely, suffering, even now may friends and angels be prepared to sound the chorus, "It is finished."

And he went a little father, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.  Matthew 26:39

# My Utmost for His Highest – 8/11/18

# This Experience Must Come



Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven. And Elisha…saw him no more. —[2 Kings 2:11-12](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=2+Kings+2%3A11-12)

It is not wrong for you to depend on your “Elijah” for as long as God gives him to you. But remember that the time will come when he must leave and will no longer be your guide and your leader, because God does not intend for him to stay. Even the thought of that causes you to say, “I cannot continue without my ‘Elijah.’ ” Yet God says you must continue.

**Alone at Your “Jordan”** ([2 Kings 2:14](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Kings+2:14)). The Jordan River represents the type of separation where you have no fellowship with anyone else, and where no one else can take your responsibility from you. You now have to put to the test what you learned when you were with your “Elijah.” You have been to the Jordan over and over again with Elijah, but now you are facing it alone. There is no use in saying that you cannot go— the experience is here, and you must go. If you truly want to know whether or not God is the God your faith believes Him to be, then go through your “Jordan” alone.

**Alone at Your “Jericho”** ([2 Kings 2:15](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Kings+2:15)). Jericho represents the place where you have seen your “Elijah” do great things. Yet when you come alone to your “Jericho,” you have a strong reluctance to take the initiative and trust in God, wanting, instead, for someone else to take it for you. But if you remain true to what you learned while with your “Elijah,” you will receive a sign, as Elisha did, that God is with you.

**Alone at Your “Bethel”** ([2 Kings 2:23](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Kings+2:23)). At your “Bethel” you will find yourself at your wits’ end but at the beginning of God’s wisdom. When you come to your wits’ end and feel inclined to panic— don’t! Stand true to God and He will bring out His truth in a way that will make your life an expression of worship. Put into practice what you learned while with your “Elijah”— use his mantle and pray (see [2 Kings 2:13-14](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Kings+2:13-14)). Make a determination to trust in God, and do not even look for Elijah anymore.

**Wisdom From Oswald Chambers**

We never enter into the Kingdom of God by having our head questions answered, but only by commitment.  
[The Highest Good—Thy Great Redemption](http://www.dhp.org/Products/Quotable-Oswald-Chambers--The__BW382.aspx?affid=RBCHAMB)

# CCEL – 8/11/18

**That through death He might destroy him that had the power of death.**—[HEB. 2:14.](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Heb.2.html" \l "Heb.2.14)

Our Saviour Jesus Christ . . . hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.—He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord GOD shall wipe away the tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for the Lord hath spoken it.—When this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.—Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

[II Tim. 1:10](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iiTim.1.html" \l "iiTim.1.10). -[Isa. 25:8](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Isa.25.html" \l "Isa.25.8). -[I Cor. 15:54-57](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iCor.15.html" \l "iCor.15.54).[II Tim. 1:7](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iiTim.1.html" \l "iiTim.1.7). -[Psa. 23:4](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.23.html" \l "Ps.23.4).

“Oh that I were as in months past.” [Job 29:2](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Job.29.html" \l "Job.29.2)

Numbers of Christians can view the past with pleasure, but regard the present with dissatisfaction; they look back upon the days which they have passed in communing with the Lord as being the sweetest and the best they have ever known, but as to the present, it is clad in a sable garb of gloom and dreariness. Once they lived near to Jesus, but now they feel that they have wandered from him, and they say, “O that I were as in months past!” They complain that they have lost their evidences, or that they have not present peace of mind, or that they have no enjoyment in the means of grace, or that conscience is not so tender, or that they have not so much zeal for God’s glory. The causes of this mournful state of things are manifold. It may arise through a comparative neglect of prayer, for a neglected closet is the beginning of all spiritual decline. Or it may be the result of idolatry. The heart has been occupied with something else, more than with God; the affections have been set on the things of earth, instead of the things of heaven. A jealous God will not be content with a divided heart; he must be loved first and best. He will withdraw the sunshine of his presence from a cold, wandering heart. Or the cause may be found in self-confidence and self-righteousness. Pride is busy in the heart, and self is exalted instead of lying low at the foot of the cross. Christian, if you are not now as you “were in months past,” do not rest satisfied with wishing for a return of former happiness, but go at once to seek your Master, and tell him your sad state. Ask his grace and strength to help you to walk more closely with him; humble yourself before him, and he will lift you up, and give you yet again to enjoy the light of his countenance. Do not sit down to sigh and lament; while the beloved Physician lives there is hope, nay there is a certainty of recovery for the worst cases.

# Word Live – 8/11/18

# Who are the wicked?

## Prepare

‘Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting. Amen’ ([Psalm 139:23,24](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+139%3A23%2C24&version=NIV)).



## Bible passage: Psalm 64

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

1 Hear me, O God, as I voice my complaint;   
       protect my life from the threat of the enemy.

2 Hide me from the conspiracy of the wicked,   
       from that noisy crowd of evildoers.

3 They sharpen their tongues like swords   
       and aim their words like deadly arrows.

4 They shoot from ambush at the innocent man;   
       they shoot at him suddenly, without fear.

5 They encourage each other in evil plans,   
       they talk about hiding their snares;   
       they say, "Who will see them ?"

6 They plot injustice and say,   
       "We have devised a perfect plan!"   
       Surely the mind and heart of man are cunning.

7 But God will shoot them with arrows;   
       suddenly they will be struck down.

8 He will turn their own tongues against them   
       and bring them to ruin;   
       all who see them will shake their heads in scorn.

9 All mankind will fear;   
       they will proclaim the works of God   
       and ponder what he has done.

10 Let the righteous rejoice in the LORD   
       and take refuge in him;   
       let all the upright in heart praise him!

## Explore

**Wicked are everywhere**

It would be nice to believe most people are good, well-intentioned, that given enough love and opportunities they will want to do the right thing. But the evidence is that the wicked are everywhere and the wicked are even sometimesus.

**Extreme set of enemies**

Psalm 64 is a complaint about an extreme set of enemies, but some of their behaviour will resonate. The enemy deliberately and carefully plans to do harm (v 2). They are not just a physical risk – they use their words to great effect. They gather other people around them, recruiting support for their side. And they are careful to hide what they are doing so they appear innocent to all but their victim (v 5).

**Call to repentance**

We can read this psalm in two ways. As those Jesus has declared righteous, we can be reassured that God will fight our battles for us, that justice will ultimately be done. But we’d be wise to read it as a salutary warning too. How easy it is to undermine the reputation of one of God’s beloved, to dishonour them, to subtly make their life hard. Perhaps this psalm is also a call to repentance.

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

## Respond

Ask God to show you if you are behaving dishonourably towards anyone. Confess the ways you have sinned towards them and receive God’s merciful forgiveness. And consider what you can do to make amends.

## Deeper Bible study

‘Sticks and stones may break my bones but words will never hurt me’ is the response to verbal bullying that used to be heard in many school playgrounds. True of physical injury, that old adage nevertheless overlooks the psychological harm caused by lies, innuendo, gossip, slander. David indicates his personal experience of such harm when he mentions the ‘tongues like swords’ and ‘words like deadly arrows’ (v 3) with which his enemies ambush him.

Feeling completely vulnerable, David commits his cause to God and experiences the truth of another old saying – ‘People in glass houses shouldn’t throw stones.’ For in verses 7 and 8 the very weapons David’s enemies use to harm him are turned by God against them, so that they are named and shamed in front of onlookers. So, David is vindicated, which serves as a testimony to us all that God defends his people and is their refuge (vs 9,10).

Followers of Jesus have from earliest times been the victims of verbal abuse. For example, Christians of the early church were accused of incest (love between brothers and sisters in Christ), atheism (belief in only one God as opposed to pagan polytheism) and cannibalism (communion bread and wine representing the body and blood of Christ). Throughout the world today Christians are frequently misrepresented by the lies and accusations that both secular and religious adversaries fire against us like so many deadly arrows when we seek to remain faithful to God’s Word. Thank God he has raised up Christian apologists (defenders) whose minds as sharp as arrows and skill in wielding the sword of the Spirit not only defend the faith but also enable the church to go on the offensive! Let us not fail to pray for them and ask God for more!

If you have internet access, consult Open Door’s World Watch List and learn how you can help and bless persecuted Christians in many different countries.

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

# Today in the Word – 8/11/18

# Desolate of Resources

**Read:** [**Mark 6:30-44**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+6%3a45-56)

### Jesus Feeds the Five Thousand

30The apostles gathered around Jesus and reported to him all they had done and taught. 31Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, “Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.”

32So they went away by themselves in a boat to a solitary place. 33But many who saw them leaving recognized them and ran on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of them. 34When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So he began teaching them many things.

35By this time it was late in the day, so his disciples came to him. “This is a remote place,” they said, “and it’s already very late. 36Send the people away so that they can go to the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat.”

37But he answered, “You give them something to eat.”

They said to him, “That would take more than half a year’s wages[[e](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=mark+6&version=NIV#fen-NIV-24445e)]! Are we to go and spend that much on bread and give it to them to eat?”

38“How many loaves do you have?” he asked. “Go and see.”

When they found out, they said, “Five—and two fish.”

39Then Jesus directed them to have all the people sit down in groups on the green grass. 40So they sat down in groups of hundreds and fifties. 41Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to his disciples to distribute to the people. He also divided the two fish among them all. 42They all ate and were satisfied, 43and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces of bread and fish. 44The number of the men who had eaten was five thousand.

In Jane Austen’s novel Pride and Prejudice, Mr. Darcey, the romantic interest of main character Elizabeth Bennet, says, “Nothing is more deceitful than the appearance of humility. It is often only carelessness of opinion, and sometimes an indirect boast.” As Christ followers, we are to have true humility. It is all too easy for us to publicly rejoice in an accomplishment as the Lord’s work, while subtly claiming most of the credit for ourselves.

In today’s passage, Jesus sent out the apostles with His power, and they were successful in casting out demons and healing the sick. But somewhere between their commissioning and their return to Jesus they began to take credit for this work, thinking their own power had accomplished the tasks. The feeding of the 5,000 taught them to think otherwise. In what Mark calls “a quiet place” (v. 31), “a solitary place” (v. 32), and “a remote place” (v. 35), the disciples found themselves in a dilemma. How would they feed the 5,000?

Quickly they learned that Jesus did not need to send the people away or run to the market. Jesus had the ability to shepherd the people with compassionate care, no matter how big or how small their need was. In His power, there was enough to feed all the men, women, and children present and have twelve baskets full of leftover food! Unlike the disciples, Jesus’ power was more than sufficient.

The Lord provides desolate times of ministry to remind us that our power to serve comes from Him alone. Dry periods of devotions, a sense of staleness in worship, or the departure of ministry partners remove any thoughts of the sufficiency of our own strength to do His will. He deserves every ounce of credit for any accomplishment and we should ascribe all power to Him.

### Apply the Word

Godly servants are marked by humility. Look at your recent accomplishments that have brought you joy. Go back one by one and declare to the Lord, “You alone accomplished this; keep your servant from taking any credit for this and all other successes.” Attributing all we do to the grace of God helps us to be sober about our own power.

### Pray with Us

Please include in your prayers today Moody’s chief financial officer, Ken Heulitt. On behalf of the whole Institute, he thanks the Moody family for your friendship and faithful support of Moody’s ministry. You make this ministry possible!

## BY Eric C. Redmond

# Our Daily Bread – 8/11/18

# “Though”

 **Read:** [**Habakkuk 3:17–19**](https://www.odb.org/2019/08/11/though)

17Though the fig tree does not bud  
    and there are no grapes on the vines,  
though the olive crop fails  
    and the fields produce no food,  
though there are no sheep in the pen  
    and no cattle in the stalls,  
18yet I will rejoice in the Lord,  
    I will be joyful in God my Savior.

19The Sovereign Lord is my strength;  
    he makes my feet like the feet of a deer,  
    he enables me to tread on the heights.

For the director of music. On my stringed instruments.

Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will be joyful in God my Savior. [Habakkuk 3:18](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Habakkuk+3%3A18)

In 2017, the opportunity to help people in the aftermath of Hurricane Harvey in the US prompted a group of us to travel to Houston. Our goal was to encourage people who’d been impacted by the storm. In the process, our own faith was challenged and strengthened as we stood with them in their damaged church buildings and homes.

The radiant faith exhibited by a number of these people in the wake of Harvey is what we see expressed by Habakkuk at the end of his seventh-century bc prophecy. The prophet predicted that tough times were on the way (1:5–2:1); things would get worse before they got better. The end of the prophecy finds him pondering the potential of earthly losses and the word though makes a threefold appearance: “Though the fig tree does not bud . . . ; though the olive crop fails . . . ; though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls” (3:17).

How do we position ourselves in the face of unimaginable losses such as the loss of health or employment, the death of a loved one, or a devastating natural disaster? Habakkuk’s “Ode for Tough Times” calls us to confident faith and trust in God, who is the source of salvation (v. 18), strength, and stability (v. 19) for yesterday, today, and forever. In the end, those who trust Him will never be disappointed.

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

#### Reflect & Pray

How has God met your need during difficult times? How can you encourage others when they face a crisis?

Father, even when life is tough and uncertain, please keep my faith anchored in You, my source of salvation and strength.

To learn more about the prophet Habakkuk, visit [christianuniversity.org/OT226.](https://christianuniversity.org/OT226.)

#### Insight

The book of Habakkuk is one of the twelve Minor Prophets of the Old Testament, given this label because of the comparatively shorter length of their prophetic works. Habakkuk’s short book contains only three chapters and is a dialogue between the prophet and God, organized around Habakkuk’s prayers or complaints and God’s answers. Because chapter 3 is bracketed by musical notations—(shigionoth, v. 1; “on my stringed instruments,” v. 19), it’s probable that the prophet may have been a Levite and a temple musician. Like other prophets, Habakkuk laments the wickedness of his time. Though Judah experienced a brief period of renewal under Josiah, the people had radically turned away from God under the wicked influence of kings Manasseh and Amon. In our passage today, Habakkuk affirms his trust in God no matter what (vv. 17–19).

# God Calling – 8/11/18

# You Are Mine

Jesus, Thou art watching over us to bless and care for us.

Yes! Remember that always -- that out of darkness, I am leading you to light. Out of unrest to rest, out of disorder to order. Out of faults and failure to perfection.

So, trust Me wholly. Fear nothing. Hope ever. Look ever up to Me and I will be your sure aid.

I and My Father are one. So He who made the ordered, beautiful world out of chaos, and set the stars in their courses, and made each plant to know its season, can He not bring out of your little chaos peace and order?

And He and I are One, and you are Mine. Your affairs are Mine. It is My Divine Task to order My affairs -- therefore yours will be ordered by Me.

The righteous is delivered out of trouble, and the wicked cometh in his stead.  Proverbs 11:8

# My Utmost for His Highest – 8/12/18

# The Theology of Resting in God



Why are you fearful, O you of little faith? — [Matthew 8:26](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=Matthew+8%3A26)

When we are afraid, the least we can do is pray to God. But our Lord has a right to expect that those who name His name have an underlying confidence in Him. God expects His children to be so confident in Him that in any crisis they are the ones who are reliable. Yet our trust is only in God up to a certain point, then we turn back to the elementary panic-stricken prayers of those people who do not even know God. We come to our wits’ end, showing that we don’t have even the slightest amount of confidence in Him or in His sovereign control of the world. To us He seems to be asleep, and we can see nothing but giant, breaking waves on the sea ahead of us.

“…O you of little faith!” What a stinging pain must have shot through the disciples as they surely thought to themselves, “We missed the mark again!” And what a sharp pain will go through us when we suddenly realize that we could have produced complete and utter joy in the heart of Jesus by remaining absolutely confident in Him, in spite of what we were facing.

There are times when there is no storm or crisis in our lives, and we do all that is humanly possible. But it is when a crisis arises that we instantly reveal upon whom we rely. If we have been learning to worship God and to place our trust in Him, the crisis will reveal that we can go to the point of breaking, yet without breaking our confidence in Him.

We have been talking quite a lot about sanctification, but what will be the result in our lives? It will be expressed in our lives as a peaceful resting in God, which means a total oneness with Him. And this oneness will make us not only blameless in His sight, but also a profound joy to Him.

**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 – 8/12/18

**The Lord will not cast off for ever: but though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion.**—[LAM. 3:31,32.](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Lam.3.html" \l "Lam.3.31)

Fear thou not, . . . saith the Lord: for I am with thee; I will not make a full end of thee, but correct thee in measure.—For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee. O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted, behold, I will lay thy stones with fair colours, and lay thy foundations with sapphires.

I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him, until he plead my cause, and execute judgment for me: he will bring me forth to the light, and I shall behold his righteousness.

[Jer. 46:28](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Jer.46.html" \l "Jer.46.28). -[Isa. 54:7,8](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Isa.54.html" \l "Isa.54.7),[10,11](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Isa.54.html" \l "Isa.54.10).[Mic. 7:9](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Mic.7.html" \l "Mic.7.9).

“The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice.” [Psalm 97:1](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.97.html" \l "Ps.97.1)

Causes for disquietude there are none so long as this blessed sentence is true. On earth the Lord’s power as readily controls the rage of the wicked as the rage of the sea; his love as easily refreshes the poor with mercy as the earth with showers. Majesty gleams in flashes of fire amid the tempest’s horrors, and the glory of the Lord is seen in its grandeur in the fall of empires, and the crash of thrones. In all our conflicts and tribulations, we may behold the hand of the divine King.

“God is God; he sees and hears

All our troubles, all our tears.

Soul, forget not, 'mid thy pains,

God o'er all forever reigns.”

In hell, evil spirits own, with misery, his undoubted supremacy. When permitted to roam abroad, it is with a chain at their heel; the bit is in the mouth of behemoth, and the hook in the jaws of leviathan. Death’s darts are under the Lord’s lock, and the grave’s prisons have divine power as their warder. The terrible vengeance of the Judge of all the earth makes fiends cower down and tremble, even as dogs in the kennel fear the hunter’s whip.

“Fear not death, nor Satan’s thrusts,

God defends who in him trusts;

Soul, remember, in thy pains,

God o'er all forever reigns.”

In heaven none doubt the sovereignty of the King Eternal, but all fall on their faces to do him homage. Angels are his courtiers, the redeemed his favourites, and all delight to serve him day and night. May we soon reach the city of the great King!

“For this life’s long night of sadness

He will give us peace and gladness.

Soul, remember, in thy pains,

God o'er all forever reigns.”

# Word Live – 8/12/18

# Walking on eggshells

## Prepare

As we begin this journey through 2 Corinthians, pray that God will use it to give you wisdom, courage and hope in tackling the challenges of life.



## Bible passage: 2 Corinthians 1:1–22

1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother,

To the church of God in Corinth, together with all his holy people throughout Achaia:

2Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

### Praise to the God of All Comfort

3Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, 4who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God. 5For just as we share abundantly in the sufferings of Christ, so also our comfort abounds through Christ. 6If we are distressed, it is for your comfort and salvation; if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which produces in you patient endurance of the same sufferings we suffer. 7And our hope for you is firm, because we know that just as you share in our sufferings, so also you share in our comfort.

8We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers and sisters, about the troubles we experienced in the province of Asia. We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired of life itself. 9Indeed, we felt we had received the sentence of death. But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead. 10He has delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us again. On him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us, 11as you help us by your prayers. Then many will give thanks on our behalf for the gracious favor granted us in answer to the prayers of many.

### Paul’s Change of Plans

12Now this is our boast: Our conscience testifies that we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially in our relations with you, with integrity and godly sincerity. We have done so, relying not on worldly wisdom but on God’s grace. 13For we do not write you anything you cannot read or understand. And I hope that, 14as you have understood us in part, you will come to understand fully that you can boast of us just as we will boast of you in the day of the Lord Jesus.

15Because I was confident of this, I wanted to visit you first so that you might benefit twice. 16I wanted to visit you on my way to Macedonia and to come back to you from Macedonia, and then to have you send me on my way to Judea. 17Was I fickle when I intended to do this? Or do I make my plans in a worldly manner so that in the same breath I say both “Yes, yes” and “No, no”?

18But as surely as God is faithful, our message to you is not “Yes” and “No.” 19For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us—by me and Silas and Timothy—was not “Yes” and “No,” but in him it has always been “Yes.” 20For no matter how many promises God has made, they are “Yes” in Christ. And so through him the “Amen” is spoken by us to the glory of God. 21Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, 22set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.

## Explore

**Precarious position**

Paul is in a very precarious position. His life is characterised by ‘troubles’ (vs 4,8), ‘sufferings’ (v 5), and ‘deadly peril’ (v 10). Later in the letter ([11:23–29](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Cor+11%3A23%E2%80%9329&version=NIV)), he gives more details of the background circumstances of his life. So as he sits down to write to the church at Corinth he is feeling far from strong.

**Precarious relationship**

Furthermore, his relationship with the people to whom he is writing is precarious. He has had to change his plans to visit Corinth (vs 12–17). This has brought insecurity into his relationship with the church. In an age where it was not possible to send a quick text to clarify what had happened, Paul found himself accused of lacking integrity and sincerity (v 12).

**Standing on something solid**

So it takes great resolve and moral courage to write to the Corinthian church and attempt to iron out their misunderstandings. Paul is able to do so because, beneath the precariousness of his circumstances, he stands on something solid. He knows who God is (vs 3,4); he understands that suffering is part of following Christ (v 5); and he knows that if God has raised Jesus from death he can rescue Paul from any situation (v 9).

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

## Respond

Is there a situation, especially a relationship, that you are avoiding because you feel weak or insecure? How can you draw on this passage for confidence and courage to face this challenge?

## Introduction to 2 Corinthians

2 Corinthians is not as well known as some of Paul’s other letters, yet it speaks powerfully to us today. We sometimes idealise the New Testament church, but here is a group of believers who were overrun with difficulties. They had been thrown off track by false teachers, who seemed all too plausible with their smooth and clever-sounding arguments. Paul’s authority had been sharply questioned, yet he never gave up on this wayward church, thus reflecting God’s great love for his people. This, in itself, should encourage us. We know that we are wayward in ourselves and we belong to churches that are far from perfect. God’s word challenges us to change but also gives reassurance that he perseveres with us. Such is God’s amazing grace.

Some commentators on 2 Corinthians propose that two letters have been stitched together, with chapters 10–13 written at a different time to the rest. Although I acknowledge that Paul may have taken some breaks as he dictated, these notes treat 2 Corinthians as a unity. The overarching theme which emerges from the 13 chapters is ‘strength in weakness’. It is a vital theme for us today. Our models of leadership and ministry are too often shaped by the standards we see around us. Yet Paul shows us a different way, one that is profoundly countercultural, modelled as it is on Jesus himself. This is the ministry that both the church and the world need: Christians who will take risks for God and reach out in vulnerability and weakness, knowing that God’s grace is ‘sufficient’ for them (12:9). The philosopher Ivan Illich was once asked, ‘How do you change society? Is the way forward violent revolution, or is it better to make step by step progress?’ Illich said neither. If we want to change society, he insisted, we must ‘tell an alternative story’.1 As we learn from God’s word, may our lives tell a different story and may God work through us by his transforming power.

For Further Reading

CG Kruse, 2 Corinthians, TOTC, IVP, 2004

1 Alan Hirsch, The Forgotten Ways, Baker, 2006, p254

[Rev Dr Peter Morden](https://www.wordlive.org/AboutWordLive/Contributors/M-P/3527733.id#.VknC1XbhCUk)

## Deeper Bible study

The ‘God of all comfort’ (v 3) is one of the best-known phrases in 2 Corinthians; the idea of comfort is clearly important in our verses, with Paul mentioning it explicitly several times (vs 3–7). It sounds wonderful – we want to be comforted – but we can easily misunderstand what is being offered here. Our view of comfort might relate to ease or even luxury, yet the Greek word translated comfort in the NIV, paraklesis, has nothing to do with this. It could easily be rendered ‘encouragement’ and carries the sense of someone being alongside to help. The context further shows this is encouragement for those who, like Paul, suffer because they follow Christ and engage in his work. Paul experienced hardship and distress and even ‘deadly peril’ (v 10) as he gave himself to cutting-edge mission. God comforts him by being alongside and delivering him.

This is a vital principle for all who engage in mission. Suffering will come and on our own we will not be able to keep going (v 8). Yet God will always be alongside to strengthen and save. Many who are reading this will be suffering because they have followed Jesus faithfully and sought to engage in his work. If this is you, pray to God for his compassion and help in hardship. Pray with confidence, because our wonderful, gracious ‘God of all comfort’ is more than ready to listen and respond.

God may help us very directly or his encouragement may come through a fellow Christian. As we receive comfort, we are to play our part in the cycle of encouragement by comforting others (v 4). God has been so good to us in Jesus, pouring his grace into our lives. Having received so much from our God, our call is to let this overflow into comfort for others (v 5).

Alongside whom is God calling you to be, sharing the comfort and strength you yourself have received?

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## To do



‘He comes alongside us when we go through hard times, and before you know it, he brings us alongside someone else who is going through hard times so that we can be there for that person just as God was there for us’ ([2 Corinthians 1:3](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2%20Corinthians%201:3&version=65), The Message).   
  
● Who do you know who is going through a difficult time? Pray for them, based on the truths in this passage.  
  
● What could you do for them?

# Today in the Word – 8/12/18

# Recognizing Jesus

**Read:** [**Mark 6:45-56**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+6%3a45-56)

### Jesus Walks on the Water

45Immediately Jesus made his disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to Bethsaida, while he dismissed the crowd. 46After leaving them, he went up on a mountainside to pray.

47Later that night, the boat was in the middle of the lake, and he was alone on land. 48He saw the disciples straining at the oars, because the wind was against them. Shortly before dawn he went out to them, walking on the lake. He was about to pass by them, 49but when they saw him walking on the lake, they thought he was a ghost. They cried out, 50because they all saw him and were terrified.

Immediately he spoke to them and said, “Take courage! It is I. Don’t be afraid.” 51Then he climbed into the boat with them, and the wind died down. They were completely amazed, 52for they had not understood about the loaves; their hearts were hardened.

53When they had crossed over, they landed at Gennesaret and anchored there. 54As soon as they got out of the boat, people recognized Jesus. 55They ran throughout that whole region and carried the sick on mats to wherever they heard he was. 56And wherever he went—into villages, towns or countryside—they placed the sick in the marketplaces. They begged him to let them touch even the edge of his cloak, and all who touched it were healed.

The Cambridge Advanced Learner’s Dictionary and Thesaurus defines “get ahead of yourself” as “to do something too early, or before you are ready or prepared.” One often hears a public speaker make a remark about getting ahead of himself when he detours from the main subject at hand and goes off track to another item.

Take courage! It is I! Don’t be afraid. Mark 6:51

While in public speaking “getting ahead of oneself” might be excused as taking the listener on an intriguing detour, it is not recommended when serving God. With kindness and grace, Jesus showed the disciples that going ahead of Him was not the way to succeed.

The disciples were sent on ahead of Jesus to Bethsaida, while he cared for the crowd. In the boat on the lake, the disciples met with strong headwinds that made the journey extremely difficult. They were “straining on the oars” (v. 48). The hardness of their hearts about Jesus feeding the 5,000 led them to fear Jesus as He walked on water toward them. Rather than being comforted, they were “terrified” (v. 50). Instead of being encouraged by the presence of the One who had the ability and power to feed 5,000 with no apparent supplies, they became afraid.

It can be easy for us to make plans that seem pleasing to God but are actually getting ahead of what the Lord wants us to do. We may pray over our plans and offer ideas that will strengthen ministries, but waiting to put our ideas in action is difficult. Yet, to make sure we are not running ahead of the Lord, we have to plan with wisdom and delay our plans if necessary. Thankfully, the Lord may sometimes provide strong winds to slow us down and allow Him to intervene with our plans. Thankfully, too, our attempts at running ahead of the Lord will not stop others from recognizing Jesus.

### Apply the Word

Zeal for the Lord is good and right, and even commanded in Scripture (Rom. 12:11)! But we must moderate our zeal with wisdom and patience. Our future-planning, vision-casting, organizational overhauls and personal improvement projects all need a healthy dose of “show me your will” sprinkled throughout them. Slow us down, Jesus!

### Pray with Us

Would you pray for the staff of Moody Radio’s KMBI, in Spokane, Wash.? Thank God for the creativity and talent of Chris Wright, Deborah Massey, Joe Gonzalez, and Scott Carlon and ask that they experience joy and peace in the Holy Spirit.

## BY Eric C. Redmond

# Our Daily Bread – 8/12/18

# Celebrating God’s Creativity

 **Read:** [**Romans 12:3–8**](https://www.odb.org/2019/08/12/celebrating-gods-creativity)

### Humble Service in the Body of Christ

3For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you. 4For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, 5so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. 6We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+12%3A3%E2%80%938#fen-NIV-28252a)] faith; 7if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; 8if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead,[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+12%3A3%E2%80%938#fen-NIV-28254b)] do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.

#### Footnotes:

1. [Romans 12:6](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+12%3A3%E2%80%938#en-NIV-28252) Or the
2. [Romans 12:8](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+12%3A3%E2%80%938#en-NIV-28254) Or to provide for others

We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. [Romans 12:6](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+12%3A6)

As music filled the church auditorium, color-blind artist Lance Brown stepped onstage. He stood in front of a large white canvas, with his back to the congregation and dipped his brush into black paint. With smooth swipes, he completed a cross. Stroke after stroke with brushes and his hands, this visual storyteller created images of Christ’s crucifixion and resurrection. He covered the large patches of the canvas with black paint and added blue and white to finish a now abstract painting in less than six minutes. He picked up the canvas, turned it upside down, and revealed a hidden image—a compassion-filled face—Jesus.

Brown said he’d been reluctant when a friend suggested he speed-paint during a church service. Yet he now travels internationally to lead people into worship as he paints and shares Christ with others.

The apostle Paul affirms the value and purpose of the diverse gifts God has dispersed to His people. Every member of His family is equipped to glorify the Lord and build others up in love (Romans 12:3–5). Paul encourages us to identify and use our gifts to edify others and point to Jesus, serving diligently and cheerfully (vv. 6–8).

God has given each of us spiritual gifts, talents, skills, and experiences to serve wholeheartedly behind the scenes or in the forefront. As we celebrate His creativity, He uses our uniqueness to spread the gospel and build up other believers in love.

By [Xochitl Dixon](https://odb.org/author/xochitldixon/)

#### Reflect & Pray

Who can you encourage to use their God-given gifts to serve others? How will you do the same?

God, thank You for Your creativity. May I reflect it today.

#### Insight

Romans 12 marks a turning point in Paul’s letter. Previously the apostle had been explaining the work of God in salvation, describing Jesus as the second Adam who came to redeem what had been lost through our first parents’ disobedience in Eden. Now he turns his attention to the way this salvation is to be lived out by those bought by Christ’s sacrifice. It starts with the redeemed becoming a “living sacrifice” (v. 1), whose focus is on being useful to God in the lives of others. This is followed by a list of spiritual gifts to equip God’s children in service to others (vv. 3–8). Another list of spiritual gifts appears in 1 Corinthians 12:7–11, and a list of leadership roles (gifts to the church) is found in Ephesians 4:11. Through these provisions, the Spirit enables us to be useful in our spiritual service.

# God Calling – 8/12/18

# Rule The World

Remember no prayer goes unanswered. Remember that the moment a thing seems wrong to you, or a person's actions to be not what you think they should be, at that moment begins your obligation and responsibility to pray for those wrongs to be righted, or that person to be different.

Face your responsibilities. What is wrong in your country, its statesmen, its laws, its people? Think out quietly, and make these matters your prayer matters. You will see lives you never touch altered, laws made at your request, evils banished.

Yes! Live in a large sense. Live to serve and to save. You may never go beyond one room, and yet you may become one of the most powerful forces for good in your country, in the world.

You may never see the mighty work you do, but I see it, evil sees it. Oh! it is a glorious life, the life of one who saves. Fellow-workers together with me. See this more and more.

Love with me, sharers of My life.

I thank thee, and praise thee, O thou God of my fathers, who hast given me wisdom and might, and hast made known unto me now what we desired of thee.  Daniel 2:23