# My Utmost for His Highest – 8/27/19

# Living Your Theology



Walk while you have the light, lest darkness overtake you… —[John 12:35](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=John+12%3A35)

Beware of not acting upon what you see in your moments on the mountaintop with God. If you do not obey the light, it will turn into darkness. “If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness!” ([Matthew 6:23](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+6:23)). The moment you forsake the matter of sanctification or neglect anything else on which God has given you His light, your spiritual life begins to disintegrate within you. Continually bring the truth out into your real life, working it out into every area, or else even the light that you possess will itself prove to be a curse.

The most difficult person to deal with is the one who has the prideful self-satisfaction of a past experience, but is not working that experience out in his everyday life. If you say you are sanctified, show it. The experience must be so genuine that it shows in your life. Beware of any belief that makes you self-indulgent or self-gratifying; that belief came from the pit of hell itself, regardless of how beautiful it may sound.

Your theology must work itself out, exhibiting itself in your most common everyday relationships. Our Lord said, “…unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven” ([Matthew 5:20](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+5:20)). In other words, you must be more moral than the most moral person you know. You may know all about the doctrine of sanctification, but are you working it out in the everyday issues of your life? Every detail of your life, whether physical, moral, or spiritual, is to be judged and measured by the standard of the atonement by the Cross of Christ.

**Wisdom From Oswald Chambers**

The Bible does not thrill; the Bible nourishes. Give time to the reading of the Bible and the recreating effect is as real as that of fresh air physically.  Disciples Indeed, 387 R

# CCEL – 8/27/19

**Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.**—[PSA. 119:105.](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.119.html" \l "Ps.119.105)

By the word of thy lips I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer. Hold up my goings in thy paths, that my footsteps slip not.—When thou goest, it shall lead thee; when thou sleepest, it shall keep thee; and when thou awakest, it shall talk with thee. For the commandment is a lamp; and the law is light.—Thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left.

I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.—We have also a sure … word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place.—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.—They need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever.

[Psa. 17:4,5](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.17.html" \l "Ps.17.4). -[Prov. 6:22,23](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Prov.6.html" \l "Prov.6.22). -[Isa. 30:21](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Isa.30.html" \l "Isa.30.21).[John 8:12](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.John.8.html" \l "John.8.12). –[II Pet. 1:19](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iiPet.1.html" \l "iiPet.1.19). -[I Cor. 13:12](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iCor.13.html" \l "iCor.13.12). -[Rev. 22:5](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Rev.22.html" \l "Rev.22.5).

“How long will it be ere they believe me?” [Numbers 14:11](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Num.14.html" \l "Num.14.11)

Strive with all diligence to keep out that monster unbelief. It so dishonours Christ, that he will withdraw his visible presence if we insult him by indulging it. It is true it is a weed, the seeds of which we can never entirely extract from the soil, but we must aim at its root with zeal and perseverance. Among hateful things it is the most to be abhorred. Its injurious nature is so venomous that he that exerciseth it and he upon whom it is exercised are both hurt thereby. In thy case, O believer! it is most wicked, for the mercies of thy Lord in the past, increase thy guilt in doubting him now. When thou dost distrust the Lord Jesus, he may well cry out, “Behold I am pressed under you, as a cart is pressed that is full of sheaves.” This is crowning his head with thorns of the sharpest kind. It is very cruel for a well-beloved wife to mistrust a kind and faithful husband. The sin is needless, foolish, and unwarranted. Jesus has never given the slightest ground for suspicion, and it is hard to be doubted by those to whom our conduct is uniformly affectionate and true. Jesus is the Son of the Highest, and has unbounded wealth; it is shameful to doubt Omnipotence and distrust all-sufficiency. The cattle on a thousand hills will suffice for our most hungry feeding, and the granaries of heaven are not likely to be emptied by our eating. If Christ were only a cistern, we might soon exhaust his fulness, but who can drain a fountain? Myriads of spirits have drawn their supplies from him, and not one of them has murmured at the scantiness of his resources. Away, then, with this lying traitor unbelief, for his only errand is to cut the bonds of communion and make us mourn an absent Saviour. Bunyan tells us that unbelief has “as many lives as a cat:” if so, let us kill one life now, and continue the work till the whole nine are gone. Down with thee, thou traitor, my heart abhors thee.

# Word Live – 8/27/19

# Something you said

## Prepare

My mission in life is ‘to be myself to the glory of God’. No one else can do this.



## Bible passage: 2 Corinthians 10:1–18

##### Paul's Defense of His Ministry

1By the meekness and gentleness of Christ, I appeal to you—I, Paul, who am "timid" when face to face with you, but "bold" when away! 2I beg you that when I come I may not have to be as bold as I expect to be toward some people who think that we live by the standards of this world. 3For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. 4The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. 5We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. 6And we will be ready to punish every act of disobedience, once your obedience is complete.

7You are looking only on the surface of things. If anyone is confident that he belongs to Christ, he should consider again that we belong to Christ just as much as he. 8For even if I boast somewhat freely about the authority the Lord gave us for building you up rather than pulling you down, I will not be ashamed of it. 9I do not want to seem to be trying to frighten you with my letters. 10For some say, "His letters are weighty and forceful, but in person he is unimpressive and his speaking amounts to nothing." 11Such people should realize that what we are in our letters when we are absent, we will be in our actions when we are present.

12We do not dare to classify or compare ourselves with some who commend themselves. When they measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves with themselves, they are not wise. 13We, however, will not boast beyond proper limits, but will confine our boasting to the field God has assigned to us, a field that reaches even to you. 14We are not going too far in our boasting, as would be the case if we had not come to you, for we did get as far as you with the gospel of Christ. 15Neither do we go beyond our limits by boasting of work done by others. Our hope is that, as your faith continues to grow, our area of activity among you will greatly expand, 16so that we can preach the gospel in the regions beyond you. For we do not want to boast about work already done in another man's territory. 17But, "Let him who boasts boast in the Lord." 18For it is not the one who commends himself who is approved, but the one whom the Lord commends.

## Explore

**Unhealed hurts**

After conflict, it is natural to want to ‘move on’ as quickly as possible. We can leave behind us loose ends, unhealed hurts and unfinished conversations. Paul knows things have been said about him behind his back (vs 1,10). The Corinthians don’t find him very impressive – at least, in the flesh. And yet his letters seem so strong. What’s going on?

**Unique role to play**

Paul addresses the subject head on. While he doesn’t assert himself as do more ‘impressive’ apostolic figures, he does have authority and he is not afraid to use it. However, it is authority for, not authority over; authority to build up, not to tear down (v 8). He is prepared to use his intellectual powers and spiritual insight to expose ungodly thinking (vs 3–5) and to bring the church into line with Christ (v 6). Moreover, as founder of the church at Corinth he has a unique role to play (v 14; see [1 Corinthians 4:15](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Corinthians+4%3A15&version=NIV)).

**Faithfulness**

In this passage Paul deals with some quite personal attacks. His response is not to hype up the personal tension but to point the church to some basic Christian principles. They want to ‘rank’ Paul by comparison with Christian leaders. But comparing ourselves to others is pointless (v 12). What counts is faithfulness in the things that God has committed to us (v 13): his opinion is what matters (v 18).

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

## Respond

Are there any loose ends in your relationships that need attention? What godly thinking can help resolve these issues?

## Deeper Bible study

How do you measure up? Paul’s opponents seem to have spent a lot of time on this question. They sought to commend themselves by making comparisons with others, especially with Paul, who they denigrated as a poor speaker and an unimpressive person generally (v 10). Almost certainly he refused to deploy the flashy rhetorical techniques they loved and probably he wasn’t physically imposing. Verse 12, with the repetition of the word ‘themselves’, leaves the impression that the false apostles were self-obsessed. They repeatedly made their comparisons and managed to convince themselves they measured up well.

Paul could easily have played their game – and won. He had an impressive track record as an apostle. For example, he had introduced the Corinthians to the gospel and led them to Christ. Then, rather than resting on his laurels, he was eager to continue his pioneering ministry elsewhere (vs 13–17). He knew that there is only one judgement that counts – God’s (v 18). Accordingly, he lived for God’s commendation alone.

We can easily be overly concerned with how we appear to others. We want to create a good impression, so we might run someone down to look better ourselves. This can happen in the workplace, in families and indeed in churches. Often it springs from insecurity. A boastful character may have little sense of self-worth. Such a person tries to build him/herself up by knocking others down, seeking to meet a deeply felt need for affirmation. Paul will have none of it. He is secure in his identity: he knows that he belongs to Christ (v 7). This leads him to be single-minded in living for God’s approval (v 18). The apostle is an example to us in this, as in much else. May we join with him in making it our goal to please our Lord (see [2 Cor 5:9](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Cor+5%3A9&version=NIV)).

Thank you, Lord, that I belong to Christ. Help me to seek his approval rather than comparing myself with others.

1 see 2 Cor 5:9

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

## Meek discipline

**Authority with a difference**

The gospel creates a new way of living. Preaching the gospel (v 16) is intended to create communities who live the gospel, who do not live according to ‘the standards of this world’ (literally ‘the flesh’, v 2). God intends that this should apply to our whole lives.  
  
In this chapter Paul is applying this principle to leadership, to the exercise of authority. Authority is for the benefit of its recipients, not for the benefit of leaders: ‘for building you up’ (v 8). Its purpose is obedience to Christ (v 5) – only incidentally, obedience to a leader. Above all, it is to exhibit the character of Christ (v 1).  
  
**Controlled strength**

By the ‘standards of this world’ (v 2), ‘meekness and gentleness’ (v 1) are weak. But not so in God’s economy. As embodied in Christ, meekness means patient strength: strength surrendered to God and used as he directs, rather than out of reaction to others.  
  
Paul is about to come to Corinth to exercise church discipline. His patience and gentleness have been misread as weakness: timid face to face, bold when away (v 10).  
  
But now he has to confront and expel the intruders who have usurped leadership in the church (see [2 Corinthians 11:12–15](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2%20Corinthians%2011:12-15&version=TNIV)) as well as dealing with serious failures in Christian lifestyle (see [2 Corinthians 12:20,21](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2%20Corinthians%2012:20-21&version=TNIV)). He is properly equipped for the task, with real spiritual power, in contrast with the strategies of his critics: self-promotion, disparaging comparison with others, and financial profiteering.  
  
**Risking misunderstanding**

Paul will act out of love for the Corinthians, some of whom will not find his loving discipline easy to accept. Some will question his authority, others his consistency. His only safeguard is God’s approval (v 18).  
  
God commends the Christlike, but Christlike leadership always risks misunderstanding. What might it mean in your context to be a Christlike, disciplined church?  
  
Graham Cray

## Defeating character assassinators

**Coping with criticism**

Life can be bruising, and sometimes the blows we receive strike at the heart of who we are. Those in leadership are prime targets for personal criticism, but all of us will find our characters under scrutiny at times.  
  
Some criticism will be fair, and if we take it humbly on board it could help us mature. But some will be untrue, and will damage not only our reputation, but God’s also.  
  
In Paul’s second letter to the Corinthians, he responds to the many assaults on his integrity that have come from this fledgling church. There is a lot we can learn from the way he handles the accusations.  
  
**Lessons from Paul in answering critics with godliness:  
  
1) Identify the charges against you as accurately as possible.**

Paul has been accused, among other things, of ‘living by the standards of this world’ (v 2), being strong in his letters but weak in person (vs 1,10), and not commending himself strongly enough to them, as his competitors seem to be doing rather well (v 12). By answering each of these points specifically, he is able to make a good case for himself without seeming overly defensive and sensitive.  
  
**2) Answer each charge clearly and humbly**

Paul is confident that he has been acting in obedience to God, and therefore is able to say that he is not ashamed of his ‘meekness and gentleness‘ (vs 1,8). Likewise, he believes that commending himself to them amounts to boasting, and the only boasting he feels comfortable with is boasting in the Lord (v 17).  
  
**3) Seek first God’s approval**

We all want to be well thought of, and it is a nasty experience to have your character or actions called into question. But it is vital that we hold onto the fact, as Paul does, that it is God whose opinion of us really counts (v 18).  
  
Jo Swinney

## Think about



What have you got to boast about?  
  
‘Let those who boast boast in the Lord’ (v 17).

# Today in the Word – 8/27/19

# Signs to Stay Awake

**Read:** [**Mark 13:24-37**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+13%3a24-37)

**24**“But in those days, following that distress,

“‘the sun will be darkened,  
    and the moon will not give its light;  
**25**the stars will fall from the sky,  
    and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.’[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+13%3a24-37#fen-NIV-24743a)]

**26**“At that time people will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. **27**And he will send his angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of the heavens.

**28**“Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near. **29**Even so, when you see these things happening, you know that it[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+13%3a24-37#fen-NIV-24747b)] is near, right at the door. **30**Truly I tell you, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. **31**Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.

### The Day and Hour Unknown

**32**“But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. **33**Be on guard! Be alert[[c](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+13%3a24-37#fen-NIV-24751c)]! You do not know when that time will come. **34**It’s like a man going away: He leaves his house and puts his servants in charge, each with their assigned task, and tells the one at the door to keep watch.

**35**“Therefore keep watch because you do not know when the owner of the house will come back—whether in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or at dawn. **36**If he comes suddenly, do not let him find you sleeping. **37**What I say to you, I say to everyone: ‘Watch!’”

#### Footnotes:

1. [Mark 13:25](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+13%3a24-37#en-NIV-24743) Isaiah 13:10; 34:4
2. [Mark 13:29](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+13%3a24-37#en-NIV-24747) Or he
3. [Mark 13:33](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+13%3a24-37#en-NIV-24751) Some manuscripts alert and pray

Driving along the Baltimore-Washington Parkway in October, you will see a beautiful sight: most of the foliage begins to change into red, orange, and yellow shades. The stretch of road between the two cities is lined with trees bursting with colors. And when drivers see these autumn colors, they know winter is coming very soon.

What I say to you, I say to everyone: Watch! Mark 13:37

When the leaves of the fig tree sprouted and its twigs became tender, it was a sign for Jesus’ audience that summer was drawing near (v. 28). Jesus used the ability to read that physical sign in nature to exhort his hearers to consider signs pointing to His return.

The unique nature of these signs would distinguish them from anyone’s claim to have seen the returned Messiah. Scripture teaches that all celestial bodies will be disturbed by the return of Christ—the sun, moon, and stars (vv. 24–25).

Unlike the predictable signs of the changing seasons, the exact time of the return of Christ is unknown even to Jesus (v. 32)! Only the Father has that date on His calendar. Jesus, in humility, voluntarily choses to leave that date in the mind of the Father alone. In doing so, Jesus lovingly creates a situation in which we must be ready at all times for signs pointing toward His return. We cannot drive down life’s road looking for an annual event that will nudge us to get ready for what’s to come. Instead, we must live in readiness mode at all times, being ever watchful.

Christ’s words about the end times have more permanence than the present heaven and earth. We would do well to heed His words with expectant hearts. This time He is coming with the power and glory of His rule.

### Apply the Word

How often do you check your daily calendar? While we cannot check our calendar to know the exact date of Christ’s return, every generation has hoped that Jesus would return in their lifetime. This eager expectancy reflects the promises of our salvation. We are to live each day as if we will see our King in His full glory tomorrow.

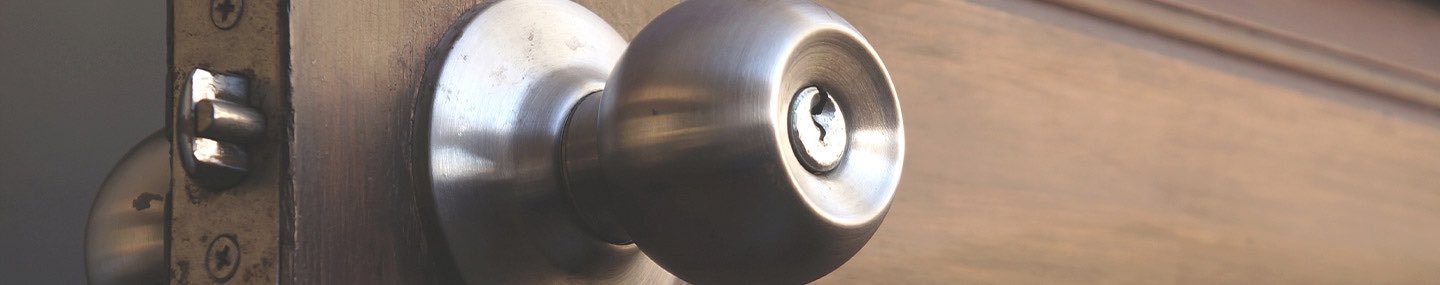
### Pray with Us

Would you pray for Greg Thornton, senior vice president of Media? Greg’s humility and love for the Lord have been a blessing for many at MBI. Ask God to continue guiding Greg in his media ministry, as well as in his service on MBI’s leadership team.

## BY Eric C. Redmond

# Our Daily Bread – 8/27/19

# A Reason to Sing

[Psalm 121](https://www.odb.org/2019/08/27/a-reason-to-sing-2)

#### A song of ascents.

1I lift up my eyes to the mountains—  
    where does my help come from?  
2My help comes from the Lord,  
    the Maker of heaven and earth.

3He will not let your foot slip—  
    he who watches over you will not slumber;  
4indeed, he who watches over Israel  
    will neither slumber nor sleep.

5The Lord watches over you—  
    the Lord is your shade at your right hand;  
6the sun will not harm you by day,  
    nor the moon by night.

7The Lord will keep you from all harm—  
    he will watch over your life;  
8the Lord will watch over your coming and going  
    both now and forevermore.

He who watches over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep. [Psalm 121:4](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=NIV&search=Psalm+121%3A4)

For a man who lives by a code, so to speak, it felt like a major failure. What’d I do? Well, I fell asleep. Our kids have a curfew to meet when they’re out for the evening. They’re good kids, but my practice is to wait up until I hear their hands turn the front doorknob. I want to know they’re home safe. I don’t have to do this: I choose to. But one night I awoke to my daughter saying through a smile, “Dad, I’m safe. You should go to bed.” Despite our best intentions, sometimes fathers fall asleep at their posts. It was very humbling, and also very human.

But that never happens with God. Psalm 121 is a reassuring song about Him as guardian and protector of His children. The psalmist declares that God who watches over us “will not slumber” (v. 3). And for emphasis, he repeats that truth in verse 4: He “will neither slumber nor sleep.”

Can you even imagine? God never falls asleep at His post. He is always keeping watch over us—the sons and daughters and aunts and uncles and mothers, and even fathers. It’s not so much that He has to do this, but rather that, out of His great love, He chooses to. That promise is definitely something to sing about.

By:  [John Blase](https://odb.org/author/johnblase/)

#### Reflect & Pray

In what ways do you sense God’s presence? When you don’t, what truths can you depend upon?

Father, thank You for Your constant care over our lives. We know that doesn’t mean a life absent of trouble, but rather a life held close by Your love and presence. Help us to confidently rest in the assurance that You’re always at Your post.

#### Insight

Psalm 121 is a song of ascent that would have been sung by worshipers on their annual journey to Jerusalem. The assurance that God “watches over” His people is repeated five times (vv. 3, 4, 5, 7, 8). The psalm is structured poetically into four couplets, each with a different theme, but all pertaining in some way to God’s protection. Verses 1 and 2 reverently declare that help comes from the “Maker of heaven and earth.” Verses 3–4 emphasize that He never slumbers as He watches over His people. Verses 5 and 6 proclaim His protection over Israel both day and night. And verses 7 and 8 point out God’s eternal protection both “now and forevermore.”

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

# God Calling – 8/27/19

# Tangled Skeins

In quietness and in confidence shall be your strength. -- Isaiah 30:15

Feel that . . . trust Me. Am I not leading you safely, faithfully? Will you believe Me, your Master, that all this is really to bring the answer to your prayers?

Remember that I am the Supreme Being who knows all and can control all.

Directly you put your affairs, their confusion, their difficulties, into My Hands I began to effect a cure of all the disharmony and disorder.

You must know that I shall cause you no more pain in the doing of it than a physician, who plans and knows he can effect a cure, would cause his patient. I will do all as tenderly as possible.

Tell Me that you trust Me in this.

He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters ... he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.  Psalm 23:2, 3

# My Utmost for His Highest – 8/28/19

# The Purpose of Prayer



…one of His disciples said to Him, "Lord, teach us to pray…" —[Luke 11:1](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=Luke+11%3A1)

Prayer is not a normal part of the life of the natural man. We hear it said that a person’s life will suffer if he doesn’t pray, but I question that. What will suffer is the life of the Son of God in him, which is nourished not by food, but by prayer. When a person is born again from above, the life of the Son of God is born in him, and he can either starve or nourish that life. Prayer is the way that the life of God in us is nourished. Our common ideas regarding prayer are not found in the New Testament. We look upon prayer simply as a means of getting things for ourselves, but the biblical purpose of prayer is that we may get to know God Himself.

“Ask, and you will receive…” ([John 16:24](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+16:24)). We complain before God, and sometimes we are apologetic or indifferent to Him, but we actually ask Him for very few things. Yet a child exhibits a magnificent boldness to ask! Our Lord said, “…unless you…become as little children…” ([Matthew 18:3](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+18:3)). Ask and God will do. Give Jesus Christ the opportunity and the room to work. The problem is that no one will ever do this until he is at his wits’ end. When a person is at his wits’ end, it no longer seems to be a cowardly thing to pray; in fact, it is the only way he can get in touch with the truth and the reality of God Himself. Be yourself before God and present Him with your problems— the very things that have brought you to your wits’ end. But as long as you think you are self-sufficient, you do not need to ask God for anything.

To say that “prayer changes things” is not as close to the truth as saying, “Prayer changes me and then I change things.” God has established things so that prayer, on the basis of redemption, changes the way a person looks at things. Prayer is not a matter of changing things externally, but one of working miracles in a person’s inner nature.

**Wisdom From Oswald Chambers**

The truth is we have nothing to fear and nothing to overcome because He is all in all and we are more than conquerors through Him. The recognition of this truth is not flattering to the worker’s sense of heroics, but it is amazingly glorifying to the work of Christ. Approved Unto God, 4 R

# CCEL – 8/28/19

**The accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night.**—[REV. 12:10.](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Rev.12.html" \l "Rev.12.10)

They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony.—Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.

Having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly.—That through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.—In all these things we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us.—Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. And take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.—Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

[Rev. 12:11](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Rev.12.html" \l "Rev.12.11). -[Rom. 8:33,34](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Rom.8.html" \l "Rom.8.33).[Col. 2:15](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Col.2.html" \l "Col.2.15). -[Heb. 2:14,15](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Heb.2.html" \l "Heb.2.14). -[Rom. 8:37](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Rom.8.html" \l "Rom.8.37). -[Eph. 6:11](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Eph.6.html" \l "Eph.6.11),[17](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Eph.6.html" \l "Eph.6.17). -[I Cor. 15:57](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iCor.15.html" \l "iCor.15.57).

“Oil for the light.” [Exodus 25:6](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Exod.25.html" \l "Exod.25.6)

My soul, how much thou needest this, for thy lamp will not long continue to burn without it. Thy snuff will smoke and become an offence if light be gone, and gone it will be if oil be absent. Thou hast no oil well springing up in thy human nature, and therefore thou must go to them that sell and buy for thyself, or like the foolish virgins, thou wilt have to cry, “My lamp is gone out.” Even the consecrated lamps could not give light without oil; though they shone in the tabernacle they needed to be fed, though no rough winds blew upon them they required to be trimmed, and thy need is equally as great. Under the most happy circumstances thou canst not give light for another hour unless fresh oil of grace be given thee.

It was not every oil that might be used in the Lord’s service; neither the petroleum which exudes so plentifully from the earth, nor the produce of fishes, nor that extracted from nuts would be accepted; one oil only was selected, and that the best olive oil. Pretended grace from natural goodness, fancied grace from priestly hands, or imaginary grace from outward ceremonies will never serve the true saint of God; he knows that the Lord would not be pleased with rivers of such oil. He goes to the olive-press of Gethsemane, and draws his supplies from him who was crushed therein. The oil of gospel grace is pure and free from lees and dregs, and hence the light which is fed thereon is clear and bright. Our churches are the Saviour’s golden candelabra, and if they are to be lights in this dark world, they must have much holy oil. Let us pray for ourselves, our ministers, and our churches, that they may never lack oil for the light. Truth, holiness, joy, knowledge, love, these are all beams of the sacred light, but we cannot give them forth unless in private we receive oil from God the Holy Ghost.

# Word Live – 8/28/19

# Infidelity

## Prepare

Recognise the presence of Jesus, the ‘Lion of Judah’ and the ‘Lamb of God’.



## Bible passage: 2 Corinthians 11:1–15

##### Paul and the False Apostles

1I hope you will put up with a little of my foolishness; but you are already doing that. 2I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy. I promised you to one husband, to Christ, so that I might present you as a pure virgin to him. 3But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ. 4For if someone comes to you and preaches a Jesus other than the Jesus we preached, or if you receive a different spirit from the one you received, or a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it easily enough. 5But I do not think I am in the least inferior to those "super-apostles." 6I may not be a trained speaker, but I do have knowledge. We have made this perfectly clear to you in every way.

7Was it a sin for me to lower myself in order to elevate you by preaching the gospel of God to you free of charge? 8I robbed other churches by receiving support from them so as to serve you. 9And when I was with you and needed something, I was not a burden to anyone, for the brothers who came from Macedonia supplied what I needed. I have kept myself from being a burden to you in any way, and will continue to do so. 10As surely as the truth of Christ is in me, nobody in the regions of Achaia will stop this boasting of mine. 11Why? Because I do not love you? God knows I do! 12And I will keep on doing what I am doing in order to cut the ground from under those who want an opportunity to be considered equal with us in the things they boast about. 13For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, masquerading as apostles of Christ. 14And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. 15It is not surprising, then, if his servants masquerade as servants of righteousness. Their end will be what their actions deserve.

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## Explore

**Passionate passages**

Almost against his better judgement, Paul now begins to speak frankly, even ‘foolishly’. At times it looks as though he is fighting for himself, but he can rightly say ‘the truth of Christ is in me’ (v 10) so his battle is for Christ. If his readers knew their Old Testament they would sense the strength of feeling behind Paul’s words. There Israel is often addressed as an unfaithful wife, a whore (eg [Ezekiel 16](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ezekiel+16&version=NIV) and [Hosea 1–3](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Hosea+1%E2%80%933&version=NIV)). These are passionate passages. Now Paul is in the position of a father whose daughter has been unfaithful to her promised husband (v 2).

**One and the same**

At stake is the nature of Jesus and the nature of the gospel (v 4). Whatever the heresy being preached by Paul’s rivals, they seem to have lost the connection between the Jesus who suffered and the Jesus who is Lord. Paul is always at pains to emphasise that this is one and the same person (eg 4:11; 5:15; 8:9; see [1 Corinthians 1:18–25](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Corinthians+1%3A18%E2%80%9325&version=NIV)).

**Devilish deception**

So the attitude of the Corinthian church to Paul and their attitude to Christ himself, whom Paul has tried to model to them, are profoundly connected. Paul became poor to make them rich (vs 7–9; see too 8:9) but the Corinthians despised him for not ‘pulling rank’ like his opponents. Behind all this is a devilish deception (vs 13–15) against which Paul must fight.

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

## Respond

Does my life model the Jesus who both suffered and is raised to glory?

## Deeper Bible study

We talk very easily about ‘love’. The word trips off the tongue, but what we say often fails to live up to the reality. Some protestations of love are only so much hot air. Worse still, people talk about love but end up manipulating and exploiting others. People cry out for genuine love, but often they are disappointed.

Paul is different. He loves the Corinthians deeply and expresses this love with some of his most passionate writing (eg v 11), but he doesn’t only write about love, he demonstrates it practically. The specific example mentioned in our verses is his refusal to accept money from the Corinthians when he was with them, although he had every right to ask for financial assistance (vs 7–11). He did not want to be a ‘burden’ to them (vs 9,10). This sacrificial act was the authenticating hallmark of his love, proving it to be genuine. Here is real love that makes a difference, patterned on the sacrificial, self-giving and transformative love Christ has for us.

Christians talk a lot about love. This is quite right, for we have a God who is love in his very nature and he calls us to love others, even those who are our ‘enemies’ ([Matt 5:44; 1 John 4:7,8; 1 Pet 1:22](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matt+5%3A44%3B+1+John+4%3A7%2C8%3B+1+Pet+1%3A22&version=NIV)). We know this, but do we show it? Our call is to be people of word and deed, loving as Jesus loved. As we do this, we should expect to be misunderstood, just as Paul was (vs 7,8). This happens especially when the people we are called to serve are wounded and broken, for when we touch people’s wounds they will sometimes feel the pain and lash out. However, we are called to persevere in love. How will we reflect Christ’s love to others today?

Think of the people God has given you to love, especially those you find difficult. How can you practically express your love for them?

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

## I’m no superman (Background)

**Paul: ‘I’m different!**

Driven by a love for the Corinthians (v 11) and a commitment to Christ on their behalf (v 2), Paul is determined to ensure the believers hold onto true teaching. His problem is that since his credibility has been undermined in their eyes, the Corinthians are pretty receptive to taking on a different version of the truth than they had originally accepted from Paul.  
  
It is therefore imperative that Paul distinguish himself from the so-called ‘super-apostles’ and regain the trust of the new church.  
  
**Travelling teachers**

Without some background, it is difficult to understand how these false teachers had so impressed their hearers. It seems to be based on two factors:  
  
**1)** They demanded payment from their listeners.  
  
**2)** They were skilled in rhetoric.  
  
Why were these things so important to the Corinthians, and why did Paul deliberately choose to do things differently?  
  
**Payment**

By earning a wage from their teaching, these preachers were by the same token increasing the perceived value of their work. It was understood that teachers should receive payment in proportion to the worth of their performance.  
  
By preaching free of charge, Paul was knowingly lowering himself in their eyes (v 7). He did this to serve them, and to make perfectly clear that he was not to be compared to the false apostles (v 12).  
  
**Rhetoric**

Rhetoric was a significant intellectual discipline in the ancient world. This dated back to the fifth century BC, when a man named Corax began to teach the art of disputation and persuasion on the island of Syracuse.   
  
Paul deliberately distanced himself from these techniques, unashamedly referring to himself as an untrained speaker (v 6), and relying instead on the power of God to win people over to his message (see [1 Corinthians 2:1,2](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Corinthians%202:1-2&version=TNIV)).  
  
Jo Swinney

## Talk together

Are there ways in which you are being tempted to accept a ‘different Jesus’ or ‘different gospel’ (v 4)?  
  
Could you be getting it wrong – in what you believe, or in things you do? Are there aspects of the gospel that you prefer to overlook?

# Today in the Word – 8/28/19

# Preparing for Passover

**Read:** [**Mark 14:1-21**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+14%3a1-21)

### Jesus Anointed at Bethany

14 Now the Passover and the Festival of Unleavened Bread were only two days away, and the chief priests and the teachers of the law were scheming to arrest Jesus secretly and kill him. 2“But not during the festival,” they said, “or the people may riot.”

3While he was in Bethany, reclining at the table in the home of Simon the Leper, a woman came with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, made of pure nard. She broke the jar and poured the perfume on his head.

4Some of those present were saying indignantly to one another, “Why this waste of perfume? 5It could have been sold for more than a year’s wages[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+14%3a1-21#fen-NIV-24760a)] and the money given to the poor.” And they rebuked her harshly.

6“Leave her alone,” said Jesus. “Why are you bothering her? She has done a beautiful thing to me. 7The poor you will always have with you,[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+14%3a1-21#fen-NIV-24762b)] and you can help them any time you want. But you will not always have me. 8She did what she could. She poured perfume on my body beforehand to prepare for my burial. 9Truly I tell you, wherever the gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her.”

10Then Judas Iscariot, one of the Twelve, went to the chief priests to betray Jesus to them. 11They were delighted to hear this and promised to give him money. So he watched for an opportunity to hand him over.

### The Last Supper

12On the first day of the Festival of Unleavened Bread, when it was customary to sacrifice the Passover lamb, Jesus’ disciples asked him, “Where do you want us to go and make preparations for you to eat the Passover?”

13So he sent two of his disciples, telling them, “Go into the city, and a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him. 14Say to the owner of the house he enters, ‘The Teacher asks: Where is my guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?’ 15He will show you a large room upstairs, furnished and ready. Make preparations for us there.”

16The disciples left, went into the city and found things just as Jesus had told them. So they prepared the Passover.

17When evening came, Jesus arrived with the Twelve. 18While they were reclining at the table eating, he said, “Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me—one who is eating with me.”

19They were saddened, and one by one they said to him, “Surely you don’t mean me?”

20“It is one of the Twelve,” he replied, “one who dips bread into the bowl with me. 21The Son of Man will go just as it is written about him. But woe to that man who betrays the Son of Man! It would be better for him if he had not been born.”

#### Footnotes:

1. [Mark 14:5](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+14%3a1-21#en-NIV-24760) Greek than three hundred denarii
2. [Mark 14:7](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+14%3a1-21#en-NIV-24762) See Deut. 15:11.

As the most anticipated movie of 2019, Marvel’s Avengers: Endgame broke the international opening weekend gross record, making $859 million. Building up to the event, potential viewers were encouraged to re-watch the entire 20+ movies in the Marvel series leading up to Endgame. For many, the pre-viewing measures helped make the waiting for the movie worth all its surrounding hype.

She has done a beautiful thing to me. Mark 14:6

In Mark’s narrative, multiple preparations were under way for the Passover, all of them associated with Jesus. Some of these actions were horribly wrong and went against the central meaning of Passover. Others were perceptively right and honored the event. Wrongly, the chief priests and scribes worked to remove Jesus from the Passover celebration. Their actions were especially self-condemning since they knew what the Law taught about murder and what the Old Testament taught about treating the righteous as evil.

Equally wrongly, Judas entered a plot to betray Jesus. The wayward disciple was guided by his desire for money rather than the remembrance of God’s mercy as commemorated by the Passover.

Rightly, however, a woman unidentified by Mark anointed Jesus for burial with costly pure nard or perfume, recognizing Him as her High Priest (Ex. 29:7). She had eyes to see Jesus’ coming death and burial, and associated it with Passover. This woman prepared for the feast by worshiping Jesus, recognizing her need for His mediation. Similarly, the disciples obediently prepared the place to share the Passover feast with Jesus.

The way we prepare to participate in the Lord’s Supper—the event memorializing Jesus’ death for us—can help us gain more from the celebration. Our preparations of worship and obedience appropriately honor Jesus and remember His sacrifice.

### Apply the Word

Does your church participate in the Lord’s Supper, also known as the Communion Table? If you know the date ahead of time, set aside time to prepare your heart for worship. Reread passages that mention the Lord’s Supper in the Gospels, reflect on the meaning of Christ’s death on your behalf, and ask the Lord to cleanse you of sin.

### Pray with Us

Thank God for the lesson we’ve learned from today’s reading. May we remember Jesus as the Passover Lamb, thank Him for His sacrifice on our behalf, and honor Him as Lord. May we worship Him in Spirit and in truth!

## BY Eric C. Redmond

# Our Daily Bread – 8/28/19

# Live. Pray. Love.



**Read:** [**Romans 12:9–21**](https://www.odb.org/2019/08/28/live-pray-love)

### Love in Action

9Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. 10Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves. 11Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. 12Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. 13Share with the Lord’s people who are in need. Practice hospitality.

14Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. 15Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. 16Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position.[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=NIV&search=Romans+12%3A9%E2%80%9321#fen-NIV-28262a)] Do not be conceited.

17Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. 18If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. 19Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written: “It is mine to avenge; I will repay,”[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=NIV&search=Romans+12%3A9%E2%80%9321#fen-NIV-28265b)] says the Lord. 20On the contrary:

“If your enemy is hungry, feed him;  
    if he is thirsty, give him something to drink.  
In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head.”[[c](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=NIV&search=Romans+12%3A9%E2%80%9321#fen-NIV-28266c)]

21Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

#### Footnotes:

1. [Romans 12:16](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=NIV&search=Romans+12%3A9%E2%80%9321#en-NIV-28262) Or willing to do menial work
2. [Romans 12:19](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=NIV&search=Romans+12%3A9%E2%80%9321#en-NIV-28265) Deut. 32:35
3. [Romans 12:20](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=NIV&search=Romans+12%3A9%E2%80%9321#en-NIV-28266) Prov. 25:21,22

Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. [Romans 12:21](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=NIV&search=Romans+12%3A21)

Influenced by parents who were strong believers in Jesus, track star Jesse Owens lived as a courageous man of faith. During the 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin, Owens, one of the few African Americans on the US team, received four gold medals in the presence of hate-filled Nazis and their leader, Hitler. He also befriended fellow athlete Luz Long, a German. Surrounded by Nazi propaganda, Owens’s simple act of living out his faith impacted Luz’s life. Later, Long wrote to Owens: “That hour in Berlin when I first spoke to you, when you had your knee upon the ground, I knew you were in prayer . . . . I think I might believe in God.”

Owens demonstrated how believers can answer the apostle Paul’s charge to “hate what is evil” and be “devoted to one another in love” (Romans 12:9–10). Though he could have responded to the evil around him with hate, Owens chose to live by faith and show love to a man who would later become his friend and eventually consider belief in God.

As God’s people commit to being “faithful in prayer” (v. 12), He empowers us to “live in harmony with one another” (v. 16).

When we depend on prayer, we can commit to living out our faith and loving all who are made in God’s image. As we cry out to God, He’ll help us break down barriers and build bridges of peace with our neighbors.

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

#### Reflect & Pray

How can you build a bridge of peace between you and a neighbor? When have you seen your faithfulness in prayer bear fruit?

Heavenly Father, please strengthen us to come together in prayer, fully committed to loving others and living peacefully.

#### Insight

Romans 12:9–21 is a difficult passage to outline—like the snippets of sayings in the book of Proverbs. But Paul is still on the subject of a renewed mind and a transformed life (12:1–2). And the central focus is love—the priority of love in the life of a believer in Jesus (v. 9). The clearest demonstration of a Christlike life is Christlike love. A transformed life is a life of radical loving and sacrificial giving. Paul tells us how we are to relate to both believers (vv. 9–16) and non-believers (vv. 17–21) in a world of evil. Love of others—especially of enemies—is a key test of the reality of a renewed mind and a transformed life (v. 21).

# God Calling – 8/28/19

# Continuous Service

Service is the Law of Heaven. My angels do always obey. "They serve Him continually" can be said of all who love Me.

With Love there is continuous service in every action, and also even in rest.

Take this not as the end but as the beginning of a New Life consecrated to My Service.

A Life of Power and Joy.

If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be; if any man serve me, him will my Father honour.  John 12:26

# My Utmost for His Highest – 8/29/19

# The Unsurpassed Intimacy of Tested Faith



Jesus said to her, "Did I not say to you that if you would believe you would see the glory of God?" —[John 11:40](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=John+11%3A40)

Every time you venture out in your life of faith, you will find something in your circumstances that, from a commonsense standpoint, will flatly contradict your faith. But common sense is not faith, and faith is not common sense. In fact, they are as different as the natural life and the spiritual. Can you trust Jesus Christ where your common sense cannot trust Him? Can you venture out with courage on the words of Jesus Christ, while the realities of your commonsense life continue to shout, “It’s all a lie”? When you are on the mountaintop, it’s easy to say, “Oh yes, I believe God can do it,” but you have to come down from the mountain to the demon-possessed valley and face the realities that scoff at your Mount-of-Transfiguration belief (see [Luke 9:28-42](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+9:28-42)). Every time my theology becomes clear to my own mind, I encounter something that contradicts it. As soon as I say, “I believe ‘God shall supply all [my] need,’ ” the testing of my faith begins ([Philippians 4:19](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Philippians+4:19)). When my strength runs dry and my vision is blinded, will I endure this trial of my faith victoriously or will I turn back in defeat?

Faith must be tested, because it can only become your intimate possession through conflict. What is challenging your faith right now? The test will either prove your faith right, or it will kill it. Jesus said, “Blessed is he who is not offended because of Me” [Matthew 11:6](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+11:6)). The ultimate thing is confidence in Jesus. “We have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end…” ([Hebrews 3:14](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Hebrews+3:14)). Believe steadfastly on Him and everything that challenges you will strengthen your faith. There is continual testing in the life of faith up to the point of our physical death, which is the last great test. Faith is absolute trust in God— trust that could never imagine that He would forsake us (see [Hebrews 13:5-6](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Hebrews+13:5-6)).

**Wisdom From Oswald Chambers**

Sincerity means that the appearance and the reality are exactly the same.  
[Studies in the Sermon on the Mount](https://dhp.org/0098.html)

# CCEL – 8/29/19

**Whoso trusteth in the Lord, happy is he.**—[PROV. 16:20.](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Prov.16.html" \l "Prov.16.20)

[Abraham] staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform.—The children of Judah prevailed, because they relied upon the Lord God of their fathers.

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea.—It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man. It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in princes.—The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord: and he delighteth in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand.

O taste and see that the Lord is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him. O fear the Lord, ye his saints: for there is no want to them that fear him.

[Rom. 4:20,21](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Rom.4.html" \l "Rom.4.20). -[II Chr. 13:18](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iiChr.13.html" \l "iiChr.13.18).[Psa. 46:1,2](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.46.html" \l "Ps.46.1). -[Psa. 118:8,9](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.118.html" \l "Ps.118.8). -[Psa. 37:23,24](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.37.html" \l "Ps.37.23).[Psa. 34:8,9](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.34.html" \l "Ps.34.8).

“Have mercy upon me, O God.” [Psalm 51:1](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.51.html" \l "Ps.51.1)

When Dr. Carey was suffering from a dangerous illness, the enquiry was made, “If this sickness should prove fatal, what passage would you select as the text for your funeral sermon?” He replied, “Oh, I feel that such a poor sinful creature is unworthy to have anything said about him; but if a funeral sermon must be preached, let it be from the words, ‘Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness; according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions.’” In the same spirit of humility he directed in his will that the following inscription and nothing more should be cut on his gravestone:—

William Carey, Born August 17th, 1761: Died - -

“A wretched, poor, and helpless worm

On thy kind arms I fall.”

Only on the footing of free grace can the most experienced and most honoured of the saints approach their God. The best of men are conscious above all others that they are men at the best. Empty boats float high, but heavily laden vessels are low in the water; mere professors can boast, but true children of God cry for mercy upon their unprofitableness. We have need that the Lord should have mercy upon our good works, our prayers, our preachings, our alms-givings, and our holiest things. The blood was not only sprinkled upon the doorposts of Israel’s dwelling houses, but upon the sanctuary, the mercy-seat, and the altar, because as sin intrudes into our holiest things, the blood of Jesus is needed to purify them from defilement. If mercy be needed to be exercised towards our duties, what shall be said of our sins? How sweet the remembrance that inexhaustible mercy is waiting to be gracious to us, to restore our backslidings, and make our broken bones rejoice!

# Word Live – 8/29/19

# Christian credentials

## Prepare

Spend some time reflecting on Jesus’ words in [John 12:24,25](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+12%3A24%2C25&version=NIV). Offer your day or week to him.



## Bible passage: 2 Corinthians 11:16–33

##### Paul Boasts About His Sufferings

16I repeat: Let no one take me for a fool. But if you do, then receive me just as you would a fool, so that I may do a little boasting. 17In this self-confident boasting I am not talking as the Lord would, but as a fool. 18Since many are boasting in the way the world does, I too will boast. 19You gladly put up with fools since you are so wise! 20In fact, you even put up with anyone who enslaves you or exploits you or takes advantage of you or pushes himself forward or slaps you in the face. 21To my shame I admit that we were too weak for that!

   What anyone else dares to boast about—I am speaking as a fool—I also dare to boast about. 22Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they Abraham's descendants? So am I. 23Are they servants of Christ? (I am out of my mind to talk like this.) I am more. I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again. 24Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. 25Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, 26I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my own countrymen, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false brothers. 27I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked. 28Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches. 29Who is weak, and I do not feel weak? Who is led into sin, and I do not inwardly burn?

30If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness. 31The God and Father of the Lord Jesus, who is to be praised forever, knows that I am not lying. 32In Damascus the governor under King Aretas had the city of the Damascenes guarded in order to arrest me. 33But I was lowered in a basket from a window in the wall and slipped through his hands.

## Explore

**By comparison**

The church at Corinth was conflicted. On the one hand they had impressive visiting speakers asserting their authority boldly; on the other hand there was Paul, supporting himself and seeming rather ordinary. In a world where power and authority were displayed assertively, Paul did not compare very well.

**Boastful confidence**

So, with a large dose of irony, Paul plays the same game of boastful confidence (v 17). This is his humanity speaking, not Christ. Yes, these visiting speakers are indeed more impressive, but look at how they demean the church (v 20). Paul can match their Jewish credentials (v 22), but the qualifications that really matter are very different.

**True apostle**

For Paul a true apostle undertook pioneer missionary work at great personal risk. The experiences which show his ‘weakness’ are the cross-shaped marks of a true apostle of Jesus Christ. These include the daily anxiety he carries for all the churches – including the church at Corinth.

**Measures of success**

It is natural to aspire to significance. We all want our lives to count. As Christians, we want to know that we are of use in God’s kingdom. But the measures of success we use can be seductive and misguided. Success in the eyes of God may not involve human recognition at all.

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

## Respond

‘I am no longer my own but yours. Put me to what you will, rank me with whom you will; … I freely and wholeheartedly yield all things to your pleasure and disposal.’ (From the Methodist Covenant Prayer)

## Deeper Bible study

As noted in the Introduction to these notes, ‘strength in weakness’ is an overarching theme of the letter – it is certainly to the fore in today’s reading. Paul’s opponents were boasting about their background, their culture and their polished rhetoric. The apostle could easily have done the same. Yet when he does boast he focuses on his weaknesses, setting out with passion and precision various ways he suffered as an apostle (vs 23–29). His words are deeply moving. Truly, Paul has shown himself a servant of Christ (v 23). His example encourages us to get out of our comfort zones and take risks as we seek to follow Jesus today.

Verses 32 and 33 can appear puzzling at first. Paul’s successful escape from Damascus doesn’t seem to fit with his boasting about weakness. Understanding the Roman background helps us. When an army laid siege to a city, the first soldier to go over the wall and enter the city (assuming he survived) claimed the Corona Muralis, or ‘wall crown’. This was perhaps the greatest military honour a Roman soldier could attain.1 Astonishingly, Paul takes this image of heroism and reverses it. He was not the first in but effectively the first out, fleeing over the wall to escape arrest. For people of the day, this would have smacked of one thing: weakness. Paul, however, was unashamed to boast in this ‘foolish’ (see v 17) upside-down fashion.

Sadly, in church and wider society today, we have a tendency to boast about our strengths (as we see them). In churches this sometimes reveals itself in a celebrity culture and in showy, self-promoting ministries. We serve Jesus, however, whose own crown was made of thorns. We are called to follow him. Paul shows us the way.

Have we been sucked into playing power games, in the church or wider society? God calls us to repentance, to take up our cross daily and to follow his Son.

1 See Tom Wright, Paul: A Biography, SPCK, 2018, p314

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

## The loser wins this one (Application)

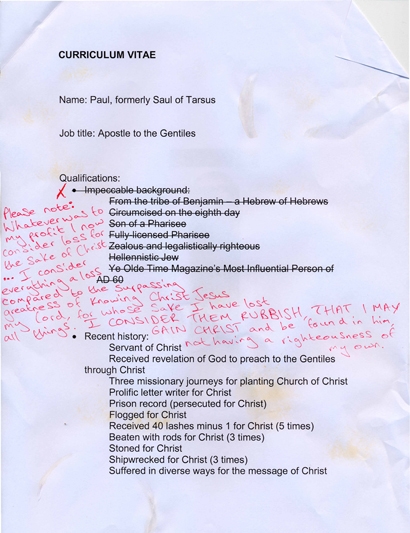
**Up to the eyes with it**

By this point in his letter, Paul can’t contain his sarcasm any longer. His frustration at the Corinthians’ willingness to put up with the outrages of the false teachers spills out in cutting wit (‘what a shame we were too weak to slap you in the face too!’; see vs 20,21) and a mock attempt to out-boast his competitors (vs 22,23).  
  
**Boasting with a difference**

But then his boasting takes on a new tone, and it is unlikely that anyone would want to out-do him in these particular achievements. The list of the suffering Paul has undergone in the course of his work for Christ is staggering and includes:  
  
• Eight floggings – five at the hands of his own Jewish people, and three from the Romans, despite the fact that Paul’s Roman citizenship gave him legal protection from such punishment.  
  
• Three shipwrecks, one of which is recorded in Acts chapter 27.  
  
• A stoning, which was a traditional manner of Jewish execution and intended to kill him.  
  
• Horrendous physical deprivations of food, water, sleep and clothing.  
  
I don’t think anyone would dare suggest to this particular follower of Christ that Christianity is nothing more than an emotional crutch!  
  
**Comfort or a cross?**

Paul is a leader in the mould of Jesus. He suffers and feels deeply for his followers – in his weakness he is strong. Paul is modelling a painful, all-consuming discipleship.  
  
Even today, we are vulnerable to teachers who pedal a more comfortable form of belief. Leaders who live sacrificially and with radical obedience to Jesus make us squirm. Perhaps we should take a careful look at why that is.  
  
Jo Swinney

## Paul’s curriculum vitae



The so-called ‘super-apostles’ who threatened to derail the Corinthian church may have been outwardly impressive, well spoken and from ‘good’ backgrounds, but Paul demonstrates that those things are not what matters. He suffered in his commitment to sharing the good news about Jesus, but was so humble he didn’t want to advertise the fact!  
  
Here’s what Paul’s CV might have looked like.

# Today in the Word – 8/29/19

# The Coming Crucifixion

**Read:** [**Mark 14:22-52**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+14%3a22-52)

22While they were eating, Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, “Take it; this is my body.”

23Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, and they all drank from it.

24“This is my blood of the[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+14%3a22-52#fen-NIV-24779a)] covenant, which is poured out for many,” he said to them. 25“Truly I tell you, I will not drink again from the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.”

26When they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

### Jesus Predicts Peter’s Denial

27“You will all fall away,” Jesus told them, “for it is written:

“‘I will strike the shepherd,  
    and the sheep will be scattered.’[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+14%3a22-52#fen-NIV-24782b)]

28But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee.”

29Peter declared, “Even if all fall away, I will not.”

30“Truly I tell you,” Jesus answered, “today—yes, tonight—before the rooster crows twice[[c](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+14%3a22-52#fen-NIV-24785c)] you yourself will disown me three times.”

31But Peter insisted emphatically, “Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you.” And all the others said the same.

### Gethsemane

32They went to a place called Gethsemane, and Jesus said to his disciples, “Sit here while I pray.” 33He took Peter, James and John along with him, and he began to be deeply distressed and troubled. 34“My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death,” he said to them. “Stay here and keep watch.”

35Going a little farther, he fell to the ground and prayed that if possible the hour might pass from him. 36“Abba,[[d](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+14%3a22-52#fen-NIV-24791d)] Father,” he said, “everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will.”

37Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. “Simon,” he said to Peter, “are you asleep? Couldn’t you keep watch for one hour? 38Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.”

39Once more he went away and prayed the same thing. 40When he came back, he again found them sleeping, because their eyes were heavy. They did not know what to say to him.

41Returning the third time, he said to them, “Are you still sleeping and resting? Enough! The hour has come. Look, the Son of Man is delivered into the hands of sinners. 42Rise! Let us go! Here comes my betrayer!”

### Jesus Arrested

43Just as he was speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, appeared. With him was a crowd armed with swords and clubs, sent from the chief priests, the teachers of the law, and the elders.

44Now the betrayer had arranged a signal with them: “The one I kiss is the man; arrest him and lead him away under guard.” 45Going at once to Jesus, Judas said, “Rabbi!” and kissed him. 46The men seized Jesus and arrested him. 47Then one of those standing near drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his ear.

48“Am I leading a rebellion,” said Jesus, “that you have come out with swords and clubs to capture me? 49Every day I was with you, teaching in the temple courts, and you did not arrest me. But the Scriptures must be fulfilled.” 50Then everyone deserted him and fled.

51A young man, wearing nothing but a linen garment, was following Jesus. When they seized him, 52he fled naked, leaving his garment behind.

#### Footnotes:

1. [Mark 14:24](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+14%3a22-52#en-NIV-24779) Some manuscripts the new
2. [Mark 14:27](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+14%3a22-52#en-NIV-24782) Zech. 13:7
3. [Mark 14:30](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+14%3a22-52#en-NIV-24785) Some early manuscripts do not have twice.
4. [Mark 14:36](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+14%3a22-52#en-NIV-24791) Aramaic for father

By this time the disciples should have been well-prepared for the death of Jesus. Three times He had warned them of the soon-to-come events in Jerusalem, each time with the promise of His resurrection after three days (8:31; 9:31; 10:32–34). The disciples had just witnessed a woman pour out costly oil on Him, which He described as preparation for His “burial” (14:8). And, as they celebrated the Passover, He spoke of His body and of drinking again in the kingdom of God (14:25).

Truly I tell you, I will not drink again from the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God. Mark 14:25

The disciples didn’t fully understand Jesus and continued eating. Jesus showed again that they did not recognize Him when He said there were potential betrayers and deserters among them. Misunderstanding the significance of His statements about the coming Crucifixion, Peter pledged loyalty to Jesus with great overconfidence. “Even if all fall away, I will not” (v. 29). Their misunderstanding would allow them to be weak in prayer rather than vigilant, and eventually would lead to their desertion.

Fully understanding the significance of the death of Jesus will take the remainder of our lives in both this world and the next. For all eternity we will rejoice at the significance of His great redemption of our souls by the sacrifice of His life. In this life, we have every day to meditate on His atoning work, the forgiveness that comes by the shedding of His blood, His fulfillment of the requirements of the Law’s judgment, and His taking God’s wrath on Himself in our place.

We should appreciate the meaning of Christ’s death more and more each day. Participation with fellow saints in the Lord’s Supper should be sweeter, our prayer life should become stronger, and our devotion to our Savior should increase.

### Apply the Word

Today’s Lord’s Supper celebrations emphasize the solemnity of the event. We come to this table in a serious manner. We take time to prepare ourselves. The Lord’s Supper, like Passover, is also a feast of celebration. We marvel at the forgiveness of our sins through Christ’s death. Thank God with joy while taking communion!

### Pray with Us

Are you a part of a local church? Take time today to pray for your church, as well as for your pastor and elders. As today’s devotional shows us, the best way to grow in faith, understand the things of God, and make disciples is in a community of believers.

## BY Eric C. Redmond

# Our Daily Bread – 8/29/19

# Use Your Voice



**Read:** [**1 Corinthians 12:1–14**](https://www.odb.org/2019/08/29/use-your-voice)

### Concerning Spiritual Gifts

12 Now about the gifts of the Spirit, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be uninformed. 2You know that when you were pagans, somehow or other you were influenced and led astray to mute idols. 3Therefore I want you to know that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, “Jesus be cursed,” and no one can say, “Jesus is Lord,” except by the Holy Spirit.

4There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. 5There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. 6There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work.

7Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. 8To one there is given through the Spirit a message of wisdom, to another a message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, 9to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, 10to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues,[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=NIV&search=1+Corinthians+12%3A1%E2%80%9314#fen-NIV-28645a)] and to still another the interpretation of tongues.[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=NIV&search=1+Corinthians+12%3A1%E2%80%9314#fen-NIV-28645b)] 11All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines.

### Unity and Diversity in the Body

12Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. 13For we were all baptized by[[c](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=NIV&search=1+Corinthians+12%3A1%E2%80%9314#fen-NIV-28648c)] one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. 14Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many.

#### Footnotes:

1. [1 Corinthians 12:10](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=NIV&search=1+Corinthians+12%3A1%E2%80%9314#en-NIV-28645) Or languages; also in verse 28
2. [1 Corinthians 12:10](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=NIV&search=1+Corinthians+12%3A1%E2%80%9314#en-NIV-28645) Or languages; also in verse 28
3. [1 Corinthians 12:13](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=NIV&search=1+Corinthians+12%3A1%E2%80%9314#en-NIV-28648) Or with; or in

There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. [1 Corinthians 12:4](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=NIV&search=1+Corinthians+12%3A4)

I was invited to meet a world-renowned pianist. Since I grew up immersed in music—playing the violin and piano, and primarily singing solos for church and other events—I was thrilled at the opportunity.

When I arrived to meet the pianist, I realized he spoke little English; and to my surprise he provided a cello for me to play—an instrument I’d never touched. He insisted that I play and he would accompany me. I screeched out a few notes, trying to mimic my violin training. Finally admitting that I was lost, we parted ways.

I awoke, realizing the scenario had been a dream. But since the musical background presented in my dream was true, in my mind lingered the words, Why didn’t you tell him you could sing?

God equips us to develop our natural talents and our spiritual gifts for others (1 Corinthians 12:7). Through prayerful reading of the Bible and the wise advice of others, we can better understand the spiritual gift (or gifts) that is uniquely ours. The apostle Paul reminds us that whatever our spiritual gift, we’re to take time to find it and use it, knowing that the Spirit distributes the gifts “just as he determines” (v. 11).

Let’s use the “voices” the Holy Spirit has given us to honor God and serve other believers in Jesus.

By:  [Evan Morgan](https://odb.org/author/evanmorgan/)

#### Reflect & Pray

What’s your spiritual “voice,” and how can you use it today? Why is it wrong to want others’ spiritual gifts?

Father, show me how You’ve gifted me and how I’m to use those gifts for others.

#### Insight

To a Corinthian church struggling with deep divisions, Paul writes about the gifts of the Spirit. His intent is to help heal the divisions and adjust the perceptions of people about their own significance or superiority. One of the first things Paul says about the gifts is that they’re given for the common good. That means that whatever the gift, its use is for the benefit of others.

# God Calling – 8/29/19

# Breathe My Name

Just breathe My Name.

It is like the pressure of a child's hand that calls forth an answering pressure, strengthens the child's confidence and banishes fear.

The name of the Lord is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe.  Proverbs 18:10

# My Utmost for His Highest – 8/30/19

# Usefulness or Relationship?



Do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven. —[Luke 10:20](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=Luke+10%3A20)

Jesus Christ is saying here, “Don’t rejoice in your successful service for Me, but rejoice because of your right relationship with Me.” The trap you may fall into in Christian work is to rejoice in successful service— rejoicing in the fact that God has used you. Yet you will never be able to measure fully what God will do through you if you do not have a right-standing relationship with Jesus Christ. If you keep your relationship right with Him, then regardless of your circumstances or whoever you encounter each day, He will continue to pour “rivers of living water” through you ([John 7:38](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+7:38)). And it is actually by His mercy that He does not let you know it. Once you have the right relationship with God through salvation and sanctification, remember that whatever your circumstances may be, you have been placed in them by God. And God uses the reaction of your life to your circumstances to fulfill His purpose, as long as you continue to “walk in the light as He is in the light” ([1 John 1:7](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+John+1:7)).

Our tendency today is to put the emphasis on service. Beware of the people who make their request for help on the basis of someone’s usefulness. If you make usefulness the test, then Jesus Christ was the greatest failure who ever lived. For the saint, direction and guidance come from God Himself, not some measure of that saint’s usefulness. It is the work that God does through us that counts, not what we do for Him. All that our Lord gives His attention to in a person’s life is that person’s relationship with God— something of great value to His Father. Jesus is “bringing many sons to glory…” ([Hebrews 2:10](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Hebrews+2:10)).

**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 – 8/30/19

**The king held out . . . the golden sceptre. So Esther drew near, and touched the top of the sceptre.**—[ESTH. 5:2.](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Esth.5.html" \l "Esth.5.2)

It shall come to pass, when he crieth unto me, that I will hear; for I am gracious.

We have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him. Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love. We love him, because he first loved us.

Let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.—For through him we . . . have access by one Spirit unto the Father.—We have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him.—Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

[Exo. 22:27](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Exod.22.html" \l "Exod.22.27).[I John 4:16-19](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iJohn.4.html" \l "iJohn.4.16).[Heb. 10:22](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Heb.10.html" \l "Heb.10.22). -[Eph. 2:18](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Eph.2.html" \l "Eph.2.18). -[Eph. 3:12](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Eph.3.html" \l "Eph.3.12). -[Heb. 4:16](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Heb.4.html#Heb.4.16).

“Wait on the Lord.” [Psalm 27:14](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.27.html" \l "Ps.27.14)

It may seem an easy thing to wait, but it is one of the postures which a Christian soldier learns not without years of teaching. Marching and quick-marching are much easier to God’s warriors than standing still. There are hours of perplexity when the most willing spirit, anxiously desirous to serve the Lord, knows not what part to take. Then what shall it do? Vex itself by despair? Fly back in cowardice, turn to the right hand in fear, or rush forward in presumption? No, but simply wait. Wait in prayer, however. Call upon God, and spread the case before him; tell him your difficulty, and plead his promise of aid. In dilemmas between one duty and another, it is sweet to be humble as a child, and wait with simplicity of soul upon the Lord. It is sure to be well with us when we feel and know our own folly, and are heartily willing to be guided by the will of God. But wait in faith. Express your unstaggering confidence in him; for unfaithful, untrusting waiting, is but an insult to the Lord. Believe that if he keep you tarrying even till midnight, yet he will come at the right time; the vision shall come and shall not tarry. Wait in quiet patience, not rebelling because you are under the affliction, but blessing your God for it. Never murmur against the second cause, as the children of Israel did against Moses; never wish you could go back to the world again, but accept the case as it is, and put it as it stands, simply and with your whole heart, without any self-will, into the hand of your covenant God, saying, “Now, Lord, not my will, but thine be done. I know not what to do; I am brought to extremities, but I will wait until thou shalt cleave the floods, or drive back my foes. I will wait, if thou keep me many a day, for my heart is fixed upon thee alone, O God, and my spirit waiteth for thee in the full conviction that thou wilt yet be my joy and my salvation, my refuge and my strong tower.”

# Word Live – 8/30/19

# Breaking the silence

## Prepare

Are you holding on to something that you have not articulated? God knows it already. Why not speak it out to him?



## Bible passage: 2 Corinthians 12:1–21

##### Paul's Vision and His Thorn

1I must go on boasting. Although there is nothing to be gained, I will go on to visions and revelations from the Lord. 2I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven. Whether it was in the body or out of the body I do not know—God knows. 3And I know that this man—whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, but God knows— 4was caught up to paradise. He heard inexpressible things, things that man is not permitted to tell. 5I will boast about a man like that, but I will not boast about myself, except about my weaknesses. 6Even if I should choose to boast, I would not be a fool, because I would be speaking the truth. But I refrain, so no one will think more of me than is warranted by what I do or say.

7To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. 8Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. 9But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. 10That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

##### Paul's Concern for the Corinthians

11I have made a fool of myself, but you drove me to it. I ought to have been commended by you, for I am not in the least inferior to the "super-apostles," even though I am nothing. 12The things that mark an apostle—signs, wonders and miracles—were done among you with great perseverance. 13How were you inferior to the other churches, except that I was never a burden to you? Forgive me this wrong!

14Now I am ready to visit you for the third time, and I will not be a burden to you, because what I want is not your possessions but you. After all, children should not have to save up for their parents, but parents for their children. 15So I will very gladly spend for you everything I have and expend myself as well. If I love you more, will you love me less? 16Be that as it may, I have not been a burden to you. Yet, crafty fellow that I am, I caught you by trickery! 17Did I exploit you through any of the men I sent you? 18I urged Titus to go to you and I sent our brother with him. Titus did not exploit you, did he? Did we not act in the same spirit and follow the same course?

19Have you been thinking all along that we have been defending ourselves to you? We have been speaking in the sight of God as those in Christ; and everything we do, dear friends, is for your strengthening. 20For I am afraid that when I come I may not find you as I want you to be, and you may not find me as you want me to be. I fear that there may be quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, factions, slander, gossip, arrogance and disorder. 21I am afraid that when I come again my God will humble me before you, and I will be grieved over many who have sinned earlier and have not repented of the impurity, sexual sin and debauchery in which they have indulged.

## Explore

**Uncomfortably silent**

Although generally outspoken, the Corinthians have been uncomfortably silent on Paul’s behalf (v 11; see 5:12). All they had to do was to say that they themselves were his endorsement of his apostleship (see [1 Corinthians 9:2](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Corinthians+9%3A2&version=NIV)), but maybe they were embarrassed by their cheap (11:7–11) and tongue-tied (10:1; 11:6) founder compared with their imposing ‘super-apostle’ visitors.

**God’s power at work**

Paul has no option but to speak on his own behalf (v 1). If supernatural revelations are taken to be the mark of a ‘spiritual’ person, he can provide the evidence (vs 1–7). But he knows such ‘boasting’ is misguided. What matters is God’s power at work, and this is more evident in weakness (vs 7b–10).

**The reverse is true**

There has also been an awkward silence around money. Paul has not accepted financial support from the Corinthians and yet he has requested far larger sums for the Jerusalem church. Does he intend to pocket the collection (v 16)? Because of their preoccupation with status and power, the Corinthians expect spiritual leaders to demand payment, respect and honour. For Paul, the reverse is true. As their ‘father’ he spends himself for their benefit (vs 14,15). His fear is that, when he returns, he will be embarrassed by their lifestyle (vs 20,21).

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

## Respond

What matters most – that people think well of you, or that God’s power is evident in you and others are built up?

## Deeper Bible study

Scholars have long sought to understand what is meant by the ‘thorn in my flesh’ (v 7). Some have speculated that Paul lived with a painful eye condition (he reminds the Galatians of a physical illness he experienced and suggestively declares that they would have been willing to tear out their eyes to give to him) ([Gal 4:13–15](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Gal+4%3A13%E2%80%9315&version=NIV)). However, it is difficult to say for sure what verse 7 refers to, not least because the meaning of the word skolops, rendered ‘thorn’ in English translations, is uncertain. Ultimately, we are left to wonder.

What is clear is that the situation was serious. We can imagine the urgency with which Paul prayed for his ‘thorn’ to be removed and his disappointment when the longed-for answer did not come, but the skolops was important – first as a safeguard against pride. Paul had been granted quite extraordinary visions and revelations (vs 1–4), so the painful thorn kept him humble. Second, the thorn ensured that the principle so central to 2 Corinthians was consistently seen in the apostle’s ministry: God’s strength was at work through his weakness (v 9).

The difficulty in identifying the thorn helps us to apply these verses to our own situations. We may face any manner of difficulties. They could be physical, or mental or relational. Paul prayed for his skolops to be taken away and we can pray this for our own thorn. However, we may well receive the same answer he did (vs 8,9). God sometimes gives us grace to cope with great difficulty, rather than taking that difficulty away. If this is your experience, depend on our gracious God who will give you all you need to get through. As you lean on him, be confident that, when you are at your weakest, God will be at work in you and through you in his mighty power.

Do you have a ‘thorn’? Spend time in prayer today asking God for grace, whatever form that grace might take.

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

## Prayer points

**Pray now…**

• Get hold of your church newsletter, friends’ prayer news or go through your recent Facebook wall posts.  
  
• Notice where your church leaders and Christian friends may be having a difficult time.  
  
• Pray for them, one by one.  
  
• What are your weaknesses? Offer them afresh to the Lord that his power may be seen in your weakness, and that you may serve humbly, just like Jesus.  
  
‘My kindness is all you need. My power is strongest when you are weak’ ([2 Corinthians 12:9](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2%20Corinthians%2012:9&version=TNIV), CEV).

# Today in the Word – 8/30/19

# The Death of Jesus

**Read:** [**Mark 15:1-27**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+15%3a1-27)

### Jesus Before Pilate

15 Very early in the morning, the chief priests, with the elders, the teachers of the law and the whole Sanhedrin, made their plans. So they bound Jesus, led him away and handed him over to Pilate.

2“Are you the king of the Jews?” asked Pilate.

“You have said so,” Jesus replied.

3The chief priests accused him of many things. 4So again Pilate asked him, “Aren’t you going to answer? See how many things they are accusing you of.”

5But Jesus still made no reply, and Pilate was amazed.

6Now it was the custom at the festival to release a prisoner whom the people requested. 7A man called Barabbas was in prison with the insurrectionists who had committed murder in the uprising. 8The crowd came up and asked Pilate to do for them what he usually did.

9“Do you want me to release to you the king of the Jews?” asked Pilate, 10knowing it was out of self-interest that the chief priests had handed Jesus over to him. 11But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have Pilate release Barabbas instead.

12“What shall I do, then, with the one you call the king of the Jews?” Pilate asked them.

13“Crucify him!” they shouted.

14“Why? What crime has he committed?” asked Pilate.

But they shouted all the louder, “Crucify him!”

15Wanting to satisfy the crowd, Pilate released Barabbas to them. He had Jesus flogged, and handed him over to be crucified.

### The Soldiers Mock Jesus

16The soldiers led Jesus away into the palace (that is, the Praetorium) and called together the whole company of soldiers. 17They put a purple robe on him, then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on him. 18And they began to call out to him, “Hail, king of the Jews!” 19Again and again they struck him on the head with a staff and spit on him. Falling on their knees, they paid homage to him. 20And when they had mocked him, they took off the purple robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him out to crucify him.

### The Crucifixion of Jesus

21A certain man from Cyrene, Simon, the father of Alexander and Rufus, was passing by on his way in from the country, and they forced him to carry the cross. 22They brought Jesus to the place called Golgotha (which means “the place of the skull”). 23Then they offered him wine mixed with myrrh, but he did not take it. 24And they crucified him. Dividing up his clothes, they cast lots to see what each would get.

25It was nine in the morning when they crucified him. 26The written notice of the charge against him read: the king of the jews.

27They crucified two rebels with him, one on his right and one on his left.

The Heidelberg Catechism features a series of questions and answers, which instruct in specific doctrines of the faith. Question 39 focuses on the significance of the Cross, asking if it is important that Christ was crucified and did not die in another way. The answer: “Yes, for thereby I am assured that He took upon Himself the curse which lay upon me; because the death of the cross was accursed of God.”

He was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities. Isaiah 53:5

The significance of the Cross of Christ for our salvation is clearly understood by any Christian reading of the events of Good Friday. But the significance of the Cross for our suffering may not be as well understood or appreciated. Jesus’ acceptance of unjust treatment, even to the point of His crucifixion, affirmed His identity as the Messianic King.

Jesus did not reply to the charges brought by His accusers (v. 5). As Barabbas was released and mocking took place, He did not speak up in His own defense but accepted His sentence. As the soldiers brutally mistreated Jesus, He did nothing to stop them (vv. 16–20). Jesus did not use His divine power to deter this abuse. He did not act to save Himself. Accepting the greatest injustice ever leveled at a person in history, Jesus showed His disciples, and us as well, how to handle injustice—walking through the most unimaginable, unbearable, unjust, unrelenting, undeserved, and seemingly unendurable of trials. Jesus let His silence speak when He was wrongly accused. His innocence stood trial as leaders played politics with His life.

A centurion, or soldier, watching the events, declared, “Surely this man was the Son of God!” (v. 39). His response shows us that our acceptance of unjust treatment for the sake of Christ will speak volumes to those looking on, pointing them to that same Messiah.

### Apply the Word

The centurion’s testimony is significant! As a soldier, he no doubt witnessed a great number of crucifixions. As a Roman, he most likely was a polytheist. That is why his declaration of Jesus as God, after witnessing Christ’s crucifixion, is especially moving. Rejoice and tell someone else of your certainty that God Himself came to save you.

### Pray with Us

What a sobering message presents today’s Scripture! As we read about the death of Jesus, help us remember, Lord, that in a world trying to achieve justice its own way, all justice belongs to you.

## BY Eric C. Redmond

# Our Daily Bread – 8/30/19

# Great Things!



**Read:** [**Psalm 126**](https://www.odb.org/2019/08/30/great-things)

#### A song of ascents.

1When the Lord restored the fortunes of[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=NIV&search=Psalm+126#fen-NIV-16117a)] Zion,  
    we were like those who dreamed.[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=NIV&search=Psalm+126#fen-NIV-16117b)]  
2Our mouths were filled with laughter,  
    our tongues with songs of joy.  
Then it was said among the nations,  
    “The Lord has done great things for them.”  
3The Lord has done great things for us,  
    and we are filled with joy.

4Restore our fortunes,[[c](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=NIV&search=Psalm+126#fen-NIV-16120c)] Lord,  
    like streams in the Negev.  
5Those who sow with tears  
    will reap with songs of joy.  
6Those who go out weeping,  
    carrying seed to sow,  
will return with songs of joy,  
    carrying sheaves with them.

#### Footnotes:

1. [Psalm 126:1](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=NIV&search=Psalm+126#en-NIV-16117) Or Lord brought back the captives to
2. [Psalm 126:1](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=NIV&search=Psalm+126#en-NIV-16117) Or those restored to health
3. [Psalm 126:4](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=NIV&search=Psalm+126#en-NIV-16120) Or Bring back our captives

What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? [Romans 8:31](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=NIV&search=Romans+8%3A31)

On November 9, 1989, the world was astonished by the news of the fall of the Berlin Wall. The wall that had divided Berlin, Germany, was coming down and the city that had been divided for twenty-eight years would be united again. Though the epicenter of joy was Germany, an onlooking world shared in the excitement. Something great had taken place!

When Israel returned to her homeland in 538 bc after being exiled for almost seventy years, it was also momentous. Psalm 126 begins with an over-the-shoulder look at that joy-filled time in the history of Israel. The experience was marked by laughter, joyful singing, and international recognition that God had done great things for His people (v. 2). And what was the response of the recipients of His rescuing mercy? Great things from God prompted great gladness (v. 3). Furthermore, His works in the past became the basis for fresh prayers for the present and bright hope for the future (vv. 4–6).

You and I need not look far in our own experiences for examples of great things from God, especially if we believe in God through His Son, Jesus. Nineteenth-century hymn writer Fanny Crosby captured this sentiment when she wrote, “Great things He hath taught us, great things He hath done, and great our rejoicing through Jesus the Son.” Yes, to God be the glory, great things He has done!

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

#### Reflect & Pray

What great things have you experienced from the hand of God? How does reflecting on these increase your trust and hope?

 Great things in the past can inspire great joy, great prayer, and great hope.

#### Insight

Psalm 126 is one of the songs of ascent, a title given to fifteen of the psalms (120–134). These psalms are also known as pilgrim songs and were most likely sung by Jewish worshipers as they ascended the road to the temple in Jerusalem to attend the three required festivals or feasts (Passover, or Festival of Unleavened Bread; Pentecost, or Feast of Weeks; and Tabernacles, also known as Tents or Booths). We read about this requirement in Deuteronomy 16:16. Other scholars believe these songs were sung by the Levite singers as they ascended the steps to minister at the temple. Psalm 126 calls worshipers to rejoice as they remember how God “restored the fortunes of Zion” (v. 1), or Jerusalem, most likely when the people returned from captivity in Babylon during Ezra’s time.

# God Calling – 8/30/19

# Give, Give, Give

Give abundantly. Feel that you are rich. Have no mean thought in your heart.

Of Love, of thought, of all you have, give, give, give.

You are followers of the World's Greatest Giver. Give of time, of personal ease and comfort, of rest, of fame, of healing, of power, of sympathy, of all these and many more.

Learn this lesson, and you will become a great power to help others and to do mighty things.

Give, and it shall be given unto you, good measure, pressed down, and shaken together and running over, shall men give unto your bosom.  Luke 6:38

# My Utmost for His Highest – 8/31/19

# “My Joy…Your Joy”



These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full. —[John 15:11](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=John+15%3A11)

What was the joy that Jesus had? Joy should not be confused with happiness. In fact, it is an insult to Jesus Christ to use the word happiness in connection with Him. The joy of Jesus was His absolute self-surrender and self-sacrifice to His Father— the joy of doing that which the Father sent Him to do— “…who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross…” ([Hebrews 12:2](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Hebrews+12:2)). “I delight to do Your will, O my God…” ([Psalm 40:8](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+40:8)). Jesus prayed that our joy might continue fulfilling itself until it becomes the same joy as His. Have I allowed Jesus Christ to introduce His joy to me?

Living a full and overflowing life does not rest in bodily health, in circumstances, nor even in seeing God’s work succeed, but in the perfect understanding of God, and in the same fellowship and oneness with Him that Jesus Himself enjoyed. But the first thing that will hinder this joy is the subtle irritability caused by giving too much thought to our circumstances. Jesus said, “…the cares of this world,…choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful” ([Mark 4:19](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+4:19)). And before we even realize what has happened, we are caught up in our cares. All that God has done for us is merely the threshold— He wants us to come to the place where we will be His witnesses and proclaim who Jesus is.

Have the right relationship with God, finding your joy there, and out of you “will flow rivers of living water” ([John 7:38](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+7:38)). Be a fountain through which Jesus can pour His “living water.” Stop being hypocritical and proud, aware only of yourself, and live “your life…hidden with Christ in God” ([Colossians 3:3](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Colossians+3:3)). A person who has the right relationship with God lives a life as natural as breathing wherever he goes. The lives that have been the greatest blessing to you are the lives of those people who themselves were unaware of having been a blessing.

**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 – 8/31/19

**The free gift is of many offences unto justification.**—[ROM. 5:16.](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Rom.5.html" \l "Rom.5.16)

Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.—I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins. Put me in remembrance: let us plead together: declare thou, that thou mayest be justified.—I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee.

God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.—Not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many.—And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.

[Isa. 1:18](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Isa.1.html" \l "Isa.1.18). -[Isa. 43:25,26](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Isa.43.html" \l "Isa.43.25). -[Isa. 44:22](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Isa.44.html" \l "Isa.44.22).[John 3:16](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.John.3.html" \l "John.3.16). -[Rom. 5:15](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Rom.5.html" \l "Rom.5.15). -[I Cor. 6:11](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iCor.6.html" \l "iCor.6.11).

“On mine arm shall they trust.” [Isaiah 51:5](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Isa.51.html" \l "Isa.51.5)

In seasons of severe trial, the Christian has nothing on earth that he can trust to, and is therefore compelled to cast himself on his God alone. When his vessel is on its beam-ends, and no human deliverance can avail, he must simply and entirely trust himself to the providence and care of God. Happy storm that wrecks a man on such a rock as this! O blessed hurricane that drives the soul to God and God alone! There is no getting at our God sometimes because of the multitude of our friends; but when a man is so poor, so friendless, so helpless that he has nowhere else to turn, he flies into his Father’s arms, and is blessedly clasped therein! When he is burdened with troubles so pressing and so peculiar, that he cannot tell them to any but his God, he may be thankful for them; for he will learn more of his Lord then than at any other time. Oh, tempest-tossed believer, it is a happy trouble that drives thee to thy Father! Now that thou hast only thy God to trust to, see that thou puttest thy full confidence in him. Dishonour not thy Lord and Master by unworthy doubts and fears; but be strong in faith, giving glory to God. Show the world that thy God is worth ten thousand worlds to thee. Show rich men how rich thou art in thy poverty when the Lord God is thy helper. Show the strong man how strong thou art in thy weakness when underneath thee are the everlasting arms. Now is the time for feats of faith and valiant exploits. Be strong and very courageous, and the Lord thy God shall certainly, as surely as he built the heavens and the earth, glorify himself in thy weakness, and magnify his might in the midst of thy distress. The grandeur of the arch of heaven would be spoiled if the sky were supported by a single visible column, and your faith would lose its glory if it rested on anything discernible by the carnal eye. May the Holy Spirit give you to rest in Jesus this closing day of the month.

# Word Live – 8/31/19

# The reckoning

## Prepare

Think back over the past 24 hours. When have you felt the presence of God? How have you shared in the life of the Spirit?



## Bible passage: 2 Corinthians 13:1–14

##### Final Warnings

1This will be my third visit to you. "Every matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses." 2I already gave you a warning when I was with you the second time. I now repeat it while absent: On my return I will not spare those who sinned earlier or any of the others, 3since you are demanding proof that Christ is speaking through me. He is not weak in dealing with you, but is powerful among you. 4For to be sure, he was crucified in weakness, yet he lives by God's power. Likewise, we are weak in him, yet by God's power we will live with him to serve you.

5Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you—unless, of course, you fail the test? 6And I trust that you will discover that we have not failed the test. 7Now we pray to God that you will not do anything wrong. Not that people will see that we have stood the test but that you will do what is right even though we may seem to have failed. 8For we cannot do anything against the truth, but only for the truth. 9We are glad whenever we are weak but you are strong; and our prayer is for your perfection. 10This is why I write these things when I am absent, that when I come I may not have to be harsh in my use of authority—the authority the Lord gave me for building you up, not for tearing you down.

##### Final Greetings

11Finally, brothers, good-by. Aim for perfection, listen to my appeal, be of one mind, live in peace. And the God of love and peace will be with you.

12Greet one another with a holy kiss. 13All the saints send their greetings.

14May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

## Explore

**Some serious questions**

The letter has followed many twists and turns as Paul has navigated his complex relationship with the church at Corinth. It has seemed that he has been on trial. Now Paul turns the spotlight on the Corinthians themselves. The time of reckoning has come. He himself is not concerned about failing any test: if the Corinthians are in fact Christians it is only because Paul is their apostle (v 5b), and his concern is not that he should be seen to have ‘passed’ or appear strong, but for them to do well (vs 6,7,9). They need to ask themselves some serious questions (v 5a) which they will not be able to dodge when Paul comes on his third visit to Corinth.

**Living out the gospel**

So the letter ends with a focus on the quality of relationships within the church itself. The God revealed in Jesus is a God of love and peace (v 11). Is his character evident in the church? How about grace? The Lord Jesus is the one who gives grace, even at his own expense and ‘weakness’ (vs 8,9). And are they participating in the life of the Holy Spirit (see 6:6)? Paul effectively says, ‘It is time to take your eyes off the “super-apostles”, to leave behind your antagonism towards me, and to focus on what matters – actually living out the gospel I brought to you.’

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

## Respond

Pray that the gospel of Jesus would be ‘fleshed out’ in your life and relationships.

## Deeper Bible study

Verse 5 was one of the favourite texts of the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Puritans, who used it to commend the discipline of ‘self-examination’ – in effect, a regular spiritual check-up. Sometimes the rigorous way that self-examination was practised became unhelpful. People with tender consciences such as John Bunyan, the writer of The Pilgrim’s Progress, became convinced they were not really Christians at all.1 Time and energy was lost in introspective soul-searching and Christians failed to claim the joyful assurance that is the birthright of every true believer in Jesus.

Nevertheless, we are encouraged – indeed commanded – to ‘examine’ and ‘test’ ourselves to see whether we are ‘in the faith’ (v 5). Yes, we are saved by grace alone, yet for all of us who have received such grace there will be some evidence we are growing as disciples of Jesus. God takes us ‘just as we are’2 but he doesn’t leave us there. He saves us from both the penalty and the power of sin, changing us step by step through his word and by his Spirit.

So, it is helpful to have a spiritual health check from time to time. As we do this today, what is the diagnosis? As already noted in these studies, we will never be perfect in this life, yet we should aim to be the best we can be (v 11). Certainly we are called to grow in love, prayer, knowledge of God, holiness, ministry and mission. In what areas does God want us to repent and move forward? It is easy to despair when we examine ourselves in this way, but all Christians have the ‘fellowship of the Holy Spirit’ (v 14) so we can change. Such is God’s saving, transforming grace to us.

Lord, show me where you want me to change and grow. Help me to become the person you want me to be.

1 Bunyan later gained a more confident assurance of faith

2 See Charlotte Elliott, 1789–1871, ‘Just as I am, without one plea’

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

## Living faith

[https://www.wordlive.org/uploads/wordlight/resources/W301009R2 Living faith.mp3](https://www.wordlive.org/uploads/wordlight/resources/W301009R2%20Living%20faith.mp3)

Paul asks challenging questions about the quality of faith the Corinthian Christians have. Listen to this meditation by James Davies and prepare to have Paul challenge you!

# Today in the Word – 8/31/19

# The Empty Tomb

**Read:** [**Mark 16:1-8**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+16%3a1-8)

### Jesus Has Risen

16 When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they might go to anoint Jesus’ body. 2Very early on the first day of the week, just after sunrise, they were on their way to the tomb 3and they asked each other, “Who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb?”

4But when they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had been rolled away. 5As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side, and they were alarmed.

6“Don’t be alarmed,” he said. “You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him. 7But go, tell his disciples and Peter, ‘He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.’”

8Trembling and bewildered, the women went out and fled from the tomb. They said nothing to anyone, because they were afraid.[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+16%3a1-8#fen-NIV-24882a)]

#### Footnotes:

1. [Mark 16:8](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+16%3a1-8#en-NIV-24882) Some manuscripts have the following ending between verses 8 and 9, and one manuscript has it after verse 8 (omitting verses 9-20): Then they quickly reported all these instructions to those around Peter. After this, Jesus himself also sent out through them from east to west the sacred and imperishable proclamation of eternal salvation. Amen.

Mark’s Gospel account ends on an odd note. In many Bibles, verses 9–20 contain a commentator’s note about the disputed authenticity of the closing section of the book. Many Bible scholars say that the earliest manuscripts of the Gospel do not contain this ending.

He has risen! He is not here. Mark 16:7

Equally odd is the description in verses 1 to 8: the reaction of the three women at the tomb of Jesus. They are there, having overcome obstacles to get to Jesus, including awaiting the Sabbath to finish, the sun to rise, and having the stone rolled away. Yet, they are described as “alarmed” by the appearance of the angel at the tomb (v. 5).

Moreover, after multiple reassurances that the crucified Jesus is alive, this account says that they leave fearful and even more —“bewildered” (v. 8). In the conclusion of Mark’s Gospel, despite the assurances to tell Peter and the disciples about the resurrection and the promise from Jesus that they will see Him alive, they do not announce it to anyone.

Even when there are no obstacles preventing us from remembering Christ’s death on our behalf, we might be hesitant to tell others about Him. Even with the scores of reassurances we have from His Word, history, and the Holy Spirit within us, we still might find ourselves hesitant to proclaim to others that the tomb is indeed empty.

The end of the Gospel of Mark proposes a challenge to servants of Jesus: Will we be silent with the message of Jesus’ death and resurrection? Or, will we use the empty tomb and the proclamation of His resurrection as a starting point to take the message of the Gospel of Mark—the good news of Jesus—to everyone without fear, assured by the promise of His return?

### Apply the Word

Now that you we have finished the Gospel of Mark, we suggest you go back and read the full story again. With the end in mind, you will notice the many references to Jesus being the Son of God and King of the Jews who came to offer eternal life. Ask the Holy Spirit to give you boldness and courage to tell others that Jesus’ tomb is empty.

### Pray with Us

In conclusion of our study of the Gospel of Mark this month, let’s thank God for His wondrous salvation extended to all who believe, and for His grace that is always sufficient. Let’s pray that our lives would be pleasing to our Lord Jesus Christ.

## BY Eric C. Redmond

# Our Daily Bread – 8/31/19

# Tight Circles

 **Read:** [**Galatians 5:1**](https://www.odb.org/2019/08/31/tight-circles)

### Freedom in Christ

5 It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.

It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. [Galatians 5:1](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=NIV&search=Galatians+5%3A1)

**Read:** [**Galatians 5:4–14**](https://www.odb.org/2019/08/31/tight-circles)

4You who are trying to be justified by the law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace. 5For through the Spirit we eagerly await by faith the righteousness for which we hope. 6For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.

7You were running a good race. Who cut in on you to keep you from obeying the truth? 8That kind of persuasion does not come from the one who calls you. 9“A little yeast works through the whole batch of dough.” 10I am confident in the Lord that you will take no other view. The one who is throwing you into confusion, whoever that may be, will have to pay the penalty. 11Brothers and sisters, if I am still preaching circumcision, why am I still being persecuted? In that case the offense of the cross has been abolished. 12As for those agitators, I wish they would go the whole way and emasculate themselves!

### Life by the Spirit

13You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=NIV&search=Galatians+5%3A1%2C+4%E2%80%9314#fen-NIV-29176a)]; rather, serve one another humbly in love. 14For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: “Love your neighbor as yourself.”[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=NIV&search=Galatians+5%3A1%2C+4%E2%80%9314#fen-NIV-29177b)]

#### Footnotes:

1. [Galatians 5:13](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=NIV&search=Galatians+5%3A1%2C+4%E2%80%9314#en-NIV-29176) In contexts like this, the Greek word for flesh (sarx) refers to the sinful state of human beings, often presented as a power in opposition to the Spirit; also in verses 16, 17, 19 and 24; and in 6:8.
2. [Galatians 5:14](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=NIV&search=Galatians+5%3A1%2C+4%E2%80%9314#en-NIV-29177) Lev. 19:18

A classmate gave my family a registered collie that had become too old to breed puppies. We soon learned this beautiful dog had, sadly, spent much of her life inside a small pen. She would only walk in tight circles. She couldn’t fetch or run in a straight line. And even with a large yard in which to play, she thought she was fenced in.

The first Christians, many who were Jews, were used to being fenced in by the Mosaic law. Though the law was good and had been given by God to convict them of sin and lead them to Jesus (Galatians 3:19–25), it was time to live out their new faith based in God’s grace and the freedom of Christ. They hesitated. After all this time, were they really free?

We may have the same problem. Perhaps we grew up in churches with rigid rules that fenced us in. Or we were raised in permissive homes and are now desperate for the security of rules. Either way, it’s time to embrace our freedom in Christ (Galatians 5:1). Jesus has freed us to obey Him out of love (John 14:21) and to “serve one another humbly in love” (Galatians 5:13). An entire field of joy and love is open for those who realize “if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed” (John 8:36).

By:  [Mike Wittmer](https://odb.org/author/mwittmer/)

#### Reflect & Pray

How have you been kept from experiencing freedom in Christ? How can realizing this freedom help you serve others?

Jesus, help me to believe I am as free as You say.

#### Insight

Circumcision was common in ancient Egyptian and Canaanite cultures (Jeremiah 9:25), but God made circumcision the physical sign of the covenant between Him and the Israelites (Genesis 17:11). Circumcision became the badge of Jewish spirituality; Gentiles became known as “the uncircumcision”—those outside of God’s love. Paul didn’t condemn circumcision in itself; he circumcised Timothy—a Greek—because of his ministry to the Jews (Acts 16:1–3). But Paul opposed the Judaizers who insisted it was needed for salvation (15:1–2). In the council of Jerusalem (vv. 6–29), the early church affirmed that salvation is by the grace of Christ alone (v. 11).

# God Calling – 8/31/19

# Pray and Deny

Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting. -- Matthew 17: 21.

You must live a life of communion and prayer if you are to save others.

Take My words as a command to you. "By prayer and fasting."

Pray and deny yourself, and you will be used marvelously to save and help others.

And when they had brought their ships to land, they forsook all, and followed him.  Luke 5:11

# My Utmost for His Highest – 9/1/19

# Destined To Be Holy



…it is written, "Be holy, for I am holy." —[1 Peter 1:16](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=1+Peter+1%3A16)

We must continually remind ourselves of the purpose of life. We are not destined to happiness, nor to health, but to holiness. Today we have far too many desires and interests, and our lives are being consumed and wasted by them. Many of them may be right, noble, and good, and may later be fulfilled, but in the meantime God must cause their importance to us to decrease. The only thing that truly matters is whether a person will accept the God who will make him holy. At all costs, a person must have the right relationship with God.

Do I believe I need to be holy? Do I believe that God can come into me and make me holy? If through your preaching you convince me that I am unholy, I then resent your preaching. The preaching of the gospel awakens an intense resentment because it is designed to reveal my unholiness, but it also awakens an intense yearning and desire within me. God has only one intended destiny for mankind— holiness. His only goal is to produce saints. God is not some eternal blessing-machine for people to use, and He did not come to save us out of pity— He came to save us because He created us to be holy. Atonement through the Cross of Christ means that God can put me back into perfect oneness with Himself through the death of Jesus Christ, without a trace of anything coming between us any longer.

Never tolerate, because of sympathy for yourself or for others, any practice that is not in keeping with a holy God. Holiness means absolute purity of your walk before God, the words coming from your mouth, and every thought in your mind— placing every detail of your life under the scrutiny of God Himself. Holiness is not simply what God gives me, but what God has given me that is being exhibited in my life.

**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

# CCEL – 9/1/19

**The fruit of the spirit is meekness.**—[GAL. 5:22,23.](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Gal.5.html" \l "Gal.5.22)

The meek . . . shall increase their joy in the Lord, and the poor among men shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel.—Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.—The ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, . . . is in the sight of God of great price.—Charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up.

Follow after meekness.—Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart.—He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb so he openeth not his mouth.—Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: who did no sin neither was guile found in his mouth: who, when he was reviled reviled not again, . . . but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.

[Isa. 29:19](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Isa.29.html" \l "Isa.29.19). -[Matt. 18:3,4](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Matt.18.html" \l "Matt.18.3). -[I Pet. 3:4](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iPet.3.html" \l "iPet.3.4). -[I Cor. 13:4](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iCor.13.html" \l "iCor.13.4).[I Tim. 6:11](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iTim.6.html" \l "iTim.6.11). -[Matt. 11:29](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Matt.11.html" \l "Matt.11.29). -[Isa. 53:7](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Isa.53.html" \l "Isa.53.7). -[I Pet. 2:21-23](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iPet.2.html" \l "iPet.2.21).

“Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory.” **[Psalm 73:24](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.73.html" \l "Ps.73.24)**

The Psalmist felt his need of divine guidance. He had just been discovering the foolishness of his own heart, and lest he should be constantly led astray by it, he resolved that God’s counsel should henceforth guide him. A sense of our own folly is a great step towards being wise, when it leads us to rely on the wisdom of the Lord. The blind man leans on his friend’s arm and reaches home in safety, and so would we give ourselves up implicitly to divine guidance, nothing doubting; assured that though we cannot see, it is always safe to trust the all-seeing God. “Thou shalt,” is a blessed expression of confidence. He was sure that the Lord would not decline the condescending task. There is a word for thee, O believer; rest thou in it. Be assured that thy God will be thy counsellor and friend; he shall guide thee; he will direct all thy ways. In his written Word thou hast this assurance in part fulfilled, for holy Scripture is his counsel to thee. Happy are we to have God’s Word always to guide us! What were the mariner without his compass? And what were the Christian without the Bible? This is the unerring chart, the map in which every shoal is described, and all the channels from the quicksands of destruction to the haven of salvation mapped and marked by one who knows all the way. Blessed be thou, O God, that we may trust thee to guide us now, and guide us even to the end! After this guidance through life, the Psalmist anticipates a divine reception at last—“and afterward receive me to glory.” What a thought for thee, believer! God himself will receive thee to glory—thee! Wandering, erring, straying, yet he will bring thee safe at last to glory! This is thy portion; live on it this day, and if perplexities should surround thee, go in the strength of this text straight to the throne.

# Word Live – 9/1/19

# The smile of God

## Prepare

Spend some time ‘counting your blessings’. You may find it helpful to write a list.



## Bible passage: Psalm 67

##### For the director of music. With stringed instruments. A psalm. A song.

1 May God be gracious to us and bless us   
       and make his face shine upon us,   
       Selah

2 that your ways may be known on earth,   
       your salvation among all nations.

3 May the peoples praise you, O God;   
       may all the peoples praise you.

4 May the nations be glad and sing for joy,   
       for you rule the peoples justly   
       and guide the nations of the earth.   
       Selah

5 May the peoples praise you, O God;   
       may all the peoples praise you.

6 Then the land will yield its harvest,   
       and God, our God, will bless us.

7 God will bless us,   
       and all the ends of the earth will fear him.

## Explore

**God’s blessing activity**

The great theologian Claus Westermann contrasted two general aspects of God’s merciful action towards humanity: God’s saving activity and God’s blessing activity.1 We have tended to emphasise the former and played down the latter. But Scripture consistently speaks of God’s blessing activity in fertility, harvest, health, prosperity and protection. This is the focus of this psalm.

**Overflow to others**

The psalm begins with a prayer for God’s blessing (v 1), moves on to declare the way God has blessed through his sovereignty over the nations and a fruitful harvest, and ends with a request for God’s continued blessing (v 7). God’s blessing overflows. But God’s blessing on Israel was to overflow to others so that God would be acknowledged and praised (vs 3,5). This is how God’s blessing always works (see [Genesis 12:2,3](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis+12%3A2%2C3&version=NIV)).

**The gift of God**

When my children were little they sometimes used to say, ‘Daddy, you’re making big eyebrows.’ What they meant was that my face was expressing disapproval. All children long for the blessing of their parents – their smile – and this is the gift of God to his people, his face shining on them. It is what Jacob wrestled for ([Genesis 32:26](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis+32%3A26&version=NIV)), it is the Father’s gift to Jesus at his baptism ([Mark 1:11](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+1%3A11&version=NIV)), it is his gift to you in Christ and to everyone in creation.

1 Westermann, Elements of Old Testament Theology, Atlanta: John Knox, 1982

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

## Respond

As you reflect on God’s blessing, is there any way you can bless someone else?

## Deeper Bible study

This beautiful psalm expresses a deep desire for God’s rule and reign to be extended over all creation. The psalmist prays for God’s salvation to be known amongst all peoples, who will then join together to praise the one true God. There will be justice, abundant provision for all, together with reverent awe for God (‘fear’, v 7). This is what it means to live under God’s rich blessing (v 1). It is a wonderful, liberating vision, filled with light, love and joy. We rejoice at God’s life-giving word.

The psalm is essentially a prayer for God’s kingdom to come on earth, as it is heaven. Jesus taught us to pray for this, and we know that the wonderful picture painted in Psalm 67 is only fulfilled through the coming of Jesus. He first came to inaugurate the kingdom, which is now growing all over the world. What is more, he will come again to make all things new, perfectly establishing his rule. This is the ‘now and not yet’ of the kingdom of God of which theologians speak. Let us respond by praying the psalm and by adding the words that Jesus taught us: ‘May your kingdom come’ ([Matt 6:10](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matt+6%3A10&version=GNT), GNB).

Of course, God calls us to do more than pray. He himself is working right now in marvellous ways, both large and small. He calls us to join with him in what he is doing. Be aware of where he is at work among your family and friends, in your workplace or neighbourhood. Be ready to engage as God gives you opportunities. May we know the joy of being part of the answer to our own prayers as we see the kingdom come more and more each day.

Pray through this psalm. After each verse add, ‘May your kingdom come … on earth, as in heaven.’ How is God calling you to be an answer to your prayers?

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

## What’s in a name? (Background)

The psalm is based on the Aaronic benediction of [Numbers 6:24,25](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Numbers%206:24-25&version=TNIV), and extends the familiar blessing into a prayer that, by God's blessing of his people, his salvation and praise may be extended over all the earth and to all the nations.   
  
One detail that is changed is the Hebrew name or term for God. In Hebraic thought, names are very important. Knowing someone’s name tells us a lot about them. Their name is closely linked with their character, activity, relationships and identity.  
  
The name represents the whole person, and a change of name indicates changes in personality and relationships. Names communicate:  
  
● **Distinctiveness** – my name sets me apart from others  
  
● **Community** – knowing my name brings me into relationships with others  
  
● **History** – the origin and meaning of my name, and how I got it, shows where I come from and what I have experienced  
  
● **Relationship** – knowing my name allows people to relate to me intimately  
  
● **Vulnerability** – using my name allows people to abuse it by taking it in vain  
  
What is important to notice in [Psalm 67](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm%2067&version=TNIV), which gives a universal dimension to God’s blessing of Israel, is that the name YHWH is replaced by Elohim. YHWH, the name revealed on Mount Sinai ([Exodus 3:13–15](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Exodus%203:13-15&version=TNIV); [6:2,3](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Exodus%206:2-3&version=TNIV)), is the mysterious name, ‘I am’. It expresses the act of salvation and covenant-making.   
  
YHWH:   
  
● saved Israel from slavery in Egypt  
  
● brought the, into a special covenant relationship at Mount Sinai  
  
● gave them the Promised Land  
  
The term Elohim is more general, from the root word for power or strength. It is a plural noun referring to the universal God:  
  
● the God of all the nations  
  
● the God of all creation  
  
● the God over all supposed gods   
  
God is both YHWH, the saviour of Israel, and Elohim, the creator of the world and redeemer of all nations. We worship him today as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.  
  
Richard Harvey

# Today in the Word – 9/1/19

# The Temple of Praise

# Read: Psalms 1-2

### Psalm 1

1Blessed is the one  
    who does not walk in step with the wicked  
or stand in the way that sinners take  
    or sit in the company of mockers,  
2but whose delight is in the law of the Lord,  
    and who meditates on his law day and night.  
3That person is like a tree planted by streams of water,  
    which yields its fruit in season  
and whose leaf does not wither—  
    whatever they do prospers.

4Not so the wicked!  
    They are like chaff  
    that the wind blows away.  
5Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment,  
    nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.

6For the Lord watches over the way of the righteous,  
    but the way of the wicked leads to destruction.

### Psalm 2

1Why do the nations conspire[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=ps+1-2&version=NIV#fen-NIV-13947a)]  
    and the peoples plot in vain?  
2The kings of the earth rise up  
    and the rulers band together  
    against the Lord and against his anointed, saying,  
3“Let us break their chains  
    and throw off their shackles.”

4The One enthroned in heaven laughs;  
    the Lord scoffs at them.  
5He rebukes them in his anger  
    and terrifies them in his wrath, saying,  
6“I have installed my king  
    on Zion, my holy mountain.”

7I will proclaim the Lord’s decree:

He said to me, “You are my son;  
    today I have become your father.  
8Ask me,  
    and I will make the nations your inheritance,  
    the ends of the earth your possession.  
9You will break them with a rod of iron[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=ps+1-2&version=NIV#fen-NIV-13955b)];  
    you will dash them to pieces like pottery.”

10Therefore, you kings, be wise;  
    be warned, you rulers of the earth.  
11Serve the Lord with fear  
    and celebrate his rule with trembling.  
12Kiss his son, or he will be angry  
    and your way will lead to your destruction,  
for his wrath can flare up in a moment.  
    Blessed are all who take refuge in him.

#### Footnotes:

1. [Psalm 2:1](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=ps+1-2&version=NIV#en-NIV-13947) Hebrew; Septuagint rage
2. [Psalm 2:9](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=ps+1-2&version=NIV#en-NIV-13955) Or will rule them with an iron scepter (see Septuagint and Syriac)

At the entrance to Solomon's Temple stood two 2S-and-a-half-foot tall bronze pillars. These pillars were elaborately decorated with capitals in the shape of lilies (1 Kings 7:15-22). Each pillar was given a name: Jachin and Boaz. They served as a grand gateway Into the temple where the presence of the Lord dwelt.

For the Lord watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked leads to destruction. Psalm 1:6

In a similar way, Psalms 1 and 2 serve as the gateway to welcome readers into a special temple of praise, the Psalter. These two psalms begin and end with a blessing (1:1; 2:12) and share several keywords. They also introduce the two most prominent themes in the Psalter:God's Law and God's Messiah.

Psalm 1 declares blessed the person who delights in and ruminates on God's Law. That person is beautifully described as a tree planted by streams of water (1:3). This secure position means that tree will be fruitful and endure, even in times of draught. A fruitful tree provides shelter and food for many. In a similar way, the person who delights in the Law will be a blessing to those around them. In contrast, the wicked are like chaff; unfruitful, useless, and transient.

Psalm 2 portrays the nations conspiring against the Lord and His Messiah. In a striking image, the Lord simply laughs at their pretense. They are no real threat to the living God. He declares that He has given them to His Son and Messiah as an inheritance (2:6-8). The Lord warns these hostile nations that their best course of action Is to "Serve the LORD with fear and celebrate his rule with trembling" (v. 11). They should pay homage to the Son or will face His judgment (v. 12). The psalm closes with a word of blessing upon all those who take refuge in the Lord's Messiah (v. 12).

**APPLY THE WORD**

The word "blessed" (1:1; 2:12) can also be translated as "happy." Psalms 1 and 2 teach ushow to find happiness In life, by delighting In God's Word and by taking refuge In His Messiah, Jesus. What do you look to for happiness? Nothing can satisfy us or fulfill us like Jesus who is revealed to us in God's Word.

**PRAY WITH US**

As we start our study of Psalms this month. let's learn from the psalmist's prayerful stance: "In the morning, Lord, you hear my voice; In the morning I lay my requests before you and wait expectantly" (Ps. 5:3), May we follow his example!

# Our Daily Bread – 9/1/19

# Unchanging

 **Read:** [**Psalm 103:13–22**](https://www.odb.org/2019/09/01/unchanging)

13As a father has compassion on his children,  
    so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him;  
14for he knows how we are formed,  
    he remembers that we are dust.  
15The life of mortals is like grass,  
    they flourish like a flower of the field;  
16the wind blows over it and it is gone,  
    and its place remembers it no more.  
17But from everlasting to everlasting  
    the Lord’s love is with those who fear him,  
    and his righteousness with their children’s children—  
18with those who keep his covenant  
    and remember to obey his precepts.

19The Lord has established his throne in heaven,  
    and his kingdom rules over all.

20Praise the Lord, you his angels,  
    you mighty ones who do his bidding,  
    who obey his word.  
21Praise the Lord, all his heavenly hosts,  
    you his servants who do his will.  
22Praise the Lord, all his works  
    everywhere in his dominion.

Praise the Lord, my soul.

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever. [Hebrews 13:8](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=NIV&search=Hebrews+13%3A8)

My wife, Cari, and I recently traveled to Santa Barbara, California—the city where we met and fell in love thirty-five years ago—to attend our college reunion. We planned to visit several places where we had spent some of the best hours of our youth together. But when we arrived at the location of our favorite Mexican restaurant, we found a building supply store there. A wrought iron plaque hung on the wall commemorating the restaurant and its four decades of service to the community.

I gazed on the barren but still familiar sidewalk, once dotted cheerfully with colorful tables and bright umbrellas. So much had changed around us! Yet in the midst of change, God’s faithfulness never changes. David observed poignantly: “The life of mortals is like grass, they flourish like a flower of the field; the wind blows over it and it is gone, and its place remembers it no more. But from everlasting to everlasting the Lord’s love is with those who fear him, and his righteousness with their children’s children” (Psalm 103:15–17). David concludes the psalm with these words: “Praise the Lord, my soul” (v. 22).

The ancient philosopher Heraclitus said, “You can never step in the same river twice.” Life is always changing around us, but God remains the same and can always be trusted to keep His promises! His faithfulness and love can be counted on from generation to generation.

By:  [James Banks](https://odb.org/author/jamesbanks/)

#### Reflect & Pray

How is it comforting to know that God never changes? When have you needed that assurance?

Almighty and eternal God, thank You that You never change and can always be trusted. Help me to rely on Your love and faithfulness today.

#### Insight

In Psalm 103, David acknowledges there are many reasons for praising God. The word praise comes from the Hebrew word meaning “to kneel” as an act of worship. Therefore, this song is David’s call to worship, with praise for God first taking place in his own heart. In verses 1–6, the psalmist reminds himself to never forget all the wonderful things God has done for him personally. Then the call to worship goes out to the nation of Israel (vv. 7–18). David proclaims the provision of a loving Father—how He had revealed Himself to Moses and blessed the nation with rescue from Egypt. Ultimately, even the angelic hosts in the heavenly realms (vv. 19–22) are called to give worship to the one true God. Finally, David ends as he began—reminding himself to honor and praise the Lord from the depths of his own heart: “Praise the Lord, my soul” (v. 22).

# God Calling – 9/1/19

# How Rich You Are

**I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.  -Hebrews 13:5**

My children, that word is unfailingly true.  Down the centuries thousands have proved My constancy, My untiringness, My unfailing Love.  "Never leave."  "Never forsake." Not just a Presence is meant by this, but ...

My Love will never leave you, My Understanding will never leave you, My Strength will never leave you.  Think of all that I am:

Love - then forever you are sure of Love.

Strength - then forever, in every difficulty and danger, you are sure of strength.

Patience - then always there is One who can never tire.

Understanding - then always you will be understood.

Can you fear the future when it holds so much for you?  Beloved, "set your affections on things above" (the higher, spiritual things), "and not on things on the earth" (the lower, temporal things), and you will see how rich you are.

Hearken unto me, O Jacob and Israel, my called; I am he; I am the first, I also am the last. - Isaiah 48:12

# My Utmost for His Highest – 9/2/19

# Life of Pure and Holy Sacrifice

He who believes in Me…out of his heart will flow… —[John 7:38](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=John+7%3A38)

Jesus did not say, “He who believes in Me will realize all the blessings of the fullness of God,” but, in essence, “He who believes in Me will have everything he receives escape out of him.” Our Lord’s teaching was always anti-self-realization. His purpose is not the development of a person— His purpose is to make a person exactly like Himself, and the Son of God is characterized by self-expenditure. If we believe in Jesus, it is not what we gain but what He pours through us that really counts. God’s purpose is not simply to make us beautiful, plump grapes, but to make us grapes so that He may squeeze the sweetness out of us. Our spiritual life cannot be measured by success as the world measures it, but only by what God pours through us— and we cannot measure that at all.

When Mary of Bethany “broke the flask…of very costly oil…and poured it on [Jesus’] head,” it was an act for which no one else saw any special occasion; in fact, “…there were some who…said, ‘Why was this fragrant oil wasted?’ ” ([Mark 14:3-4](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+14:3-4)). But Jesus commended Mary for her extravagant act of devotion, and said, “…wherever this gospel is preached…what this woman has done will also be told as a memorial to her” ([Mark 14:9](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+14:9)). Our Lord is filled with overflowing joy whenever He sees any of us doing what Mary did— not being bound by a particular set of rules, but being totally surrendered to Him. God poured out the life of His Son “that the world through Him might be saved” ([John 3:17](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+3:17)). Are we prepared to pour out our lives for Him?

“He who believes in Me…out of his heart will flow rivers of living water”— and hundreds of other lives will be continually refreshed. Now is the time for us to break “the flask” of our lives, to stop seeking our own satisfaction, and to pour out our lives before Him. Our Lord is asking who of us will do it for Him?

**WISDOM FROM OSWALD CHAMBERS**

The Bible does not thrill; the Bible nourishes. Give time to the reading of the Bible and the recreating effect is as real as that of fresh air physically.  Disciples Indeed, 387 R

# CCEL – 9/2/19

**Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart.**—[PSA. 27:14.](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.27.html" \l "Ps.27.14)

Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength.—Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.—Thou hast been a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in distress, a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat, when the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall.

The trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.—Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward. For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise.

[Isa. 40:28,29](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Isa.40.html" \l "Isa.40.28). -[Isa. 41:10](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Isa.41.html" \l "Isa.41.10). -[Isa. 25:4](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Isa.25.html" \l "Isa.25.4).[Jas. 1:3,4](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Jas.1.html" \l "Jas.1.3). -[Heb. 10:35,36](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Heb.10.html" \l "Heb.10.35).

“But Simon’s wife’s mother lay sick of a fever, and anon they tell him of her.” **[Mark 1:30](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Mark.1.html" \l "Mark.1.30)**

Very interesting is this little peep into the house of the Apostolic Fisherman. We see at once that household joys and cares are no hindrance to the full exercise of ministry, nay, that since they furnish an opportunity for personally witnessing the Lord’s gracious work upon one’s own flesh and blood, they may even instruct the teacher better than any other earthly discipline. Papists and other sectaries may decry marriage, but true Christianity and household life agree well together. Peter’s house was probably a poor fisherman’s hut, but the Lord of Glory entered it, lodged in it, and wrought a miracle in it. Should our little book be read this morning in some very humble cottage, let this fact encourage the inmates to seek the company of King Jesus. God is oftener in little huts than in rich palaces. Jesus is looking round your room now, and is waiting to be gracious to you. Into Simon’s house sickness had entered, fever in a deadly form had prostrated his mother-in-law, and as soon as Jesus came they told him of the sad affliction, and he hastened to the patient’s bed. Have you any sickness in the house this morning? You will find Jesus by far the best physician, go to him at once and tell him all about the matter. Immediately lay the case before him. It concerns one of his people, and therefore will not be trivial to him. Observe, that at once the Saviour restored the sick woman; none can heal as he does. We may not make sure that the Lord will at once remove all disease from those we love, but we may know that believing prayer for the sick is far more likely to be followed by restoration than anything else in the world; and where this avails not, we must meekly bow to his will by whom life and death are determined. The tender heart of Jesus waits to hear our griefs, let us pour them into his patient ear.

# Word Live – 9/2/19

# A righteous response

## Prepare

Wars, famines, disasters, disease… our world is not as it should be. We can’t care deeply about everything, but often God will put one or two situations on our hearts. Pray for the issues he’s bringing to your mind now.



## Bible passage: Nehemiah 1:1–11

##### Nehemiah's Prayer

1 The words of Nehemiah son of Hacaliah:   
      In the month of Kislev in the twentieth year, while I was in the citadel of Susa, 2 Hanani, one of my brothers, came from Judah with some other men, and I questioned them about the Jewish remnant that survived the exile, and also about Jerusalem.

3 They said to me, "Those who survived the exile and are back in the province are in great trouble and disgrace. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates have been burned with fire."

4 When I heard these things, I sat down and wept. For some days I mourned and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven. 5 Then I said:   
       "O LORD, God of heaven, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love with those who love him and obey his commands, 6 let your ear be attentive and your eyes open to hear the prayer your servant is praying before you day and night for your servants, the people of Israel. I confess the sins we Israelites, including myself and my father's house, have committed against you. 7 We have acted very wickedly toward you. We have not obeyed the commands, decrees and laws you gave your servant Moses.

8 "Remember the instruction you gave your servant Moses, saying, 'If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the nations, 9 but if you return to me and obey my commands, then even if your exiled people are at the farthest horizon, I will gather them from there and bring them to the place I have chosen as a dwelling for my Name.'

10 "They are your servants and your people, whom you redeemed by your great strength and your mighty hand. 11 O Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of this your servant and to the prayer of your servants who delight in revering your name. Give your servant success today by granting him favor in the presence of this man."   
      I was cupbearer to the king.

## Explore

**How to respond**

The beginning of Nehemiah’s story gives us a helpful model for how to respond to the brokenness in our world.

**Lament first**

First, he wept. So often we want to rush on to fixing the problem, but it is important to lament first – to feel and express the appropriate emotions.

**Focus on prayer**

Next, he fasted and prayed for several days. Presumably he still had to work in that time and couldn’t spend the week locked in private prayer, but his focus, whatever else he was doing, was on prayer. He was latching on to God, holding the situation before him, and allowing God to shape his response to it.

**Participate in the answer**

Then, when he knew what God was calling him to do, he prayed a prayer of action. It is a wonderful model for our prayers: it begins with adoration of God, moves to confession of sin, recalls God’s relevant promises, then presents a simple, clear, measurable request. And as is so often the case, he found God was calling him to participate in the answer.

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

## Respond

Hillsong have a worship song called ‘Hosanna’ which contains some dangerous lyrics. You may have sung them dozens of times, but pray them today – if you’re willing for God to answer them: ‘Break my heart for what breaks yours / Everything I am for your kingdom’s cause’ (Brooke Fraser).

## Introduction to Nehemiah

The story of Nehemiah well illustrates Paul’s declaration: ‘Everything written in the Scriptures was written to teach us, in order that we might have hope through the patience and encouragement which the Scriptures give us.’ ([Rom 15:4](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Rom+15%3A4&version=GNT), GNB) Nehemiah’s calling was to rebuild city walls and revitalise community life among the threatened and despondent population of Jerusalem in the middle of the fifth century bc. His work overlapped with that of Ezra, who preceded him to supervise uniform observance of the Jewish Law.

Nehemiah’s role as governor of Jerusalem provides important leadership lessons today for all who work hard to see tired and dispirited Western churches revitalised spiritually and energised for mission: ‘No other biblical character gives such clear information about how to “practise the presence of God” while carrying a leadership role.’1 Such lessons can emerge because of the measure of continuity between ancient Israel and the post-Pentecost church. The word ‘church’ comes from the Old Testament; its Hebrew equivalent is found five times in Nehemiah, where the NIV renders it ‘assembly’ or ‘company’ ([Neh 5:13; 7:66; 8:2,17; 13:1](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Neh+5%3A13%3B+7%3A66%3B+8%3A2%2C17%3B+13%3A1&version=NIV)). Of course, there is also discontinuity between old and new. Jesus said, ‘I will build my church’ ([Matt 16:18](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matt+16%3A18&version=NIV), italics added), implying an imminent radical new development from the church or assembly of the past.

At a critical point in the revitalisation of the Jerusalem community, the people come together to renew their covenant commitment to the Lord. They begin to do so at 8:2 as an ‘assembly’ or – if you like – ‘church’. The spiritual roots of Christians go back to that assembly led by Ezra and Nehemiah, as well as to others preceding it under Hezekiah, Solomon, Moses and others. There is hope, patience and encouragement awaiting us over the next two weeks, as we spend time with the book of Nehemiah. As you engage in this ancient text, prayerfully allow the Holy Spirit to minister to you. May both Word and Spirit give you confidence and courage to meet the opportunities and challenges you will face over the next fortnight.

1 The Insight Bible, Zondervan, 1992, p415

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

## Deeper Bible study

Two key words in Hanani’s report on the state of the Jerusalem community are ‘trouble’ and ‘disgrace’ (v 3) (see also [Neh 2:17](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Neh+2%3A17&version=NIV)) The pathetic scene of broken city walls and burnt-out gates meant that foreigners despised the citizens of Jerusalem and scoffed at the God who apparently had abandoned them. Arguably, there is a parallel with Western churches: overall decline is causing many church members to lose heart and others to give up. Popular modern attitudes pooh-poohing the church mirror the scorn of Judah’s neighbours.

Nehemiah’s reaction to Jerusalem’s misfortune is to weep, mourn, fast and pray. He did this ‘for some days’ (v 4) – ie for four months (see v 1 and 2:1)! Clearly, for Nehemiah, prayer was huge. His words in verses 5–10 offer us a template when praying for churches going through hard times.

First, Nehemiah is convinced that God is able (‘great and awesome’) and willing (‘keeps his covenant of love’) to change the situation (v 5). Is this our theology of prayer? How strong is our persuasion that God can and will revive his people today? Second, Nehemiah confesses the sins of his people as though they were his own (vs 6,7). Does a holier-than-thou condescension inhibit us from sensing a deep solidarity with those for whom we pray? Third, Nehemiah pleads the promises of Scripture (vs 8,9). In praying, do we attempt, reverently, to hold God to his promises? Fourth, the premise of Nehemiah’s prayer is: God has redeemed his people (v 10)! Do we lose sight of the mighty fact that God in Christ has redeemed his church? Fifth, Nehemiah commits himself to take risks for his people (v 11). Perhaps we need to ask: ‘Am I willing to inconvenience myself by becoming part of the answer to my prayer?’

Prayer is powerful precisely because God can and God will. He can answer because he is all-powerful. He will answer because he promises to keep his covenant.

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

## Prayer points

What situation or issue sparks righteous grief or anger in you?

Nehemiah was upset when he heard about the state of Jerusalem because he knew it was God’s city and its state of ruin was dishonouring to God (v 4).

Think of an issue you know about which saddens the heart of God. It might be a global issue like poverty, war or people trafficking, or it might be a local issue like disunity in the church or sickness.  
  
As you pray, follow Nehemiah’s example:   
  
• Remember who you are praying to (v 5).   
  
• Remember your relationship to him (vs 6,10,11).   
  
• Confess any sin (vs 6b,7).   
  
• Remember God’s promises (vs 8,9).   
  
• Bring your request (v 11).   
  
Alison Clarke

# Today in the Word – 9/2/19

# The Lies of the Enemy

# Read: Psalms 3-4

### Psalm 3[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=ps+3-4&version=NIV#fen-NIV-13959a)]

#### A psalm of David. When he fled from his son Absalom.

1Lord, how many are my foes!  
    How many rise up against me!  
2Many are saying of me,  
    “God will not deliver him.”[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=ps+3-4&version=NIV#fen-NIV-13960b)]

3But you, Lord, are a shield around me,  
    my glory, the One who lifts my head high.  
4I call out to the Lord,  
    and he answers me from his holy mountain.

5I lie down and sleep;  
    I wake again, because the Lord sustains me.  
6I will not fear though tens of thousands  
    assail me on every side.

7Arise, Lord!  
    Deliver me, my God!  
Strike all my enemies on the jaw;  
    break the teeth of the wicked.

8From the Lord comes deliverance.  
    May your blessing be on your people.

### Psalm 4[[c](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=ps+3-4&version=NIV#fen-NIV-13967c)]

#### For the director of music. With stringed instruments. A psalm of David.

1Answer me when I call to you,  
    my righteous God.  
Give me relief from my distress;  
    have mercy on me and hear my prayer.

2How long will you people turn my glory into shame?  
    How long will you love delusions and seek false gods[[d](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=ps+3-4&version=NIV#fen-NIV-13968d)]?[[e](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=ps+3-4&version=NIV#fen-NIV-13968e)]  
3Know that the Lord has set apart his faithful servant for himself;  
    the Lord hears when I call to him.

4Tremble and[[f](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=ps+3-4&version=NIV#fen-NIV-13970f)] do not sin;  
    when you are on your beds,  
    search your hearts and be silent.  
5Offer the sacrifices of the righteous  
    and trust in the Lord.

6Many, Lord, are asking, “Who will bring us prosperity?”  
    Let the light of your face shine on us.  
7Fill my heart with joy  
    when their grain and new wine abound.

8In peace I will lie down and sleep,  
    for you alone, Lord,  
    make me dwell in safety.

#### Footnotes:

1. [Psalm 3:1](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=ps+3-4&version=NIV#en-NIV-13959) In Hebrew texts 3:1-8 is numbered 3:2-9.
2. [Psalm 3:2](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=ps+3-4&version=NIV#en-NIV-13960) The Hebrew has Selah (a word of uncertain meaning) here and at the end of verses 4 and 8.
3. [Psalm 4:1](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=ps+3-4&version=NIV#en-NIV-13967) In Hebrew texts 4:1-8 is numbered 4:2-9.
4. [Psalm 4:2](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=ps+3-4&version=NIV#en-NIV-13968) Or seek lies
5. [Psalm 4:2](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=ps+3-4&version=NIV#en-NIV-13968) The Hebrew has Selah (a word of uncertain meaning) here and at the end of verse 4.
6. [Psalm 4:4](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=ps+3-4&version=NIV#en-NIV-13970) Or In your anger (see Septuagint)

Sam Johnson was a fighter pilot in Vietnam. On his 25th mission, he was shot down and spent the next seven and a half years as a POW in the "Hanoi Hilton." About half of that time he spent in solitary confinement. The only people he ever saw were the guards and enemy officers who came to interrogate him. He was eventually released and would serve as a member of the US Congress for almost three decades.

I call out to the Lord, and he answers me from his holy mountain. Psalm 3:4

King David also found himself surrounded by enemies. "LORD, how many are my foes! How many rise up against me! Many are saying of me, 'God will not deliver him'" (Ps. 3:1-2). The preface to the psalm informs us that it was written when David's son Absalom had usurped the throne and drove David out of Jerusalem. How jarring it must have been for David to see most of the nation turn on him and follow his rebellious son. He found himself back on the run in the wilderness as he had been in the days of Saul. How easy it would be to believe the taunts of the crowd that God was not with him.

But David turned his eyes away from his enemies and onto the Lord. "But you, LORD, are a shield around me. my glory and the One who lifts my head" (v. 3). He was able to sleep in ·peace because he knew his life was in God's hands (v. 5-6). In faith, he asked God to defeat his enemies and "break the teeth of the wicked" (v. 7). This striking metaphor shows that David wanted his enemies to be powerless. A lion or a snake without teeth is not a threat. David ended by affirming that "from the LORD comes deliverance" (v. 8).

**APPLY THE WORD**

This psalm teaches that our identity Is not found in the acclaim or ridicule of the crowd, but in our relationship with God. David refused to be defined by his enemies. Do you find yourself believing the words of people who are trying to harm you? Today, find your identity and hope in the Lord who promises to deliver us.

**Pray with Us**

As we celebrate this Labor Day, thank God for the gift of hard work. Help us remember that, no matter what task we are called to do, we can do It for the lord: "It Is the lord Christ you are serving” (Col. 3:23-24).

# Our Daily Bread – 9/2/19

# A Lasting Legacy

 **Read:** [**Genesis 4:1–2**](https://www.odb.org/2019/09/02/a-lasting-legacy-2)

### Cain and Abel

4 Adam[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=NIV&search=Genesis+4%3A1%E2%80%932#fen-NIV-81a)] made love to his wife Eve, and she became pregnant and gave birth to Cain.[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=NIV&search=Genesis+4%3A1%E2%80%932#fen-NIV-81b)] She said, “With the help of the Lord I have brought forth[[c](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=NIV&search=Genesis+4%3A1%E2%80%932#fen-NIV-81c)] a man.” 2Later she gave birth to his brother Abel.

Now Abel kept flocks, and Cain worked the soil.

#### Footnotes:

1. [Genesis 4:1](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=NIV&search=Genesis+4%3A1%E2%80%932#en-NIV-81) Or The man
2. [Genesis 4:1](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=NIV&search=Genesis+4%3A1%E2%80%932#en-NIV-81) Cain sounds like the Hebrew for brought forth or acquired.
3. [Genesis 4:1](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=NIV&search=Genesis+4%3A1%E2%80%932#en-NIV-81) Or have acquired

[Eve] said, “With the help of the Lord I have brought forth a man.” [Genesis 4:1](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=NIV&search=Genesis+4%3A1)

Thomas Edison invented the first practical electric light bulb. Jonas Salk developed an effective polio vaccine. Amy Carmichael penned many of the hymns we sing in worship. But what about you? Why were you put on earth? How will you invest your life?

Genesis 4 tells us that Eve “became pregnant and gave birth to Cain.” After holding Cain for the first time, Eve announced, “With the help of the Lord I have brought forth a man” (v. 1). In an effort to explain the surprising experience of the very first birth, Eve uses a phrase dripping with dependency on the sovereign aid of God: “With the help of the Lord.” Eventually, through Eve’s seed, God would provide rescue for His people through another Son (John 3:16). What a legacy!

Parenthood is just one of many ways people make lasting contributions to this world. Perhaps your offering will burst forth from a room where you write or knit or paint. You might be an example for another who is deprived of godly influence. Or your investment might even come after your death in ways you could never imagine. It may be the work you leave behind or your reputation for integrity in business. In any case, will your words echo Eve’s dependency on God? With the help of the Lord, what will you do for His honor?

By:  [Elisa Morgan](https://odb.org/author/elisamorgan/)

#### Reflect & Pray

How do you want to be remembered after you leave this world? In what ways will you seek God’s help to make that happen?

Dear God, may I lean intoYou in all I do, because it is only with Your help that I can bring forth a lasting legacy.

#### Insight

In Genesis 4:1–2 we find fulfillment of two events stated earlier in the book. In 1:28 God blessed Adam and Eve and told them to “be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it.” The fact that Eve gave birth to Cain and Abel was the first sign that the blessing was still in effect.

The second fulfillment relates to God’s promise of a redeemer in 3:15. God told the serpent, “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.” God spoke this promise before there were children to fulfill it. Adam and Eve’s offspring made the ultimate offspring—Jesus—possible.

# God Calling – 9/2/19

# I Must Provide

I am your Lord. Enough. Then I can command your obedient service, your loyalty. But I am bound by My Lordship to give you protection.

I am bound to fight for you, to plan for you, to secure you a sufficiency of all within My Power to provide. Think how vast that provision can be. Never doubt.  Such marvels are unfolding. Wonders beyond your dreams. They only need the watering of a grateful spirit and a loving heart to yield abundantly.

And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God.  John 20:28