# My Utmost for His Highest – 12/17/19

# Redemption— Creating the Need it Satisfies



The natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him… —[1 Corinthians 2:14](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=1+Corinthians+2%3A14)

The gospel of God creates the sense of need for the gospel. Is the gospel hidden to those who are servants already? No, Paul said, “But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe…” ([2 Corinthians 4:3-4](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Corinthians+4:3-4)). The majority of people think of themselves as being completely moral, and have no sense of need for the gospel. It is God who creates this sense of need in a human being, but that person remains totally unaware of his need until God makes Himself evident. Jesus said, “Ask, and it will be given to you…” ([Matthew 7:7](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+7:7)). But God cannot give until a man asks. It is not that He wants to withhold something from us, but that is the plan He has established for the way of redemption. Through our asking, God puts His process in motion, creating something in us that was nonexistent until we asked. The inner reality of redemption is that it creates all the time. And as redemption creates the life of God in us, it also creates the things which belong to that life. The only thing that can possibly satisfy the need is what created the need. This is the meaning of redemption— it creates and it satisfies.

Jesus said, “And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself” ([John 12:32](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+12:32)). When we preach our own experiences, people may be interested, but it awakens no real sense of need. But once Jesus Christ is “lifted up,” the Spirit of God creates an awareness of the need for Him. The creative power of the redemption of God works in the souls of men only through the preaching of the gospel. It is never the sharing of personal experiences that saves people, but the truth of redemption. “The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life” ([John 6:63](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+6:63)).

**Wisdom From Oswald Chambers**

There is no allowance whatever in the New Testament for the man who says he is saved by grace but who does not produce the graceful goods. Jesus Christ by His Redemption can make our actual life in keeping with our religious profession.  
[Studies in the Sermon on the Mount](http://www.dhp.org/Products/Studies-in-the-Sermon-on-the-Mount%e2%80%94Gods-Character-and-the-Believers-Conduct__0098.aspx?affid=RBCHAMB)

# CCEL – 12/17/19

Quicken us, and we will call upon thy name.—[PSA. 80:18.](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.80.html" \l "Ps.80.18)

It is the Spirit that quickeneth.—The Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.—Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance.

I will never forget thy precepts: for with them thou hast quickened me.—The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.—The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.—If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.—This is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us.

No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.

[John 6:63](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.John.6.html" \l "John.6.63). -[Rom. 8:26,27](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Rom.8.html" \l "Rom.8.26). -[Eph. 6:18](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Eph.6.html" \l "Eph.6.18).[Psa. 119:93](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.119.html" \l "Ps.119.93). -[John 6:63](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.John.6.html#John.6.63). -[II Cor. 3:6](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iiCor.3.html" \l "iiCor.3.6). -[John 15:7](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.John.15.html" \l "John.15.7). -[I John 5:14](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iJohn.5.html" \l "iJohn.5.14).[I Cor. 12:3](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iCor.12.html" \l "iCor.12.3).

“I remember thee.” [Jeremiah 2:2](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Jer.2.html" \l "Jer.2.2)

Let us note that Christ delights to think upon his Church, and to look upon her beauty. As the bird returneth often to its nest, and as the wayfarer hastens to his home, so doth the mind continually pursue the object of its choice. We cannot look too often upon that face which we love; we desire always to have our precious things in our sight. It is even so with our Lord Jesus. From all eternity “His delights were with the sons of men;” his thoughts rolled onward to the time when his elect should be born into the world; he viewed them in the mirror of his foreknowledge. “In thy book,” he says, “all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them” ([Ps. 139:16](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.139.html" \l "Ps.139.16)). When the world was set upon its pillars, he was there, and he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel. Many a time before his incarnation, he descended to this lower earth in the similitude of a man; on the plains of Mamre ([Gen. 18](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Gen.18.html)), by the brook of Jabbok ([Gen. 32:24-30](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Gen.32.html" \l "Gen.32.24)), beneath the walls of Jericho ([Jos. 5:13](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Josh.5.html" \l "Josh.5.13)), and in the fiery furnace of Babylon ([Dan. 3:19](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Dan.3.html" \l "Dan.3.19), [25](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Dan.3.html" \l "Dan.3.25)), the Son of Man visited his people. Because his soul delighted in them, he could not rest away from them, for his heart longed after them. Never were they absent from his heart, for he had written their names upon his hands, and graven them upon his side. As the breastplate containing the names of the tribes of Israel was the most brilliant ornament worn by the high priest, so the names of Christ’s elect were his most precious jewels, and glittered on his heart. We may often forget to meditate upon the perfections of our Lord, but he never ceases to remember us. Let us chide ourselves for past forgetfulness, and pray for grace ever to bear him in fondest remembrance. Lord, paint upon the eyeballs of my soul the image of thy Son.

# Word Live – 12/17/19

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# Scripture Union – 12/17/19

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# Today in the Word – 12/17/19

# The Good Shepherd

**Read:** [**John 10:1–18**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+10%3a1%e2%80%9318)

### **The Good Shepherd and His Sheep**

10 “Very truly I tell you Pharisees, anyone who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber. 2The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. 3The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. 4When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice. 5But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger’s voice.” 6Jesus used this figure of speech, but the Pharisees did not understand what he was telling them.

7Therefore Jesus said again, “Very truly I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. 8All who have come before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep have not listened to them. 9I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved.[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+10%3a1%e2%80%9318" \l "fen-NIV-26491a" \o "See footnote a)] They will come in and go out, and find pasture. 10The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

11“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. 12The hired hand is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. 13The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.

14“I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me— 15just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep. 16I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd. 17The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life—only to take it up again. 18No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father.”

#### **Footnotes:**

1. [John 10:9](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+10%3a1%e2%80%9318#en-NIV-26491) Or kept safe

In his book A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23, Phillip Keller describes the peril of a “cast sheep,” that is, a sheep that’s fallen flat on its back and cannot get back up on its own. In this position, it’s an easy target for predators such as buzzards and wolves. And, if not rescued within a short time, it will die. Gas spreads through the digestive system and cuts off the flow of blood. If the weather is hot and sunny, the sheep can die in just a few hours.

I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me. John 10:14

As sheep, we need the Good Shepherd (vv. 11, 14)! As a shepherd, Jesus cares for, watches over, guides, protects, defends, and rescues us. He knows us by name (v. 3). His voice leads us (v. 4).

In Ancient Near Eastern culture, shepherding was a common metaphor for kingship. An ideal king would behave much like a good shepherd, working to create and ensure the well-being of his nation (flock). So when Jesus asserted His authority at the end of this passage, He wasn’t really changing topics (v. 18). He is our King as well as our Shepherd!

Notice that the shepherd is strongly contrasted with the thief and the hired hand. Thieves and robbers wanted to harm the flock (vv. 1–5). These are enemies of God. Hired hands might be better, but they run away when danger comes. They’re not invested like the shepherd (vv. 12–13). These are false shepherds or bad religious leaders.

Christ is an exceptional shepherd. He loved us so much He laid down His life for us (vv. 11, 15, 17). His selfless goal is our salvation—”that they may have life, and have it to the full” (v. 10). As sheep, our best choice is to follow, trust, and stay close to Him.

### **Apply the Word**

Aren’t you thankful Jesus is your Shepherd? The image of God as a shepherd is found throughout Scripture. If you have time, read Psalm 23 today. If you have more time, we suggest reading Ezekiel 34 as well. “I will bind up the injured and strengthen the weak. . . . I will shepherd the flock with justice” (v. 16).

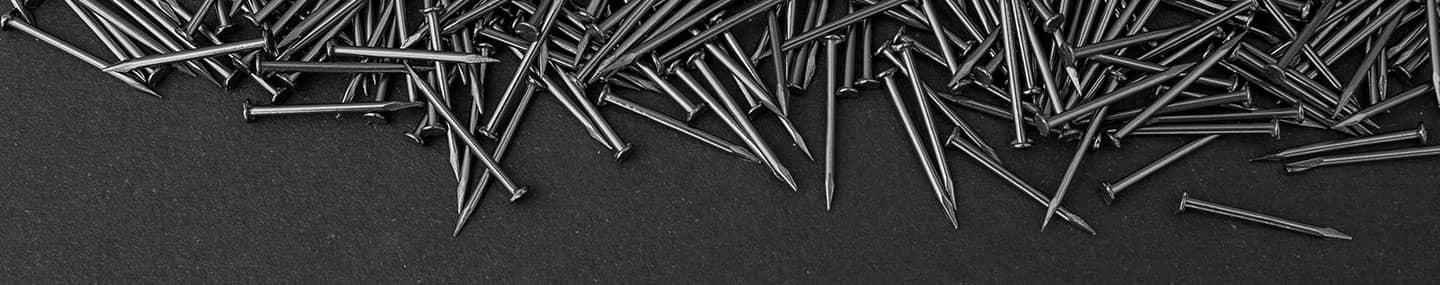
### **Pray with Us**

“The Lord is my shepherd.” Psalm 23 echoes today’s Scripture reading from John 10. Today, we focus our prayers on the powerful images in both passages and thank the Lord for watching over us, even when we walk “through the darkest valley” (Ps. 23:4).

## BY Brad Baurain

# Our Daily Bread – 12/17/19

# Lord of the . . . Nails?

 **Read: Psalm 18:30–36**

It is God who arms me with strength and keeps my way secure. 30As for God, his way is perfect:  
    The Lord’s word is flawless;  
    he shields all who take refuge in him.  
31For who is God besides the Lord?  
    And who is the Rock except our God?  
32It is God who arms me with strength  
    and keeps my way secure.  
33He makes my feet like the feet of a deer;  
    he causes me to stand on the heights.  
34He trains my hands for battle;  
    my arms can bend a bow of bronze.  
35You make your saving help my shield,  
    and your right hand sustains me;  
    your help has made me great.  
36You provide a broad path for my feet,  
    so that my ankles do not give way.Psalm 18:32

I was getting into my car when the glint caught my eye: a nail, embedded in my rear tire’s sidewall. I listened for the telltale whistle of air. Thankfully, the hole was plugged—at least for the moment.

As I drove to a tire store, I wondered: How long has that nail been there? Days? Weeks? How long have I been protected from a threat I didn’t even know existed?

We can sometimes live under the illusion that we’re in control. But that nail reminded me we’re not.

But when life feels out of control and unstable, we have a God whose reliability we can trust. In Psalm 18, David praises God for watching over him (vv. 34–35). David confesses, “It is God who arms me with strength. . . . You provide a broad path for my feet, so that my ankles do not give way” (vv. 32, 36). In this poem of praise, David celebrates God’s sustaining presence (v. 35).

I personally don’t march into combat like David; I even go out of my way not to take unnecessary risks. Still, my life is often chaotic.

But I can rest in the knowledge that, though God doesn’t promise us protection from all of life’s difficulties, He always knows where I am. He knows where I’m going and what I’ll encounter. And He’s the Lord of it all—even the “nails” of our lives.

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

#### **Reflect & Pray**

When has God protected you from something that you didn’t even know about? How did He watch over your way or help you stay clear of that threat?

Father, help us to remember daily that You know every step we take. Help us to trust in Your provision for every potential problem or sudden setback we face today.

#### **Insight**

Because of David’s success and popularity (1 Samuel 17; 18:15–16), the insanely jealous King Saul tried to kill him (18:10–11). On the run for his life, David sought refuge in the mountains and caves (22:1; 23:26; 24:2). But David was mindful that it was God who delivered, protected, and kept him safe. Out of his experience as a fugitive, David wrote Psalm 18 (which also appears in 2 Samuel 22) as a thanksgiving song, therefore the long superscription: “Of David the servant of the Lord. He sang to the Lord the words of this song when the Lord delivered him from the hand of all his enemies and from the hand of Saul.” David used seven metaphors in this psalm to describe God: rock, fortress, deliverer, refuge, shield, horn of salvation, and stronghold (v. 2)—all pictures of protection, security, deliverance, and safety.

# God Calling – 12/17/19

# Quiet Lives

"Well done, thou good and faithful servant ... enter into the joy of thy Lord."  Matthew 25:21

These words are whispered in the ears of many whom the world would pass by unrecognizing.  Not to the great, and the world-famed, are these words said so often, but to the quiet followers who serve Me unobtrusively, yet faithfully, who bear their cross bravely, with a smiling face to the world.  Thank Me for the quiet lives.

These words speak not only of the passing into that fuller Spirit Life.  Duty faithfully done for Me does mean entrance into a Life of Joy - My Joy, the Joy of your Lord.  The world may never see it, the humble, patient, quiet service, but I see it, and My reward is not earth's fame, earth's wealth, earth's pleasures, but the Joy Divine.

Whether here, or there, in the earth-world, or in the spirit-world, this is My reward. Joy.  The Joy that carries an exquisite thrill in the midst of pain and poverty and suffering.  That Joy of which I said no man could take it from you.  Earth has no pleasure, no reward, that can give man that Joy.  It is known only to My lovers and My friends.

This Joy may come, not as the reward of activity in My service.  It may be the reward of patient suffering, bravely borne.

Suffering, borne with Me, must in time bring Joy, as does all real contact with Me.  So live with Me in that Kingdom of Joy , My Kingdom, the Gateway into which may be service, it may be suffering.

Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation.  Isaiah 12:3

# My Utmost for His Highest – 12/18/19

# Test of Faithfulness



We know that all things work together for good to those who love God… —[Romans 8:28](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=Romans+8%3A28)

It is only a faithful person who truly believes that God sovereignly controls his circumstances. We take our circumstances for granted, saying God is in control, but not really believing it. We act as if the things that happen were completely controlled by people. To be faithful in every circumstance means that we have only one loyalty, or object of our faith— the Lord Jesus Christ. God may cause our circumstances to suddenly fall apart, which may bring the realization of our unfaithfulness to Him for not recognizing that He had ordained the situation. We never saw what He was trying to accomplish, and that exact event will never be repeated in our life. This is where the test of our faithfulness comes. If we will just learn to worship God even during the difficult circumstances, He will change them for the better very quickly if He so chooses.

Being faithful to Jesus Christ is the most difficult thing we try to do today. We will be faithful to our work, to serving others, or to anything else; just don’t ask us to be faithful to Jesus Christ. Many Christians become very impatient when we talk about faithfulness to Jesus. Our Lord is dethroned more deliberately by Christian workers than by the world. We treat God as if He were a machine designed only to bless us, and we think of Jesus as just another one of the workers.

The goal of faithfulness is not that we will do work for God, but that He will be free to do His work through us. God calls us to His service and places tremendous responsibilities on us. He expects no complaining on our part and offers no explanation on His part. God wants to use us as He used His own Son.

**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 – 12/18/19

**Let us come boldly unto the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.**—[HEB. 4:16.](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Heb.4.html" \l "Heb.4.16)

Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.—Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.

I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain.—Having therefore, . . . boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; and having an high priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.—We may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.

[Phi. 4:6,7](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Phil.4.html" \l "Phil.4.6). -[Rom. 8:15](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Rom.8.html" \l "Rom.8.15).[Isa. 45:19](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Isa.45.html" \l "Isa.45.19). -[Heb. 10:19](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Heb.10.html" \l "Heb.10.19),[22](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Heb.10.html" \l "Heb.10.22). -[Heb. 13:6](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Heb.13.html" \l "Heb.13.6).

“Rend your heart, and not your garments.” [Joel 2:13](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Joel.2.html" \l "Joel.2.13)

Garment-rending and other outward signs of religious emotion, are easily manifested and are frequently hypocritical; but to feel true repentance is far more difficult, and consequently far less common. Men will attend to the most multiplied and minute ceremonial regulations—for such things are pleasing to the flesh—but true religion is too humbling, too heart-searching, too thorough for the tastes of the carnal men; they prefer something more ostentatious, flimsy, and worldly. Outward observances are temporarily comfortable; eye and ear are pleased; self-conceit is fed, and self-righteousness is puffed up: but they are ultimately delusive, for in the article of death, and at the day of judgment, the soul needs something more substantial than ceremonies and rituals to lean upon. Apart from vital godliness all religion is utterly vain; offered without a sincere heart, every form of worship is a solemn sham and an impudent mockery of the majesty of heaven.

Heart-rending is divinely wrought and solemnly felt. It is a secret grief which is personally experienced, not in mere form, but as a deep, soul-moving work of the Holy Spirit upon the inmost heart of each believer. It is not a matter to be merely talked of and believed in, but keenly and sensitively felt in every living child of the living God. It is powerfully humiliating, and completely sin-purging; but then it is sweetly preparative for those gracious consolations which proud unhumbled spirits are unable to receive; and it is distinctly discriminating, for it belongs to the elect of God, and to them alone.

The text commands us to rend our hearts, but they are naturally hard as marble: how, then, can this be done? We must take them to Calvary: a dying Saviour’s voice rent the rocks once, and it is as powerful now. O blessed Spirit, let us hear the death-cries of Jesus, and our hearts shall be rent even as men rend their vestures in the day of lamentation.

# Word Live – 12/18/19

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# Scripture Union – 12/18/19

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

# Today in the Word – 12/18/19

# The Model for Servanthood

**Read:** [**John 13:1–17**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+13%3a1%e2%80%9317)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

How soon we forget the lessons we are taught! During the Last Supper, Jesus’ disciples argued about which of them was the greatest (Luke 22:24–27). Like many, they anticipated a Messiah who would liberate them from Roman rule and establish a kingdom, and they wanted powerful positions. They each considered themselves especially worthy! Jesus rebuked them, saying, “I am among you as one who serves” (v. 27).

Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet. John 13:14

Their discussion is even more surprising considering earlier that same evening, Jesus had shown them a stunning example of servanthood. In that time and place, foot washing met a practical need, but was done by servants, not a rabbi. When Jesus washed their feet, then, His bewildered disciples didn’t know how to react. To see their esteemed teacher wrap a towel around His waist, get a basin of water, and wash their filthy feet was shocking.

What motivated Christ to model humility in this way? First, His sense of God’s plan (John 13:1). He was perfectly clear about His identity, origins, mission, and authority (v. 3). Second, He loved the disciples. This included not only Peter and his clumsy attempt to avoid being served (vv. 6–10), but also Judas, whose betrayal was already in process (vv. 2, 11). And third, because “taking the very nature of a servant” was an essential part of His mission of redemption (Phil. 2:5–8).

We’re not greater than Jesus. So if we don’t follow His example, the failure to serve is a sin of pride (John 13:14–16). Genuine service, on the other hand, is motivated by love and brings about blessing (vv. 17, 35). As Paul explained, biblical freedom is characterized by humble service to one another (Gal. 5:13).

### **Apply the Word**

How can you follow Jesus’ example and serve others this week? Even a small, practical act can show Christ’s love. As James explained: “Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to them, ‘Go in peace; keep warm and well fed,’ but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it?” (2:14–17).

### **Pray with Us**

Thank you, Lord, for the reminder in today’s reading of what a true servant should be! Your washing the disciples’ feet still surprises and humbles us today. Help us learn how to serve others the same way, motivated by love and clear purpose.

## BY Brad Baurain

# Our Daily Bread – 12/18/19

# Walk in the Present with God

 **Read: Psalm 102:11–13**

11My days are like the evening shadow;  
    I wither away like grass.

12But you, Lord, sit enthroned forever;  
    your renown endures through all generations.  
13You will arise and have compassion on Zion,  
    for it is time to show favor to her;  
    the appointed time has come.

**Read: Psalm 102:18–28**

18Let this be written for a future generation,  
    that a people not yet created may praise the Lord:  
19“The Lord looked down from his sanctuary on high,  
    from heaven he viewed the earth,  
20to hear the groans of the prisoners  
    and release those condemned to death.”  
21So the name of the Lord will be declared in Zion  
    and his praise in Jerusalem  
22when the peoples and the kingdoms  
    assemble to worship the Lord.

23In the course of my life[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+102%3A11%E2%80%9313+%2C+18%E2%80%9328&version=NIV#fen-NIV-15545a)] he broke my strength;  
    he cut short my days.  
24So I said:  
“Do not take me away, my God, in the midst of my days;  
    your years go on through all generations.  
25In the beginning you laid the foundations of the earth,  
    and the heavens are the work of your hands.  
26They will perish, but you remain;  
    they will all wear out like a garment.  
Like clothing you will change them  
    and they will be discarded.  
27But you remain the same,  
    and your years will never end.  
28The children of your servants will live in your presence;  
    their descendants will be established before you.”

#### **Footnotes:**

1. [Psalm 102:23](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+102%3A11%E2%80%9313+%2C+18%E2%80%9328&version=NIV#en-NIV-15545) Or By his power

The children of your servants will live in your presence; their descendants will be established before you. Psalm 102:28

In Mere Christianity, C. S. Lewis wrote: “Almost certainly God is not in time. His life does not consist of moments one following another . . . . Ten-thirty—and every other moment from the beginning of the world—is always present for Him.” Still, waiting seasons often feel endless. But as we learn to trust God, the eternal Maker of time, we can accept the reality that our fragile existence is secure in His hands.

The psalmist, lamenting in Psalm 102, admits his days are as fleeting as “the evening shadow” and withering grass, while God “endures through all generations” (vv. 11–12). The writer, weary from suffering, proclaims that God sits “enthroned forever” (v. 12). He affirms that God’s power and consistent compassion reach beyond his personal space (vv. 13–18). Even in his despair (vv. 19–24), the psalmist turns his focus on the power of God as Creator (v. 25). Though His creations will perish, He will remain the same for eternity (vv. 26–27).

When time seems to be standing still or dragging on, it’s tempting to accuse God of being late or non-responsive. We can grow impatient and frustrated with remaining still. We can forget He’s chosen every single cobblestone on the path He’s planned for us. But He never leaves us to fend for ourselves. As we live by faith in the presence of God, we can walk in the present with God.

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

#### **Reflect & Pray**

How can acknowledging God as the Maker of time help you trust Him when His timing doesn’t meet your preference? How can living in the present give you peace?

Loving God, please teach us to be present in life, refusing to worry about tomorrow as You affirm Your constant presence.

#### **Insight**

Psalm 102 is a prayer written by an unnamed individual. The psalm is broken into stanzas and reflects the author crying out to God (vv. 1–2), describes the situation of distress (vv. 3–11), acknowledges that God hears his cries (vv. 12–17), declares the future praise of the Lord (vv. 18–22), and concludes with a summary (vv. 22–28). The psalm doesn’t contain any specific reference to repentance, but it later became one of seven penitential (confession) psalms (Pss. 6; 32; 38; 51; 102; 130; 143) used in the early church.

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

# God Calling – 12/18/19

# Dazzling Glory

Arise, shine; for thy light is come and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.  Isaiah 60:1

The glory of the Lord is the Beauty of His Character.  It is risen upon you when you realize it, even though on earth you can do so only in part.

The Beauty of the Purity and Love of God is too dazzling for mortals to see in full.

The Glory of the Lord is also risen upon you when you reflect that Glory in your lives, when in Love, Patience, Service, Purity, whatever it may be, you reveal to the world a something of the Father, an assurance that you have been with Me, your Lord and Savior.

But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.  2 Corinthians 3:18

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

# The Focus Of Our Message



I did not come to bring peace but a sword. —[Matthew 10:34](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=Matthew+10%3A34)

Never be sympathetic with a person whose situation causes you to conclude that God is dealing harshly with him. God can be more tender than we can conceive, and every once in a while He gives us the opportunity to deal firmly with someone so that He may be viewed as the tender One. If a person cannot go to God, it is because he has something secret which he does not intend to give up— he may admit his sin, but would no more give up that thing than he could fly under his own power. It is impossible to deal sympathetically with people like that. We must reach down deep in their lives to the root of the problem, which will cause hostility and resentment toward the message. People want the blessing of God, but they can’t stand something that pierces right through to the heart of the matter.

If you are sensitive to God’s way, your message as His servant will be merciless and insistent, cutting to the very root. Otherwise, there will be no healing. We must drive the message home so forcefully that a person cannot possibly hide, but must apply its truth. Deal with people where they are, until they begin to realize their true need. Then hold high the standard of Jesus for their lives. Their response may be, “We can never be that.” Then drive it home with, “Jesus Christ says you must.” “But how can we be?” “You can’t, unless you have a new Spirit” (see [Luke 11:13](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+11:13)).

There must be a sense of need created before your message is of any use. Thousands of people in this world profess to be happy without God. But if we could be truly happy and moral without Jesus, then why did He come? He came because that kind of happiness and peace is only superficial. Jesus Christ came to “bring…a sword” through every kind of peace that is not based on a personal relationship with Himself.

**Wisdom From Oswald Chambers**

“When the Son of man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?” We all have faith in good principles, in good management, in good common sense, but who amongst us has faith in Jesus Christ? Physical courage is grand, moral courage is grander, but the man who trusts Jesus Christ in the face of the terrific problems of life is worth a whole crowd of heroes.  The Highest Good, 544 R

# CCEL – 12/19/19

**Unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness.**—[PSA. 112:4.](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.112.html" \l "Ps.112.4)

Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God.—Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand.—The commandment is a lamp, and the law is light.

Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me. I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him, until he plead my cause, and execute judgment for me: he will bring me forth to the light, and I shall behold his righteousness.

The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!

[Isa. 50:10](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Isa.50.html" \l "Isa.50.10). -[Psa. 37:24](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.37.html" \l "Ps.37.24). -[Prov. 6:23](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Prov.6.html" \l "Prov.6.23).[Mic. 7:8,9](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Mic.7.html" \l "Mic.7.8).[Matt. 6:22,23](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Matt.6.html" \l "Matt.6.22).

“The lot is cast into the lap, but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord.” [Proverbs 16:33](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Prov.16.html" \l "Prov.16.33)

If the disposal of the lot is the Lord’s whose is the arrangement of our whole life? If the simple casting of a lot is guided by him, how much more the events of our entire life—especially when we are told by our blessed Saviour: “The very hairs of your head are all numbered: not a sparrow falleth to the ground without your Father.” It would bring a holy calm over your mind, dear friend, if you were always to remember this. It would so relieve your mind from anxiety, that you would be the better able to walk in patience, quiet, and cheerfulness as a Christian should. When a man is anxious he cannot pray with faith; when he is troubled about the world, he cannot serve his Master, his thoughts are serving himself. If you would “seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness,” all things would then be added unto you. You are meddling with Christ’s business, and neglecting your own when you fret about your lot and circumstances. You have been trying “providing” work and forgetting that it is yours to obey. Be wise and attend to the obeying, and let Christ manage the providing. Come and survey your Father’s storehouse, and ask whether he will let you starve while he has laid up so great an abundance in his garner? Look at his heart of mercy; see if that can ever prove unkind! Look at his inscrutable wisdom; see if that will ever be at fault. Above all, look up to Jesus Christ your Intercessor, and ask yourself, while he pleads, can your Father deal ungraciously with you? If he remembers even sparrows, will he forget one of the least of his poor children? “Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he will sustain thee. He will never suffer the righteous to be moved.”

My soul, rest happy in thy low estate,

Nor hope nor wish to be esteem'd or great;

To take the impress of the Will Divine,

Be that thy glory, and those riches thine.

# Word Live – 12/19/19

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

# Scripture Union – 12/19/19

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

# Today in the Word – 12/19/19

# Our Advocate

**Read:** [**1 John 1:5–2:2**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+John+1%3a5%e2%80%932%3a2)

### **Light and Darkness, Sin and Forgiveness**

5This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. 6If we claim to have fellowship with him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live out the truth. 7But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+John+1%3a5%e2%80%932%3a2#fen-NIV-30548a)] sin.

8If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. 9If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. 10If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word is not in us.

2 My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. 2He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.

#### **Footnotes:**

1. [1 John 1:7](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+John+1%3a5%e2%80%932%3a2#en-NIV-30548) Or every

Perry Mason was the title character in a popular series of novels, radio programs, and finally a television series set in Los Angeles starring Raymond Burr. The fictional lawyer specialized in advocating for the innocent, mostly people who had been wrongly accused of murder. Perry Mason epitomized a good lawyer, striving to help those in need.

If anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. 1 John 2:1

The Bible uses this type of legal language, saying that Jesus is our advocate before God the Father. God’s amazing grace is key to understanding salvation. In today’s reading, the apostle John wrote to believers about what to do when sin occurs in our life after our initial salvation. Just as grace and forgiveness were at work in our justification, so also we find them at work in our sanctification.

Every follower of Christ must walk in the light and pursue righteous living (1:5–7). It’s the key to having fellowship with God and with one another. The question naturally arises, then, “What happens when we sin?” What we must first understand is that we will sin (1:8, 10). It’s going to happen. God’s work in us is not yet finished.

When we do sin, we must confess our wrongdoing to God. That means repenting of our sin and turning from it, knowing God has promised to forgive us (1:9). It’s in this context that we can fully appreciate the role of Jesus as our Advocate (2:1). As the perfectly Righteous One, He speaks on our behalf before God the Judge, saying, in essence, “I have already paid the price for this believer’s sin. No penalty remains. Please grant more grace and forgiveness.” In other words, Christ’s atoning sacrifice has already taken care of matters (2:2). His blood has cleansed and purified us, and continues to cleanse and purify us, from sin (1:7, 9).

### **Apply the Word**

Today, spend time confessing your sins to the Lord. We don’t need to fear bringing our sin before a Holy God because for us as believers, forgiveness is guaranteed. And there’s every reason to do so. Sin interferes with relationships, but Christ already took care of that on the cross. Go to Him today, and revel in His grace!

### **Pray with Us**

A special part of December for all of us at MBI is Moody Radio’s special Christmas programming. Please uphold in prayer the teams at Moody Radio who work hard to bring the saving message of Christ through music to listeners.

## BY Brad Baurain

# Our Daily Bread – 12/19/19

# Written on the Heart

 **Read: 2 Corinthians 2:17–3:6**

17Unlike so many, we do not peddle the word of God for profit. On the contrary, in Christ we speak before God with sincerity, as those sent from God.

3 Are we beginning to commend ourselves again? Or do we need, like some people, letters of recommendation to you or from you? 2You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, known and read by everyone. 3You show that you are a letter from Christ, the result of our ministry, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.

4Such confidence we have through Christ before God. 5Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God. 6He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant—not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, known and read by everyone. 2 Corinthians 3:2

As a professor, I’m often asked by students to write letters of recommendation for them—for leadership positions, study-abroad programs, graduate schools, and even jobs. In each letter, I have a chance to praise the student’s character and qualifications.

When Christians traveled in the ancient world, they often carried with them similar “letters of commendation” from their churches. Such a letter ensured that the traveling brother or sister would be welcomed hospitably.

The apostle Paul didn’t need a letter of recommendation when he spoke to the church in Corinth—they knew him. In his second letter to that church, Paul wrote that he preached the gospel out of sincerity, not for personal gain (2 Corinthians 2:17). But then he wondered if his readers would think that in defending his motives in preaching, he was trying to write a letter of recommendation for himself.

He didn’t need such a letter, he said, because the people in the church in Corinth were themselves like letters of recommendation. The visible work of Christ in their lives was like a letter “written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God” (3:3). Their lives testified to the true gospel Paul had preached to them—their lives were letters of reference that could be “known and read by everyone” (3:2). As we follow Jesus, this becomes true of us too—our lives tell the story of the goodness of the gospel.

By: [Amy Peterson](https://odb.org/author/petersonamy/)

#### **Reflect & Pray**

When people read the “letter” of your life, what do they see of Jesus? Who are the teachers who have left their imprint on you?

Jesus, I want others to see You in my life. May I decrease and You increase.

#### **Insight**

Letters of recommendation to introduce and give approval or authority to someone were common in the ancient world (see Ezra 7:11–26; Nehemiah 2:7–8; Acts 18:27; Romans 16:1–2; 1 Corinthians 16:3; Colossians 4:10; 3 John 1:9). Since Paul didn’t have any such letters, his opponents said he wasn’t a true apostle. Arguing that he didn’t need an introductory or authorization letter from anyone, Paul said that the Corinthians themselves, as believers in Christ, eloquently proved and authenticated his status as an apostle (2 Corinthians 3:1–3). Paul had made this point earlier: “Am I not an apostle? Haven’t I seen Jesus our Lord with my own eyes? Isn’t it because of my work that you belong to the Lord? Even if others think I am not an apostle, I certainly am to you. You yourselves are proof that I am the Lord’s apostle” (1 Corinthians 9:1–2 nlt).

# God Calling – 12/19/19

# Hills of the Lord

I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help.    
My help cometh form the Lord, which made heaven and earth.  Psalm 121:1,2

Yes! always raise your eyes, from earth's sordid and mean and false, to the Hills of the Lord. From poverty, lift your eyes to the Help of the Lord.

In moments of weakness, lift your eyes to the Hills of the Lord.

Train your sight by constantly getting this long view.  Train it to see more and more, further and further, until distant peaks seem familiar.

The Hills of the Lord.  The Hills whence comes your help.  A parched earth looks to the Hills for its rivers, its streams, its life.  So look you to the Hills.  From those Hills comes Help.  Help from the Lord - who made Heaven and earth.

So, for all your spiritual needs, look to the Lord, who made Heaven, and for all your temporal needs look to Me, owner of all this, the Lord who made the earth.

Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.  James 4:10

# My Utmost for His Highest – 12/20/19

# The Right Kind of Help



And I, if I am lifted up…will draw all peoples to Myself. —[John 12:32](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=John+12%3A32)

Very few of us have any understanding of the reason why Jesus Christ died. If sympathy is all that human beings need, then the Cross of Christ is an absurdity and there is absolutely no need for it. What the world needs is not “a little bit of love,” but major surgery.

When you find yourself face to face with a person who is spiritually lost, remind yourself of Jesus Christ on the cross. If that person can get to God in any other way, then the Cross of Christ is unnecessary. If you think you are helping lost people with your sympathy and understanding, you are a traitor to Jesus Christ. You must have a right-standing relationship with Him yourself, and pour your life out in helping others in His way— not in a human way that ignores God. The theme of the world’s religion today is to serve in a pleasant, non-confrontational manner.

But our only priority must be to present Jesus Christ crucified— to lift Him up all the time (see [1 Corinthians 2:2](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Corinthians+2:2)). Every belief that is not firmly rooted in the Cross of Christ will lead people astray. If the worker himself believes in Jesus Christ and is trusting in the reality of redemption, his words will be compelling to others. What is extremely important is for the worker’s simple relationship with Jesus Christ to be strong and growing. His usefulness to God depends on that, and that alone.

The calling of a New Testament worker is to expose sin and to reveal Jesus Christ as Savior. Consequently, he cannot always be charming and friendly, but must be willing to be stern to accomplish major surgery. We are sent by God to lift up Jesus Christ, not to give wonderfully beautiful speeches. We must be willing to examine others as deeply as God has examined us. We must also be sharply intent on sensing those Scripture passages that will drive the truth home, and then not be afraid to apply them.

**Wisdom From Oswald Chambers**

We are only what we are in the dark; all the rest is reputation. What God looks at is what we are in the dark—the imaginations of our minds; the thoughts of our heart; the habits of our bodies; these are the things that mark us in God’s sight.  The Love of God—The Ministry of the Unnoticed, 669 L

# CCEL – 12/20/19

**He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world.**—[EPH. 1:4.](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Eph.1.html" \l "Eph.1.4)

That we should be holy and without blame before him in love.

God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: whereunto he called you, . . . to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.—Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.—Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.

A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh.—God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness.

[Eph. 1:4](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Eph.1.html#Eph.1.4).[II Thes. 2:13,14](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iiThess.2.html" \l "iiThess.2.13). -[Rom. 8:29,30](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Rom.8.html" \l "Rom.8.29). -[I Pet. 1:2](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iPet.1.html" \l "iPet.1.2).[Ezek. 36:26](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ezek.36.html" \l "Ezek.36.26). -[I Thes. 4:7](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iThess.4.html" \l "iThess.4.7).

“Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love.” [Jeremiah 31:3](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Jer.31.html" \l "Jer.31.3)

Sometimes the Lord Jesus tells his Church his love thoughts. “He does not think it enough behind her back to tell it, but in her very presence he says, ‘Thou art all fair, my love.’ It is true, this is not his ordinary method; he is a wise lover, and knows when to keep back the intimation of love and when to let it out; but there are times when he will make no secret of it; times when he will put it beyond all dispute in the souls of his people” (R. Erskine’s Sermons). The Holy Spirit is often pleased, in a most gracious manner, to witness with our spirits of the love of Jesus. He takes of the things of Christ and reveals them unto us. No voice is heard from the clouds, and no vision is seen in the night, but we have a testimony more sure than either of these. If an angel should fly from heaven and inform the saint personally of the Saviour’s love to him, the evidence would not be one whit more satisfactory than that which is borne in the heart by the Holy Ghost. Ask those of the Lord’s people who have lived the nearest to the gates of heaven, and they will tell you that they have had seasons when the love of Christ towards them has been a fact so clear and sure, that they could no more doubt it than they could question their own existence. Yes, beloved believer, you and I have had times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord, and then our faith has mounted to the topmost heights of assurance. We have had confidence to lean our heads upon the bosom of our Lord, and we have no more questioned our Master’s affection to us than John did when in that blessed posture; nay, nor so much: for the dark question, “Lord, is it I that shall betray thee?” has been put far from us. He has kissed us with the kisses of his mouth, and killed our doubts by the closeness of his embrace. His love has been sweeter than wine to our souls.

# Word Live – 12/20/19

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

# Scripture Union – 12/20/19

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

# Today in the Word – 12/20/19

# Our Great High Priest

**Read:** [**John 17**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+17)

### **Jesus Prays to Be Glorified**

17 After Jesus said this, he looked toward heaven and prayed:

“Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you. 2For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him. 3Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. 4I have brought you glory on earth by finishing the work you gave me to do. 5And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began.

### **Jesus Prays for His Disciples**

6“I have revealed you[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+17#fen-NIV-26766a)] to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours; you gave them to me and they have obeyed your word. 7Now they know that everything you have given me comes from you. 8For I gave them the words you gave me and they accepted them. They knew with certainty that I came from you, and they believed that you sent me. 9I pray for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given me, for they are yours. 10All I have is yours, and all you have is mine. And glory has come to me through them. 11I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+17#fen-NIV-26771b)] your name, the name you gave me, so that they may be one as we are one. 12While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe by[[c](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+17#fen-NIV-26772c)] that name you gave me. None has been lost except the one doomed to destruction so that Scripture would be fulfilled.

13“I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them. 14I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. 15My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. 16They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. 17Sanctify them by[[d](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+17#fen-NIV-26777d)] the truth; your word is truth. 18As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. 19For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified.

### **Jesus Prays for All Believers**

20“My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, 21that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. 22I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one— 23I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

24“Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world.

25“Righteous Father, though the world does not know you, I know you, and they know that you have sent me. 26I have made you[[e](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+17#fen-NIV-26786e)] known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them.”

#### **Footnotes:**

1. [John 17:6](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+17#en-NIV-26766) Greek your name
2. [John 17:11](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+17#en-NIV-26771) Or Father, keep them faithful to
3. [John 17:12](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+17#en-NIV-26772) Or kept them faithful to
4. [John 17:17](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+17#en-NIV-26777) Or them to live in accordance with
5. [John 17:26](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+17#en-NIV-26786) Greek your name

In Tell It Slant, Eugene Peterson advised reading Jesus’ “High Priestly Prayer” in John 17 with a calm and attentive heart: “Jesus is no longer talking to us. Jesus is talking to the Father. Jesus is praying. He prays a long time. This is holy ground. We find ourselves embraced in a holy listening. We are in a place of prayer, a praying presence. Our mouths are stopped. We are quiet: be still my soul.”

I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message. John 17:20

This chapter reveals Christ at work as our Great High Priest. His roles as high priest, advocate, and mediator overlap to some extent in that they each show part of what He does for us in salvation (see also Heb. 4:14–16).

First, Christ prayed for Himself, asking that He would be glorified by finishing His mission of redemption and bringing people to the Father (vv. 1–5). Next, He prayed for His disciples to be protected, unified, sanctified, and sustained against the evil one and the hatred of the world (vv. 6–19). He also prayed for them as messengers of the gospel (v. 18). As we know, these requests were powerfully granted!

Finally, Jesus prayed for future believers, including you and me (v. 20). He asked that we would be unified in the same way He and the Father are (vv. 21–23). Why? “So that the world may believe.” He also asked that we would be in heaven with Him one day (v. 24). He closed by affirming that He has indeed revealed the Father to all who trust in Him (vv. 25–26).

Jesus is our Great High Priest, but as believers we are “priests” as well (see, for example, Rev. 1:6). Part of what this means is that we have the tremendous privilege of interceding for one another in prayer, just as our Lord did.

### **Apply the Word**

Today’s reading is the longest recorded prayer of Christ and definitely worth deeper study. We encourage you to consult study Bibles, commentaries, and other resources. Consider what this passage tells you about Christ. Finally, no study is complete without asking, “What difference should this make in my life?”

### **Pray with Us**

During your prayer time today, as we read the Lord’s High Priestly prayer in John 17, thank Christ for lifting up to the Father His followers—the disciples of the 1st century, as well as future believers through generations, including us.

## BY Brad Baurain

# Our Daily Bread – 12/20/19

# Failure Is Impossible

 **Read: Nehemiah 6:1–9**

### **Further Opposition to the Rebuilding**

6 When word came to Sanballat, Tobiah, Geshem the Arab and the rest of our enemies that I had rebuilt the wall and not a gap was left in it—though up to that time I had not set the doors in the gates— 2Sanballat and Geshem sent me this message: “Come, let us meet together in one of the villages[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Nehemiah+6%3A1%E2%80%939&version=NIV#fen-NIV-12404a)] on the plain of Ono.”

But they were scheming to harm me; 3so I sent messengers to them with this reply: “I am carrying on a great project and cannot go down. Why should the work stop while I leave it and go down to you?” 4Four times they sent me the same message, and each time I gave them the same answer.

5Then, the fifth time, Sanballat sent his aide to me with the same message, and in his hand was an unsealed letter 6in which was written:

“It is reported among the nations—and Geshem[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Nehemiah+6%3A1%E2%80%939&version=NIV#fen-NIV-12408b)] says it is true—that you and the Jews are plotting to revolt, and therefore you are building the wall. Moreover, according to these reports you are about to become their king 7and have even appointed prophets to make this proclamation about you in Jerusalem: ‘There is a king in Judah!’ Now this report will get back to the king; so come, let us meet together.”

8I sent him this reply: “Nothing like what you are saying is happening; you are just making it up out of your head.”

9They were all trying to frighten us, thinking, “Their hands will get too weak for the work, and it will not be completed.”

But I prayed, “Now strengthen my hands.”

#### **Footnotes:**

1. [Nehemiah 6:2](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Nehemiah+6%3A1%E2%80%939&version=NIV#en-NIV-12404) Or in Kephirim
2. [Nehemiah 6:6](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Nehemiah+6%3A1%E2%80%939&version=NIV#en-NIV-12408) Hebrew Gashmu, a variant of Geshem

This work had been done with the help of our God. Nehemiah 6:16

“Failure is impossible!” These words were spoken by Susan B. Anthony (1820–1906), known for her immovable stance on women’s rights in the US. Though she faced constant criticism and later an arrest, trial, and guilty verdict for voting illegally, Anthony vowed to never give up the fight to gain women the right to vote, believing her cause was just. Though she didn’t live to see the fruit of her labor, her declaration proved true. In 1920, the nineteenth amendment to the Constitution gave women the right to vote.

Failure wasn’t an option for Nehemiah either, mainly because he had a Powerful Helper: God. After asking Him to bless his cause—rebuilding the wall of Jerusalem—Nehemiah and those who had returned to Jerusalem from exile in Babylon worked to make that happen. The wall was needed to keep the people safe from enemies. But opposition to the cause came in the form of deception and threats. Nehemiah refused to let opposition deter him. He informed those who opposed the work, “I am carrying on a great project” (Nehemiah 6:3). After that, he prayed, “Now strengthen my hands” (v. 9). Thanks to perseverance, the work was completed (v. 15).

God gave Nehemiah the strength to persevere in the face of opposition. Is there a task for which you’re tempted to give up? Ask God to provide whatever you need to keep going.

By: [Linda Washington](https://odb.org/author/lindawashingtonodb/)

#### **Reflect & Pray**

How do you normally handle opposition? What cause are you willing to fight for, no matter how tough the opposition?

Precious God, I need Your help to keep going with the work You’ve given me to do, no matter what the cost may be.

#### **Insight**

Nehemiah recognized that his enemies were seeking to “harm” him (Nehemiah 6:2). When their attempts at “diplomacy” failed, they tried to bait him with false accusations made in an unsealed letter (v. 5). An unsealed letter could be read by anyone and was likely used to spread the rumor that Nehemiah was really plotting to become king. Nehemiah refuted the charge (v. 8) and turned to God in prayer (v. 9).

To learn more about the time of Nehemiah, visit [christianuniversity.org/OT128-07](https://christianuniversity.org/OT128-07).

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

# God Calling – 12/20/19

# Mysteries

Your Hope is in the Lord. More and more set your hopes on Me. Know that whatever the future may hold it will hold more and more of Me. It cannot but be glad and full of Joy.  So in Heaven, or on earth, wherever you may be, your way must be truly one of delight.

Do not try to find answers to the mysteries of the world.  Learn to know Me more and more, and in that Knowledge you will have all the answers you need here, and when you see Me Face to Face, in that purely Spiritual world, you will find no need to ask.  There again all your answers will be in Me.

Remember, I was the answer in time to all man's questions about My Father and His Laws. Know no theology. Know Me. I was the Word of God. All you need to know about God you know in Me. If a man knows me not, all your explanations will fall on an unresponsive heart.

Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope in God; for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.  Psalm 43:5

# My Utmost for His Highest – 12/21/19

# Experience or God’s Revealed Truth?



We have received…the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. —[1 Corinthians 2:12](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=1+Corinthians+2%3A12)

My experience is not what makes redemption real— redemption is reality. Redemption has no real meaning for me until it is worked out through my conscious life. When I am born again, the Spirit of God takes me beyond myself and my experiences, and identifies me with Jesus Christ. If I am left only with my personal experiences, I am left with something not produced by redemption. But experiences produced by redemption prove themselves by leading me beyond myself, to the point of no longer paying any attention to experiences as the basis of reality. Instead, I see that only the reality itself produced the experiences. My experiences are not worth anything unless they keep me at the Source of truth— Jesus Christ.

If you try to hold back the Holy Spirit within you, with the desire of producing more inner spiritual experiences, you will find that He will break the hold and take you again to the historic Christ. Never support an experience which does not have God as its Source and faith in God as its result. If you do, your experience is anti-Christian, no matter what visions or insights you may have had. Is Jesus Christ Lord of your experiences, or do you place your experiences above Him? Is any experience dearer to you than your Lord? You must allow Him to be Lord over you, and pay no attention to any experience over which He is not Lord. Then there will come a time when God will make you impatient with your own experience, and you can truthfully say, “I do not care what I experience— I am sure of Him!”

Be relentless and hard on yourself if you are in the habit of talking about the experiences you have had. Faith based on experience is not faith; faith based on God’s revealed truth is the only faith there is.

**Wisdom From Oswald Chambers**

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

# CCEL – 12/21/19

**The days of thy mourning shall be ended.**—[ISA. 60:20.](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Isa.60.html" \l "Isa.60.20)

In the world ye shall have tribulation.—The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.—We that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life.

These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.

[John 16:33](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.John.16.html" \l "John.16.33). -[Rom. 8:22,23](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Rom.8.html" \l "Rom.8.22). -[II Cor. 5:4](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iiCor.5.html#iiCor.5.4).[Rev. 7:14-17](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Rev.7.html" \l "Rev.7.14).

“Yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant.” [2 Samuel 23:5](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iiSam.23.html" \l "iiSam.23.5)

This covenant is divine in its origin. “He hath made with me an everlasting covenant.” Oh that great word He ! Stop, my soul. God, the everlasting Father, has positively made a covenant with thee; yes, that God who spake the world into existence by a word; he, stooping from his majesty, takes hold of thy hand and makes a covenant with thee. Is it not a deed, the stupendous condescension of which might ravish our hearts forever if we could really understand it? “HE hath made with me a covenant.” A king has not made a covenant with me—that were somewhat; but the Prince of the kings of the earth, Shaddai, the Lord All-sufficient, the Jehovah of ages, the everlasting Elohim, “He hath made with me an everlasting covenant.” But notice, it is particular in its application. “Yet hath he made with me an everlasting covenant.” Here lies the sweetness of it to each believer. It is nought for me that he made peace for the world; I want to know whether he made peace for me! It is little that he hath made a covenant, I want to know whether he has made a covenant with me. Blessed is the assurance that he hath made a covenant with me! If God the Holy Ghost gives me assurance of this, then his salvation is mine, his heart is mine, he himself is mine—he is my God.

This covenant is everlasting in its duration. An everlasting covenant means a covenant which had no beginning, and which shall never, never end. How sweet amidst all the uncertainties of life, to know that “the foundation of the Lord standeth sure,” and to have God’s own promise, “My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips.” Like dying David, I will sing of this, even though my house be not so with God as my heart desireth.

# Word Live – 12/21/19

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

# Scripture Union – 12/21/19

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

# Today in the Word – 12/21/19

# Head of the Church

**Read:** [**Ephesians 4:11–16**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ephesians+4%3a11%e2%80%9316)

11So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, 12to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up 13until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

14Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. 15Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. 16From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

When Father Christmas entered Narnia in The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe by C. S. Lewis, he brought gifts. For Peter, there was a sword and a shield emblazoned with a red lion. For Susan, there was a bow, a quiver of arrows, and a magical horn. For Lucy, there was a small dagger and a bottle of healing cordial.

From him the whole body . . . grows and builds itself up in love. Ephesians 4:16

These gifts were not on their wish lists. They were not given for personal enjoyment. They had purposes within the larger story. The same is true of spiritual gifts in the Body of Christ. They are given to believers for the purpose of serving one another and mutual edification (vv. 11–12). The goal is maturity in both doctrine and practice, “attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ” (vv. 13–16). All of God’s people are to use their spiritual gifts in this way, not just those in professional or vocational ministry.

The Head of the Body is Christ Himself (v. 15; Col. 1:18). As we know from our own experience, a body without a head will no longer function. The head is the brains of the operation. The head runs the show. The same is true in this metaphor: Christ has complete authority over the church, including both local churches and the church universal. Whereas human beings tend to exercise their authority for prideful or self-centered ends, Christ exercises His authority for our good and His glory.

Paul wrote here that Christ gives spiritual gifts (v. 11), whereas elsewhere he said the Holy Spirit distributes them (1 Cor. 12:4). This, as with being the Creator (see December 3), is another both/and situation. Since both the Son and the Spirit are God, they can both be said to be the One who gives spiritual gifts.

### **Apply the Word**

Are you using your spiritual gift(s) to serve in your church? If not, ask God where you might get involved. If you’re not sure what your spiritual gift is, we encourage you to talk to your pastor or a church leader. If you think you’re too busy to serve, we suggest re-reading today’s passage from Ephesians. Church is not a spectator sport!

### **Pray with Us**

Please support in prayer Moody Publishers, headed by vice president, Paul Santhouse. We are grateful for this fruitful ministry! Found at your local bookstore or online at moodypublishers.com, Moody’s books are a great present for Christmas!

## BY Brad Baurain

# Our Daily Bread – 12/21/19

# The Giver’s Delight

**Read: Luke 2:4–14**

4So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. 5He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. 6While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, 7and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.

8And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. 9An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. 10But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. 11Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. 12This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.”

13Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,

14“Glory to God in the highest heaven,  
    and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.”

Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. Luke 2:11

Remember Tickle Me Elmo? Cabbage Patch Kids? The Furby? What do they have in common? Each rank among the twenty most popular Christmas gifts of all time. Also included on the list are familiar favorites such as Monopoly, the Nintendo Game Boy, and Wii.

We all delight in giving gifts at Christmas, but that’s nothing compared to God’s delight in giving the first Christmas gift. This gift came in the form of a baby, born in a Bethlehem manger (Luke 2:7).

Despite His humble birth, the Child’s arrival was proclaimed by an angel who declared, “I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord” (vv. 10–11). Following this magnificent news, a “heavenly host” appeared, “praising God and saying, ‘Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests’” (vv. 13–14).

This Christmas, enjoy giving gifts to your loved ones, but never lose sight of the reason for the giving—the spectacular favor of God on His creation crystallized in the gift of His own Son to save us from our sin. We give because He gave. May we worship Him in gratitude!

By: [Remi Oyedele](https://odb.org/author/remioyedele/)

#### **Reflect & Pray**

Why is Jesus the greatest Christmas gift you ever received? How can you share this gift with others more effectively?

Father, thank You for Jesus—the greatest gift of all!

#### **Insight**

Angels, God’s supernatural messengers, appear at interesting junctures in both of Luke’s writings—the gospel of Luke and Acts. Their activities surrounding the births of John and Jesus (Luke 1 and 2) are well known. Luke also noted that an angel appeared to strengthen Jesus when He was facing death (Luke 22:43). Women at Christ’s tomb saw a vision of angels who announced that He was alive (24:23). Two men in white robes in Acts 1:10–11 were likely angels. Angels were dispatched to release the apostles from prison (Acts 5:17–21); to give Philip traveling instructions (8:26); to give directions to Cornelius (10:1–8); to release Peter from prison (12:6–11); to execute judgment on a prideful ruler (12:23); and to encourage a wearied apostle Paul (27:23–26).

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

# God Calling – 12/21/19

# Radiate Joy

Not only must you rejoice, but your Joy must be made manifest.  "Known unto all men."  A candle must not be set under a bushel, but on a candlestick, that it may give light to all who are in the house.

Men must see and know your Joy, and seeing it, know, without any doubt, that it springs from trust in Me, from living with Me.

The hard dull way of resignation is not My Way.  When I entered Jerusalem, knowing well that scorn and reviling and death awaited Me, it was with cries of Hosanna, and with a triumphal procession.  Not just a few "Lost Cause" followers creeping with Me into the city.  There was no note of sadness in My Last Supper Talk with My disciples, and "when we had sung an hymn" we went out unto the Mount of Olives.

So trust, so conquer, so joy.  Love colors the way. Love takes the sting out of the wind of adversity.

Love. Love. Love of Me. The consciousness of My Presence, and that of My Father, we are one, and He - God - is Love.

Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.  Matthew 5:16

# My Utmost for His Highest – 12/22/19

# The Drawing of the Father



No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him… —[John 6:44](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=John+6%3A44)

When God begins to draw me to Himself, the problem of my will comes in immediately. Will I react positively to the truth that God has revealed? Will I come to Him? To discuss or deliberate over spiritual matters when God calls is inappropriate and disrespectful to Him. When God speaks, never discuss it with anyone as if to decide what your response may be (see [Galatians 1:15-16](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Galatians+1:15-16)). Belief is not the result of an intellectual act, but the result of an act of my will whereby I deliberately commit myself. But will I commit, placing myself completely and absolutely on God, and be willing to act solely on what He says? If I will, I will find that I am grounded on reality as certain as God’s throne.

In preaching the gospel, always focus on the matter of the will. Belief must come from the will to believe. There must be a surrender of the will, not a surrender to a persuasive or powerful argument. I must deliberately step out, placing my faith in God and in His truth. And I must place no confidence in my own works, but only in God. Trusting in my own mental understanding becomes a hindrance to complete trust in God. I must be willing to ignore and leave my feelings behind. I must will to believe. But this can never be accomplished without my forceful, determined effort to separate myself from my old ways of looking at things. I must surrender myself completely to God.

Everyone has been created with the ability to reach out beyond his own grasp. But it is God who draws me, and my relationship to Him in the first place is an inner, personal one, not an intellectual one. I come into the relationship through the miracle of God and through my own will to believe. Then I begin to get an intelligent appreciation and understanding of the wonder of the transformation in my life.

**WISDOM FROM OSWALD CHAMBERS**

Both nations and individuals have tried Christianity and abandoned it, because it has been found too difficult; but no man has ever gone through the crisis of deliberately making Jesus Lord and found Him to be a failure.

The Love of God—The Making of a Christian, 680 R

# CCEL – 12/22/19

**Your work of faith.**—[I THES. 1:3.](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iThess.1.html" \l "iThess.1.3)

This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.

Faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.—Faith worketh by love.—He that soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.—We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.—Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth. Wherefore also we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power.—It is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

[John 6:29](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.John.6.html#John.6.29).[Jas. 2:17](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Jas.2.html" \l "Jas.2.17). -[Gal. 5:6](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Gal.5.html" \l "Gal.5.6). -[Gal. 6:8](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Gal.6.html" \l "Gal.6.8). -[Eph. 2:10](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Eph.2.html" \l "Eph.2.10). -[Tit. 2:14](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Titus.2.html" \l "Titus.2.14).[II Thes. 1:3](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iiThess.1.html" \l "iiThess.1.3),[11](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iiThess.1.html" \l "iiThess.1.11). -[Phi 2:13](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Phil.2.html" \l "Phil.2.13).

“I will strengthen thee.” **[Isaiah 41:10](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Isa.41.html" \l "Isa.41.10)**

God has a strong reserve with which to discharge this engagement; for he is able to do all things. Believer, till thou canst drain dry the ocean of omnipotence, till thou canst break into pieces the towering mountains of almighty strength, thou never needest to fear. Think not that the strength of man shall ever be able to overcome the power of God. Whilst the earth’s huge pillars stand, thou hast enough reason to abide firm in thy faith. The same God who directs the earth in its orbit, who feeds the burning furnace of the sun, and trims the lamps of heaven, has promised to supply thee with daily strength. While he is able to uphold the universe, dream not that he will prove unable to fulfil his own promises. Remember what he did in the days of old, in the former generations. Remember how he spake and it was done; how he commanded, and it stood fast. Shall he that created the world grow weary? He hangeth the world upon nothing; shall he who doth this be unable to support his children? Shall he be unfaithful to his word for want of power? Who is it that restrains the tempest? Doth not he ride upon the wings of the wind, and make the clouds his chariots, and hold the ocean in the hollow of his hand? How can he fail thee? When he has put such a faithful promise as this on record, wilt thou for a moment indulge the thought that he has outpromised himself, and gone beyond his power to fulfil? Ah, no! Thou canst doubt no longer.

O thou who art my God and my strength, I can believe that this promise shall be fulfilled, for the boundless reservoir of thy grace can never be exhausted, and the overflowing storehouse of thy strength can never be emptied by thy friends or rifled by thine enemies.

“Now let the feeble all be strong,

And make Jehovah’s arm their song.”

# Word Live – 12/22/19

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

# Scripture Union – 12/22/19

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

# Today in the Word – 12/22/19

# The Resurrection and the Life

**Read:** [**John 11:17–44**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+11%3a17%e2%80%9344)

### **Jesus Comforts the Sisters of Lazarus**

17On his arrival, Jesus found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. 18Now Bethany was less than two miles[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+11%3a17%e2%80%9344#fen-NIV-26542a)] from Jerusalem, 19and many Jews had come to Martha and Mary to comfort them in the loss of their brother. 20When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet him, but Mary stayed at home.

21“Lord,” Martha said to Jesus, “if you had been here, my brother would not have died. 22But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask.”

23Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.”

24Martha answered, “I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.”

25Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; 26and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?”

27“Yes, Lord,” she replied, “I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who is to come into the world.”

28After she had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary aside. “The Teacher is here,” she said, “and is asking for you.” 29When Mary heard this, she got up quickly and went to him. 30Now Jesus had not yet entered the village, but was still at the place where Martha had met him. 31When the Jews who had been with Mary in the house, comforting her, noticed how quickly she got up and went out, they followed her, supposing she was going to the tomb to mourn there.

32When Mary reached the place where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.”

33When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled. 34“Where have you laid him?” he asked.

“Come and see, Lord,” they replied.

35Jesus wept.

36Then the Jews said, “See how he loved him!”

37But some of them said, “Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?”

### **Jesus Raises Lazarus From the Dead**

38Jesus, once more deeply moved, came to the tomb. It was a cave with a stone laid across the entrance. 39“Take away the stone,” he said.

“But, Lord,” said Martha, the sister of the dead man, “by this time there is a bad odor, for he has been there four days.”

40Then Jesus said, “Did I not tell you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?”

41So they took away the stone. Then Jesus looked up and said, “Father, I thank you that you have heard me. 42I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me.”

43When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out!” 44The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face.

Jesus said to them, “Take off the grave clothes and let him go.”

#### **Footnotes:**

1. [John 11:18](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+11%3a17%e2%80%9344#en-NIV-26542) Or about 3 kilometers

“Death be not proud,” begins a famous Holy Sonnet by poet John Donne, “though some have called thee Mighty and dreadful, for thou art not so.” Donne addresses Death as a person, saying it has no real power, but is rather “slave to fate, chance, kings, and desperate men.” He compares it to rest or sleep, even as pleasurable. In the end: “One short sleep past, we wake eternally, And death shall be no more; Death, thou shalt die.”

Whoever lives by believing in me will never die. John 11:26

Like Donne, we can say that death has no real power, for the Lord Jesus has conquered it once and for all! As Jesus told Martha in today’s reading, “I am the resurrection and the life” (v. 25). We’ve already seen that Christ is our Risen Lord (Dec. 9), and that He’s the “firstborn from among the dead” (Col. 1:18). Today’s narrative builds on these truths.

When Christ heard that His friend Lazarus was sick, He deliberately delayed in order to bring God greater glory (v. 4) and to strengthen His disciples’ faith (v. 15). He knew exactly what would happen. Of course, no one else had the foggiest notion. The idea that death could be reversed was so outside their paradigm that even when responding in faith—as Martha did in her powerful confession (v. 27)—they didn’t see it coming. They believed Jesus could have healed Lazarus if He’d come sooner. They believed Lazarus would be raised in the future. But now? After he’d been in the tomb four days? No way.

The fact is, though, that even prior to His death and resurrection, Jesus was Lord over death. He is life and source of all life. He brought Lazarus back to life with a simple command (v. 43), a miracle that brought many to faith in Him (vv. 42, 45). Lazarus presumably died again at a later date, for Christ was the first to be resurrected with a glorified body.

### **Apply the Word**

I’ve given some thought to the Scripture passages, music, and poems I’d like used at my funeral—not because I’m morbid, but because I want to tell others about my faith in Christ. One item on my list is the John Donne poem (quoted earlier). How about you? How would you like to testify of your faith in Jesus?

### **Pray with Us**

Today is a good time to review all the names of Jesus we’ve learned so far and to add the one from John 11—the Resurrection and the Life. Thank the Lord that He has graced our lives with His love and turned the tears of our past into the joy of new life in Him.

## BY Brad Baurain

# Our Daily Bread – 12/22/19

# The Father’s Blessing



**Read: 1 John 3:1–3**

3 See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. 2Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears,[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+John+3%3A1%E2%80%933&version=NIV" \l "fen-NIV-30582a" \o "See footnote a)] we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. 3All who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure.

#### **Footnotes:**

1. [1 John 3:2](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+John+3%3A1%E2%80%933&version=NIV#en-NIV-30582) Or when it is made known

See what great love the Father has lavished on us. 1 John 3:1

Recently, several people within our church—those who had experienced poor relationships with their fathers—asked me to stand in as a loving, father figure and offer a blessing over them. The blessing asked forgiveness for the ways a father can hurt his children by setting expectations that are too high or being distant or failing to offer tender presence and affirmation. It also pronounced delight, admiration, and abundant love. As I shared the blessing, I wept. I realized how I still needed to receive such words, and how much my children need them too.

The Scriptures repeatedly speak of God as our Father, a reality reshaping the distorted father images we might have. God, our eternal Father, has “lavished on us” perfect love, making us “children of God” (1 John 3:1). Our identity as God’s sons and daughters grounds us in an uncertain, fear-inducing world. “We are children of God,” John says, even though “what we will be has not yet been made known” (v. 2). Facing ever-present challenges, all we can truly count on is that our Father loves and provides for us and never stops. When everything is said and done, God says through the inspired words of John, we can be certain we’ll be like Him (v. 2).

In the midst of our anxieties, wounds, and failures, our good Father speaks a blessing of inexhaustible love. God insists we belong, for He’s made us His children.

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

#### **Reflect & Pray**

What comes to mind when you ponder the word father? How does God’s lavish love reshape the father image for you?

God, teach me more about how You are my Father. May I experience and know Your care.

#### **Insight**

A believer’s life is a father-child relationship, the most basic and embryonic of all love relationships. God loves us not because we’re worthy of His love, but simply because it’s His nature to love (Exodus 34:6–7). The apostle John simply puts it, “God is love” (1 John 4:8, 16). Jesus taught us to talk with God who is “our Father in heaven” (Matthew 6:9). We’re privileged and empowered by the Holy Spirit to call Him “Abba, Father” (Romans 8:15–16; Galatians 4:6). This term is a name of endearment and intimacy. One writer says that God has many names but Abba Father is his favorite name for God. Calling Him “Abba, Father” authenticates our salvation, for we become children of God through Jesus (John 1:12; Galatians 3:26). Our status as His children entitles us to a spiritual inheritance as God’s heirs (Romans 8:17; Galatians 4:7).

# God Calling – 12/22/19

# Practice Protection

Fear no evil because I have conquered evil. It has power to hurt only those who do not place themselves under My Protection. This is not a question of feeling, it is an assured fact.

All you have to do is say with assurance that whatever it is cannot harm you, as I have conquered it. Children, in not only the big, but the little things of life, be sure of My conquering Power. Know that all is well. Be sure of it. Practice this. Learn it until it is unfailing and instinctive with you.

But practice it in the quite small things, and then you will find you will do it easily, naturally, lovingly, trustingly, in the big things of life.

"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." Psalm 23:4

# My Utmost for His Highest – 12/23/19

# Sharing in the Atonement



God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus

Christ… —[Galatians 6:14](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=Galatians+6%3A14)

The gospel of Jesus Christ always forces a decision of our will. Have I accepted God’s verdict on sin as judged on the Cross of Christ? Do I have even the slightest interest in the death of Jesus? Do I want to be identified with His death— to be completely dead to all interest in sin, worldliness, and self? Do I long to be so closely identified with Jesus that I am of no value for anything except Him and His purposes? The great privilege of discipleship is that I can commit myself under the banner of His Cross, and that means death to sin. You must get alone with Jesus and either decide to tell Him that you do not want sin to die out in you, or that at any cost you want to be identified with His death. When you act in confident faith in what our Lord did on the cross, a supernatural identification with His death takes place immediately. And you will come to know through a higher knowledge that your old life was “crucified with Him” ([Romans 6:6](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+6:6)). The proof that your old life is dead, having been “crucified with Christ” ([Galatians 2:20](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Galatians+2:20)), is the amazing ease with which the life of God in you now enables you to obey the voice of Jesus Christ.

Every once in a while our Lord gives us a glimpse of what we would be like if it were not for Him. This is a confirmation of what He said— “…without Me you can do nothing” ([John 15:5](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+15:5)). That is why the underlying foundation of Christianity is personal, passionate devotion to the Lord Jesus. We mistake the joy of our first introduction into God’s kingdom as His purpose for getting us there. Yet God’s purpose in getting us into His kingdom is that we may realize all that identification with Jesus Christ means.

**WISDOM FROM OSWALD CHAMBERS**

We should always choose our books as God chooses our friends, just a bit beyond us, so that we have to do our level best to keep up with them.

Shade of His Hand, 1216 L

# CCEL – 12/23/19

**Let him take hold of my strength, that he may make peace with me.**—[ISA. 27:5.](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Isa.27.html" \l "Isa.27.5)

I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil.—There is no peace, saith the Lord, unto the wicked.

In Christ Jesus ye who sometime were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace.

It pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell: and having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself.—Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past: . . . that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.—If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Trust ye in the Lord for ever, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength.

[Jer. 29:11](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Jer.29.html" \l "Jer.29.11). -[Isa. 48:22](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Isa.48.html" \l "Isa.48.22).[Eph. 2:13,14](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Eph.2.html" \l "Eph.2.13).[Col. 1:19,20](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Col.1.html" \l "Col.1.19). -[Rom. 3:24-26](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Rom.3.html" \l "Rom.3.24). -[I John 1:9](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iJohn.1.html" \l "iJohn.1.9).[Isa. 26:4](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Isa.26.html" \l "Isa.26.4).

“Friend, go up higher.” [Luke 14:10](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Luke.14.html" \l "Luke.14.10)

When first the life of grace begins in the soul, we do indeed draw near to God, but it is with great fear and trembling. The soul conscious of guilt, and humbled thereby, is overawed with the solemnity of its position; it is cast to the earth by a sense of the grandeur of Jehovah, in whose presence it stands. With unfeigned bashfulness it takes the lowest room.

But, in after life, as the Christian grows in grace, although he will never forget the solemnity of his position, and will never lose that holy awe which must encompass a gracious man when he is in the presence of the God who can create or can destroy; yet his fear has all its terror taken out of it; it becomes a holy reverence, and no more an overshadowing dread. He is called up higher, to greater access to God in Christ Jesus. Then the man of God, walking amid the splendours of Deity, and veiling his face like the glorious cherubim, with those twin wings, the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ, will, reverent and bowed in spirit, approach the throne; and seeing there a God of love, of goodness, and of mercy, he will realize rather the covenant character of God than his absolute Deity. He will see in God rather his goodness than his greatness, and more of his love than of his majesty. Then will the soul, bowing still as humbly as aforetime, enjoy a more sacred liberty of intercession; for while prostrate before the glory of the Infinite God, it will be sustained by the refreshing consciousness of being in the presence of boundless mercy and infinite love, and by the realization of acceptance “in the Beloved.” Thus the believer is bidden to come up higher, and is enabled to exercise the privilege of rejoicing in God, and drawing near to him in holy confidence, saying, “Abba, Father.”

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“So may we go from strength to strength,

And daily grow in grace,

Till in thine image raised at length,

We see thee face to face.”

# Word Live – 12/23/18

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

# Scripture Union – 12/23/19

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

# Today in the Word – 12/23/19

# Son of David

**Read:** [**Luke 1:26–38**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+1%3a26%e2%80%9338)

### **The Birth of Jesus Foretold**

26In the sixth month of Elizabeth’s pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, 27to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin’s name was Mary. 28The angel went to her and said, “Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you.”

29Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. 30But the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. 31You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. 32He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, 33and he will reign over Jacob’s descendants forever; his kingdom will never end.”

34“How will this be,” Mary asked the angel, “since I am a virgin?”

35The angel answered, “The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+1%3a26%e2%80%9338#fen-NIV-24929a)] the Son of God. 36Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month. 37For no word from God will ever fail.”

38“I am the Lord’s servant,” Mary answered. “May your word to me be fulfilled.” Then the angel left her.

#### **Footnotes:**

1. [Luke 1:35](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+1%3a26%e2%80%9338#en-NIV-24929) Or So the child to be born will be called holy,

Once King David was securely established on his throne, he wanted to build a temple for the Lord. God told him no, but also made a remarkable promise: “The Lord himself will establish a house for you” (2 Sam. 7:11). God’s faithful love would never be withdrawn from the line of David: “Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever” (v. 16).

He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. Luke 1:32

And we know the rest of the story! God’s covenant with David was fulfilled in the person of Jesus, Son of David (Luke 1:32b–33). Today begins four days of Christmas readings, starting with Gabriel’s announcement to Mary, called the Annunciation. The Eternal Word would become flesh, literally, in her womb (John 1:14). God would be one of us, with us—Immanuel (Isa. 7:14).

The baby’s name would be Jesus, the Greek form of Joshua, meaning “the Lord saves” (Luke 1:31). He would be “the Son of the Most High” or the “Son of God,” that is, the second person of the Trinity (vv. 32a, 35). As the Messiah and a descendant of King David (see the genealogies in both Matthew and Luke), He would be given the throne of David and fulfill God’s promise (vv. 32b–33).

There would be no biological father, though Joseph would become Jesus’ human father. Mary was a virgin. The life inside her would be conceived by God (v. 35). This is a miracle but not necessarily that surprising, given that God is the source of all life and made the first man out of dust, the first woman out of a rib.

Mary’s response was filled with faith, submission, and humility, despite the sheer size of the news and its unprecedented nature. Gabriel encouraged her with the reminder, “No word from God will ever fail” (v. 37).

### **Apply the Word**

What are you trusting God for this Christmas? Does it seem impossible? Remember you worship the God of the impossible. Perhaps you’re trying to work it out with your own resources or strength. If so, consider the faith-filled example of Mary, who said, “I am the Lord’s servant. . . . May your word to me be fulfilled” (v. 38).

### **Pray with Us**

Our reading today celebrates Immanuel, God with us. Let’s ask the Lord to grant us Mary’s ability to follow and obey Him with humility, and be encouraged as well by Gabriel’s words to her: “No word from God will ever fail” (Luke 1:37).

## BY Brad Baurain

# Our Daily Bread – 12/23/19

# A String of Yeses



**Read: Luke 2:15–19**

15When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let’s go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.”

16So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. 17When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, 18and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. 19But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart.

Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. Luke 2:19

One Christmas, my grandmother gave me a beautiful pearl necklace. The beautiful beads glowed about my neck until one day the string broke. Balls bounced in all directions off our home’s hardwood flooring. Crawling over the planks, I recovered each tiny orb. On their own, they were small. But oh, when strung together, those pearls made such an impression!

Sometimes my yeses to God seem so insignificant—like those individual pearls. I compare myself to Mary, the mother of Jesus who was so fantastically obedient. She said yes when she embraced God’s call for her to carry the Messiah. “‘I am the Lord’s servant,’ Mary answered. ‘May your word to me be fulfilled’” (Luke 1:38). Did she understand all that would be required of her? That an even bigger yes to relinquishing her Son on the cross loomed ahead?

After the visits of the angels and shepherds, Luke 2:19 tells us that Mary “treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart.” Treasure means to “store up.” Ponder means to “thread together.” The phrase is repeated of Mary in Luke 2:51. She would respond with many yeses over her lifetime.

As with Mary, the key to our obedience might be a threading together of various yeses to our Father’s invitations, one at a time, until they string into the treasure of a surrendered life.

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

#### **Reflect & Pray**

What yeses do you need to say to God? How can you learn to be more obedient?

Dear God, help us to respond, one yes at a time, to Your ongoing work in our lives.

#### **Insight**

In Luke 2:15–19, we see several responses to God’s revelation of Himself in Jesus. The shepherds responded by believing and then acting on their urgent desire to see what God had done (v. 15). After seeing Jesus, they shared the news (v. 17), which the people responded to with amazement (v. 18). But Mary’s response is arguably deeper than all of these responses, and likely one Luke intended to be a model of faith. When Mary “treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart” (v. 19), she continued a long tradition of God’s people responding to His revelation by internalizing it in their hearts through ongoing pondering or meditation (see Psalm 119:11; Proverbs 3:1–3).

By: [**Monica La Rose**](https://odb.org/author/monicabrands/)

# God Calling – 12/23/19

# The World's Song

**Bless us, O Lord, we beseech Thee and show us the way in which Thou wouldst have us walk.**

Walk with Me in the way of Peace. Shed Peace, not discord, wherever you go. But it must be My Peace.

Never a Peace that is a truce with the power of evil. Never harmony if that means your life-music being adapted to the mood and music of the world.

My disciples so often make the mistake of thinking all must be harmonious. No! Not when it means singing the song of the world.

I, the Prince of Peace, said that I came "not to bring Peace but a sword."

"And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also we are called...and be ye thankful." Colossians 3:15