# My Utmost for His Highest – 12/10/19

# The Offering of the Natural



It is written that Abraham had two sons: the one by a bondwoman, the other by a freewoman. —[Galatians 4:22](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=Galatians+4%3A22)

Paul was not dealing with sin in this chapter of Galatians, but with the relation of the natural to the spiritual. The natural can be turned into the spiritual only through sacrifice. Without this a person will lead a divided life. Why did God demand that the natural must be sacrificed? God did not demand it. It is not God’s perfect will, but His permissive will. God’s perfect will was for the natural to be changed into the spiritual through obedience. Sin is what made it necessary for the natural to be sacrificed.

Abraham had to offer up Ishmael before he offered up Isaac (see [Genesis 21:8-14](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis+21:8-14)). Some of us are trying to offer up spiritual sacrifices to God before we have sacrificed the natural. The only way we can offer a spiritual sacrifice to God is to “present [our] bodies a living sacrifice…” ([Romans 12:1](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+12:1)). Sanctification means more than being freed from sin. It means the deliberate commitment of myself to the God of my salvation, and being willing to pay whatever it may cost.

If we do not sacrifice the natural to the spiritual, the natural life will resist and defy the life of the Son of God in us and will produce continual turmoil. This is always the result of an undisciplined spiritual nature. We go wrong because we stubbornly refuse to discipline ourselves physically, morally, or mentally. We excuse ourselves by saying, “Well, I wasn’t taught to be disciplined when I was a child.” Then discipline yourself now! If you don’t, you will ruin your entire personal life for God.

God is not actively involved with our natural life as long as we continue to pamper and gratify it. But once we are willing to put it out in the desert and are determined to keep it under control, God will be with it. He will then provide wells and oases and fulfill all His promises for the natural (see [Genesis 21:15-19](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis+21:15-19)).

**Wisdom From Oswald Chambers**

The Bible is a relation of facts, the truth of which must be tested. Life may go on all right for a while, when suddenly a bereavement comes, or some crisis; unrequited love or a new love, a disaster, a business collapse, or a shocking sin, and we turn up our Bibles again and God’s word comes straight home, and we say, “Why, I never saw that there before.” Shade of His Hand, 1223 L

# CCEL – 12/10/19

**No man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.**—[JOHN 10:29.](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.John.10.html" \l "John.10.29)

I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.—The Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom.—We are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.—Your life is hid with Christ in God.

Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?

Our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work.

[II Tim. 1:12](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iiTim.1.html" \l "iiTim.1.12). -[II Tim. 4:18](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iiTim.4.html" \l "iiTim.4.18). -[Rom. 8:37-39](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Rom.8.html" \l "Rom.8.37). -[Col. 3:3](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Col.3.html" \l "Col.3.3).[Jas. 2:5](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Jas.2.html" \l "Jas.2.5).[II Thes. 2:16,17](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iiThess.2.html" \l "iiThess.2.16).

“So shall we ever be with the Lord.” [1 Thessalonians 4:17](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iThess.4.html" \l "iThess.4.17)

Even the sweetest visits from Christ, how short they are—and how transitory! One moment our eyes see him, and we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory, but again a little time and we do not see him, for our beloved withdraws himself from us; like a roe or a young hart he leaps over the mountains of division; he is gone to the land of spices, and feeds no more among the lilies.

“If today he deigns to bless us

With a sense of pardoned sin,

He to-morrow may distress us,

Make us feel the plague within.”

Oh, how sweet the prospect of the time when we shall not behold him at a distance, but see him face to face: when he shall not be as a wayfaring man tarrying but for a night, but shall eternally enfold us in the bosom of his glory. We shall not see him for a little season, but

“Millions of years our wondering eyes,

Shall o'er our Saviour’s beauties rove;

And myriad ages we'll adore,

The wonders of his love.”

In heaven there shall be no interruptions from care or sin; no weeping shall dim our eyes; no earthly business shall distract our happy thoughts; we shall have nothing to hinder us from gazing forever on the Sun of Righteousness with unwearied eyes. Oh, if it be so sweet to see him now and then, how sweet to gaze on that blessed face for aye, and never have a cloud rolling between, and never have to turn one’s eyes away to look on a world of weariness and woe! Blest day, when wilt thou dawn? Rise, O unsetting sun! The joys of sense may leave us as soon as they will, for this shall make glorious amends. If to die is but to enter into uninterrupted communion with Jesus, then death is indeed gain, and the black drop is swallowed up in a sea of victory.

# Word Live – 12/10/19

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

# Scripture Union – 12/10/19

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

# Today in the Word – 12/10/19

# Our Redeemer

**Read:** [**Galatians 3:7–14**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Galatians+3%3a7%e2%80%9314)

7Understand, then, that those who have faith are children of Abraham. 8Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: “All nations will be blessed through you.”[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Galatians+3%3a7%e2%80%9314#fen-NIV-29111a)] 9So those who rely on faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.

10For all who rely on the works of the law are under a curse, as it is written: “Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law.”[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Galatians+3%3a7%e2%80%9314#fen-NIV-29113b)] 11Clearly no one who relies on the law is justified before God, because “the righteous will live by faith.”[[c](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Galatians+3%3a7%e2%80%9314#fen-NIV-29114c)] 12The law is not based on faith; on the contrary, it says, “The person who does these things will live by them.”[[d](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Galatians+3%3a7%e2%80%9314#fen-NIV-29115d)] 13Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: “Cursed is everyone who is hung on a pole.”[[e](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Galatians+3%3a7%e2%80%9314#fen-NIV-29116e)] 14He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit.

#### Footnotes:

1. [Galatians 3:8](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Galatians+3%3a7%e2%80%9314#en-NIV-29111) Gen. 12:3; 18:18; 22:18
2. [Galatians 3:10](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Galatians+3%3a7%e2%80%9314#en-NIV-29113) Deut. 27:26
3. [Galatians 3:11](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Galatians+3%3a7%e2%80%9314#en-NIV-29114) Hab. 2:4
4. [Galatians 3:12](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Galatians+3%3a7%e2%80%9314#en-NIV-29115) Lev. 18:5
5. [Galatians 3:13](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Galatians+3%3a7%e2%80%9314#en-NIV-29116) Deut. 21:23

R. A. Torrey, the second president of Moody Bible Institute, explained why Jesus’ sacrifice meets the need of every person: “The gospel, with a crucified Christ at its center, meets the needs of all conditions and classes of men as well as of all races. It meets the need of the millionaire and the need of the pauper; it meets the need of great men of science . . . and the need of the man or woman who cannot read nor write; it meets the need of the king on the throne and the need of the laborer in the ditch.”

He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the gentiles through Jesus Christ. Galatians 3:14

The gospel is good news for everyone! In his first epistle, Paul made clear that the good news of redemption in Christ is for both Jews and Gentiles (vv. 7–9). As God told Abraham, “All nations will be blessed through you” (see Gen. 12:3), a promise here called the “gospel in advance.” God’s plan had always been larger than one nation. The fact is that all who trust in Christ are considered spiritual “children of Abraham.”

Furthermore, redemption is about faith, not works or the Law (vv. 10–12). Since lawbreakers are cursed, and since keeping the Law is impossible, those who rely on it are automatically cursed. Those who rely on faith in Christ, by contrast, stand justified before God. This is not a new truth, since faith was also the basis for Abraham’s justification (v. 6). Anyone who tries to earn salvation will fail.

In short, the gospel is not about what we do but about what Christ did (vv. 13–14; Eph. 1:7). He came under the Law’s curse. He paid the death penalty we owed for sin. Only through faith in Him can we receive the rich blessings of salvation, especially the Holy Spirit.

### **Apply the Word**

The gospel is such good news, we cannot keep it to ourselves! If you’re not sure how to share your faith, pray for an opportunity in the near future. If you have specific friends or family members in mind, pray for a moment to share what you believe. There’s no better way to celebrate Christmas than to tell others about Christ!

### **Pray with Us**

Today we pray again for the Educational Ministries faculty: Timothy Downey, Dennis Fledderjohann, and Elizabeth Smith. May they be encouraged and strengthened in the Spirit as they faithfully teach tomorrow’s Christian educators.

## BY Brad Baurain

# Our Daily Bread – 12/10/19

# Grace at the End



**Read: Mark 5:25–34**

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

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

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

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

Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering. Mark 5:34

Artist Doug Merkey’s masterful sculpture Ruthless Trust features a bronze human figure clinging desperately to a cross made of walnut wood. He writes, “It’s a very simple expression of our constant and appropriate posture for life—total, unfettered intimacy with and dependency upon Christ and the gospel.”

That’s the kind of trust we see expressed in the actions and words of the unnamed woman in Mark 5:25–34. For twelve years her life had been in shambles (v. 25). “She had suffered a great deal under the care of many doctors and had spent all she had, yet instead of getting better she grew worse” (v. 26). But having heard about Jesus, she made her way to Him, touched Him, and was “freed from her suffering” (vv. 27–29).

Have you come to the end of yourself? Have you depleted all your resources? Anxious, hopeless, lost, distressed people need not despair. The Lord Jesus still responds to desperate faith—the kind displayed by this suffering woman and depicted in Merkey’s sculpture. This faith is expressed in the words of hymn writer Charles Wesley: “Father, I stretch my hands to Thee; no other help I know.” Don’t have that kind of faith? Ask God to help you trust Him. Wesley’s hymn concludes with this prayer: “Author of faith, to Thee I lift my weary, longing eyes; O may I now receive that gift! My soul, without it, dies.”

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

#### **Reflect & Pray**

When have you desperately clung to Christ? How did God meet your need?

Father, thank You for Your power to rescue me. Help me to trust You to meet all my needs.

#### **Insight**

The woman in Mark 5:25–34 “who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years” took a risk by reaching out to touch Jesus. According to Jewish law, bleeding made a person unclean. This woman had likely lived as an outcast from society because those who came in contact with her would have become unclean themselves. The truth of the woman’s great faith is enhanced when we realize that many would have viewed her act of touching Jesus as making Him unclean rather than Him making her clean.

However, once the woman admitted to touching Jesus, He declared, “your faith has healed you” (vv. 33–34). The word translated “healed” (sozo) indicates physical healing as well as the restoring of a relationship with God. The woman’s faith healed her both physically and eternally.

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

# God Calling – 12/10/19

# The Quiet Time

There may be many times when I reveal nothing, command nothing, give no guidance. But your path is clear, and your task, to grow daily more and more into the knowledge of Me. That this quiet time with Me will enable you to do.

I may ask you to sit silent before Me, and I may speak no word that you could write. All the same that waiting with Me will bring comfort and Peace. Only friends who understand and love each other can wait silent in each other's presence.

And it may be that I shall prove our friendship by asking you to wait in silence while I rest with you, assured of your Love and understanding. So wait, so love, so joy.

"My beloved spake, and said unto me, Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away." Song of Solomon 2:10

# My Utmost for His Highest – 12/11/19

# Individuality



Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself…" —[Matthew 16:24](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=Matthew+16%3A24)

Individuality is the hard outer layer surrounding the inner spiritual life. Individuality shoves others aside, separating and isolating people. We see it as the primary characteristic of a child, and rightly so. When we confuse individuality with the spiritual life, we remain isolated. This shell of individuality is God’s created natural covering designed to protect the spiritual life. But our individuality must be yielded to God so that our spiritual life may be brought forth into fellowship with Him. Individuality counterfeits spirituality, just as lust counterfeits love. God designed human nature for Himself, but individuality corrupts that human nature for its own purposes.

The characteristics of individuality are independence and self-will. We hinder our spiritual growth more than any other way by continually asserting our individuality. If you say, “I can’t believe,” it is because your individuality is blocking the way; individuality can never believe. But our spirit cannot help believing. Watch yourself closely when the Spirit of God is at work in you. He pushes you to the limits of your individuality where a choice must be made. The choice is either to say, “I will not surrender,” or to surrender, breaking the hard shell of individuality, which allows the spiritual life to emerge. The Holy Spirit narrows it down every time to one thing (see [Matthew 5:23-24](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+5:23-24)). It is your individuality that refuses to “be reconciled to your brother” ([Matthew 5:24](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+5:24)). God wants to bring you into union with Himself, but unless you are willing to give up your right to yourself, He cannot. “…let him deny himself…”— deny his independent right to himself. Then the real life-the spiritual life-is allowed the opportunity to grow.

**Wisdom From Oswald Chambers**

There is no condition of life in which we cannot abide in Jesus. We have to learn to abide in Him wherever we are placed.  Our Brilliant Heritage, 946 R

# CCEL – 12/11/19

Let not your good be evil spoken of.—[ROM. 14:16.](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Rom.14.html" \l "Rom.14.16)

Abstain from all appearance of evil.—Providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men.—For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men.

But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters. Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf.

Brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.—Take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumblingblock to them that are weak.—Whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.—Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.

[I Thes. 5:22](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iThess.5.html" \l "iThess.5.22). -[II Cor. 8:21](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iiCor.8.html" \l "iiCor.8.21). -[I Pet. 2:15](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iPet.2.html" \l "iPet.2.15).[I Pet. 4:15,16](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iPet.4.html" \l "iPet.4.15).[Gal. 5:13](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Gal.5.html#Gal.5.13). -[I Cor. 8:9](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iCor.8.html" \l "iCor.8.9). -[Matt. 18:6](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Matt.18.html" \l "Matt.18.6). -[Matt. 25:40](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Matt.25.html" \l "Matt.25.40).

“Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it.” [1 Thessalonians 5:24](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iThess.5.html" \l "iThess.5.24)

Heaven is a place where we shall never sin; where we shall cease our constant watch against an indefatigable enemy, because there will be no tempter to ensnare our feet. There the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest. Heaven is the “undefiled inheritance;” it is the land of perfect holiness, and therefore of complete security. But do not the saints even on earth sometimes taste the joys of blissful security? The doctrine of God’s word is, that all who are in union with the Lamb are safe; that all the righteous shall hold on their way; that those who have committed their souls to the keeping of Christ shall find him a faithful and immutable preserver. Sustained by such a doctrine we can enjoy security even on earth; not that high and glorious security which renders us free from every slip, but that holy security which arises from the sure promise of Jesus that none who believe in him shall ever perish, but shall be with him where he is. Believer, let us often reflect with joy on the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints, and honour the faithfulness of our God by a holy confidence in him.

May our God bring home to you a sense of your safety in Christ Jesus! May he assure you that your name is graven on his hand; and whisper in your ear the promise, “Fear not, I am with thee.” Look upon him, the great Surety of the covenant, as faithful and true, and, therefore, bound and engaged to present you, the weakest of the family, with all the chosen race, before the throne of God; and in such a sweet contemplation you will drink the juice of the spiced wine of the Lord’s pomegranate, and taste the dainty fruits of Paradise. You will have an antepast of the enjoyments which ravish the souls of the perfect saints above, if you can believe with unstaggering faith that “faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it.”

# Word Live – 12/11/19

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

# Scripture Union – 12/11/19

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# Today in the Word – 12/11/19

# Mediator Between God and Humanity

[**Read: Hebrews 9:11–22**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Hebrews+9%3a11%e2%80%9322)

### **The Blood of Christ**

11But when Christ came as high priest of the good things that are now already here,[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Hebrews+9%3a11%e2%80%9322#fen-NIV-30117a)] he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not made with human hands, that is to say, is not a part of this creation. 12He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, thus obtaining[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Hebrews+9%3a11%e2%80%9322#fen-NIV-30118b)] eternal redemption. 13The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean. 14How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death,[[c](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Hebrews+9%3a11%e2%80%9322#fen-NIV-30120c)] so that we may serve the living God!

15For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance—now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant.

16In the case of a will,[[d](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Hebrews+9%3a11%e2%80%9322#fen-NIV-30122d)] it is necessary to prove the death of the one who made it, 17because a will is in force only when somebody has died; it never takes effect while the one who made it is living. 18This is why even the first covenant was not put into effect without blood. 19When Moses had proclaimed every command of the law to all the people, he took the blood of calves, together with water, scarlet wool and branches of hyssop, and sprinkled the scroll and all the people. 20He said, “This is the blood of the covenant, which God has commanded you to keep.”[[e](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Hebrews+9%3a11%e2%80%9322#fen-NIV-30126e)] 21In the same way, he sprinkled with the blood both the tabernacle and everything used in its ceremonies. 22In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.

#### **Footnotes:**

1. [Hebrews 9:11](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Hebrews+9%3a11%e2%80%9322#en-NIV-30117) Some early manuscripts are to come
2. [Hebrews 9:12](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Hebrews+9%3a11%e2%80%9322#en-NIV-30118) Or blood, having obtained
3. [Hebrews 9:14](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Hebrews+9%3a11%e2%80%9322#en-NIV-30120) Or from useless rituals
4. [Hebrews 9:16](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Hebrews+9%3a11%e2%80%9322#en-NIV-30122) Same Greek word as covenant; also in verse 17
5. [Hebrews 9:20](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Hebrews+9%3a11%e2%80%9322#en-NIV-30126) Exodus 24:8

The expression “skin in the game,” often encountered in the world of business and finance, is used when people have a personal stake in reaching a goal. They see their work as much more than “just a job.” They’re risking their own resources or reputation. Their commitment might be emotional, financial, or even physical.

Christ is the mediator of a new covenant. Hebrews 9:15

As the Mediator between God and humanity, Jesus most certainly had “skin in the game” because He was and is fully God and fully man. But why was such a mediator needed? Because sin made us enemies of God. We were at war, with no hope of winning, and no offering a sacrifice represented the people before the Lord. But when Jesus came, He became both the priest and the sacrifice.

Christ is the superior Mediator of a superior covenant (Heb. 8:6). He did what He did in the heavenly tabernacle (God’s presence), not its earthly shadow (9:11). His atonement is once-for-all, not repeated. His blood is effectual for forgiveness, unlike the blood of animal sacrifices (v. 12). Those sacrifices made people outwardly clean, but Christ makes us inwardly clean and holy, free to serve God (vv. 13–14). Jesus not only mediates the new covenant but also guarantees it (v. 15). How does this work?

Like a will. Just as a will takes effect only when the one who made it dies, so our inheritance of eternal life took effect because of Jesus’ death (vv. 16–17). While the blood of animal sacrifices only symbolized purification, Jesus’ blood actually accomplished our forgiveness and redemption (vv. 18–22). And while formerly we were set apart for death, now through Christ’s mediation we’re set apart for life. We were God’s enemies but now can be His friends!

### **Apply the Word**

We often think more about what we have freedom from than what we have freedom to do. We think in terms of our own independence, being able to do whatever we want. Within a biblical worldview, however, freedom runs the other way. We’ve been released from sin’s bondage in order to “serve the living God” (v. 14). Obedience is true freedom!

### **Pray with Us**

Indeed, Christ gives us true freedom! We can worship Him in Spirit and in truth, made clean by His sacrifice. As you pray today, praise Him that He cleansed us “from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God” (Heb. 9:14).

## BY Brad Baurain

# Our Daily Bread – 12/11/19

# Canceled Debts

 **Read: Deuteronomy 15:1–8**

### **The Year for Canceling Debts**

15 At the end of every seven years you must cancel debts. 2This is how it is to be done: Every creditor shall cancel any loan they have made to a fellow Israelite. They shall not require payment from anyone among their own people, because the Lord’s time for canceling debts has been proclaimed. 3You may require payment from a foreigner, but you must cancel any debt your fellow Israelite owes you. 4However, there need be no poor people among you, for in the land the Lord your God is giving you to possess as your inheritance, he will richly bless you, 5if only you fully obey the Lord your God and are careful to follow all these commands I am giving you today. 6For the Lord your God will bless you as he has promised, and you will lend to many nations but will borrow from none. You will rule over many nations but none will rule over you.

7If anyone is poor among your fellow Israelites in any of the towns of the land the Lord your God is giving you, do not be hardhearted or tightfisted toward them. 8Rather, be openhanded and freely lend them whatever they need.

The Lord’s time for canceling debts has been proclaimed. Deuteronomy 15:2

In 2009, Los Angeles County stopped charging families for the costs of their children’s incarceration. Though no new fees were charged, those with unpaid fees from before the change in policy were still required to settle their debt. Then in 2018 the county canceled all outstanding financial obligations.

For some families, canceling the debt aided greatly in their struggle to survive; no longer having liens on their property or wages being garnished meant they were better able to put food on the table. It was for this kind of hardship that God called for debts to be forgiven every seven years (Deuteronomy 15:2). He didn’t want people to be crippled forever by them.

Because the Israelites were forbidden to charge interest on a loan to fellow Israelites (Exodus 22:25), their motives for lending to a neighbor weren’t to make a profit, but rather to help those who were enduring hard times, perhaps due to a bad harvest. Debts were to be freely forgiven every seven years. As a result, there would be less poverty among the people (Deuteronomy 15:4).

Today, believers in Jesus aren’t bound by these laws. But God might occasionally prompt us to forgive a debt so those who’ve been struggling can begin afresh as contributing members of society. When we show such mercy and generosity to others, we lift up God’s character and give people hope.

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

#### **Reflect & Pray**

How have your “debts” been forgiven? Who can you lift up by forgiving a debt owed or a wrong done to you?

Jesus, thank You for caring about the financial burdens we carry.

#### **Insight**

The law of Moses provided Israel with guidelines for life. First, there were liturgical elements that governed how Israel was to engage in the worship of God, including the design of the tabernacle and its furnishings; procedures for special feast times; and issues of ceremonial purity. There was also a societal component, which dealt with how the people of Israel were to interact with one another as families and as a covenant people together under one God. Finally, the law had a national component that described how Israel was to relate to the surrounding nations once they arrived in the land of promise. Taken together, the law was a comprehensive set of instructions covering life for the people of God.

For more, see Knowing God Through the Old Testament at [discoveryseries.org/sb101.](https://discoveryseries.org/sb101.)

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

# God Calling – 12/11/19

# A Sunrise Gift

To those whose lives have been full of struggle and care, who have felt as you both have, the tragedy of living, the pity of an agonized heart for My poor world -- to those of My followers I give that Peace and Joy that brings to age its second Spring, the youth they sacrificed for Me, and for My world. . . .

Take each day now as a joyous sunrise gift from Me. Your simple daily tasks done in My strength and Love will bring the consciousness of all your highest hopes. Expect great things. Expect great things.

"This is the day which the Lord hath made; and we will rejoice and be glad in it." Psalm 118:24

# My Utmost for His Highest – 12/12/19

# Personality

# Personality

…that they may be one just as We are one… —[John 17:22](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=John+17%3A22)

Personality is the unique, limitless part of our life that makes us distinct from everyone else. It is too vast for us even to comprehend. An island in the sea may be just the top of a large mountain, and our personality is like that island. We don’t know the great depths of our being, therefore we cannot measure ourselves. We start out thinking we can, but soon realize that there is really only one Being who fully understands us, and that is our Creator.

Personality is the characteristic mark of the inner, spiritual man, just as individuality is the characteristic of the outer, natural man. Our Lord can never be described in terms of individuality and independence, but only in terms of His total Person— “I and My Father are one” ([John 10:30](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+10:30)). Personality merges, and you only reach your true identity once you are merged with another person. When love or the Spirit of God come upon a person, he is transformed. He will then no longer insist on maintaining his individuality. Our Lord never referred to a person’s individuality or his isolated position, but spoke in terms of the total person— “…that they may be one just as We are one….” Once your rights to yourself are surrendered to God, your true personal nature begins responding to God immediately. Jesus Christ brings freedom to your total person, and even your individuality is transformed. The transformation is brought about by love— personal devotion to Jesus. Love is the overflowing result of one person in true fellowship with another.

**Wisdom From Oswald Chambers**

Beware of bartering the Word of God for a more suitable conception of your own.  Disciples Indeed, 386 R

# CCEL – 12/12/19

The Lord is in the midst of thee.—[ZEPH. 3:15.](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Zeph.3.html" \l "Zeph.3.15)

Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.—Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees. Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompence; He will come and save you.—The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing.—Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart.

I heard a great voice out of heaven, saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain.

[Isa. 41:10](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Isa.41.html" \l "Isa.41.10). -[Isa. 35:3,4](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Isa.35.html" \l "Isa.35.3). -[Zeph. 3:17](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Zeph.3.html" \l "Zeph.3.17). -[Psa. 27:14](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.27.html" \l "Ps.27.14).[Rev. 21:3,4](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Rev.21.html" \l "Rev.21.3).

“His ways are everlasting.” [Habakkuk 3:6](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Hab.3.html" \l "Hab.3.6)

What he hath done at one time, he will do yet again. Man’s ways are variable, but God’s ways are everlasting. There are many reasons for this most comforting truth: among them are the following—the Lord’s ways are the result of wise deliberation; he ordereth all things according to the counsel of his own will. Human action is frequently the hasty result of passion, or fear, and is followed by regret and alteration; but nothing can take the Almighty by surprise, or happen otherwise than he has foreseen. His ways are the outgrowth of an immutable character, and in them the fixed and settled attributes of God are clearly to be seen. Unless the Eternal One himself can undergo change, his ways, which are himself in action, must remain forever the same. Is he eternally just, gracious, faithful, wise, tender?—then his ways must ever be distinguished for the same excellences. Beings act according to their nature: when those natures change, their conduct varies also; but since God cannot know the shadow of a turning, his ways will abide everlastingly the same. Moreover there is no reason from without which could reverse the divine ways, since they are the embodiment of irresistible might. The earth is said, by the prophet, to be cleft with rivers, mountains tremble, the deep lifts up its hands, and sun and moon stand still, when Jehovah marches forth for the salvation of his people. Who can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou? But it is not might alone which gives stability; God’s ways are the manifestation of the eternal principles of right, and therefore can never pass away. Wrong breeds decay and involves ruin, but the true and the good have about them a vitality which ages cannot diminish.

This morning let us go to our heavenly Father with confidence, remembering that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever, and in him the Lord is ever gracious to his people.

# Word Live – 12/12/19

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

# Scripture Union – 12/12/19

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

# Today in the Word – 12/12/19

# Light of the World

**Read:** [**John 8:12–19**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+8%3a12%e2%80%9319)

### **Dispute Over Jesus’ Testimony**

12When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”

13The Pharisees challenged him, “Here you are, appearing as your own witness; your testimony is not valid.”

14Jesus answered, “Even if I testify on my own behalf, my testimony is valid, for I know where I came from and where I am going. But you have no idea where I come from or where I am going. 15You judge by human standards; I pass judgment on no one. 16But if I do judge, my decisions are true, because I am not alone. I stand with the Father, who sent me. 17In your own Law it is written that the testimony of two witnesses is true. 18I am one who testifies for myself; my other witness is the Father, who sent me.”

19Then they asked him, “Where is your father?”

“You do not know me or my Father,” Jesus replied. “If you knew me, you would know my Father also.”

Philosopher J. P. Moreland described how Disneyland in California has an entire work crew assigned to do nothing but light bulbs. They keep a record of the park’s thousands of light bulbs, and replace them when they reach 80 percent life expectancy. Are they successful? Never once has he seen a burned-out light there!

Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life. John 8:12

Light of the World is one of the most well-known names for Christ. It’s an image associated with knowledge, truth, righteousness, hope, and life. As Isaiah prophesied, “The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned” (Isa. 9:2; see also John 1:4). Today begins our study’s third section: looking at Christ’s attributes in relationship with His people.

When Jesus said, “I am the light of the world” (v. 12), the Pharisees immediately challenged Him (vv. 13–18). By saying His testimony wasn’t valid, they were essentially accusing Him of lying and pride. Jesus responded that He and the Father together made two witnesses and that the Pharisees were ignorant of His divine identity and origins.

Offended, the Pharisees made a second challenge (v. 19): “Where is your father?” Ironically, they proved their own ignorance, but it might also have been intended as an insult about the circumstances of His birth. If so, Jesus disregarded the insult, instead asserting that to know Him was to know the Father. For the religious leaders of Israel not to understand this was quite an indictment (John 3:19)!

As followers of Christ, we are to be “the light of the world” ourselves (Matt. 5:14) by reflecting His light. How? We are to “walk in the light” and live holy lives (1 John 1:5–7).

### **Apply the Word**

To illustrate the importance of light, try spending part of your devotional time or small group meeting in a dark room, then light only one candle or a flashlight. Notice how a single light makes an enormous difference! The good news is we don’t have to generate our own light, we are called to reflect Christ’s light in a dark world.

### **Pray with Us**

What a powerful image of Christ as the Light of the world today’s Scripture presents! It’s also a challenge to us, as followers of Christ, to be the light and walk in His light. Lord Jesus, give us the strength and the courage to live holy lives.

## BY Brad Baurain

# Our Daily Bread – 12/12/19

# Overcoming Fear

**** **Read: 1 Samuel 17:4–7**

4A champion named Goliath, who was from Gath, came out of the Philistine camp. His height was six cubits and a span.[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Samuel+17%3A4%E2%80%937+%2C+45%E2%80%9350&version=NIV#fen-NIV-7623a)] 5He had a bronze helmet on his head and wore a coat of scale armor of bronze weighing five thousand shekels[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Samuel+17%3A4%E2%80%937+%2C+45%E2%80%9350&version=NIV#fen-NIV-7624b)]; 6on his legs he wore bronze greaves, and a bronze javelin was slung on his back. 7His spear shaft was like a weaver’s rod, and its iron point weighed six hundred shekels.[[c](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Samuel+17%3A4%E2%80%937+%2C+45%E2%80%9350&version=NIV#fen-NIV-7626c)] His shield bearer went ahead of him.

#### **Footnotes:**

1. [1 Samuel 17:4](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Samuel+17%3A4%E2%80%937+%2C+45%E2%80%9350&version=NIV#en-NIV-7623) That is, about 9 feet 9 inches or about 3 meters
2. [1 Samuel 17:5](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Samuel+17%3A4%E2%80%937+%2C+45%E2%80%9350&version=NIV#en-NIV-7624) That is, about 125 pounds or about 58 kilograms
3. [1 Samuel 17:7](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Samuel+17%3A4%E2%80%937+%2C+45%E2%80%9350&version=NIV#en-NIV-7626) That is, about 15 pounds or about 6.9 kilograms

**Read: 1 Samuel 17:45–50**

45David said to the Philistine, “You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the Lord Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. 46This day the Lord will deliver you into my hands, and I’ll strike you down and cut off your head. This very day I will give the carcasses of the Philistine army to the birds and the wild animals, and the whole world will know that there is a God in Israel. 47All those gathered here will know that it is not by sword or spear that the Lord saves; for the battle is the Lord’s, and he will give all of you into our hands.”

48As the Philistine moved closer to attack him, David ran quickly toward the battle line to meet him. 49Reaching into his bag and taking out a stone, he slung it and struck the Philistine on the forehead. The stone sank into his forehead, and he fell facedown on the ground.

50So David triumphed over the Philistine with a sling and a stone; without a sword in his hand he struck down the Philistine and killed him.

Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the Lord our God. Psalm 20:7

Fear ruled a man’s life for thirty-two years. Afraid of being caught for his crimes, he hid at his sister’s farmhouse, going nowhere and visiting no one, even missing his mother’s funeral. When he was sixty-four, he learned that no charges had ever been filed against him. The man was free to resume a normal life. Yes, the threat of punishment was real, but he allowed the fear of it to control him.

Likewise, fear ruled the Israelites when the Philistines challenged them at the Valley of Elah. The threat was real. Their enemy Goliath was 9 feet 9 inches tall and his body armor alone weighed 125 pounds (1 Samuel 17:4–5). For forty days, every morning and evening, Goliath challenged the Israelite army to fight him. But no one dared come forward. No one until David visited the battle lines. He heard and saw the taunting, and volunteered to fight Goliath.

While everyone in the Israelite army thought Goliath was too big to fight, David the shepherd boy knew he wasn’t too big for God. He said, “the Lord saves; for the battle is the Lord’s” (v. 47).

When we’re gripped by fear, let’s follow David’s example and fix our eyes on God to gain a right perspective of the problem. The threat may be real, but the One who is with us and for us is bigger than that which is against us.

By: [Albert Lee](https://odb.org/author/albertlee/)

#### **Reflect & Pray**

What giant battle are you facing that’s crippling you in fear? How can you intentionally fix your eyes on the living God?

Thank You, God, that You’re bigger than any other giant in my life. I trust You.

#### **Insight**

David defeated Goliath with a sling and a stone. While the sling was an unconventional weapon of warfare, it was common for shepherds to use it to defend against wild animals. Twice in today’s short text it’s mentioned that David defeated Goliath without a sword (1 Samuel 17:47, 50). What we might read past in this familiar story is what the author wants to highlight: David won the day without a sword because it was God who delivered Goliath into his hands.

# God Calling – 12/12/19

# Care-free

Perfect love casteth out fear.

Love and fear cannot dwell together. By their very natures they cannot exist side by side. Evil is powerful, and fear is one of evil's most potent forces.

Therefore a weak vacillating love can be soon routed by fear, whereas a perfect Love, a trusting Love, is immediately the Conqueror, and fear, vanquished, flees in confusion.

But I am Love because God is Love, and I and the Father are one. So the only way to obtain this perfect Love, that dispels fear, is to have Me more and more in your lives. You can only banish fear by My Presence and My Name.

Fear of the future -- Jesus will be with us.

Fear of poverty -- Jesus will provide. (And so to all the temptations of fear.)

You must not allow fear to enter. Talk to Me. Think of Me. Talk of Me. Love Me. And that sense of My Power will so possess you that no fear can possess your mind. Be strong in this My Love.

"And it shall come to pass in the day that the Lord shall give thee rest from thy sorrow, and from thy fear, and from the hard bondage wherein thou wast made to serve." Isaiah 14:3

# My Utmost for His Highest – 12/13/19

# Intercessory Prayer



…men always ought to pray and not lose heart. —[Luke 18:1](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=Luke+18%3A1)

You cannot truly intercede through prayer if you do not believe in the reality of redemption. Instead, you will simply be turning intercession into useless sympathy for others, which will serve only to increase the contentment they have for remaining out of touch with God. True intercession involves bringing the person, or the circumstance that seems to be crashing in on you, before God, until you are changed by His attitude toward that person or circumstance. Intercession means to “fill up…[with] what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ” ([Colossians 1:24](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Colossians+1:24)), and this is precisely why there are so few intercessors. People describe intercession by saying, “It is putting yourself in someone else’s place.” That is not true! Intercession is putting yourself in God’s place; it is having His mind and His perspective.

As an intercessor, be careful not to seek too much information from God regarding the situation you are praying about, because you may be overwhelmed. If you know too much, more than God has ordained for you to know, you can’t pray; the circumstances of the people become so overpowering that you are no longer able to get to the underlying truth.

Our work is to be in such close contact with God that we may have His mind about everything, but we shirk that responsibility by substituting doing for interceding. And yet intercession is the only thing that has no drawbacks, because it keeps our relationship completely open with God.

What we must avoid in intercession is praying for someone to be simply “patched up.” We must pray that person completely through into contact with the very life of God. Think of the number of people God has brought across our path, only to see us drop them! When we pray on the basis of redemption, God creates something He can create in no other way than through intercessory prayer.

**Wisdom From Oswald Chambers**

The Bible is the only Book that gives us any indication of the true nature of sin, and where it came from. The Philosophy of Sin, 1107 R

# CCEL – 12/13/19

Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.—[II TIM. 2:1.](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iiTim.2.html" \l "iiTim.2.1)

Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power.—As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.—Trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified.—Built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto a holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye also are builded together for a habitation of God through the Spirit.

I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.—Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.

Fight the good fight of faith.—In nothing terrified by your adversaries.

[Col. 1:11](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Col.1.html" \l "Col.1.11). -[Col. 2:6,7](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Col.2.html" \l "Col.2.6). -[Isa. 61:3](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Isa.61.html" \l "Isa.61.3). -[Eph. 2:20](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Eph.2.html" \l "Eph.2.20),[22](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Eph.2.html" \l "Eph.2.22).[Acts 20:32](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Acts.20.html" \l "Acts.20.32). -[Phi. 1:11](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Phil.1.html" \l "Phil.1.11).[I Tim. 6:12](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iTim.6.html" \l "iTim.6.12). -[Phi. 1:28](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Phil.1.html" \l "Phil.1.28).

“Salt without prescribing how much.” [Ezra 7:22](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ezra.7.html" \l "Ezra.7.22)

Salt was used in every offering made by fire unto the Lord, and from its preserving and purifying properties it was the grateful emblem of divine grace in the soul. It is worthy of our attentive regard that, when Artaxerxes gave salt to Ezra the priest, he set no limit to the quantity, and we may be quite certain that when the King of kings distributes grace among his royal priesthood, the supply is not cut short by him. Often are we straitened in ourselves, but never in the Lord. He who chooses to gather much manna will find that he may have as much as he desires. There is no such famine in Jerusalem that the citizens should eat their bread by weight and drink their water by measure. Some things in the economy of grace are measured; for instance our vinegar and gall are given us with such exactness that we never have a single drop too much, but of the salt of grace no stint is made, “Ask what thou wilt and it shall be given unto thee.” Parents need to lock up the fruit cupboard, and the sweet jars, but there is no need to keep the salt-box under lock and key, for few children will eat too greedily from that. A man may have too much money, or too much honour, but he cannot have too much grace. When Jeshurun waxed fat in the flesh, he kicked against God, but there is no fear of a man’s becoming too full of grace: a plethora of grace is impossible. More wealth brings more care, but more grace brings more joy. Increased wisdom is increased sorrow, but abundance of the Spirit is fulness of joy. Believer, go to the throne for a large supply of heavenly salt. It will season thine afflictions, which are unsavoury without salt; it will preserve thy heart which corrupts if salt be absent, and it will kill thy sins even as salt kills reptiles. Thou needest much; seek much, and have much.

# Word Live – 12/13/19

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

# Scripture Union – 12/13/19

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# Today in the Word – 12/13/19

# The Bread of Life

**Read:** [**John 6:26–40**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+6%3a26%e2%80%9340)

26Jesus answered, “Very truly I tell you, you are looking for me, not because you saw the signs I performed but because you ate the loaves and had your fill. 27Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For on him God the Father has placed his seal of approval.”

28Then they asked him, “What must we do to do the works God requires?”

29Jesus answered, “The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent.”

30So they asked him, “What sign then will you give that we may see it and believe you? What will you do? 31Our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written: ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+6%3a26%e2%80%9340#fen-NIV-26289a)]”

32Jesus said to them, “Very truly I tell you, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. 33For the bread of God is the bread that comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.”

34“Sir,” they said, “always give us this bread.”

35Then Jesus declared, “I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty. 36But as I told you, you have seen me and still you do not believe. 37All those the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away. 38For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me. 39And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all those he has given me, but raise them up at the last day. 40For my Father’s will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day.”

#### **Footnotes:**

1. [John 6:31](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+6%3a26%e2%80%9340#en-NIV-26289) Exodus 16:4; Neh. 9:15; Psalm 78:24,25

The Sugarfire Smoke House in St. Louis claimed first prize at the Sandwich World Championship. Chef David Molina won the award for his “Cuban Reuben,” which included smoked ham, pulled pork, pastrami, mustard, swiss cheese, and pickles, all placed between two sourdough grilled cheese sandwiches, which in turn were made with provolone cheese, white American cheese, and horseradish mustard.

The bread of God is the bread that comes down from heaven and gives life to the world. John 6:33

Are we making you hungry? The crowds were ravenously hungry when Jesus miraculously fed them loaves and fish (vv. 1–13). But when they came looking for more of the same, He rebuked them for wrong motives (v. 26). They should be looking for “food that endures to eternal life” (v. 27). One spoils while the other gives lasting spiritual nourishment.

The crowd asked, in essence, how can we earn such food (v. 28)? The only “work” to do, Jesus responded, is to believe in me (v. 29). Their next question was, why should we believe in you? Apparently, the feeding of the 5,000 wasn’t enough?! They wanted something equal to God’s provision of manna in the wilderness (vv. 30–31). Surprisingly (to the people), Jesus asserted that God had already provided a better bread (vv. 32–33). “Give it to us,” they predictably answered.

Jesus met their deeper hunger by revealing Himself to be the Bread of Life (vv. 35–40). He is the Messiah and source of life, not in a temporal sense but for eternity. All who believe in Him will be accepted and one day resurrected. This is possible because Jesus perfectly obeyed the will of the Father and His plan of redemption. Best of all, He promised that no one who trusted Him for salvation would be lost (v. 39), a promise or doctrine we often call “assurance of salvation” or “perseverance of the saints.”

### **Apply the Word**

Ready for another object lesson? Try baking a loaf of bread (maybe you have a bread machine in the back of a closet). Or, purchase a loaf for your neighbor. Ask God for a natural opening to explain that you are studying how Jesus is the Bread of Life and He alone can satisfy our spiritual hunger (v. 35).

### **Pray with Us**

As the true Bread of Life, Christ provides us with both physical and spiritual sustenance in wonderful, sometimes even miraculous, ways. Join us in thanking God today for meeting all our needs, giving us the assurance of His presence in our lives.

## BY Brad Baurain

# Our Daily Bread – 12/13/19

# Asking God

 **Read: Psalm 6:4–9**

4Turn, Lord, and deliver me;  
    save me because of your unfailing love.  
5Among the dead no one proclaims your name.  
    Who praises you from the grave?

6I am worn out from my groaning.

All night long I flood my bed with weeping  
    and drench my couch with tears.  
7My eyes grow weak with sorrow;  
    they fail because of all my foes.

8Away from me, all you who do evil,  
    for the Lord has heard my weeping.  
9The Lord has heard my cry for mercy;  
    the Lord accepts my prayer.

The Lord has heard my cry for mercy; the Lord accepts my prayer. Psalm 6:9

When my husband, Dan, was diagnosed with cancer, I couldn’t find the “right” way to ask God to heal him. In my limited view, other people in the world had such serious problems—war, famine, poverty, natural disasters. Then one day, during our morning prayer time, I heard my husband humbly ask, “Dear Lord, please heal my disease.”

It was such a simple but heartfelt plea that it reminded me to stop complicating every prayer request, because God perfectly hears our righteous cries for help. As David simply asked, “Turn, Lord, and deliver me; save me because of your unfailing love” (Psalm 6:4).

That’s what David declared during a time of spiritual confusion and despair. His exact situation isn’t explained in this psalm. His honest pleas, however, show deep desire for godly help and restoration. “I am worn out from my groaning,” he wrote (v. 6).

Yet, David didn’t let his own limits, including sin, stop him from going to God with his need. Thus, even before God answered, David was able to rejoice, “the Lord has heard my weeping. The Lord has heard my cry for mercy; the Lord accepts my prayer” (vv. 8–9).

Despite our own confusion and uncertainty, God hears and accepts the honest pleas of His children. He’s ready to hear us, especially when we need Him most.

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

#### **Reflect & Pray**

What’s stopping you from asking God for His help? What help will you seek from Him today?

Dear God, as you cleanse our hearts, grant us courage to ask for Your divine help, believing that You hear us and will answer.

#### **Insight**

Psalm 6, written by David, is considered one of seven penitential psalms, or psalms of confession of sin (32; 38; 51; 102; 130; 143). As F. B. Meyer in his commentary on Psalms writes, “The earlier verses of this psalm are a wail; but it ends in a song. It is like a day of rain which clears at evening.” David is in “deep anguish” because of his sin and shortcomings and cries out, “How long, Lord, how long?” (Psalm 6:3). He felt God’s displeasure regarding his sin and as a result was in agony—groaning, weeping, sorrowful, sleepless, and perhaps ill. Yet, it seems no sooner was his prayer uttered but he felt God’s mercy and forgiveness: “The Lord has heard my cry” and “accepts my prayer” (v. 9).

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

# God Calling – 12/13/19

# Perpetual Guidance

Fullness of Joy. The Joy of Perpetual Guidance. The Joy of knowing that every detail of your lives is planned by Me, but planned with a wealth of tenderness and Love.

Wait for Guidance in every step. Wait to be shown My way. The thought of this loving leading should give you great Joy. All the responsibility of Life taken off your shoulders. All its business worry taken off your shoulders. It is indeed a Joy for you to feel so free and yet so planned for.

Oh! the wonder of this a God-guided life. To think anything impossible in such circumstances is to say it cannot be done by Me. To say that is surely a denial of Me.

"That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son." 1 John 1:3

# My Utmost for His Highest – 12/14/19

# The Great Life



Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled… —[John 14:27](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=John+14%3A27)

Whenever we experience something difficult in our personal life, we are tempted to blame God. But we are the ones in the wrong, not God. Blaming God is evidence that we are refusing to let go of some disobedience somewhere in our lives. But as soon as we let go, everything becomes as clear as daylight to us. As long as we try to serve two masters, ourselves and God, there will be difficulties combined with doubt and confusion. Our attitude must be one of complete reliance on God. Once we get to that point, there is nothing easier than living the life of a saint. We encounter difficulties when we try to usurp the authority of the Holy Spirit for our own purposes.

God’s mark of approval, whenever you obey Him, is peace. He sends an immeasurable, deep peace; not a natural peace, “as the world gives,” but the peace of Jesus. Whenever peace does not come, wait until it does, or seek to find out why it is not coming. If you are acting on your own impulse, or out of a sense of the heroic, to be seen by others, the peace of Jesus will not exhibit itself. This shows no unity with God or confidence in Him. The spirit of simplicity, clarity, and unity is born through the Holy Spirit, not through your decisions. God counters our self-willed decisions with an appeal for simplicity and unity.

My questions arise whenever I cease to obey. When I do obey God, problems come, not between me and God, but as a means to keep my mind examining with amazement the revealed truth of God. But any problem that comes between God and myself is the result of disobedience. Any problem that comes while I obey God (and there will be many), increases my overjoyed delight, because I know that my Father knows and cares, and I can watch and anticipate how He will unravel my problems.

**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 – 12/14/19

Make his praise glorious.—[PSA. 66:2.](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.66.html" \l "Ps.66.2)

This people have I formed for myself; they shall shew forth my praise.—I will cleanse them from all their iniquity, whereby they have sinned against me; and I will pardon all their iniquities, whereby they have sinned, and whereby they have transgressed against me. And it shall be to me a name of joy, a praise and an honour before all the nations of the earth.—By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name.

I will praise thee, O Lord my God, with all my heart: and I will glorify thy name for evermore. For great is thy mercy toward me: and thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest hell.—Who is like unto thee, O Lord, . . . glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?—I will praise the name of God with a song, and will magnify him with thanksgiving.—They sing the song of Moses the servant of God and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty.

[Isa. 43:21](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Isa.43.html" \l "Isa.43.21). -[Jer. 33:8,9](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Jer.33.html" \l "Jer.33.8). -[Heb. 13:15](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Heb.13.html" \l "Heb.13.15).[Psa. 86:12,13](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.86.html" \l "Ps.86.12). -[Exo. 15:11](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Exod.15.html" \l "Exod.15.11). -[Psa. 69:30](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.69.html" \l "Ps.69.30). -[Rev. 15:3](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Rev.15.html" \l "Rev.15.3).

“They go from strength to strength.” [Psalm 84:7](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.84.html" \l "Ps.84.7)

They go from strength to strength. There are various renderings of these words, but all of them contain the idea of progress.

Our own good translation of the authorized version is enough for us this morning. “They go from strength to strength.” That is, they grow stronger and stronger. Usually, if we are walking, we go from strength to weakness; we start fresh and in good order for our journey, but by-and-by the road is rough, and the sun is hot, we sit down by the wayside, and then again painfully pursue our weary way. But the Christian pilgrim having obtained fresh supplies of grace, is as vigorous after years of toilsome travel and struggle as when he first set out. He may not be quite so elate and buoyant, nor perhaps quite so hot and hasty in his zeal as he once was, but he is much stronger in all that constitutes real power, and travels, if more slowly, far more surely. Some gray-haired veterans have been as firm in their grasp of truth, and as zealous in diffusing it, as they were in their younger days; but, alas, it must be confessed it is often otherwise, for the love of many waxes cold and iniquity abounds, but this is their own sin and not the fault of the promise which still holds good: “The youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall, but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, and they shall walk and not faint.” Fretful spirits sit down and trouble themselves about the future. “Alas!” say they, “we go from affliction to affliction.” Very true, O thou of little faith, but then thou goest from strength to strength also. Thou shalt never find a bundle of affliction which has not bound up in the midst of it sufficient grace. God will give the strength of ripe manhood with the burden allotted to full-grown shoulders.

# Word Live – 12/14/19

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

# Scripture Union – 12/14/19

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# Today in the Word – 12/14/19

# The Living Stone

**Read:** [**1 Peter 2:4–10**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Peter+2%3a4%e2%80%9310)

### **The Living Stone and a Chosen People**

4As you come to him, the living Stone—rejected by humans but chosen by God and precious to him— 5you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Peter+2%3a4%e2%80%9310#fen-NIV-30405a)] to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. 6For in Scripture it says:

“See, I lay a stone in Zion,  
    a chosen and precious cornerstone,  
and the one who trusts in him  
    will never be put to shame.”[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Peter+2%3a4%e2%80%9310#fen-NIV-30406b)]

7Now to you who believe, this stone is precious. But to those who do not believe,

“The stone the builders rejected  
    has become the cornerstone,”[[c](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Peter+2%3a4%e2%80%9310#fen-NIV-30407c)]

8and,

“A stone that causes people to stumble  
    and a rock that makes them fall.”[[d](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Peter+2%3a4%e2%80%9310#fen-NIV-30408d)]

They stumble because they disobey the message—which is also what they were destined for.

9But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. 10Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

#### **Footnotes:**

1. [1 Peter 2:5](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Peter+2%3a4%e2%80%9310#en-NIV-30405) Or into a temple of the Spirit
2. [1 Peter 2:6](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Peter+2%3a4%e2%80%9310#en-NIV-30406) Isaiah 28:16
3. [1 Peter 2:7](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Peter+2%3a4%e2%80%9310#en-NIV-30407) Psalm 118:22
4. [1 Peter 2:8](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Peter+2%3a4%e2%80%9310#en-NIV-30408) Isaiah 8:14

Pondering today’s reading, musician Michael Card wrote the song “Living Stones”:

The living Stone—rejected by humans but chosen by God and precious to him. 1 Peter 2:4

“See, in Zion He is known  
As a chosen precious cornerstone  
And the ones who come to trust in Him  
Will never know the shame  
That He bore on that cross when it seems  
That all was lost.  
He is the Stone that makes men stumble  
The Rock that makes them fall.  
Living stones, living stones  
We are holy, living stones  
Built upon the firm foundation that is Jesus.”

What does it mean for Christ to be a Living Stone (v. 4) or a “chosen and precious cornerstone” (v. 6)? In today’s reading, Peter quoted several Old Testament references to show that Jesus was chosen by God but rejected by humans. Christ was the key to God’s plan of redemption. Those who do not believe in Him will trip over Him—their lack of faith will be their stumbling block (vv. 7–8). Those who do believe in Him, on the other hand, will receive God’s mercy (vv. 5, 9–10).

Peter quoted from a Messianic psalm: “The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone” (v. 7; Ps. 118:22). He had previously quoted this same verse before the Sanhedrin (Acts 4:11). Jesus Himself had also quoted this verse as part of the parable of the tenants, indicating that the Jewish leaders had rejected God’s Chosen One. He further said people who failed to accept Him would be “broken to pieces” and “crushed” (Luke 20:17–19). As God’s “precious cornerstone for a sure foundation” (Isa. 28:16), Jesus succeeded despite opposition in His mission of salvation. We, too, are “living stones” who “are being built into a spiritual house” or God’s family (v. 5; Eph. 2:19–22).

### **Apply the Word**

You are God’s special possession, and Peter urges you to “declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light” (v. 9). How will you praise Him today? Will you explain the gospel to a friend? Will you share a Bible verse on social media? Whatever you choose to do, give thanks for the gift of salvation!

### **Pray with Us**

We encourage you to praise Jesus today as the Messiah and the Cornerstone, as quoted by the apostle Peter from Psalm 118 in today’s reading. Declare His praise with confidence and gratitude for His gift of salvation.

## BY Brad Baurain

# Our Daily Bread – 12/14/19

# Jesus and the Bigger Story



**Ruth 4:13–17**

### **Naomi Gains a Son**

13So Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife. When he made love to her, the Lord enabled her to conceive, and she gave birth to a son. 14The women said to Naomi: “Praise be to the Lord, who this day has not left you without a guardian-redeemer. May he become famous throughout Israel! 15He will renew your life and sustain you in your old age. For your daughter-in-law, who loves you and who is better to you than seven sons, has given him birth.”

16Then Naomi took the child in her arms and cared for him. 17The women living there said, “Naomi has a son!” And they named him Obed. He was the father of Jesse, the father of David.

We are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. Ephesians 2:10

A generous friend offered to babysit our kids so my wife and I could go on a date. “You should go somewhere fancy!” she gushed. Being practical people, we decided to go grocery shopping instead. When we returned, grocery bags in arms, our friend asked why we hadn’t done anything special. We told her that what makes a date special isn’t so much what you do, but who you’re with.

One of the few books of the Bible that doesn’t record God directly saying or doing anything, the book of Ruth could seem to be pretty ordinary. So some read it as a touching but largely human drama of two people coming together in a relationship.

But in truth, something extraordinary is taking place. In the final chapter of Ruth, we read that Ruth and Boaz’s union results in a son named Obed, the grandfather of David (4:17). And as we read in Matthew 1:1, it’s from David’s family that Jesus was born. It’s Jesus who unveils the ordinary story of Ruth and Boaz and reveals the extraordinary story of God’s amazing plans and purposes at work.

So often we see our own lives in the same way: as ordinary and serving no special purpose. But when we view our lives through Christ, He gives eternal significance to even the most ordinary situations and relationships.

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

#### **Reflect & Pray**

When has God turned an ordinary situation into one of extraordinary significance for you? How has He made all moments in life something sacred and extraordinary?

Jesus, You give eternal purpose and meaning to the most ordinary of circumstances. Help me to see all my relationships and circumstances through You!

#### **Insight**

It’s helpful to contrast the long view of the book of Ruth with its immediate context. In the long view, Ruth’s child would be the grandfather of David—Israel’s great king. This connection also prepares the way for the birth of Jesus, who would come from David’s kingly line (see Matthew 1:1–16). The result of Ruth and Boaz’s union prepared for the rescue of the world; in a more immediate sense, the birth of Obed also provided a kind of rescue for Naomi. Her life decimated by loss and grief, she’s delivered from despair and heartache by the gift of this new life (Ruth 4:16–17). Her joy restored, Naomi was once again able to live up to her name, which means “pleasant.”

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

# God Calling – 12/14/19

# Storms

Our loving Lord, we thank Thee for Thy marvelous keeping power.

There is no miracle so wonderful as the miracle of a soul being kept by My Power. Forces of evil batter and storm, but are powerless. Tempests rage unavailingly.

It is like a cool garden with sweet flowers and bees and butterflies and trees and playing fountains set in the midst of a mighty roaring city. Try to see your lives as that.

Not only as calm and unmoved, but as breathing fragrance, expressing beauty. Expect storms. Know this -- you cannot be united in your great friendship and bond to do My work, and in your great Love for Me, and not excite the envy, hatred, and malice of all whom you meet who are not on My side.

Where does the enemy attack? The fortress, the stronghold, not the desert waste.

"Except the Lord to build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain." Psalm 127:1

# My Utmost for His Highest – 12/15/19

# “Approved to God”



Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. —[2 Timothy 2:15](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=2+Timothy+2%3A15)

If you cannot express yourself well on each of your beliefs, work and study until you can. If you don’t, other people may miss out on the blessings that come from knowing the truth. Strive to re-express a truth of God to yourself clearly and understandably, and God will use that same explanation when you share it with someone else. But you must be willing to go through God’s winepress where the grapes are crushed. You must struggle, experiment, and rehearse your words to express God’s truth clearly. Then the time will come when that very expression will become God’s wine of strength to someone else. But if you are not diligent and say, “I’m not going to study and struggle to express this truth in my own words; I’ll just borrow my words from someone else,” then the words will be of no value to you or to others. Try to state to yourself what you believe to be the absolute truth of God, and you will be allowing God the opportunity to pass it on through you to someone else.

Always make it a practice to stir your own mind thoroughly to think through what you have easily believed. Your position is not really yours until you make it yours through suffering and study. The author or speaker from whom you learn the most is not the one who teaches you something you didn’t know before, but the one who helps you take a truth with which you have quietly struggled, give it expression, and speak it clearly and boldly.

**Wisdom From Oswald Chambers**

A fanatic is one who entrenches himself in invincible ignorance. Baffled to Fight Better, 59 R

# CCEL – 12/15/19

Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.—[GAL. 6:2.](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Gal.6.html" \l "Gal.6.2)

Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who . . . took upon him the form of a servant.—Even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.—He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.

When Jesus . . . saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled.—Jesus wept.—Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.

Be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous: not rendering evil for evil or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing.

[Phi. 2:4,5](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Phil.2.html" \l "Phil.2.4),[7](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Phil.2.html" \l "Phil.2.7). -[Mark 10:45](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Mark.10.html" \l "Mark.10.45). -[II Cor. 5:15](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iiCor.5.html" \l "iiCor.5.15).[John 11:33](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.John.11.html" \l "John.11.33). -[John 11:35](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.John.11.html" \l "John.11.35). -[Rom. 12:15](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Rom.12.html" \l "Rom.12.15).[I Pet. 3:8,9](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iPet.3.html" \l "iPet.3.8).

“Orpah kissed her mother in law; but Ruth clave unto her.” [Ruth 1:14](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ruth.1.html" \l "Ruth.1.14)

Both of them had an affection for Naomi, and therefore set out with her upon her return to the land of Judah. But the hour of test came; Naomi most unselfishly set before each of them the trials which awaited them, and bade them if they cared for ease and comfort to return to their Moabitish friends. At first both of them declared that they would cast in their lot with the Lord’s people; but upon still further consideration Orpah with much grief and a respectful kiss left her mother in law, and her people, and her God, and went back to her idolatrous friends, while Ruth with all her heart gave herself up to the God of her mother in law. It is one thing to love the ways of the Lord when all is fair, and quite another to cleave to them under all discouragements and difficulties. The kiss of outward profession is very cheap and easy, but the practical cleaving to the Lord, which must show itself in holy decision for truth and holiness, is not so small a matter. How stands the case with us, is our heart fixed upon Jesus, is the sacrifice bound with cords to the horns of the altar? Have we counted the cost, and are we solemnly ready to suffer all worldly loss for the Master’s sake? The after gain will be an abundant recompense, for Egypt’s treasures are not to be compared with the glory to be revealed. Orpah is heard of no more; in glorious ease and idolatrous pleasure her life melts into the gloom of death; but Ruth lives in history and in heaven, for grace has placed her in the noble line whence sprung the King of kings. Blessed among women shall those be who for Christ’s sake can renounce all; but forgotten and worse than forgotten shall those be who in the hour of temptation do violence to conscience and turn back unto the world. O that this morning we may not be content with the form of devotion, which may be no better than Orpah’s kiss, but may the Holy Spirit work in us a cleaving of our whole heart to our Lord Jesus.

# Word Live – 12/15/19

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

# Scripture Union – 12/15/19

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

# Today in the Word – 12/15/19

# The Way, the Truth, and the Life

**Read:** [**John 14:1–10**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+14%3a1%e2%80%9310)

### **Jesus Comforts His Disciples**

14 “Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+14%3a1%e2%80%9310#fen-NIV-26670a)]; believe also in me. 2My Father’s house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? 3And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. 4You know the way to the place where I am going.”

### **Jesus the Way to the Father**

5Thomas said to him, “Lord, we don’t know where you are going, so how can we know the way?”

6Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. 7If you really know me, you will know[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+14%3a1%e2%80%9310#fen-NIV-26676b)] my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him.”

8Philip said, “Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us.”

9Jesus answered: “Don’t you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? 10Don’t you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you I do not speak on my own authority. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work.

#### **Footnotes:**

1. [John 14:1](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+14%3a1%e2%80%9310#en-NIV-26670) Or Believe in God
2. [John 14:7](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+14%3a1%e2%80%9310#en-NIV-26676) Some manuscripts If you really knew me, you would know

Musicians Stuart Townend and Keith Getty wrote the powerful worship song, “In Christ Alone.” The final verse proclaims:

No one comes to the Father except through me. John 14:6

“No guilt in life, no fear in death  
This is the power of Christ in me.  
From life’s first cry to final breath,  
Jesus commands my destiny.  
No power of hell, no scheme of man,  
Can ever pluck me from his hand.  
Till he returns or calls me home,  
Here in the power of Christ I’ll stand.”

There is no other way to the Father than through Christ alone! Jesus made this very clear in today’s reading: “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (v. 6). The title Way draws on the common biblical metaphor of a path. Jesus also said: “Small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life” (Matt. 7:14). Early Christianity was actually called “the Way” (Acts 9:2). And for us, there is no way to God other than Christ, even while our culture frowns on such exclusive claims.

There is also no other Truth, certainly not “personal truth” or “truth for me” that has become pervasive in our world. John uses the Greek word for “truth” 25 times in his Gospel, always connecting it to Jesus. Sometimes we think Satan has lesser or weaker truths, but the fact is that he has no truth at all—he is the “father of lies” (John 8:44).

Finally, as we’ve seen already this month, there is no other source of Life. In our culture, Jesus’ assertion sounds alarming, but He actually communicated this “I am” statement to offer comfort (v. 1). That’s one reason He put things in relational terms. “The way and the truth and the life” are all about knowing Jesus (vv. 7–10).

### **Apply the Word**

Our culture values sincerity and thinks there are many different paths to God. Are you ready to give a clear answer about the hope in you to others? (1 Peter 3:15). Two books that might help you express your belief in Jesus as the true Way are Jesus Among Other Gods by Ravi Zacharias and Is Jesus the Only Way? by Philip Graham Ryken.

### **Pray with Us**

May our worship at today’s church services be filled with gospel truth because it is a witness to the power and beauty of our union with Christ. Praise Him today as the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

## BY Brad Baurain

# Our Daily Bread – 12/15/19

# Water into Hope

**** **Read: John 4:4–14**

4Now he had to go through Samaria. 5So he came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph. 6Jacob’s well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about noon.

7When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, “Will you give me a drink?” 8(His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.)

9The Samaritan woman said to him, “You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?” (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+4%3A4%E2%80%9314&version=NIV#fen-NIV-26166a)])

10Jesus answered her, “If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water.”

11“Sir,” the woman said, “you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water? 12Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his livestock?”

13Jesus answered, “Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, 14but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”

#### **Footnotes:**

1. [John 4:9](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+4%3A4%E2%80%9314&version=NIV#en-NIV-26166) Or do not use dishes Samaritans have used

Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. John 7:37

Tom and Mark’s ministry refreshes lives. This is clear in the video they share of a group of fully clad children laughing and dancing in the refreshing water of an open shower—their first ever. The men work with indigenous churches to install water filtration systems on wells in Haiti, easing and lengthening lives as diseases connected to contaminated water are prevented. Access to clean, fresh water gives the people hope for their future.

Jesus referred to “living water” in John 4 to capture a similar idea of a continual source of refreshment. Tired and thirsty, Jesus had asked a Samaritan woman for a drink (vv. 4–8). This request led to a conversation in which Jesus offered the woman “living water” (vv. 9–15)—water that would become a source of life and hope within them, like “a spring of water welling up to eternal life” (v. 14).

We discover what this living water is later in John, when Jesus said, “Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink,” declaring that whoever believed in Him would have “rivers of living water [flowing] from within them.” John explains, “By this he meant the Spirit” (7:37–39).

Through the Spirit, believers are united to Christ and have access to the boundless power, hope, and joy found in God. Like living water, the Spirit lives inside believers, refreshing and renewing us.

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

#### **Reflect & Pray**

How has Jesus satisfied your thirst through His Spirit? How will you share what Jesus has done for you?

Dear God, thank You for leaving us Your Spirit. Work in us so that our lives point others to You.

#### **Insight**

Ever since the days of the prophets, Israel had looked forward to a messianic age when renewing waters of spiritual life would flow from the temple of Jerusalem (Ezekiel 47:1–12; Joel 3:18; Zechariah 14:6–9). In anticipation of that day, at the annual Feast of Tabernacles the high priest of Israel drew water from the pool of Siloam outside of Jerusalem and led a procession into the city where he poured out the water at the temple altar. Jesus claimed not only to be the source of living water but also the temple of the living God (John 2:18–21; 4:10-14).

By: [**Mart DeHaan**](https://odb.org/author/martdehaan-2/)

# God Calling – 12/15/19

# By My Spirit

Man is apt to think that once in time only was My Miracle-working Power in action.  That is not so.  Wherever man trusts wholly in Me, and leaves to Me the choosing of the very day and hour, then there is My miracle-working Power as manifest, as marvelously manifest today, as ever it was when I was on earth, as ever it was to set My Apostles free, or to work miracles of wonder and healing through them.

Trust in Me. Have a boundless faith in Me, and you will see, and seeing, will give Me all the glory.  Remember, and say often to yourselves, "not by might, nor by Power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord."

Dwell much in thought upon all I accomplished on earth, and then say to yourselves, "He, our Lord, our Friend, could accomplish this now in our lives."

Apply these miracles to your present day need, and know that your Help and Salvation are sure.

And they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Mark 16:20

# My Utmost for His Highest – 12/16/19

# Wrestling Before God



Take up the whole armor of God…praying always… —[Ephesians 6:13,18](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=Ephesians+6%3A13%2C18)

You must learn to wrestle against the things that hinder your communication with God, and wrestle in prayer for other people; but to wrestle with God in prayer is unscriptural. If you ever do wrestle with God, you will be crippled for the rest of your life. If you grab hold of God and wrestle with Him, as Jacob did, simply because He is working in a way that doesn’t meet with your approval, you force Him to put you out of joint (see [Genesis 32:24-25](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis+32:24-25)). Don’t become a cripple by wrestling with the ways of God, but be someone who wrestles before God with the things of this world, because “we are more than conquerors through Him…” ([Romans 8:37](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+8:37)). Wrestling before God makes an impact in His kingdom. If you ask me to pray for you, and I am not complete in Christ, my prayer accomplishes nothing. But if I am complete in Christ, my prayer brings victory all the time. Prayer is effective only when there is completeness— “take up the whole armor of God….”

Always make a distinction between God’s perfect will and His permissive will, which He uses to accomplish His divine purpose for our lives. God’s perfect will is unchangeable. It is with His permissive will, or the various things that He allows into our lives, that we must wrestle before Him. It is our reaction to these things allowed by His permissive will that enables us to come to the point of seeing His perfect will for us. “We know that all things work together for good to those who love God…” ([Romans 8:28](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+8:28))— to those who remain true to God’s perfect will— His calling in Christ Jesus. God’s permissive will is the testing He uses to reveal His true sons and daughters. We should not be spineless and automatically say, “Yes, it is the Lord’s will.” We don’t have to fight or wrestle with God, but we must wrestle before God with things. Beware of lazily giving up. Instead, put up a glorious fight and you will find yourself empowered with His strength.

**Wisdom From Oswald Chambers**

The vital relationship which the Christian has to the Bible is not that he worships the letter, but that the Holy Spirit makes the words of the Bible spirit and life to him.  The Psychology of Redemption, 1066 L

# CCEL – 12/16/19

Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.—[JOHN 13:1.](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.John.13.html" \l "John.13.1)

I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine. And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them. I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love.—Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.—A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.

He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.—Christ . . . loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word.

[John 17:9,10](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.John.17.html" \l "John.17.9),[15,16](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.John.17.html" \l "John.17.15).[John 15:9](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.John.15.html" \l "John.15.9). -[John 15:13,14](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.John.15.html" \l "John.15.13). -[John 13:34](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.John.13.html" \l "John.13.34).[Phi. 1:6](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Phil.1.html" \l "Phil.1.6). -[Eph. 5:25,26](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Eph.5.html" \l "Eph.5.25).

“Come unto me.” [Matthew 11:28](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Matt.11.html" \l "Matt.11.28)

The cry of the Christian religion is the gentle word, “Come.” The Jewish law harshly said, “Go, take heed unto thy steps as to the path in which thou shalt walk. Break the commandments, and thou shalt perish; keep them, and thou shalt live.” The law was a dispensation of terror, which drove men before it as with a scourge; the gospel draws with bands of love. Jesus is the good Shepherd going before his sheep, bidding them follow him, and ever leading them onwards with the sweet word, “Come.” The law repels, the gospel attracts. The law shows the distance which there is between God and man; the gospel bridges that awful chasm, and brings the sinner across it.

From the first moment of your spiritual life until you are ushered into glory, the language of Christ to you will be, “Come, come unto me.” As a mother puts out her finger to her little child and woos it to walk by saying, “Come,” even so does Jesus. He will always be ahead of you, bidding you follow him as the soldier follows his captain. He will always go before you to pave your way, and clear your path, and you shall hear his animating voice calling you after him all through life; while in the solemn hour of death, his sweet words with which he shall usher you into the heavenly world shall be—“Come, ye blessed of my Father.”

Nay, further, this is not only Christ’s cry to you, but, if you be a believer, this is your cry to Christ—“Come! come!” You will be longing for his second advent; you will be saying, “Come quickly, even so come Lord Jesus.” You will be panting for nearer and closer communion with him. As his voice to you is “Come,” your response to him will be, “Come, Lord, and abide with me. Come, and occupy alone the throne of my heart; reign there without a rival, and consecrate me entirely to thy service.”

# Word Live – 12/16/19

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

# Scripture Union – 12/16/19

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

# Today in the Word – 12/16/19

# Master Teacher

**Read:** [**Matthew 13:10–43**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+13%3a10%e2%80%9343)

10The disciples came to him and asked, “Why do you speak to the people in parables?”

11He replied, “Because the knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them. 12Whoever has will be given more, and they will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them. 13This is why I speak to them in parables:

“Though seeing, they do not see;  
    though hearing, they do not hear or understand.

14In them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah:

“‘You will be ever hearing but never understanding;  
    you will be ever seeing but never perceiving.  
15For this people’s heart has become calloused;  
    they hardly hear with their ears,  
    and they have closed their eyes.  
Otherwise they might see with their eyes,  
    hear with their ears,  
    understand with their hearts  
and turn, and I would heal them.’[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+13%3a10%e2%80%9343#fen-NIV-23555a)]

16But blessed are your eyes because they see, and your ears because they hear. 17For truly I tell you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it.

18“Listen then to what the parable of the sower means: 19When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in their heart. This is the seed sown along the path. 20The seed falling on rocky ground refers to someone who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. 21But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away. 22The seed falling among the thorns refers to someone who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, making it unfruitful. 23But the seed falling on good soil refers to someone who hears the word and understands it. This is the one who produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown.”

### **The Parable of the Weeds**

24Jesus told them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. 25But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. 26When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared.

27“The owner’s servants came to him and said, ‘Sir, didn’t you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?’

28“‘An enemy did this,’ he replied.

“The servants asked him, ‘Do you want us to go and pull them up?’

29“‘No,’ he answered, ‘because while you are pulling the weeds, you may uproot the wheat with them. 30Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn.’”

### **The Parables of the Mustard Seed and the Yeast**

31He told them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. 32Though it is the smallest of all seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds come and perch in its branches.”

33He told them still another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into about sixty pounds[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+13%3a10%e2%80%9343#fen-NIV-23573b)] of flour until it worked all through the dough.”

34Jesus spoke all these things to the crowd in parables; he did not say anything to them without using a parable. 35So was fulfilled what was spoken through the prophet:

“I will open my mouth in parables,  
    I will utter things hidden since the creation of the world.”[[c](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+13%3a10%e2%80%9343#fen-NIV-23575c)]

### **The Parable of the Weeds Explained**

36Then he left the crowd and went into the house. His disciples came to him and said, “Explain to us the parable of the weeds in the field.”

37He answered, “The one who sowed the good seed is the Son of Man. 38The field is the world, and the good seed stands for the people of the kingdom. The weeds are the people of the evil one, 39and the enemy who sows them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels.

40“As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age. 41The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. 42They will throw them into the blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. 43Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Whoever has ears, let them hear.

#### **Footnotes:**

1. [Matthew 13:15](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+13%3a10%e2%80%9343#en-NIV-23555) Isaiah 6:9,10 (see Septuagint)
2. [Matthew 13:33](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+13%3a10%e2%80%9343#en-NIV-23573) Or about 27 kilograms
3. [Matthew 13:35](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+13%3a10%e2%80%9343#en-NIV-23575) Psalm 78:2

Earlier this year, Dr. Rosalie de Rosset completed 50 years of service at Moody Bible Institute. As a professor of Communications, she specializes in teaching literature and mentoring. “I love my students,” she says. “I love talking to them about their lives, their struggles, and the way Jesus meets them . . . God is good. His grace is profound, and my students have made teaching a marvel of an experience.” Dr. de Rosset does all she does as an ardent follower of the Master Teacher, Jesus Christ.

You call me “Teacher” and “Lord,” and rightly so, for that is what I am. John 13:13

Today’s reading shows the heart of Christ who often taught with parables, using pictures and stories from everyday life. He wanted the meaning to be clear to those listening in faith (Matt. 13:10–17). He was perfectly in tune to the hearts and minds of His audience, and He always taught following the larger “lesson plan” of His Father.

The second story, later revealed to be an allegory, is built around a problem (vv. 24–28): A good man planted wheat, then his enemy came and planted weeds in the same field. This only became known when both sprouted. The solution was to sort it out at the harvest (vv. 29–30). Why wait? To make sure the wheat wasn’t harmed.

At the disciples’ request, Jesus explained the meaning (vv. 36–41). The good man is the Son of Man (Himself), while the enemy is the devil. The field is the world. The wheat represents people of the kingdom of God, that is, believers in the Son. The weeds represent everyone else. The harvesters are angels and the harvest is the final judgment. The core lesson here focuses on the two contrasting destinies: Sinners will be punished, while “the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father” (vv. 42–43).

### **Apply the Word**

Did you have a teacher who was also a Christian role model? Why not write a note to that teacher today (if the person is still alive)? Let them know how much you appreciated their godly example. And, all of us can join in praying for teachers, that they will find ways to show Christ to their students.

### **Pray with Us**

Reading about Jesus as Teacher in today’s devotional, brings to mind Moody’s faculty—undergraduate, graduate, and those leading online courses. Will you pray for our professors to follow their Master Teacher wholeheartedly?

## BY Brad Baurain

# Our Daily Bread – 12/16/19

# What You’re Worth



**Read: Zechariah 11:4–13**

### **Two Shepherds**

4This is what the Lord my God says: “Shepherd the flock marked for slaughter. 5Their buyers slaughter them and go unpunished. Those who sell them say, ‘Praise the Lord, I am rich!’ Their own shepherds do not spare them. 6For I will no longer have pity on the people of the land,” declares the Lord. “I will give everyone into the hands of their neighbors and their king. They will devastate the land, and I will not rescue anyone from their hands.”

7So I shepherded the flock marked for slaughter, particularly the oppressed of the flock. Then I took two staffs and called one Favor and the other Union, and I shepherded the flock. 8In one month I got rid of the three shepherds.

The flock detested me, and I grew weary of them 9and said, “I will not be your shepherd. Let the dying die, and the perishing perish. Let those who are left eat one another’s flesh.”

10Then I took my staff called Favor and broke it, revoking the covenant I had made with all the nations. 11It was revoked on that day, and so the oppressed of the flock who were watching me knew it was the word of the Lord.

12I told them, “If you think it best, give me my pay; but if not, keep it.” So they paid me thirty pieces of silver.

13And the Lord said to me, “Throw it to the potter”—the handsome price at which they valued me! So I took the thirty pieces of silver and threw them to the potter at the house of the Lord.

The Lord said to me, “Throw it to the potter!” Zechariah 11:13

Now an accomplished writer, Caitlin describes the depression she battled after fighting off an assault. The emotional violence cut deeper than her physical struggle, for she felt it proved “how undesirable I was. I was not the kind of girl you wanted to get to know.” She felt unworthy of love, the kind of person others use and toss aside.

God understands. He lovingly shepherded Israel, but when He asked them what He was worth, “they paid me thirty pieces of silver” (Zechariah 11:12). This was the price of a slave; what masters must be reimbursed should their slave be accidentally killed (Exodus 21:32). God was insulted to be offered the lowest possible value—look at “the handsome price at which they valued me!” He said sarcastically (Zechariah 11:13). And He had Zechariah throw the money away.

Jesus understands. He wasn’t merely betrayed by His friend; He was betrayed with contempt. The Jewish leaders despised Christ, so they offered Judas thirty pieces of silver—the lowest price you could put on a person—and he took it (Matthew 26:14–15; 27:9). Judas thought so little of Jesus he sold Him for nearly nothing.

If people undervalued Jesus, don’t be surprised when they undervalue you. Your value isn’t what others say. It’s not even what you say. It’s entirely and only what God says. He thinks you are worth dying for.

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

#### **Reflect & Pray**

How would you describe your value? Who can you help to grasp true value?

I’m grateful that I’m valued by You, God!

#### **Insight**

Zechariah is a common name in the Old Testament, with as many as thirty different people bearing that name. It was particularly appropriate for the prophet to carry this name, however, for Zechariah means “Yahweh remembers.” As one of the former exiles returning from Babylon, Zechariah’s role was to remind the people of Israel to remember the God who’d never forgotten them through all their years of captivity.

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

# God Calling – 12/16/19

# Union Is Power

For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.  Matthew 18:20

Claim that promise always.  Know it true that when two of My lovers meet I am the Third.  Never limit that promise.

When you two are together in My Name, united by one bond in My Spirit, I am there.  Not only when you meet to greet Me, and to hear My Voice.

Think what this means in Power.  It is again the lesson of the Power that follows two united to serve Me.

 Let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them.  Exodus 25:8