# My Utmost for His Highest – 12/1/20

# The Law and the Gospel



Whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all. —[James 2:10](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=James+2%3A10)

The moral law does not consider our weaknesses as human beings; in fact, it does not take into account our heredity or infirmities. It simply demands that we be absolutely moral. The moral law never changes, either for the highest of society or for the weakest in the world. It is enduring and eternally the same. The moral law, ordained by God, does not make itself weak to the weak by excusing our shortcomings. It remains absolute for all time and eternity. If we are not aware of this, it is because we are less than alive. Once we do realize it, our life immediately becomes a fatal tragedy. “I was alive once without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died” ([Romans 7:9](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+7:9)). The moment we realize this, the Spirit of God convicts us of sin. Until a person gets there and sees that there is no hope, the Cross of Christ remains absurd to him. Conviction of sin always brings a fearful, confining sense of the law. It makes a person hopeless— “…sold under sin” ([Romans 7:14](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+7:14)). I, a guilty sinner, can never work to get right with God— it is impossible. There is only one way by which I can get right with God, and that is through the death of Jesus Christ. I must get rid of the underlying idea that I can ever be right with God because of my obedience. Who of us could ever obey God to absolute perfection!

We only begin to realize the power of the moral law once we see that it comes with a condition and a promise. But God never coerces us. Sometimes we wish He would make us be obedient, and at other times we wish He would leave us alone. Whenever God’s will is in complete control, He removes all pressure. And when we deliberately choose to obey Him, He will reach to the remotest star and to the ends of the earth to assist us with all of His almighty power.

**Wisdom From Oswald Chambers**

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

# CCEL – 12/1/20

**A man shall be as a hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest.**—[ISA. 32:2.](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Isa.32.html" \l "Isa.32.2)

Forasmuch . . . as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same.—The man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts.—I and my Father are one.

He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.—There shall be a tabernacle for a shadow in the daytime from the heat, and for a place of refuge, and for a covert from storm and from rain.—The Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand. The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night.

When my heart is overwhelmed: lead me to the rock that is higher than I.—Thou art my hiding place; thou shalt preserve me from trouble.—Thou hast been a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in his 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.

[Heb. 2:14](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Heb.2.html" \l "Heb.2.14). -[Zech. 13:7](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Zech.13.html" \l "Zech.13.7). -[John 10:30](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.John.10.html" \l "John.10.30).[Psa. 91:1](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.91.html" \l "Ps.91.1). -[Isa. 4:6](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Isa.4.html" \l "Isa.4.6). -[Psa. 121:5,6](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.121.html" \l "Ps.121.5).[Psa. 61:2](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.61.html" \l "Ps.61.2). -[Psa. 32:7](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.32.html" \l "Ps.32.7). -[Isa. 25:4](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Isa.25.html" \l "Isa.25.4).

“Thou hast made summer and winter.” [Psalm 74:17](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.74.html" \l "Ps.74.17)

My soul begin this wintry month with thy God. The cold snows and the piercing winds all remind thee that he keeps his covenant with day and night, and tend to assure thee that he will also keep that glorious covenant which he has made with thee in the person of Christ Jesus. He who is true to his Word in the revolutions of the seasons of this poor sin-polluted world, will not prove unfaithful in his dealings with his own well-beloved Son.

Winter in the soul is by no means a comfortable season, and if it be upon thee just now it will be very painful to thee: but there is this comfort, namely, that the Lord makes it. He sends the sharp blasts of adversity to nip the buds of expectation: he scattereth the hoarfrost like ashes over the once verdant meadows of our joy: he casteth forth his ice like morsels freezing the streams of our delight. He does it all, he is the great Winter King, and rules in the realms of frost, and therefore thou canst not murmur. Losses, crosses, heaviness, sickness, poverty, and a thousand other ills, are of the Lord’s sending, and come to us with wise design. Frosts kill noxious insects, and put a bound to raging diseases; they break up the clods, and sweeten the soil. O that such good results would always follow our winters of affliction!

How we prize the fire just now! how pleasant is its cheerful glow! Let us in the same manner prize our Lord, who is the constant source of warmth and comfort in every time of trouble. Let us draw nigh to him, and in him find joy and peace in believing. Let us wrap ourselves in the warm garments of his promises, and go forth to labours which befit the season, for it were ill to be as the sluggard who will not plough by reason of the cold; for he shall beg in summer and have nothing.

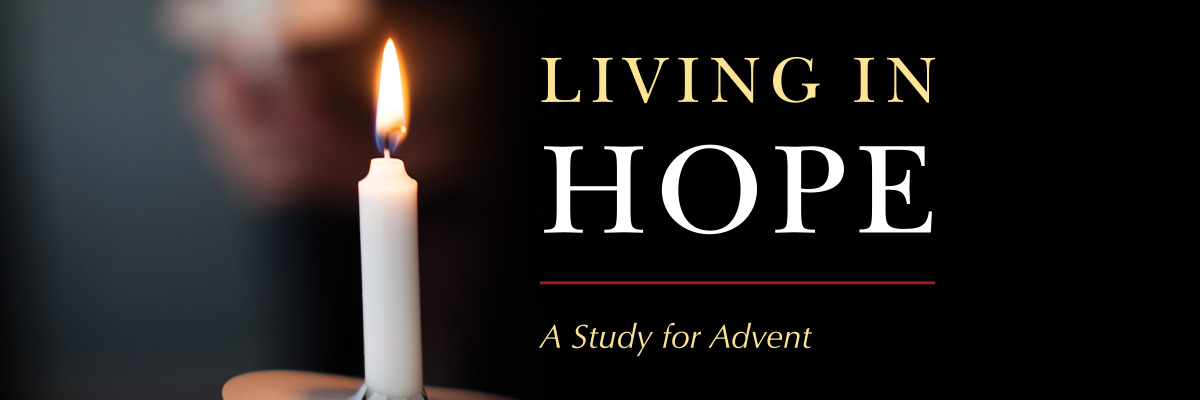
# Word Live – 12/1/20

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# Scripture Union – 12/1/20

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# Today in the Word – 12/1/20



# The First Week of Advent: Hope

**Read:** [**Matthew 12:15-21**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+12%3a15-21)

### **God’s Chosen Servant**

15Aware of this, Jesus withdrew from that place. A large crowd followed him, and he healed all who were ill. 16He warned them not to tell others about him. 17This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah:

18“Here is my servant whom I have chosen,  
    the one I love, in whom I delight;  
I will put my Spirit on him,  
    and he will proclaim justice to the nations.  
19He will not quarrel or cry out;  
    no one will hear his voice in the streets.  
20A bruised reed he will not break,  
    and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out,  
till he has brought justice through to victory.  
21    In his name the nations will put their hope.”[[a](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+12%3a15-21#fen-NIV-23511a)]

#### **Footnotes:**

1. [Matthew 12:21](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+12%3a15-21#en-NIV-23511) Isaiah 42:1-4

The weeks leading up to Christmas are called Advent. Why? Because Advent means “coming” or “arrival.” Christmas is the season in which we celebrate the arrival of the turning point in God’s plan of redemption— the coming of His Son, Jesus Christ. In today’s culture, the Advent season is marked by the four Sundays preceding Christmas, with each assigned a particular theme: first, hope; second, love; third, joy; and fourth, peace. This month’s devotional study is structured around these four themes. Since in Scripture the four themes are intertwined, they’ll also be interwoven in our study. Together, we can prepare our hearts for the Christmas holy day, as well as better understand and celebrate the connections between Christmas and the gospel.

He will proclaim justice to the nations. Matthew 12:18

We begin our study with hope. Biblical hope is closely connected with faith (Heb. 11:1). Faith treats the future as if it were already accomplished because God has promised. With reference to Christmas, there are many promises that God has already kept (Messianic prophecies), and this strengthens our faith that He will keep the rest as well. That’s genuine hope!

In today’s reading, Jesus was doing healing miracles, but not yet claiming to be the Messiah because the timing was not yet right in God’s plan (vv. 15–16). Even so, the Pharisees were already plotting to kill Him (v. 14). Matthew chose this moment in his Gospel to remind readers that Jesus’ ministry fulfilled a prophecy of Isaiah (v. 17; Isa. 42:1–4). This prophecy describes God’s beloved Servant who would “proclaim justice to the nations” (v. 18) through meekness (v. 19), gentleness, and kindness (v. 20)—the kind of behavior seen in Jesus’ healings. His actions reveal His identity. No wonder “the nations will put their hope” in Him (v. 21)!

**Apply the Word**

One way some families enjoy marking this holiday season is with an Advent calendar. Though we’re several days in, it’s not too late to get one (or make your own). Many versions are available online or at your local Christian bookstore.

### **Pray with Us**

Heavenly Father, as we enter the Advent season we ask that you prepare us to honor you with our celebrations. Make your promises ever-present in our minds and fill our hearts with the hope we have in Jesus.

## BY Brad Baurain

# Our Daily Bread – 12/1/20

# Being There

 **Read:** [**Job 2:11–13**](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Job%202.11%E2%80%9313)

11When Job’s three friends, Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite, heard about all the troubles that had come upon him, they set out from their homes and met together by agreement to go and sympathize with him and comfort him. 12When they saw him from a distance, they could hardly recognize him; they began to weep aloud, and they tore their robes and sprinkled dust on their heads. 13Then they sat on the ground with him for seven days and seven nights. No one said a word to him, because they saw how great his suffering was.

They sat on the ground with [Job] for seven days and seven nights. [Job 2:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Job%202.13)

When Jen, a theme park employee, saw Ralph collapse in tears on the ground, she rushed to help. Ralph, a young boy with autism, was sobbing because the ride he’d waited all day to enjoy had broken down. Instead of hurrying him to his feet or simply urging him to feel better, Jen got down onto the ground with Ralph, validating his feelings and allowing him the time to cry.

Jen’s actions are a beautiful example of how we can come alongside those who are grieving or suffering. The Bible tells of Job’s crippling grief after the loss of his home, his herds (his income), his health, and the simultaneous deaths of his ten children. When Job’s friends learned of his pain, they “set out from their homes . . . [to go] comfort him” ([Job 2:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Job%202.11)). Job sat on the ground in mourning. When they arrived, his friends sat down with him—for seven days—saying nothing because they saw the depth of his suffering.

In their humanness, Job’s friends later offered Job insensitive advice. But for the first seven days, they gave him the wordless and tender gift of presence. We may not understand someone’s grief, but we don’t need to understand in order to love them well by simply being with them.

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

#### **Reflect & Pray**

Who has been with you in difficult times? Who needs your presence today?

God, I thank You for being with me always—in good times and bad. Help me to offer that gift of presence to those You put in my path.

To learn more about helping hurting people, visit [ChristianUniversity.org/CC205.](https://ChristianUniversity.org/CC205.)

#### **Insight**

Although the book of Job doesn’t contain the oldest recorded events in the Bible (see [Genesis 1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen%201)), it’s considered by some scholars to be the earliest written book of the Bible. The Bible Knowledge Commentary says an early date of about 2,000 bc is possible for many reasons: The length of Job’s life (about 210 years), his wealth measured in livestock, the absence of any mention of the Mosaic laws and traditions, and the patriarchal name for God (El Shaddai or God the Almighty) being used more than thirty times (though only seventeen times in the rest of the Old Testament). These facts suggest an early date for Job’s writing. This book resonates with people universally because of its candor in struggling with the problem of suffering.

# God Calling – 12/1/20

# Responsibility

I am beside you. A very human Jesus, who understands all your weaknesses, and sees too your struggles and conquests.

Remember, I was the Companion of the Weak. Ready to supply their hunger. Teaching My followers their responsibility towards all, not only those near and dear to them, but to the multitude.

"Lord, send them away that they may go into the villages and buy themselves victuals," said My disciples, with no sympathy for the fainting, exhausted men, women, and children.

But I taught that Divine Sympathy includes responsibility. "Give ye them to eat," was My reply.  I taught that pity, without a remedy for the evil, or the need, is worthless.

"Give ye them to eat." Wherever your sympathy goes, you must go too, if possible. Remember that in thinking of your own needs. Claim from Me the same attitude now.

The servant is not above his Master, certainly not in Spiritual attainments, and what I taught My disciples, I do.

So fainting and needy, by the lakeside of life, know that I will supply your need, not grudgingly, but in full measure.

"And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not." Galatians 6:9

# My Utmost for His Highest – 12/2/20

# Christian Perfection



Not that I have already attained, or am already perfect… —[Philippians 3:12](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=Philippians+3%3A12)

It is a trap to presume that God wants to make us perfect specimens of what He can do— God’s purpose is to make us one with Himself. The emphasis of holiness movements tends to be that God is producing specimens of holiness to put in His museum. If you accept this concept of personal holiness, your life’s determined purpose will not be for God, but for what you call the evidence of God in your life. How can we say, “It could never be God’s will for me to be sick”? If it was God’s will to bruise His own Son ([Isaiah 53:10](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isaiah+53:10)), why shouldn’t He bruise you? What shines forth and reveals God in your life is not your relative consistency to an idea of what a saint should be, but your genuine, living relationship with Jesus Christ, and your unrestrained devotion to Him whether you are well or sick.

Christian perfection is not, and never can be, human perfection. Christian perfection is the perfection of a relationship with God that shows itself to be true even amid the seemingly unimportant aspects of human life. When you obey the call of Jesus Christ, the first thing that hits you is the pointlessness of the things you have to do. The next thought that strikes you is that other people seem to be living perfectly consistent lives. Such lives may leave you with the idea that God is unnecessary— that through your own human effort and devotion you can attain God’s standard for your life. In a fallen world this can never be done. I am called to live in such a perfect relationship with God that my life produces a yearning for God in the lives of others, not admiration for myself. Thoughts about myself hinder my usefulness to God. God’s purpose is not to perfect me to make me a trophy in His showcase; He is getting me to the place where He can use me. Let Him do what He wants.

**Wisdom From Oswald Chambers**

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

# CCEL – 12/2/20

**Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things.**—[I JOHN 2:20.](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iJohn.2.html" \l "iJohn.2.20)

God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power.—It pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell.—Of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace.

Thou anointest my head with oil.—The anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him.

The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.

The Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.

[Acts 10:38](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Acts.10.html" \l "Acts.10.38). -[Col. 1:19](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Col.1.html" \l "Col.1.19). -[John 1:16](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.John.1.html" \l "John.1.16).[Psa. 23:5](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.23.html" \l "Ps.23.5). -[I John 2:27](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iJohn.2.html" \l "iJohn.2.27).[John 14:26](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.John.14.html" \l "John.14.26).[Rom. 8:26](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Rom.8.html" \l "Rom.8.26).

“Thou art all fair, my love.” [Song of Solomon 4:7](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Song.4.html" \l "Song.4.7)

The Lord’s admiration of his Church is very wonderful, and his description of her beauty is very glowing. She is not merely fair, but “all fair.” He views her in himself, washed in his sin-atoning blood and clothed in his meritorious righteousness, and he considers her to be full of comeliness and beauty. No wonder that such is the case, since it is but his own perfect excellency that he admires; for the holiness, glory, and perfection of his Church are his own glorious garments on the back of his own well-beloved spouse. She is not simply pure, or well-proportioned; she is positively lovely and fair! She has actual merit! Her deformities of sin are removed; but more, she has through her Lord obtained a meritorious righteousness by which an actual beauty is conferred upon her. Believers have a positive righteousness given to them when they become “accepted in the beloved” ([Eph. 1:6](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Eph.1.html" \l "Eph.1.6)). Nor is the Church barely lovely, she is superlatively so. Her Lord styles her “Thou fairest among women.” She has a real worth and excellence which cannot be rivalled by all the nobility and royalty of the world. If Jesus could exchange his elect bride for all the queens and empresses of earth, or even for the angels in heaven, he would not, for he puts her first and foremost—“fairest among women.” Like the moon she far outshines the stars. Nor is this an opinion which he is ashamed of, for he invites all men to hear it. He sets a “behold” before it, a special note of exclamation, inviting and arresting attention. “Behold, thou art fair, my love; behold, thou art fair” ([Song of Sol. 4:1](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Song.4.html" \l "Song.4.1)). His opinion he publishes abroad even now, and one day from the throne of his glory he will avow the truth of it before the assembled universe. “Come, ye blessed of my Father” ([Matt. 25:34](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Matt.25.html" \l "Matt.25.34)), will be his solemn affirmation of the loveliness of his elect.

# Word Live – 12/2/20

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# Scripture Union – 12/2/20

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# Today in the Word – 12/2/20

# Hoping in the Promise Keeper

**Read:** [**Romans 4:18–25**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+4%3a18%e2%80%9325)

18Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations, just as it had been said to him, “So shall your offspring be.”[[a](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+4%3a18%e2%80%9325#fen-NIV-28041a)] 19Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead—since he was about a hundred years old—and that Sarah’s womb was also dead. 20Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, 21being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised. 22This is why “it was credited to him as righteousness.” 23The words “it was credited to him” were written not for him alone, 24but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness—for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. 25He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.

#### **Footnotes:**

1. [Romans 4:18](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+4%3a18%e2%80%9325#en-NIV-28041) Gen. 15:5

In her song, “Faithful God,” Laura Story magnifies the Lord’s trustworthiness: “For you are the love that never leaves / The friend that won’t deceive / You’re the one sure thing / Faithful God, every promise kept / Every need You’ve met, faithful God. / All I am and all I’ll ever be / Is all because You love faithfully / Faithful God.”

He did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God. Romans 4:20

Unlike worldly hope—which can be mere wishful thinking—godly hope is grounded in God’s absolute integrity. He always does what He says. He always keeps His promises. No exceptions. Paul illustrated this with the story of Abraham (vv. 18–21). God promised that Abraham would be “the father of many nations” (v. 18). Yet at age 100 he didn’t have a single son. Hope at this point seemed entirely unreasonable, humanly speaking. Abraham was not delusional. He knew the facts: “His body was as good as dead” and his wife’s womb was dead as well (v. 19). Yet Abraham’s faith did not falter. He was fully persuaded that God would keep His impossible promise. In fact, since there was absolutely no human way for this promise to be fulfilled, God would get even more glory!

On this side of the Cross, our faith is the same as Abraham’s (vv. 22–25). His faith “was credited to him as righteousness” (v. 22). What he looked forward to, we look back on: the saving death of Christ. “He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification” (v. 25; see Isa. 53:12). “Justification” is our righteous standing before God, accomplished in and by Christ. This is how we have peace with God (Rom. 5:1). In Jesus, all God’s promises are kept, wherever we are on the gospel story’s timeline.

**Apply the Word**

If you’re looking for more God-centered ways to celebrate this Christmas season (and other holidays as well), we recommend the book Putting God Back in the Holidays, by Bill and Penny Thrasher.

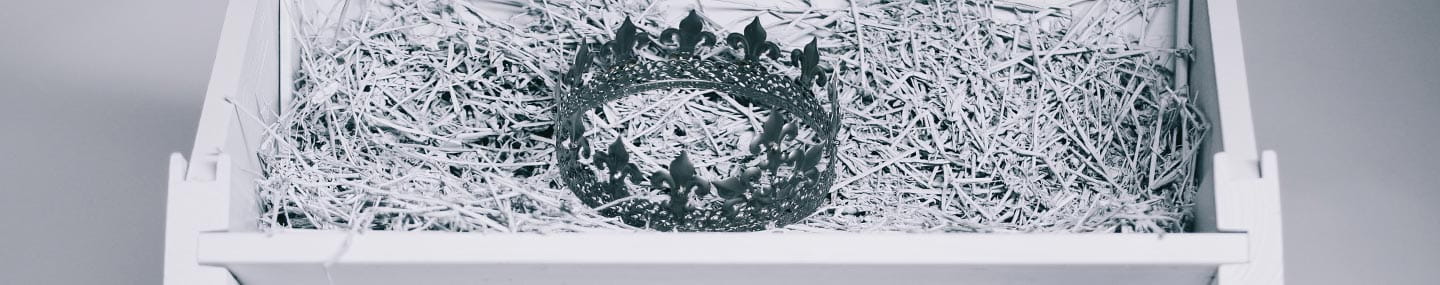
### **Pray with Us**

Dear God, as we remember Abraham’s faith in your promises, we rejoice in the impossible things that you have accomplished for your glory—including our salvation! Thank you for your faithfulness.

## BY Brad Baurain

# Our Daily Bread – 12/2/20

# Christmas Presence

 **Read:** [**Isaiah 7:10–14**](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa%207.10%E2%80%9314)

10Again the Lord spoke to Ahaz, 11“Ask the Lord your God for a sign, whether in the deepest depths or in the highest heights.”

12But Ahaz said, “I will not ask; I will not put the Lord to the test.”

13Then Isaiah said, “Hear now, you house of David! Is it not enough to try the patience of humans? Will you try the patience of my God also? 14Therefore the Lord himself will give you[[a](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isaiah+7%3A10%E2%80%9314&version=NIV#fen-NIV-17797a)] a sign: The virgin[[b](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isaiah+7%3A10%E2%80%9314&version=NIV#fen-NIV-17797b)] will conceive and give birth to a son, and[[c](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isaiah+7%3A10%E2%80%9314&version=NIV#fen-NIV-17797c)] will call him Immanuel.[[d](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isaiah+7%3A10%E2%80%9314&version=NIV#fen-NIV-17797d)]

#### **Footnotes:**

1. [Isaiah 7:14](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isaiah+7%3A10%E2%80%9314&version=NIV#en-NIV-17797) The Hebrew is plural.
2. [Isaiah 7:14](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isaiah+7%3A10%E2%80%9314&version=NIV#en-NIV-17797) Or young woman
3. [Isaiah 7:14](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isaiah+7%3A10%E2%80%9314&version=NIV#en-NIV-17797) Masoretic Text; Dead Sea Scrolls son, and he or son, and they
4. [Isaiah 7:14](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isaiah+7%3A10%E2%80%9314&version=NIV#en-NIV-17797) Immanuel means God with us.

The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son. [Isaiah 7:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa%207.14)

“No ear may hear His coming, but in this world of sin, where meek souls will receive Him still, the dear Christ enters in.” Those words from Phillips Brooks’ much-loved hymn “O Little Town of Bethlehem” point to the very heart of Christmas. Jesus came into our broken world to rescue us from our sin and give all who would put their faith in Him a new and vital relationship with God.

In a letter to a friend decades after he wrote the hymn, Brooks poignantly described the outcome of this relationship in his own life: “I cannot tell you how personal this grows to me. He is here. He knows me and I know Him. It is no figure of speech. It is the realest thing in the world, and every day makes it realer. And one wonders with delight what it will grow to as the years go on.”

Brooks’ calm assurance of God’s presence in his life reflects one of the names of Jesus prophesied by Isaiah: “The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel” ([Isaiah 7:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa%207.14)). The gospel of Matthew gives us the meaning of the Hebrew name Immanuel: “God with us” (1:23).

God drew near to us through Jesus so we could know Him personally and be with Him forever. His loving presence with us is the greatest gift of all.

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

#### **Reflect & Pray**

What does it mean to you that God loves you so much He wants to be with you always? How will you draw near to Him today?

Loving God, thank You for giving Yourself to me through Your life on earth, death on the cross, and resurrection. Please help me to live for You today and forever!

#### **Insight**

The book of Isaiah is the second most referenced Old Testament book (after Psalms) in the New Testament, with about sixty-six direct quotations and 348 allusions to it. While [Isaiah 7:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa%207.14) finds its ultimate fulfillment in the Virgin Mary giving birth to Jesus ([Matthew 1:22–23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt%201.22%E2%80%9323)), some scholars believe the prophecy was first fulfilled at the time of Isaiah. Around 734 bc, an Israel-Syria military alliance attacked Judah. [Isaiah 7:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa%207.14) is a promise and a sign given to the faithless King Ahaz of Judah that God would destroy this alliance. The sign tells of two events. First, a specific “virgin” (Hebrew ʿalmâ, meaning “young woman of marriageable age”) would conceive and bear a son to be called Immanuel. Second, the threat from this enemy alliance would end before the child was weaned (vv. 15–16). According to this view, this sign was fulfilled in [2 Kings 16:7–9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2%20Kings%2016.7%E2%80%939) within two years after it was given (732 bc).

# God Calling – 12/2/20

# The Ideal Man

Draw nigh, shoes off thy feet, in silent awe and adoration. Draw nigh, as Moses drew nigh to the burning bush.

I give you the loving intimacy of a friend, but I am God too, and the wonder of our intercourse, the miracle of your intimacy with Me, will mean the more to you, if sometimes you see the Majestic Figure of the Son of God.

Draw nigh in the utter confidence that is the sublimest prayer. Draw nigh. No far-off pleading, even to a God clothed with majesty of fire. Draw nigh. Draw nigh, not as a suppliant, but as a listener. I am this Suppliant, as I make known to you My wishes. For this Majestic God is Brother too, longing so intensely that you should serve your brother-man, and longing, even more intensely, that you should be true to that Vision He has of you.

You speak of your fellow man as disappointing you, as falling short of the ideal you had of him. But what of Me? For every man there is the ideal man I see in him. The man he could be, the man I would have him be.

Judge of My Heart when he fails to fulfill that promise. The disappointments of man may be great and many, but they are nothing as compared with My disappointments. Remember this, and strive to be the friend I see in my vision of you.

"Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you." James 4:8

# My Utmost for His Highest – 12/3/20

# “Not by Might nor by Power”



My speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power… —[1 Corinthians 2:4](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=1+Corinthians+2%3A4)

If in preaching the gospel you substitute your knowledge of the way of salvation for confidence in the power of the gospel, you hinder people from getting to reality. Take care to see while you proclaim your knowledge of the way of salvation, that you yourself are rooted and grounded by faith in God. Never rely on the clearness of your presentation, but as you give your explanation make sure that you are relying on the Holy Spirit. Rely on the certainty of God’s redemptive power, and He will create His own life in people.

Once you are rooted in reality, nothing can shake you. If your faith is in experiences, anything that happens is likely to upset that faith. But nothing can ever change God or the reality of redemption. Base your faith on that, and you are as eternally secure as God Himself. Once you have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, you will never be moved again. That is the meaning of sanctification. God disapproves of our human efforts to cling to the concept that sanctification is merely an experience, while forgetting that even our sanctification must also be sanctified (see [John 17:19](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+17:19)). I must deliberately give my sanctified life to God for His service, so that He can use me as His hands and His feet.

**Wisdom From Oswald Chambers**

It is an easy thing to argue from precedent because it makes everything simple, but it is a risky thing to do. Give God “elbow room”; let Him come into His universe as He pleases. If we confine God in His working to religious people or to certain ways, we place ourselves on an equality with God.  Baffled to Fight Better, 51 L

# CCEL – 12/3/20

**I would seek unto God, and unto God would I commit my cause.**—[JOB 5:8.](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Job.5.html" \l "Job.5.8)

Is anything too hard for the Lord?—Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass.—Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God.—Casting all your care upon him, for he careth for you.

Hezekiah received the letter from the hand of the messengers, and read it: and Hezekiah went up unto the house of the Lord, and spread it before the Lord. And Hezekiah prayed unto the Lord.

It shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear.—The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.

I love the Lord, because he hath heard my voice and my supplications. Because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him as long as I live.

[Gen. 18:14](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Gen.18.html" \l "Gen.18.14). -[Psa. 37:5](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.37.html" \l "Ps.37.5). -[Phi. 4:6](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Phil.4.html" \l "Phil.4.6). -[I Pet. 5:7](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iPet.5.html" \l "iPet.5.7).[Isa. 37:14,15](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Isa.37.html" \l "Isa.37.14).[Isa. 65:24](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Isa.65.html" \l "Isa.65.24). -[Jas. 5:16](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Jas.5.html" \l "Jas.5.16).[Psa. 116:1,2](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.116.html" \l "Ps.116.1).

“There is no spot in thee.” [Song of Solomon 4:7](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Song.4.html" \l "Song.4.7)

Having pronounced his Church positively full of beauty, our Lord confirms his praise by a precious negative, “There is no spot in thee.” As if the thought occurred to the Bridegroom that the carping world would insinuate that he had only mentioned her comely parts, and had purposely omitted those features which were deformed or defiled, he sums up all by declaring her universally and entirely fair, and utterly devoid of stain. A spot may soon be removed, and is the very least thing that can disfigure beauty, but even from this little blemish the believer is delivered in his Lord’s sight. If he had said there is no hideous scar, no horrible deformity, no deadly ulcer, we might even then have marvelled; but when he testifies that she is free from the slightest spot, all these other forms of defilement are included, and the depth of wonder is increased. If he had but promised to remove all spots by-and-by, we should have had eternal reason for joy; but when he speaks of it as already done, who can restrain the most intense emotions of satisfaction and delight? O my soul, here is marrow and fatness for thee; eat thy full, and be satisfied with royal dainties.

Christ Jesus has no quarrel with his spouse. She often wanders from him, and grieves his Holy Spirit, but he does not allow her faults to affect his love. He sometimes chides, but it is always in the tenderest manner, with the kindest intentions: it is “my love” even then. There is no remembrance of our follies, he does not cherish ill thoughts of us, but he pardons and loves as well after the offence as before it. It is well for us it is so, for if Jesus were as mindful of injuries as we are, how could he commune with us? Many a time a believer will put himself out of humour with the Lord for some slight turn in providence, but our precious Husband knows our silly hearts too well to take any offence at our ill manners.

# Word Live – 12/3/20

# <https://content.scriptureunion.org.uk/wordlive/>

# Scripture Union – 12/3/20

[**https://scriptureunion.org/encounters/**](https://scriptureunion.org/encounters/)

# Today in the Word – 12/3/20

# Hope of Redemption

**Read:** [**Romans 8:18–25**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+8%3a18%e2%80%9325)

### **Present Suffering and Future Glory**

18I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. 19For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed. 20For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope 21that[[a](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+8%3a18%e2%80%9325#fen-NIV-28138a)] the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God.

22We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. 23Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies. 24For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have? 25But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.

#### **Footnotes:**

1. [Romans 8:21](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+8%3a18%e2%80%9325#en-NIV-28138) Or subjected it in hope. 21For

“In the barn on Christmas Eve, after all the people leave, The animals in voices low, remember Christmas long ago.” So begins The Animals’ Christmas Eve. In this children’s book, the animals retell the first Christmas, recalling the birth of the Christ-child and how He was laid in one of their feeding troughs. The story ends: “Twelve chimes ring out from far away—the lovely bells of Christmas Day. And every beast bows low its head, for one small babe in a manger bed.”

The creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed. Romans 8:19

The natural world has a stake in Christmas, too, for as today’s reading makes clear, the hope of redemption extends to creation (vv. 19–22). the Apostle Paul explained that creation is in “bondage to decay” (v. 21) not by its own fault, but rather due to the sinful choice of Adam and Eve, whose Fall brought death into the world. When God’s plan of redemption is complete, and “the freedom and glory of the children of God” are fully realized (v. 21), then, too, will nature be liberated. This process is like childbirth: Pain leads to new life.

Creation’s groaning resonates with our own (vv. 23–25). We, too, are waiting. We have “the firstfruits of the Spirit” as a down payment, but the full “redemption of our bodies”—that is, the day we will have resurrection bodies like Christ’s—is yet future (v. 23). Our “adoption to sonship” has begun, but the full inheritance has not yet been received (v. 23). Patient waiting is required. This is the hope of salvation: in the armor of God, the helmet that protects our head (1 Thess. 5:8). What we are waiting and hoping for, with faith-filled certainty, is so precious that our present sufferings are not worthy of comparison (v. 18). Salvation is a present truth and a future hope!

**Apply the Word**

Consider well-known Scripture stories from a different perspective. Choose one character (an angel, a shepherd, the innkeeper, or maybe even a sheep) and try relating what happened the first Christmas from their viewpoint.

### **Pray with Us**

Lord, we feel the groan of creation echoed in our own souls as we long for the future redemption of our bodies. Sustain our future hope and teach us to live out our salvation as a present reality.

## BY Brad Baurain

# Our Daily Bread – 12/3/20

# The Privilege of Prayer

 **Read:** [**1 Chronicles 29:11–19**](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1%20Chron%2029.11%E2%80%9319)

Yours, Lord, is the greatness and the power  
    and the glory and the majesty and the splendor,  
    for everything in heaven and earth is yours.  
Yours, Lord, is the kingdom;  
    you are exalted as head over all.  
12Wealth and honor come from you;  
    you are the ruler of all things.  
In your hands are strength and power  
    to exalt and give strength to all.  
13Now, our God, we give you thanks,  
    and praise your glorious name.

14“But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to give as generously as this? Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand. 15We are foreigners and strangers in your sight, as were all our ancestors. Our days on earth are like a shadow, without hope. 16Lord our God, all this abundance that we have provided for building you a temple for your Holy Name comes from your hand, and all of it belongs to you. 17I know, my God, that you test the heart and are pleased with integrity. All these things I have given willingly and with honest intent. And now I have seen with joy how willingly your people who are here have given to you. 18Lord, the God of our fathers Abraham, Isaac and Israel, keep these desires and thoughts in the hearts of your people forever, and keep their hearts loyal to you. 19And give my son Solomon the wholehearted devotion to keep your commands, statutes and decrees and to do everything to build the palatial structure for which I have provided.”

Give my son Solomon the wholehearted devotion to keep your commands, statutes and decrees. [1 Chronicles 29:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1%20Chron%2029.19)

Country artist Chris Stapleton’s deeply personal song, “Daddy Doesn’t Pray Anymore,” was inspired by his own father’s prayers for him. The poignant lyrics reveal the reason his father’s prayers ended: not disillusionment or weariness, but his own death. Stapleton imagines that now, instead of speaking with Jesus in prayer, his dad is walking and talking face-to-face with Jesus.

Stapleton’s recollection of his father’s prayers for him brings to mind a biblical father’s prayer for his son. As King David’s life ebbed away, he made preparations for his son Solomon to take over as the next king of Israel.

After assembling the nation together to anoint Solomon, David led the people in prayer, as he’d done many times before. As David recounted God’s faithfulness to Israel, he prayed for the people to remain loyal to Him. Then he included a personal prayer specifically for his son, asking God to “give my son Solomon the wholehearted devotion to keep your commands, statutes and decrees” ([1 Chronicles 29:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1%20Chron%2029.19)).

We too have the remarkable privilege to faithfully pray for the people God has placed in our lives. Our example of faithfulness can make an indelible impact that will remain even after we’re gone. Just as God continued to work out the answers to David’s prayers for Solomon and Israel after he was gone, so too the impact of our prayers outlives us.

By:  [Lisa M. Samra](https://odb.org/author/lisasamra/)

#### **Reflect & Pray**

How have someone’s prayers made a significant impact on your life? How might you encourage others with your prayers?

Heavenly Father, I bring my loved ones before You and ask that You would work out Your plans in their lives.

Read Talking with My Father: Jesus Teaches on Prayer at [DiscoverySeries.org/HP171.](https://DiscoverySeries.org/HP171.)

#### **Insight**

When everything had been collected for the building of the temple, David offered a prayer of praise to God ([1 Chronicles 29:10–19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1%20Chron%2029.10%E2%80%9319)). In his prayer, he proclaims God’s greatness and majesty (vv. 10–13). He then focuses on the generosity of God’s people and acknowledges that ultimately everything comes from Him and the people are giving back what belongs to Him (vv. 14–17). Looking to the future, David acknowledges that the God who was with their ancestors is also with them. He asks God to keep the hearts of the people faithful and loyal and to give Solomon “whole-hearted devotion” (v. 19).

# God Calling – 12/3/20

# A Journey With Me

Fret not your souls with puzzles that you cannot solve. The solution may never be shown you until you have left this flesh-life.

Remember what I have so often told you, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now." Only step by step, and stage by stage, can you proceed, in your journey upward.

The one thing to be sure of is that it is a journey with Me. There does come a Joy known to those who suffer with Me. But that is not the result of the suffering, but the result of the close intimacy with Me, to which suffering drove you.

"But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day."  Proverbs 4:18

# My Utmost for His Highest – 12/4/20

# The Law of Opposition



To him who overcomes… —[Revelation 2:7](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=Revelation+2%3A7)

Life without war is impossible in the natural or the supernatural realm. It is a fact that there is a continuing struggle in the physical, mental, moral, and spiritual areas of life.

Health is the balance between the physical parts of my body and all the things and forces surrounding me. To maintain good health I must have sufficient internal strength to fight off the things that are external. Everything outside my physical life is designed to cause my death. The very elements that sustain me while I am alive work to decay and disintegrate my body once it is dead. If I have enough inner strength to fight, I help to produce the balance needed for health. The same is true of the mental life. If I want to maintain a strong and active mental life, I have to fight. This struggle produces the mental balance called thought.

Morally it is the same. Anything that does not strengthen me morally is the enemy of virtue within me. Whether I overcome, thereby producing virtue, depends on the level of moral excellence in my life. But we must fight to be moral. Morality does not happen by accident; moral virtue is acquired.

And spiritually it is also the same. Jesus said, “In the world you will have tribulation…” ([John 16:33](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+16:33)). This means that anything which is not spiritual leads to my downfall. Jesus went on to say, “…but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.” I must learn to fight against and overcome the things that come against me, and in that way produce the balance of holiness. Then it becomes a delight to meet opposition.

Holiness is the balance between my nature and the law of God as expressed in Jesus Christ.

**Wisdom From Oswald Chambers**

When you are joyful, be joyful; when you are sad, be sad. If God has given you a sweet cup, don’t make it bitter; and if He has given you a bitter cup, don’t try and make it sweet; take things as they come.  Shade of His Hand, 1226 L

# CCEL – 12/4/20

**Where shall wisdom be found?**—[JOB 28:12.](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Job.28.html" \l "Job.28.12)

If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering.—Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.—The only wise God.—Be not wise in thine own eyes.

Ah, Lord God! behold, I cannot speak: for I am a child. But the Lord said unto me, Say not, I am a child: for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak. Be not afraid of their faces: for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith the Lord.

Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.—All things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.

[Jas. 1:5,6](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Jas.1.html" \l "Jas.1.5). -[Prov. 3:5,6](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Prov.3.html" \l "Prov.3.5). -[I Tim. 1:17](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iTim.1.html" \l "iTim.1.17). -[Prov. 3:7](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Prov.3.html" \l "Prov.3.7).[Jer. 1:6-8](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Jer.1.html" \l "Jer.1.6).[John 16:23,24](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.John.16.html" \l "John.16.23). -[Matt. 21:22](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Matt.21.html" \l "Matt.21.22).

“I have much people in this city.” [Acts 18:10](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Acts.18.html" \l "Acts.18.10)

This should be a great encouragement to try to do good, since God has among the vilest of the vile, the most reprobate, the most debauched and drunken, an elect people who must be saved. When you take the Word to them, you do so because God has ordained you to be the messenger of life to their souls, and they must receive it, for so the decree of predestination runs. They are as much redeemed by blood as the saints before the eternal throne. They are Christ’s property, and yet perhaps they are lovers of the ale-house, and haters of holiness; but if Jesus Christ purchased them he will have them. God is not unfaithful to forget the price which his Son has paid. He will not suffer his substitution to be in any case an ineffectual, dead thing. Tens of thousands of redeemed ones are not regenerated yet, but regenerated they must be; and this is our comfort when we go forth to them with the quickening Word of God.

Nay, more, these ungodly ones are prayed for by Christ before the throne. “Neither pray I for these alone,” saith the great Intercessor, “but for them also which shall believe on me through their word.” Poor, ignorant souls, they know nothing about prayer for themselves, but Jesus prays for them. Their names are on his breastplate, and ere long they must bow their stubborn knee, breathing the penitential sigh before the throne of grace. “The time of figs is not yet.” The predestinated moment has not struck; but, when it comes, they shall obey, for God will have his own; they must, for the Spirit is not to be withstood when he cometh forth with fulness of power—they must become the willing servants of the living God. “My people shall be willing in the day of my power.” “He shall justify many.” “He shall see of the travail of his soul.” “I will divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong.”

# Word Live – 12/4/20

# <https://content.scriptureunion.org.uk/wordlive/>

# Scripture Union – 12/4/20

[**https://scriptureunion.org/encounters/**](https://scriptureunion.org/encounters/)

# Today in the Word – 12/4/20

# The Personal Side of Hope

**Read:** [**Psalm 130**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+130)

#### **A song of ascents.**

1Out of the depths I cry to you, Lord;  
2    Lord, hear my voice.  
Let your ears be attentive  
    to my cry for mercy.

3If you, Lord, kept a record of sins,  
    Lord, who could stand?  
4But with you there is forgiveness,  
    so that we can, with reverence, serve you.

5I wait for the Lord, my whole being waits,  
    and in his word I put my hope.  
6I wait for the Lord  
    more than watchmen wait for the morning,  
    more than watchmen wait for the morning.

7Israel, put your hope in the Lord,  
    for with the Lord is unfailing love  
    and with him is full redemption.  
8He himself will redeem Israel  
    from all their sins.

Do you have biblical hope? The great nineteenth-century preacher Charles Spurgeon responded: “When you are cleaned right out, when even the last rusty counterfeit farthing has been emptied out of your pocket and you stand before your God as a wretched, starving and bankrupt beggar, your abject poverty and dire need will commend you to His mercy and love!”

I wait for the LORD, my whole being waits, and in his word I put my hope. Psalm 130:5

Hope in the Lord is not abstract but gritty and realistic. Today’s reading begins: “Out of the depths I cry to you, LORD” (v. 1). The hope of Christmas is for you, today, no matter how dire your situation. It’s not only about Abraham and Messianic prophecy and the liberation of creation—it’s for each one of us personally. God has numbered the very hairs on your head (Luke 12:6–7), meaning He knows and cares about every detail of your life.

Psalm 130 models prayer from this perspective (vv. 1–2). Why did the psalmist feel so low? In this case, because he’d sinned and felt guilt (vv. 3–4). That’s why this psalm is one of seven “penitential psalms.” Based on our record, no one can stand righteous before the Lord. The only reason a relationship with Him is possible is that God has granted mercy and forgiveness. Only because of this can we serve and worship Him.

Centered in faith on this hope, the psalmist waits for the Lord (vv. 5–6). He knows God’s mercy and forgiveness will transform his feelings and the spiritual reality of his situation. He longs for this as eagerly as a watchman waits for morning to dawn, and he exhorts God’s people to do the same (vv. 7–8). God’s “unfailing love” is our only hope of redemption from sin!

**Apply the Word**

One way to better realize the hope we have in Christ is by practicing confession. We encourage you today to bring your sins before God’s throne: confess, mourn, and repent of sin. Then, you can realize the joy and freedom of God’s forgiveness (1 John 1:9).

### **Pray with Us**

You are the one who searches hearts and exposes darkness. Forgive us our sins and give us a craving for righteousness that is mightier than any temptation. Almighty God, thank you for your steadfast forgiveness!

## BY Brad Baurain

# Our Daily Bread – 12/4/20

# Relentless Love

 **Read:** [**1 John 3:16–18**](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1%20John%203.16%E2%80%9318)

16This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters. 17If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person? 18Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.

Let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth. [1 John 3:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1%20John%203.18)

Heidi and Jeff came home from an overseas work assignment in a hot climate and settled for several months near family in the state of Michigan—just in time for winter. This would be the first time many of their ten children had seen the natural beauty of snow.

But winter weather in Michigan requires a lot of warm outerwear, including coats, mittens, and boots. For a large family, it would be quite an expensive undertaking just to outfit them for the bitterly cold months ahead. But God provided. First, a neighbor brought over footwear, then snow pants, then hats and gloves. Then, a friend urged others at her church to collect a variety of warm clothes in all twelve sizes for each member of the family. By the time the snow arrived, the family had exactly what they needed.

One of the ways we serve God is by serving those in need. [First John 3:16–18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1%20John%203.16%E2%80%9318) encourages us to help others from the abundance of our own possessions. Serving helps us to be more like Jesus as we begin to love and see people as He does.

God often uses His children to fulfill needs and to answer prayers. And as we serve others, our own hearts are encouraged as we encourage those we serve. As a result, our own faith will grow as God equips us for service in new ways (v. 18).

By:  [Cindy Hess Kasper](https://odb.org/author/cindyhesskasper/)

#### **Reflect & Pray**

As you notice the numerous needs of people around you, how can you show God’s love in a practical way? How does serving God help your faith to grow?

Father, fill my heart with the willingness to help when I see a need. Help me to give joyfully and serve You with gratitude.

Read Compassion: Learning to Love Like Jesus at [DiscoverySeries.org/Q0208](https://DiscoverySeries.org/Q0208).

#### **Insight**

In this, the first of John’s three letters, he sets out three distinctive characteristics of Christianity. One is the historical truth of Jesus’ life ([1 John 1:1–3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1%20John%201.1%E2%80%933)). John makes much of the fact that he (and others) personally witnessed the earthly existence and the miracles of Jesus. The second is the call (and motivation) to live in the righteousness Jesus gives us (1:6–2:2). The third characteristic, love, is what John develops beginning in 2:3 and continuing into today’s reading. This love is the “love for the Father” (v. 15) and isn’t for the world or the things in it. When this love compels us, we can’t help but love each other in the way referenced in 3:16–18. Such a love will be a shining witness to the world that doesn’t yet know His love.

# God Calling – 12/4/20

# Man of Sorrows

He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Isaiah 53:3

That these words strike a note of Beauty in the hearts of those attuned to hear the Beautiful, shows truly that the heart recognizes the need for the Man of Sorrows. That it sees nothing contemptible in One despised by the world. That it recognizes the vast difference between the values of Heaven, and those of the world. Fame and acclamations are accorded to earth's great, contempt and rejection to the Son of God.

One of the things My disciples must ever seek to do is to set aside the valuation of the world, and judge only according to the values of Heaven. These are not for you.  Do not seek the praise and the notice of men. You follow a despised Christ. See the mob is hooting, throwing stones, jeering, and yet in that quiet little throng there is a happiness and Joy the reviling crowds could never know.

Follow that little throng with stones and gibes, and it appears to be of men, mean, ludicrous, contemptible.  Be one of the throng, and you feel the Majesty of God in the presence of Him, Who was despised and rejected of men. Wreaths around His Brow, and shouts of applause, would belittle that Majesty.

In your dark hours, when human help fails, keep very close to the Man of Sorrows. Feel My Hand of Love press yours in silent but complete understanding. I, too, was acquainted with grief. No heart can ache without My heart aching too. "He was despised, and we esteemed Him not."

"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world....For all that is in the world,...is not of the Father, but is of the world." 1 John 2:15-16

# My Utmost for His Highest – 12/5/20

# “The Temple of the Holy Spirit”



…only in regard to the throne will I be greater than you. —[Genesis 41:40](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=Genesis+41%3A40)

I am accountable to God for the way I control my body under His authority. Paul said he did not “set aside the grace of God”— make it ineffective ([Galatians 2:21](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Galatians+2:21)). The grace of God is absolute and limitless, and the work of salvation through Jesus is complete and finished forever. I am not being saved— I am saved. Salvation is as eternal as God’s throne, but I must put to work or use what God has placed within me. To “work out [my] own salvation” ([Philippians 2:12](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Philippians+2:12)) means that I am responsible for using what He has given me. It also means that I must exhibit in my own body the life of the Lord Jesus, not mysteriously or secretly, but openly and boldly. “I discipline my body and bring it into subjection . . .” ([1 Corinthians 9:27](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Corinthians+9:27)). Every Christian can have his body under absolute control for God. God has given us the responsibility to rule over all “the temple of the Holy Spirit,” including our thoughts and desires ([1 Corinthians 6:19](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Corinthians+6:19)). We are responsible for these, and we must never give way to improper ones. But most of us are much more severe in our judgment of others than we are in judging ourselves. We make excuses for things in ourselves, while we condemn things in the lives of others simply because we are not naturally inclined to do them.

Paul said, “I beseech you…that you present your bodies a living sacrifice…” ([Romans 12:1](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+12:1)). What I must decide is whether or not I will agree with my Lord and Master that my body will indeed be His temple. Once I agree, all the rules, regulations, and requirements of the law concerning the body are summed up for me in this revealed truth-my body is “the temple of the Holy Spirit.”

**Wisdom From Oswald Chambers**

The Christian Church should not be a secret society of specialists, but a public manifestation of believers in Jesus.  Facing Reality, 34 R

# CCEL – 12/5/20

**It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes.**—[PSA. 119:71.](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.119.html" \l "Ps.119.71)

Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered.—We suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

He knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold. My foot hath held his steps, his way have I kept, and not declined.

Thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no. Thou shalt also consider in thine heart, that, as a man chasteneth his son, so the Lord thy God chasteneth thee. Therefore thou shalt keep the commandments of the Lord thy God, to walk in his ways, and to fear him.

[Heb. 5:8](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Heb.5.html" \l "Heb.5.8). -[Rom. 8:17,18](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Rom.8.html" \l "Rom.8.17).[Job 23:10,11](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Job.23.html" \l "Job.23.10).[Deut. 8:2](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Deut.8.html" \l "Deut.8.2),[5,6](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Deut.8.html" \l "Deut.8.5).

“Ask, and it shall be given you.” [Matthew 7:7](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Matt.7.html" \l "Matt.7.7)

We know of a place in England still existing, where a dole of bread is served to every passerby who chooses to ask for it. Whoever the traveller may be, he has but to knock at the door of St. Cross Hospital, and there is the dole of bread for him. Jesus Christ so loveth sinners that he has built a St. Cross Hospital, so that whenever a sinner is hungry, he has but to knock and have his wants supplied. Nay, he has done better; he has attached to this Hospital of the Cross a bath; and whenever a soul is black and filthy, it has but to go there and be washed. The fountain is always full, always efficacious. No sinner ever went into it and found that it could not wash away his stains. Sins which were scarlet and crimson have all disappeared, and the sinner has been whiter than snow. As if this were not enough, there is attached to this Hospital of the Cross a wardrobe, and a sinner making application simply as a sinner, may be clothed from head to foot; and if he wishes to be a soldier, he may not merely have a garment for ordinary wear, but armour which shall cover him from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head. If he asks for a sword, he shall have that given to him, and a shield too. Nothing that is good for him shall be denied him. He shall have spending-money so long as he lives, and he shall have an eternal heritage of glorious treasure when he enters into the joy of his Lord.

If all these things are to be had by merely knocking at mercy’s door, O my soul, knock hard this morning, and ask large things of thy generous Lord. Leave not the throne of grace till all thy wants have been spread before the Lord, and until by faith thou hast a comfortable prospect that they shall be all supplied. No bashfulness need retard when Jesus invites. No unbelief should hinder when Jesus promises. No cold-heartedness should restrain when such blessings are to be obtained.

# Word Live – 12/5/20

# <https://content.scriptureunion.org.uk/wordlive/>

# Scripture Union – 12/5/20

[**https://scriptureunion.org/encounters/**](https://scriptureunion.org/encounters/)

# Today in the Word – 12/5/20

# The Strength of Hope

**Read:** [**Isaiah 40:25-31**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isaiah+40%3a25-31)

25“To whom will you compare me?  
    Or who is my equal?” says the Holy One.  
26Lift up your eyes and look to the heavens:  
    Who created all these?  
He who brings out the starry host one by one  
    and calls forth each of them by name.  
Because of his great power and mighty strength,  
    not one of them is missing.

27Why do you complain, Jacob?  
    Why do you say, Israel,  
“My way is hidden from the Lord;  
    my cause is disregarded by my God”?  
28Do you not know?  
    Have you not heard?  
The Lord is the everlasting God,  
    the Creator of the ends of the earth.  
He will not grow tired or weary,  
    and his understanding no one can fathom.  
29He gives strength to the weary  
    and increases the power of the weak.  
30Even youths grow tired and weary,  
    and young men stumble and fall;  
31but those who hope in the Lord  
    will renew their strength.  
They will soar on wings like eagles;  
    they will run and not grow weary,  
    they will walk and not be faint.

Forty Roman soldiers in 4th-century Armenia disobeyed the emperor’s order. These brave Christians stood firm, refusing to offer a pagan sacrifice. They were imprisoned and tortured, stripped, and herded onto a frozen pond. Warm baths were offered to anyone who would deny their faith. But as the sunset, the men sang hymns, refusing to disgrace their Savior! Their martyrdom is a dramatic example of the strength of biblical hope. “What is death for us but an entrance into eternal life?” they asked. This was not wishful thinking or human optimism. This is a rock-solid standing firm on the character of God—true biblical hope.

He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. Isaiah 40:29

Isaiah knew that the only foundation for true hope is the character of God (vv. 25–28). These verses reveal Him to be incomparably great, powerful, all-seeing, caring, tireless, wise, and eternal. He’s the Creator and knows the stars by name. Israel’s complaint in verse 27 was not legitimate. God saw and cared about what was happening to them.

God “gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak” (vv. 29–31). Those who hope in Him have access to the awesome power that brought the universe into being! This is far beyond our pitiful human resources. How else could people in crisis “soar on wings like eagles”? This vivid imagery emphasizes strength, freedom, and effortlessness (the eagle is not working hard). In Him, we can soar above our current circumstances.

The verb “hope” (v. 31) has also been translated as “wait” or “trust.” These ideas are woven together—to wait for the Lord also means to hope in Him. It means we can trust Him absolutely. There’s a forward-looking eager expectation here. Despite our present circumstances, godly hope sustains and strengthens us!

**Apply the Word**

Isaiah 40:30–31 is a classic Bible promise that will encourage you during difficult times. Why not memorize these verses during this month? Then they’ll be in your heart and mind, ready and available for instant access!

### **Pray with Us**

Father, we cannot rely on human strength to carry us through hardship. Instead, help us to look to the hope we have in your Son, Jesus Christ. Strengthen our faith through both happy and hard times.

## BY Brad Baurain

# Our Daily Bread – 12/5/20

# The Yard-Sale Christmas

 **Read:** [**1 Timothy 6:6–10**](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1%20Tim%206.6%E2%80%9310)

6But godliness with contentment is great gain. 7For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. 8But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. 9Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. 10For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.

**Read:** [**1 Timothy 6:**](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1%20Tim%206.6%E2%80%9310)[**17–19**](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1%20Timothy%206.17%E2%80%9319)

17Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. 18Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. 19In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.

Godliness with contentment is great gain. [1 Timothy 6:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1%20Tim%206.6)

A mom felt she’d been overspending on family Christmas gifts, so one year she decided to try something different. For a few months before the holiday, she scrounged through yard sales for inexpensive, used items. She bought more than usual but for far less money. On Christmas Eve, her children excitedly opened gift after gift after gift. The next day there were more! Mom had felt guilty about not getting new gifts so she had additional gifts for Christmas morning. The kids began opening them but quickly complained, “We’re too tired to open any more! You’ve given us so much!” That’s not a typical response from children on a Christmas morning!

God has blessed us with so much, but it seems we’re always looking for more: a bigger house, a better car, a larger bank account, or [fill in the blank]. Paul encouraged Timothy to remind people in his congregation that “we brought nothing into this world, and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that” ([1 Timothy 6:7–8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1%20Tim%206.7%E2%80%938)).

God has given us our very breath and life—besides providing for our needs. How refreshing it might be to enjoy and be content with His gifts and to say, You’ve given us so much! We don’t need more. “Godliness with contentment is great gain” (v. 6).

By:  [Anne Cetas](https://odb.org/author/annecetas/)

#### **Reflect & Pray**

What are you thankful to God for today? How might you learn contentment?

Father, You’ve blessed me with so much. Teach me each day to give thanks.

#### **Insight**

Timothy first appears in Scripture in [Acts 16:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts%2016.1): “Paul came to Derbe and then to Lystra, where a disciple named Timothy lived, whose mother was Jewish and a believer but whose father was a Greek.” This brief introduction reveals some reasons why Timothy (which means “honoring God” or “honored by God”) made such an ideal protégé for the apostle. Paul, a Jew who’d embraced God’s call to be the “apostle to the Gentiles” ([Galatians 2:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal%202.8)), now would have a young man to assist in the work who had a mixed heritage both ethnically and spiritually. With a Jewish mother and Greek father, Timothy would have grown up with his feet in both of those worlds, each with its own heritage and values. In addition, because it appears that his father wasn’t a believer in Jesus, he’d have been personally exposed to both the faith of his mother and the spiritual need of his father.

# God Calling – 12/5/20

# Law of Supply

The first law of giving is of the spirit world. Give to all you meet, or whose lives touch yours, of your prayers, your time, yourselves, your love, your thought. You must practice this giving first.

Then give of this world's goods and money, as you have them given to you. To give money and material things, without having first made the habit daily, hourly, ever increasingly, of giving on the highest plane, is wrong.

Give, give, give all your best to all who need it.

Be great givers--great givers. Give as I said My Father in Heaven gives. He who makes His sun to shine on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. Remember, as I have told you before, give according to need, never according to desert. In giving, with the thought of supplying a real need you must closely resemble that Father in Heaven, the Great Giver.

As you receive, you must supply the needs of those I bring to you. Not questioning, not limiting. Their nearness to you, their relationship, must never count. Only their need is to guide you. Pray to become great givers.

"Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away." Matthew 5:43

# My Utmost for His Highest – 12/6/20

# “My Rainbow in the Cloud”

# http://cdn.utmost.org/files/2016/12/06-770x468.jpg

I set My rainbow in the cloud, and it shall be for the sign of the covenant between Me and the earth. —[Genesis 9:13](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=Genesis+9%3A13)

It is the will of God that human beings should get into a right-standing relationship with Him, and His covenants are designed for this purpose. Why doesn’t God save me? He has accomplished and provided for my salvation, but I have not yet entered into a relationship with Him. Why doesn’t God do everything we ask? He has done it. The point is— will I step into that covenant relationship? All the great blessings of God are finished and complete, but they are not mine until I enter into a relationship with Him on the basis of His covenant.

Waiting for God to act is fleshly unbelief. It means that I have no faith in Him. I wait for Him to do something in me so I may trust in that. But God won’t do it, because that is not the basis of the God-and-man relationship. Man must go beyond the physical body and feelings in his covenant with God, just as God goes beyond Himself in reaching out with His covenant to man. It is a question of faith in God— a very rare thing. We only have faith in our feelings. I don’t believe God until He puts something tangible in my hand, so that I know I have it. Then I say, “Now I believe.” There is no faith exhibited in that. God says, “Look to Me, and be saved…” ([Isaiah 45:22](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isaiah+45:22)).

When I have really transacted business with God on the basis of His covenant, letting everything else go, there is no sense of personal achievement— no human ingredient in it at all. Instead, there is a complete overwhelming sense of being brought into union with God, and my life is transformed and radiates peace and joy.

**Wisdom From Oswald Chambers**

For the past three hundred years men have been pointing out how similar Jesus Christ’s teachings are to other good teachings. We have to remember that Christianity, if it is not a supernatural miracle, is a sham.  The Highest Good, 548 L

# CCEL – 12/6/20

**It is God which worketh in you.**—[PHI. 2:13.](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Phil.2.html#Phil.2.13)

Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God.—A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven.—No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.—And I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear me for ever.

Do not err, my beloved brethren. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.

For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

Lord, thou wilt ordain peace for us: for thou also hast wrought all our works in us.

[II Cor. 3:5](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iiCor.3.html" \l "iiCor.3.5). -[John 3:27](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.John.3.html" \l "John.3.27). -[John 6:44](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.John.6.html" \l "John.6.44). -[Jer. 32:39](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Jer.32.html" \l "Jer.32.39).[Jas. 1:16-18](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Jas.1.html" \l "Jas.1.16).[Eph. 2:10](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Eph.2.html" \l "Eph.2.10).[Isa. 26:12](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Isa.26.html" \l "Isa.26.12).

“As is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly.” [1 Corinthians 15:48](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iCor.15.html" \l "iCor.15.48)

The head and members are of one nature, and not like that monstrous image which Nebuchadnezzar saw in his dream. The head was of fine gold, but the belly and thighs were of brass, the legs of iron, and the feet, part of iron and part of clay. Christ’s mystical body is no absurd combination of opposites; the members were mortal, and therefore Jesus died; the glorified head is immortal, and therefore the body is immortal too, for thus the record stands, “Because I live, ye shall live also.” As is our loving Head, such is the body, and every member in particular. A chosen Head and chosen members; an accepted Head, and accepted members; a living Head, and living members. If the head be pure gold, all the parts of the body are of pure gold also. Thus is there a double union of nature as a basis for the closest communion. Pause here, devout reader, and see if thou canst without ecstatic amazement, contemplate the infinite condescension of the Son of God in thus exalting thy wretchedness into blessed union with his glory. Thou art so mean that in remembrance of thy mortality, thou mayest say to corruption, “Thou art my father,” and to the worm, “Thou art my sister”; and yet in Christ thou art so honoured that thou canst say to the Almighty, “Abba, Father,” and to the Incarnate God, “Thou art my brother and my husband.” Surely if relationships to ancient and noble families make men think highly of themselves, we have whereof to glory over the heads of them all. Let the poorest and most despised believer lay hold upon this privilege; let not a senseless indolence make him negligent to trace his pedigree, and let him suffer no foolish attachment to present vanities to occupy his thoughts to the exclusion of this glorious, this heavenly honour of union with Christ.

# Word Live – 12/6/20

# <https://content.scriptureunion.org.uk/wordlive/>

# Scripture Union – 12/6/20

[**https://scriptureunion.org/encounters/**](https://scriptureunion.org/encounters/)

# Today in the Word – 12/6/20

# The Second Week of Advent: Love

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

### **Jesus Teaches Nicodemus**

3 Now there was a Pharisee, a man named Nicodemus who was a member of the Jewish ruling council. 2He came to Jesus at night and said, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the signs you are doing if God were not with him.”

3Jesus replied, “Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again.[[a](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+3%3a1-21" \l "fen-NIV-26124a" \o "See footnote a)]”

4“How can someone be born when they are old?” Nicodemus asked. “Surely they cannot enter a second time into their mother’s womb to be born!”

5Jesus answered, “Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit. 6Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit[[b](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+3%3a1-21#fen-NIV-26127b)] gives birth to spirit. 7You should not be surprised at my saying, ‘You[[c](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+3%3a1-21#fen-NIV-26128c)] must be born again.’ 8The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit.”[[d](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+3%3a1-21#fen-NIV-26129d)]

9“How can this be?” Nicodemus asked.

10“You are Israel’s teacher,” said Jesus, “and do you not understand these things? 11Very truly I tell you, we speak of what we know, and we testify to what we have seen, but still you people do not accept our testimony. 12I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not believe; how then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things? 13No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven—the Son of Man.[[e](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+3%3a1-21" \l "fen-NIV-26134e" \o "See footnote e)] 14Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up,[[f](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+3%3a1-21#fen-NIV-26135f)] 15that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him.”[[g](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+3%3a1-21#fen-NIV-26136g)]

16For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. 17For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. 18Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son. 19This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. 20Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that their deeds will be exposed. 21But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what they have done has been done in the sight of God.

#### **Footnotes:**

1. [John 3:3](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+3%3a1-21#en-NIV-26124) The Greek for again also means from above; also in verse 7.
2. [John 3:6](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+3%3a1-21#en-NIV-26127) Or but spirit
3. [John 3:7](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+3%3a1-21#en-NIV-26128) The Greek is plural.
4. [John 3:8](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+3%3a1-21#en-NIV-26129) The Greek for Spirit is the same as that for wind.
5. [John 3:13](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+3%3a1-21#en-NIV-26134) Some manuscripts Man, who is in heaven
6. [John 3:14](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+3%3a1-21#en-NIV-26135) The Greek for lifted up also means exalted.
7. [John 3:15](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+3%3a1-21#en-NIV-26136) Some interpreters end the quotation with verse 21.

In China, some parents follow their freshman children to university. They’re allowed to camp nearby for a month in order to help them adjust to life away from home by, for example, cooking their meals or washing their laundry. Tianjin University offers “tents of love” for free so that anyone, regardless of socioeconomic status, can take part in what is becoming a move-in tradition.

Whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. John 3:16

God loves us even more than those devoted parents! On this second Sunday of Advent, we will focus on love, namely, God’s love for us, which He demonstrated by sending His Son for our salvation (v. 16). Today’s reading begins with a dialogue between Jesus and a leading Pharisee named Nicodemus. What did it mean to be “born from above” that is, to experience spiritual rebirth (vv. 3–7)? Jesus helps the baffled rabbi, using a comparison to Moses lifting up a bronze snake in the wilderness (vv. 14–15; Num. 21:4–9).

John 3:16 is one of the most well- known and often referenced verses in the New Testament because it clearly explains the message of the gospel. Nicodemus learned that being born again is the only way to enter the kingdom of God. It’s a work of the Holy Spirit, accomplished for those who put their faith in Christ. The same promise-keeping love of the Old Testament is now climactically seen in God’s gift of love, His Son.

By believing in Him, we receive eternal life instead of the death we as sinners deserve. But it’s important to remember that it is a gift; it can also be refused. Those who do not believe in Jesus will be condemned and receive the just punishment for their sin. Will you accept this gift today?

**Apply the Word**

You could receive no better gift this Christmas than the gift of salvation through Jesus Christ. If you haven’t done so already, choose today to put your faith in Jesus. Accept Him as your Savior; confess your sins, and accept His sacrifice on your behalf.

### **Pray with Us**

Dear God, we confess that we are sinners destined for eternal death, but your salvation gave us eternal life. We place our hope in your Son and ask your Holy Spirit to continue the work of renewal in our lives.

## BY Brad Baurain

# Our Daily Bread – 12/6/20

# Aunt Betty’s Way

 **Read:** [**1 John 5:1–6**](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1%20John%205.1%E2%80%936)

### **Faith in the Incarnate Son of God**

5 Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves the father loves his child as well. 2This is how we know that we love the children of God: by loving God and carrying out his commands. 3In fact, this is love for God: to keep his commands. And his commands are not burdensome, 4for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. 5Who is it that overcomes the world? Only the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.

6This is the one who came by water and blood—Jesus Christ. He did not come by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth.

This is how we know that we love the children of God: by loving God and carrying out his commands. [1 John 5:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1%20John%205.2)

When I was young, whenever my doting Aunt Betty visited, it felt like Christmas. She’d bring Star Wars toys and slip me cash on her way out the door. Whenever I stayed with her, she filled the freezer with ice cream and never cooked vegetables. She had few rules and let me stay up late. My aunt was marvelous, reflecting God’s generosity. However, to grow up healthy, I needed more than only Aunt Betty’s way. I also needed my parents to place expectations on me and my behavior and hold me to them.

God asks more of me than Aunt Betty. While He floods us with relentless love, a love that never wavers even when we resist or run away, He does expect something of us. When God instructed Israel how to live, He provided Ten Commandments, not ten suggestions ([Exodus 20:1–17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod%2020.1%E2%80%9317)). Aware of our self-deception, God offers clear expectations: we’re to “[love] God and [carry] out his commands” ([1 John 5:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1%20John%205.2)).

Thankfully, “[God’s] commands are not burdensome” (v. 3). By the Holy Spirit’s power, we can live them out as we experience God’s love and joy. His love for us is unceasing. But the Scriptures offer a question to help us know if we love God in return: Are we obeying His commands as the Spirit guides us?

We can say we love God, but what we do in His strength tells the real story.

By:  [Winn Collier](https://odb.org/author/wcollier/)

#### **Reflect & Pray**

When do you find it most difficult to obey God? How does this connection between obedience and love offer new insight for your life in Christ?

God, I say I love You, but it’s hard to love. It’s hard to obey. Help me see the truth and to love You with my actions.

#### **Insight**

In [1 John 5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1%20John%205), John addresses two of his favorite topics and their relationship to each other: love and God’s commandments. Verse 2 could be considered a summary of John’s theology. Love and obedience are so intertwined that one is considered a demonstration, or proof, of the other.

Sounding much like Jesus when He identified not just the most important, but the two most important commands (see [Matthew 22:34–40](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt%2022.34%E2%80%9340); [Mark 12:28–33](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Mark%2012.28%E2%80%9333)), John connects the love of God with love of others. He says that anyone who loves the Father “loves his child as well” ([1 John 5:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1%20John%205.1)). Obedience to His commandments isn’t just a demonstration of love for God but also shows love for the children of God (vv. 2–3).

In the gospel of John, Jesus tells His disciples that if they love Him, they’ll keep His commands (14:15, 21; 15:10)—one of which was to love one another.

# God Calling – 12/6/20

# Expect Temptation

Lord, give us Power to conquer temptation as Thou didst in the wilderness.

The very first step towards conquering temptation is to see it as temptation. To dissociate yourself from it.

Not to think of it as something resulting from your tiredness, or illness, or poverty, or nerve-strain, when you feel you might well excuse yourself for yielding, but first to realize very fully that when you have heard My voice ("the Heavens opened," as it were) and are going to fulfill your mission to work for me and to draw souls to me, you must expect a mighty onslaught from the evil one, who will endeavor with all his might to frustrate you, and to prevent your good work. Expect that.

Then when these little temptations, or big ones come, you will recognize them as planned by evil to thwart Me. Then for very love of Me you will conquer.

"And lead me not into temptation, but deliver me from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever." Matthew 6:13

# My Utmost for His Highest – 12/7/20

# Repentance



Godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation… —[2 Corinthians 7:10](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=2+Corinthians+7%3A10)

Conviction of sin is best described in the words:

My sins, my sins, my Savior,  
How sad on Thee they fall.

Conviction of sin is one of the most uncommon things that ever happens to a person. It is the beginning of an understanding of God. Jesus Christ said that when the Holy Spirit came He would convict people of sin (see [John 16:8](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+16:8)). And when the Holy Spirit stirs a person’s conscience and brings him into the presence of God, it is not that person’s relationship with others that bothers him but his relationship with God— “Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done this evil in your sight…” ([Psalm 51:4](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+51:4)). The wonders of conviction of sin, forgiveness, and holiness are so interwoven that it is only the forgiven person who is truly holy. He proves he is forgiven by being the opposite of what he was previously, by the grace of God. Repentance always brings a person to the point of saying, “I have sinned.” The surest sign that God is at work in his life is when he says that and means it. Anything less is simply sorrow for having made foolish mistakes— a reflex action caused by self-disgust.

The entrance into the kingdom of God is through the sharp, sudden pains of repentance colliding with man’s respectable “goodness.” Then the Holy Spirit, who produces these struggles, begins the formation of the Son of God in the person’s life (see [Galatians 4:19](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Galatians+4:19)). This new life will reveal itself in conscious repentance followed by unconscious holiness, never the other way around. The foundation of Christianity is repentance. Strictly speaking, a person cannot repent when he chooses— repentance is a gift of God. The old Puritans used to pray for “the gift of tears.” If you ever cease to understand the value of repentance, you allow yourself to remain in sin. Examine yourself to see if you have forgotten how to be truly repentant.

**Wisdom From Oswald Chambers**

The attitude of a Christian towards the providential order in which he is placed is to recognize that God is behind it for purposes of His own.  Biblical Ethics, 99 R

# CCEL – 12/7/20

**He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.**—[II COR. 5:21.](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iiCor.5.html" \l "iiCor.5.21)

The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.—Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.—As by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.

After that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; that being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.—There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

The Lord our Righteousness.

[Isa. 53:6](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Isa.53.html" \l "Isa.53.6). -[I Pet. 2:24](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iPet.2.html" \l "iPet.2.24). -[Rom. 5:19](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Rom.5.html" \l "Rom.5.19).[Tit. 3:4-7](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Titus.3.html" \l "Titus.3.4). -[Rom. 8:1](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Rom.8.html" \l "Rom.8.1).[Jer. 23:6](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Jer.23.html" \l "Jer.23.6).

“Base things of the world hath God chosen.” [1 Corinthians 1:28](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iCor.1.html" \l "iCor.1.28)

Walk the streets by moonlight, if you dare, and you will see sinners then. Watch when the night is dark, and the wind is howling, and the picklock is grating in the door, and you will see sinners then. Go to yon jail, and walk through the wards, and mark the men with heavy over-hanging brows, men whom you would not like to meet at night, and there are sinners there. Go to the Reformatories, and note those who have betrayed a rampant juvenile depravity, and you will see sinners there. Go across the seas to the place where a man will gnaw a bone upon which is reeking human flesh, and there is a sinner there. Go where you will, you need not ransack earth to find sinners, for they are common enough; you may find them in every lane and street of every city, and town, and village, and hamlet. It is for such that Jesus died. If you will select me the grossest specimen of humanity, if he be but born of woman, I will have hope of him yet, because Jesus Christ is come to seek and to save sinners. Electing love has selected some of the worst to be made the best. Pebbles of the brook grace turns into jewels for the crown-royal. Worthless dross he transforms into pure gold. Redeeming love has set apart many of the worst of mankind to be the reward of the Saviour’s passion. Effectual grace calls forth many of the vilest of the vile to sit at the table of mercy, and therefore let none despair.

Reader, by that love looking out of Jesus’ tearful eyes, by that love streaming from those bleeding wounds, by that faithful love, that strong love, that pure, disinterested, and abiding love; by the heart and by the bowels of the Saviour’s compassion, we conjure you turn not away as though it were nothing to you; but believe on him and you shall be saved. Trust your soul with him and he will bring you to his Father’s right hand in glory everlasting.

# Word Live – 12/7/20

# <https://content.scriptureunion.org.uk/wordlive/>

# Scripture Union – 12/7/20

[**https://scriptureunion.org/encounters/**](https://scriptureunion.org/encounters/)

# Today in the Word – 12/7/20

# Follow in Love

**Read:** [**John 13:1-35**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+13%3a1-35)

### **Jesus Washes His Disciples’ Feet**

13 It was just before the Passover Festival. Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.

2The evening meal was in progress, and the devil had already prompted Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, to betray Jesus. 3Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; 4so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. 5After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples’ feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.

6He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, “Lord, are you going to wash my feet?”

7Jesus replied, “You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand.”

8“No,” said Peter, “you shall never wash my feet.”

Jesus answered, “Unless I wash you, you have no part with me.”

9“Then, Lord,” Simon Peter replied, “not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!”

10Jesus answered, “Those who have had a bath need only to wash their feet; their whole body is clean. And you are clean, though not every one of you.” 11For he knew who was going to betray him, and that was why he said not every one was clean.

12When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. “Do you understand what I have done for you?” he asked them. 13“You call me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord,’ and rightly so, for that is what I am. 14Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet. 15I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. 16Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. 17Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.

### **Jesus Predicts His Betrayal**

18“I am not referring to all of you; I know those I have chosen. But this is to fulfill this passage of Scripture: ‘He who shared my bread has turned[[a](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+13%3a1-35#fen-NIV-26649a)] against me.’[[b](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+13%3a1-35#fen-NIV-26649b)]

19“I am telling you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe that I am who I am. 20Very truly I tell you, whoever accepts anyone I send accepts me; and whoever accepts me accepts the one who sent me.”

21After he had said this, Jesus was troubled in spirit and testified, “Very truly I tell you, one of you is going to betray me.”

22His disciples stared at one another, at a loss to know which of them he meant. 23One of them, the disciple whom Jesus loved, was reclining next to him. 24Simon Peter motioned to this disciple and said, “Ask him which one he means.”

25Leaning back against Jesus, he asked him, “Lord, who is it?”

26Jesus answered, “It is the one to whom I will give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish.” Then, dipping the piece of bread, he gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot. 27As soon as Judas took the bread, Satan entered into him.

So Jesus told him, “What you are about to do, do quickly.” 28But no one at the meal understood why Jesus said this to him. 29Since Judas had charge of the money, some thought Jesus was telling him to buy what was needed for the festival, or to give something to the poor. 30As soon as Judas had taken the bread, he went out. And it was night.

### **Jesus Predicts Peter’s Denial**

31When he was gone, Jesus said, “Now the Son of Man is glorified and God is glorified in him. 32If God is glorified in him,[[c](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+13%3a1-35" \l "fen-NIV-26663c" \o "See footnote c)] God will glorify the Son in himself, and will glorify him at once.

33“My children, I will be with you only a little longer. You will look for me, and just as I told the Jews, so I tell you now: Where I am going, you cannot come.

34“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. 35By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

#### **Footnotes:**

1. [John 13:18](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+13%3a1-35#en-NIV-26649) Greek has lifted up his heel
2. [John 13:18](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+13%3a1-35#en-NIV-26649) Psalm 41:9
3. [John 13:32](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+13%3a1-35#en-NIV-26663) Many early manuscripts do not have If God is glorified in him.

The classic Christmas movie “It’s a Wonderful Life” celebrates the sacrificial love of its main character, George Bailey. As a young man, George gave up his dreams of success and travel, to stay and help his father and his community. When he almost lost everything, it is up to his friends and family to teach him that his selfless acts of love made a difference in their lives.

As I have loved you, so you must love one another. John 13:34

In today’s reading, we see an intimate moment between Jesus and His disciples. Jesus warned that He would not be with them for much longer (v. 33). He washed their feet and predicted Judas’s betrayal knowing that His time was drawing near (v. 5). Under these circumstances, what important message did He have for them? Simply this: To follow Him, they must love another as He had loved them (v. 34).

How did Jesus love His disciples? He would lay down His life, sacrificially, to accomplish His Father’s will. Jesus would be glorified by obeying His Father, that is, His obedience would bring honor to the name of the Lord (vv. 31–32). At the completion of His mission of salvation, He would return to heaven and sit at the right hand of His Father. Where He was going, His disciples would be unable to follow, but they could continue to follow Him by imitating His example.

We are called to love as Jesus loved. Why? “By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another” (v. 35). In what sense is this a new command (v. 34)? They had been given a new standard: Christ’s perfection. We’ve gone from “loving our neighbor” to “loving our enemies” (Matt. 5:43–45). Loving as Christ did is one of our Advent priorities.

**Apply the Word**

Loving one another like Christ loved us can take many forms, including acts of service or sharing our finances/food/possessions (Acts 2:42–47). Consider one way you can follow Christ’s example and show God’s love to someone during this Christmas season.

### **Pray with Us**

Lord Jesus, you have told us to love one another as you love us. Please fill our hearts with your love for others and open our eyes to practical ways we can demonstrate your love this week, and throughout this Advent season.

## BY Brad Baurain

# Our Daily Bread – 12/7/20

# Prayer of the Broken-Down

 **Read:** [**Psalm 109:21–27**](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps%20109.21%E2%80%9327)

21But you, Sovereign Lord,  
    help me for your name’s sake;  
    out of the goodness of your love, deliver me.  
22For I am poor and needy,  
    and my heart is wounded within me.  
23I fade away like an evening shadow;  
    I am shaken off like a locust.  
24My knees give way from fasting;  
    my body is thin and gaunt.  
25I am an object of scorn to my accusers;  
    when they see me, they shake their heads.

26Help me, Lord my God;  
    save me according to your unfailing love.  
27Let them know that it is your hand,  
    that you, Lord, have done it.

Help me, Lord my God. [Psalm 109:26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps%20109.26)

“Dear Father in heaven, I’m not a praying man, but if you’re up there, and you can hear me, show me the way. I’m at the end of my rope.” That prayer is whispered by a broken-down George Bailey, the character played by Jimmy Stewart in the classic film It’s a Wonderful Life. In the now iconic scene, Bailey’s eyes fill with tears. They weren’t part of the script, but as he spoke that prayer Stewart said he “felt the loneliness, the hopelessness of people who had nowhere to turn.” It broke him.

Bailey’s prayer, boiled down, is simply “Help me.” And this is exactly what’s voiced in [Psalm 109](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps%20109). David was at the end of his rope: “poor and needy,” his “heart . . . wounded” (v. 22), and his body “thin and gaunt” (v. 24). He was fading “like an evening shadow” (v. 23), and sensed himself to be an “object of scorn” in the eyes of his accusers (v. 25). In his extreme brokenness, he had nowhere else to turn. He cried out for the Sovereign Lord to show him the way: “Help me, Lord my God” (v. 26).

There are seasons in our lives when “broken down” says it all. In such times it can be hard to know what to pray. Our loving God will respond to our simple prayer for help.

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

#### **Reflect & Pray**

When was the last time you felt broken down by life? If you have a family member or friend who currently feels that way, how might you help?

Dear Father, some days are hard. They feel hopeless. Turn my heart to You in my brokenness. Give me strength to simply ask for help.

To learn more about the practice of prayer, visit [ChristianUniversity.org/SF120](https://ChristianUniversity.org/SF120).

#### **Insight**

[Psalm 109](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps%20109) has been called the “Judas Psalm.” Peter quotes from it to support his suggestion that the apostles needed to replace the betrayer of Jesus ([Psalm 109:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps%20109.8); [Acts 1:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts%201.20)). This psalm is also known for the intensity of the curses that show up in David’s appeal to God for help ([Psalm 109:6–20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps%20109.6%E2%80%9320)). From a New Testament point of view, we may not understand the cruelty of the requests. Bible scholars differ in their interpretations, with some suggesting verses 6–20 express what David’s enemies were wishing on him. The New Living Translation inserts “They say” at the beginning of verse 6 to indicate that David is asking God for help in the face of such hatred. Regardless of the interpretation, such curses stand in contrast to Jesus’ counsel to reflect our relationship to Him by returning blessing for curses ([Luke 6:27–36](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke%206.27%E2%80%9336)).

# God Calling – 12/7/20

# Food of Life

I have meat to eat that ye know not of.

Those were My words to My Disciples in the early days of My Ministry. Later I was to lead them on to a fuller understanding of that Majestic Union of a soul with God in which strength, life, and food pass from One to the other.

Meat is to sustain the body. To do the Will of God is the very strength and support of Life. Feed on that Food.

Soul-starvation comes from the failing to do, and to delight in doing, My Will. How busy the world is in talking of bodies that are undernourished! What of the souls that are undernourished?

Make it indeed your meat to do My Will. Strength and Power will indeed come to you from that.

"Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him who sent me, and to finish his work." John 4:34