# My Utmost for His Highest – 12/15/20

# “Approved to God”



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

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

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

**Wisdom From Oswald Chambers**

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

# CCEL – 12/15/20

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

# Word Live – 12/15/20

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

# Scripture Union – 12/15/20

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

# Today in the Word – 12/15/20

# The Joy of Finding Christ

**Read:** [**Matthew 13:44–46**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+13%3a44%e2%80%9346)

### **The Parables of the Hidden Treasure and the Pearl**

44“The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field.

45“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. 46When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it.

A French family found an unexpected treasure in 2018. It was a vase, kept in a shoebox and stashed in their attic because they didn’t like it much. When examined by experts, the vase turned out to be from the 18th century Qing dynasty in China. In perfect condition with remarkable artistic details, it sold at auction for $19 million!

Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. Luke 12:34

Before you run off to search your own attic for treasure, consider today’s parables. Both are pictures of what it’s like to find the kingdom of heaven. The first compares it to finding a treasure hidden in a field (v. 44). Hiding valuables in this way was more common in an age without safes or bank vaults. The discovery here was an unexpected surprise. Understanding the value of what he’s found, he rushes off joyfully to sell all he has in order to buy the field and thus obtain the treasure.

The second parable compares finding the kingdom of heaven to finding a pearl of tremendous value (vv. 45–46). The discovery comes after a long quest, but the result is the same. The man joyfully “sold everything he had and bought it” (v. 46). Both stories demonstrate the supreme worth of the kingdom—and by implication, of salvation and of Christ—and the necessity of total commitment. There can be nothing halfhearted about Christian discipleship.

The joy in these parables is in finding Christ, for He embodies the kingdom of heaven. Just as heaven rejoices when one lost sheep was found (see December 12), so also do the “lost sheep” celebrate the treasure of being found by the Good Shepherd. Their joy signals the start of a transformed life. After all, the treasure is not “ours,” but rather we belong to the kingdom!

**Apply the Word**

Did you ever find an unexpected treasure, like a dollar bill left in your pocket? Or maybe it was something you actively searched for, like geocaching. Luke 12:34 encourages us to ask: Where or what is my treasure? What do I value above all else?

### **Pray with Us**

We are the lost sheep who have been found, and we rejoice in this glorious truth! We praise you, Jesus, our Great Shepherd, and our greatest treasure.

## BY Brad Baurain

# Our Daily Bread – 12/15/20

# Gentle Speech

 **Read:** [**2 Timothy 2:22–26**](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2%20Tim%202.22%E2%80%9326)

22Flee the evil desires of youth and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart. 23Don’t have anything to do with foolish and stupid arguments, because you know they produce quarrels. 24And the Lord’s servant must not be quarrelsome but must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. 25Opponents must be gently instructed, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, 26and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will.

The Lord’s servant must not be quarrelsome. [2 Timothy 2:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2%20Tim%202.24)

I was on Facebook, arguing. Bad move. What made me think I was obligated to “correct” a stranger on a hot topic—especially a divisive one? The results were heated words, hurt feelings (on my part anyway), and a broken opportunity to witness well for Jesus. That’s the sum outcome of “internet anger.” It’s the term for the harsh words flung daily across the blogosphere. As one ethics expert explained, people wrongly conclude that rage “is how public ideas are talked about.”

Paul’s wise advice to Timothy gave the same caution. “Don’t have anything to do with foolish and stupid arguments, because you know they produce quarrels. And the Lord’s servant must not be quarrelsome but must be kind to everyone” ([2 Timothy 2:23–24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2%20Tim%202.23%E2%80%9324)).

Paul’s good counsel, written to Timothy from a Roman prison, was sent to prepare the young pastor for teaching God’s truth. The apostle’s advice is just as timely for us today, especially when the conversation turns to our faith. “Opponents must be gently instructed, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth” (v. 25).

Speaking kindly to others is part of this challenge, but not just for pastors. For all who love God and seek to tell others about Him, may we speak His truth in love. With every word, the Holy Spirit will help us.

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

#### **Reflect & Pray**

Why is it vital as a believer in Jesus to avoid arguing with others on the internet (and in other contexts)? When you’re led by the Holy Spirit, how does the tone of your comments—your heart—change?

Father God, when I’m speaking to others about Your truth—or other interests—indwell my heart and tongue with Your love.

Read Words Matter: Speaking with Wisdom in an Age of Outrage at [DiscoverySeries.org/courses/words-matter.](https://DiscoverySeries.org/courses/words-matter.)

#### **Insight**

In his second letter to young pastor Timothy, Paul uses some familiar words that are worth exploring a bit deeper. In [2 Timothy 2:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2%20Tim%202.22), Paul encourages Timothy to “flee the evil desires of youth.” The word Paul uses for flee is pheuge, which means “escape” or “run away.” Paul is telling him to remove himself physically from the danger. In the moment of temptation, the best thing to do isn’t to fill ourselves with courage and rely on our willpower, but to run away. This word is also used in Paul’s first letter to Timothy (6:11) when he tells the young man to flee from the love of money. And we see it in [Matthew 2:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt%202.13), when the angel of the Lord tells Joseph to take the baby Jesus and Mary and escape to Egypt.

# God Calling – 12/15/20

# By My Spirit

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

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

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

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

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

# My Utmost for His Highest – 12/16/20

# Wrestling Before God



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

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

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

**Wisdom From Oswald Chambers**

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

# CCEL – 12/16/20

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

# Word Live – 12/16/20

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

# Scripture Union – 12/16/20

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

# Today in the Word – 12/16/20

# The Joy of the Resurrection

**Read:** [**1 Corinthians 15:12–23**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Corinthians+15%3a12%e2%80%9323)

### **The Resurrection of the Dead**

12But if it is preached that Christ has been raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? 13If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. 14And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. 15More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God, for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead. But he did not raise him if in fact the dead are not raised. 16For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either. 17And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. 18Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. 19If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied.

20But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. 21For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. 22For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. 23But each in turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him.

As we celebrate the birth of Jesus, we must not forget the joy of the Resurrection (Matt. 28:1–10; Luke 24:36–53). What an incredible example of tremendous grief turned to overwhelming joy! After Jesus was executed, His followers were mourning and afraid. Would the authorities come for them next? Then the women brought an incredible tale—Jesus was alive! His grave was empty and the stone rolled away! Their lives, and indeed the entire world, had been turned upside down.

Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting? 1 Corinthians 15:55

The fact that Jesus died and was resurrected is our hope and joy because Christ’s resurrection guarantees our own! To rejoice in the hope of resurrection is an act of faith. From God’s perspective, it has already been accomplished. Christ is “the firstborn from among the dead” (Col. 1:18). There will be many to follow, including ourselves.

Paul asked, “What if there is no resurrection?” (1 Cor. 15:13–18). In that case, Christ has not been raised, our faith is useless, and the gospel is false. If this were true, we’re not saved, and the dead will stay dead. Without the truth and doctrine of the resurrection, we cannot have hope or faith in Christ (v. 19). If this life is all there is, and death is the end, then death and sin have won.

On the other hand, if Christ did rise from the dead, then so will we (vv. 20–23). In this case, our faith is powerful, the gospel is true, we’re saved from sin, and proclaiming the good news of Christ is our greatest privilege and responsibility. He has won the victory, all praise and glory to Him!

**Apply the Word**

It may seem odd to read about the resurrection at Christmas. But we can more fully appreciate the story of Jesus’ birth when we know the ending. Today, we thank God for the joy of His birth and the joy of His resurrection which conquered the grave once and for all.

### **Pray with Us**

As Christ was resurrected, so are we raised with Him. Thank you, Father, for the resurrection and the new life you give us. Because Christ lives, we have assured faith, confident joy, and guaranteed hope.

## BY Brad Baurain

# Our Daily Bread – 12/16/20

# Christmas Awe

 **Read:** [**Hebrews 1:1–9**](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb%201.1%E2%80%939)

### **God’s Final Word: His Son**

1 In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, 2but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe. 3The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven. 4So he became as much superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is superior to theirs.

### **The Son Superior to Angels**

5For to which of the angels did God ever say,

“You are my Son;  
    today I have become your Father”[[a](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Hebrews+1%3A1%E2%80%939&version=NIV" \l "fen-NIV-29969a" \o "See footnote a)]?

Or again,

“I will be his Father,  
    and he will be my Son”[[b](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Hebrews+1%3A1%E2%80%939&version=NIV" \l "fen-NIV-29969b" \o "See footnote b)]?

6And again, when God brings his firstborn into the world, he says,

“Let all God’s angels worship him.”[[c](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Hebrews+1%3A1%E2%80%939&version=NIV#fen-NIV-29970c)]

7In speaking of the angels he says,

“He makes his angels spirits,  
    and his servants flames of fire.”[[d](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Hebrews+1%3A1%E2%80%939&version=NIV#fen-NIV-29971d)]

8But about the Son he says,

“Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever;  
    a scepter of justice will be the scepter of your kingdom.  
9You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness;  
    therefore God, your God, has set you above your companions  
    by anointing you with the oil of joy.”[[e](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Hebrews+1%3A1%E2%80%939&version=NIV#fen-NIV-29973e)]

#### **Footnotes:**

1. [Hebrews 1:5](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Hebrews+1%3A1%E2%80%939&version=NIV#en-NIV-29969) Psalm 2:7
2. [Hebrews 1:5](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Hebrews+1%3A1%E2%80%939&version=NIV#en-NIV-29969) 2 Samuel 7:14; 1 Chron. 17:13
3. [Hebrews 1:6](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Hebrews+1%3A1%E2%80%939&version=NIV#en-NIV-29970) Deut. 32:43 (see Dead Sea Scrolls and Septuagint)
4. [Hebrews 1:7](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Hebrews+1%3A1%E2%80%939&version=NIV#en-NIV-29971) Psalm 104:4
5. [Hebrews 1:9](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Hebrews+1%3A1%E2%80%939&version=NIV#en-NIV-29973) Psalm 45:6,7

Let all God’s angels worship him. [Hebrews 1:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb%201.6)

I was in London one night for a meeting. It was pouring rain, and I was late. I rushed through the streets, turned a corner, and then stopped still. Dozens of angels hovered above Regent Street, their giant shimmering wings stretching across the traffic. Made of thousands of pulsing lights, it was the most amazing Christmas display I’d seen. I wasn’t the only one captivated. Hundreds lined the street, gazing up in awe.

Awe is central to the Christmas story. When the angel appeared to Mary explaining she would miraculously conceive ([Luke 1:26–38](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke%201.26%E2%80%9338)), and to the shepherds announcing Jesus’ birth (2:8–20), each reacted with fear, wonder—and awe. Looking around at that Regent Street crowd, I wondered if we were experiencing in part what those first angelic encounters felt like.

A moment later, I noticed something else. Some of the angels had their arms raised, as if they too were gazing up at something. Like the angelic choir that burst into song at the mention of Jesus (vv. 13–14), it seems angels too can be caught up in awe—as they gaze on Him.

“The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being” ([Hebrews 1:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb%201.3)). Bright and luminous, Jesus is the focus of every angel’s gaze (v. 6). If an angel-themed Christmas display can stop busy Londoners in their tracks, just imagine the moment when we see Him face-to-face.

By:  [Sheridan Voysey](https://odb.org/author/svoysey/)

#### **Reflect & Pray**

When was the last time you felt a sense of awe? How can you rekindle a sense of awe over Jesus this Christmastime?

Father, I worship You. Thank You for the gift of Your awesome Son.

#### **Insight**

In the face of opposition and the temptation to revert back to Judaism, the author of Hebrews writes to Jewish brothers and sisters suffering for their confession of faith in Jesus (10:32–39). Some were tempted to retreat to a temple-centered way of life. The writer, seemingly known to his first readers (13:18–25), warns against the natural inclination to slip back into old ways adhering to rules and regulations rather than living in the spirit and grace of Christ (2:9; 4:14–16). Intimately acquainted with both Jesus and temple worship, this author reasons that all lesser forms of ritual and revelation point beyond themselves to the greater glory of the Son—and ultimate Word of God (1:1–3)—who tasted death for everyone (2:9, 15).

Visit [ChristianUniversity.org/NT337](https://ChristianUniversity.org/NT337) to learn more about the book of Hebrews.

# God Calling – 12/16/20

# Union Is Power

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

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

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

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

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

# My Utmost for His Highest – 12/17/20

# 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 – 12/17/20

Quicken us, and we will call upon thy name.—[PSA. 80:18.](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.80.html#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#John.6.63). -[Rom. 8:26,27](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Rom.8.html#Rom.8.26). -[Eph. 6:18](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Eph.6.html#Eph.6.18).[Psa. 119:93](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.119.html#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#iiCor.3.6). -[John 15:7](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.John.15.html#John.15.7). -[I John 5:14](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iJohn.5.html#iJohn.5.14).[I Cor. 12:3](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iCor.12.html#iCor.12.3).

“I remember thee.” [Jeremiah 2:2](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Jer.2.html#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#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#Gen.32.24)), beneath the walls of Jericho ([Jos. 5:13](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Josh.5.html#Josh.5.13)), and in the fiery furnace of Babylon ([Dan. 3:19](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Dan.3.html#Dan.3.19), [25](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Dan.3.html#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 – 12/17/20

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

# Scripture Union – 12/17/20

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

# Today in the Word – 12/17/20

# Our Living Hope and Joy

**Read:** [**1 Peter 1:3–9**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Peter+1%3a3%e2%80%939)

### **Praise to God for a Living Hope**

3Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, 5who through faith are shielded by God’s power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. 6In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. 7These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. 8Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, 9for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

A popular contemporary Christmas song by Keith Getty and Stuart Townend declares: “Joy has dawned upon the world, / Promised from creation: / God’s salvation now unfurled, / Hope for every nation. / Not with fanfares from above, / Not with scenes of glory, / But a humble gift of love: / Jesus born of Mary.”

He has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Peter 1:3

Christ is indeed our living hope and joy! All four themes of Advent are found in Him and especially in His work of salvation (vv. 3–5). Salvation is new birth (past) into a living hope (present) through Christ’s resurrection, with a secure inheritance (future) yet to be fully received. God did all this out of His great mercy, and our best response is joy, praise, and worship. In our present Christian lives, we’re to live as people who “through faith are shielded by God’s power” (v. 5). Since He’s omnipotent or all-powerful, we can therefore live with absolute confidence that nothing can happen to us that is out of His control.

This kind of faith is not a sad or stoic thing, but a joy-filled responsibility (vv. 6–9). Though we’re sure to experience trials and sufferings, these prove the quality of our faith and therefore bring more glory to God (see also James 1:2–4). They’re part of the process of our sanctification: To believe in Christ means to love Him and to be filled with “an inexpressible and glorious joy” (v. 8) as we journey on toward the Celestial City. The word for “joy” here carries the specific sense of exultation and victory. Peter began verse 8, “Though you have not seen him” because he’d actually seen Jesus, but he knew the readers of his epistle had not—including us!

**Apply the Word**

Do you have the assurance of salvation? There are times when we might backslide and wonder if we’re still saved. Satan might even whisper nagging doubts into our minds. But there’s no need to worry! Our salvation is secure in God’s hands, now and forever.

### **Pray with Us**

Father, there are times when we may doubt your promises, flee righteousness, or live in apathy. We pray that you will always draw us back and fill our hearts with renewed fervor. Thank you that our salvation is secure in you.

## BY Brad Baurain

# Our Daily Bread – 12/17/20

# Leave a Little Behind

 **Read:** [**Leviticus 23:15–22**](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Lev%2023.15%E2%80%9322)

#### **The Festival of Weeks**

15“‘From the day after the Sabbath, the day you brought the sheaf of the wave offering, count off seven full weeks. 16Count off fifty days up to the day after the seventh Sabbath, and then present an offering of new grain to the Lord. 17From wherever you live, bring two loaves made of two-tenths of an ephah of the finest flour, baked with yeast, as a wave offering of firstfruits to the Lord. 18Present with this bread seven male lambs, each a year old and without defect, one young bull and two rams. They will be a burnt offering to the Lord, together with their grain offerings and drink offerings—a food offering, an aroma pleasing to the Lord. 19Then sacrifice one male goat for a sin offering[[a](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Leviticus+23%3A15%E2%80%9322&version=NIV#fen-NIV-3422a)] and two lambs, each a year old, for a fellowship offering. 20The priest is to wave the two lambs before the Lord as a wave offering, together with the bread of the firstfruits. They are a sacred offering to the Lord for the priest. 21On that same day you are to proclaim a sacred assembly and do no regular work. This is to be a lasting ordinance for the generations to come, wherever you live.

22“‘When you reap the harvest of your land, do not reap to the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest. Leave them for the poor and for the foreigner residing among you. I am the Lord your God.’”

#### **Footnotes:**

1. [Leviticus 23:19](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Leviticus+23%3A15%E2%80%9322&version=NIV#en-NIV-3422) Or purification offering

Leave them for the poor and for the foreigner residing among you. [Leviticus 23:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Lev%2023.22)

Pennies, nickels, dimes, quarters, and occasionally a half-dollar. That’s what you’d find on the nightstand beside his bed. He’d empty his pockets each evening and leave the contents there, for he knew eventually they’d come to visit—they being his grandchildren. Over the years the kids learned to visit his nightstand as soon as they arrived. He could have put all that spare change in a coin bank or even stored it away in a savings account. But he didn’t. He delighted in leaving it there for the little ones, the precious guests in his home.

A similar mindset is what’s expressed in [Leviticus 23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Lev%2023) when it comes to bringing in the harvest from the land. God, via Moses, told the people something quite counterintuitive: not to “reap to the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest” (v. 22). Essentially, He said, “Leave a little behind.” This instruction reminded the people that God was behind the harvest in the first place, and that He used His people to provide for those of little account (the strangers in the land).

Such thinking is definitely not the norm in our world. But it’s exactly the kind of mindset that will characterize the grateful sons and daughters of God. He delights in a generous heart. And that often comes through you and me.

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

#### **Reflect & Pray**

What’s your first reaction to the thought of “leaving a little behind”? What’s one way you could practice such thankful generosity toward the poor or the strangers in your life?

Loving God, thank You for Your provision in my life. Give me eyes to see ways in which I can share with others, especially those poor and in need.

#### **Insight**

Today’s passage from [Leviticus 23:15–22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Lev%2023.15%E2%80%9322) refers to one of the annual Jewish festivals known as the Feast (or Festival) of Weeks. This Old Testament festival began fifty days after the Festival of First Fruits (see vv. 9–14). It included animal sacrifices and grain offerings and was a time of rejoicing and thanksgiving to God for His great bounty. It was also an occasion to be generous with the poor (v. 22). In the New Testament, it’s referred to as Pentecost ([Acts 2:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts%202.1); from the Greek word for fiftieth), the day when the Holy Spirit came upon 120 believers in Jesus gathered in an upper room (1:15).

# God Calling – 12/17/20

# 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 – 12/18/20

# 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 – 12/18/20

**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 – 12/18/20

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

# Scripture Union – 12/18/20

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

# Today in the Word – 12/18/20

# Rejoice Always

**Read:** [**Philippians 4:4–9**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Philippians+4%3a4%e2%80%939)

### **Final Exhortations**

4Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! 5Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. 6Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

8Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. 9Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

The very first Christmas card was designed and printed in 1843 in England. Two outer panels showed people caring for the poor, while an inner center panel pictured a family enjoying Christmas dinner. Though their popularity is decreasing among younger generations today, as recently as 2010 an estimated 1.5 billion Christmas cards were sent in the United States. That accounted for 45 percent of all cards sent throughout the year!

Rejoice in the Lord always, I will say it again: Rejoice! Philippians 4:4

Especially among friends and family, Christmas is a season of fellowship and joy. In today’s reading, Paul wasn’t necessarily thinking of Christmas, but the four themes of Advent appear nonetheless. First, joy. He exhorted the Philippians to rejoice always (v. 4). “In the Lord” meant this wasn’t part of the ebb and flow of our normal emotions, but rather an essential connection to the truth of the gospel. Does “always” mean we never feel sad? No. Paradoxically, Christians are capable of lamenting and rejoicing at the same time.

Second, hope. “The Lord is near” reminds believers of the hope of Christ’s Second Coming (v. 5). With reference to the present, when we have anxieties and worries, hope means we can turn them over to the Lord in prayer, with thanksgiving (v. 6). Why carry such a heavy burden ourselves?

Third, peace. When we turn our anxieties over to the Lord in prayer, the result is the peace of Christ guarding our hearts and minds (v. 7). Christ’s peace stands sentry at the door of our hearts, making sure life’s troubles do not trouble us. This kind of peace comes from knowing God is in control. Fourth, love. This is the way to put the gospel into practice (v. 9).

**Apply the Word**

Another traditional part of family and church Christmas celebrations is a Nativity or manger scene. They can be as small as an ornament or a life-size outdoor display. In what ways do you think this special holiday decoration helps us celebrate the joy of Christmas?

### **Pray with Us**

Lord, we look to you for the joy that surpasses understanding. We place our hope in you, regardless of defeat. We find peace in your power, unfazed by fear. We draw on your love, unchecked by human weakness, to love others.

## BY Brad Baurain

# Our Daily Bread – 12/18/20

# The Language of the Cross

 **Read:** [**Romans 5:1–10**](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom%205.1%E2%80%9310)

### **Peace and Hope**

5 Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we[[a](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+5%3A1%E2%80%9310&version=NIV#fen-NIV-28049a)] have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, 2through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we[[b](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+5%3A1%E2%80%9310&version=NIV#fen-NIV-28050b)] boast in the hope of the glory of God. 3Not only so, but we[[c](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+5%3A1%E2%80%9310&version=NIV#fen-NIV-28051c)] also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; 4perseverance, character; and character, hope. 5And hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.

6You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. 7Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. 8But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

9Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God’s wrath through him! 10For if, while we were God’s enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!

#### **Footnotes:**

1. [Romans 5:1](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+5%3A1%E2%80%9310&version=NIV#en-NIV-28049) Many manuscripts let us
2. [Romans 5:2](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+5%3A1%E2%80%9310&version=NIV#en-NIV-28050) Or let us
3. [Romans 5:3](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+5%3A1%E2%80%9310&version=NIV#en-NIV-28051) Or let us

God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. [Romans 5:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom%205.8)

Pastor Tim Keller said, “Nobody ever learns who they are by being told. They must be shown.” In a sense, it’s one application of the adage, “Actions speak louder than words.” Spouses show their mates that they’re appreciated by listening to them and loving them. Parents show their children they’re valued by lovingly caring for them. Coaches show athletes they have potential by investing in their development. And on it goes. By the same token, a different kind of action can show people painful things that communicate much darker messages.

Of all the action-based messages in the universe, there’s one that matters most. When we want to be shown who we are in God’s eyes, we need look no further than His actions on the cross. In [Romans 5:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom%205.8), Paul wrote, “God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” The cross shows us who we are: those whom God so loved that He gave His one and only Son for us ([John 3:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John%203.16)).

Against the mixed messages and confusing actions of broken people in a broken culture, the message of God’s heart rings clear. Who are you? You’re the one so loved by God that He gave His Son for Your rescue. Consider the price He paid for you and the wonderful reality that, to Him, you were always worth it.

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

#### **Reflect & Pray**

How have you been defining your worth? What false messages might you need to discard or reject in exchange for comprehending the value that God places on you?

Father, I can never understand why You would love me so much or give Your Son for my forgiveness. Your love is unsearchable and Your grace is amazing. Thank You for making me Your child!

See The 4-D Love of God at [DiscoverTheWord.org/series/the-4-d-love-of-god.](https://DiscoverTheWord.org/series/the-4-d-love-of-god.)

#### **Insight**

In [Romans 1–3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom%201%E2%80%933), Paul begins his letter by showing that those who reject Jesus are enemies of God and objects of His wrath (1:18; 2:5; 3:23). Then he shares the good news of God’s salvation through Christ: “God, in his grace, freely makes us right in his sight. He did this through Christ Jesus when he freed us from the penalty for our sins. For God presented Jesus as the sacrifice for sin” (3:24–25 nlt). In [Romans 5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom%205), Paul affirms God’s lavish love for us. First, we know how much He loves us “because he has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with his love” (5:5 nlt). Second, while we were still God’s enemies (vv. 6–10), He showed His great love by giving us His only Son to be “an atoning sacrifice for our sins” ([1 John 4:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1%20John%204.10)) and making us “friends of God” ([Romans 5:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom%205.11) nlt).

# God Calling – 12/18/20

# 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 – 12/19/20

# 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 – 12/19/20

**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 – 12/19/20

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

# Scripture Union – 12/19/20

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

# Today in the Word – 12/19/20

# The Prince of Peace

**Read:** [**Isaiah 9:2–7**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isaiah+9%3a2%e2%80%937)

2The people walking in darkness  
    have seen a great light;  
on those living in the land of deep darkness  
    a light has dawned.  
3You have enlarged the nation  
    and increased their joy;  
they rejoice before you  
    as people rejoice at the harvest,  
as warriors rejoice  
    when dividing the plunder.  
4For as in the day of Midian’s defeat,  
    you have shattered  
the yoke that burdens them,  
    the bar across their shoulders,  
    the rod of their oppressor.  
5Every warrior’s boot used in battle  
    and every garment rolled in blood  
will be destined for burning,  
    will be fuel for the fire.  
6For to us a child is born,  
    to us a son is given,  
    and the government will be on his shoulders.  
And he will be called  
    Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,  
    Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.  
7Of the greatness of his government and peace  
    there will be no end.  
He will reign on David’s throne  
    and over his kingdom,  
establishing and upholding it  
    with justice and righteousness  
    from that time on and forever.  
The zeal of the Lord Almighty  
    will accomplish this.

Right now, how many wars do you think are happening around the globe? The United Nations has three criteria for a conflict to be called a war: First, it must involve armed struggle by at least one province against another. Second, it must be formally declared. And third, it must have been going on for at least six months. Using these standards, there are 134 wars taking place around the world at the time this was written.

The people walking in darkness have seen a great light. Isaiah 9:2

Is it any wonder we long for the Prince of Peace to return? Tomorrow is the fourth Sunday of Advent, for which the traditional theme is peace. Today’s word of Messianic prophecy names the Lord using several related titles and word-pictures. His coming, wrote Isaiah, will be like a light in the darkness, like the hope of dawn’s arrival (v. 2). Jesus called Himself the “light of the world” (John 8:12), and His disciple Peter later celebrated God’s calling us “out of darkness into his wonderful light” (1 Peter 2:9). In the shorter term, though God had allowed the conquest and exile of His disobedient people, one day He would shatter the yoke of oppression and liberate them, just as in the days of Gideon (vv. 3–4). The picture of burning the warrior’s boots (v. 5) indicates the arrival of a time of peace. In the longer term, God would send a once-for-all liberator, Messiah Jesus, who would fulfill God’s plan of redemption (vv. 6–7). He would be the Wonderful Counselor, acting in marvelous wisdom; the Mighty God, or all-powerful Divine Warrior (see Ps. 24:8); the Everlasting Father, provider, and protector (see 2 Sam. 7:16); and the Prince of Peace, the One who will bring not only the end of all wars but also complete shalom or holistic well-being (see Isa. 11:6–9).

**Apply the Word**

If you enjoy classical Christmas music, one album I love that includes all the themes of Advent is Angels’ Glory, featuring Kathleen Battle (voice) and Christopher Parkening (guitar). Listen to your favorite Christmas music as a part of your worship time today.

### **Pray with Us**

Lord Jesus, you are the ultimate victor, and we rejoice that your victory guarantees a future of peace. Fill our hearts and minds with your peace today.

## BY Brad Baurain

# Our Daily Bread – 12/19/20

# Who Are You Wearing?

 **Read:** [**Zechariah 3:1–7**](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Zech%203.1%E2%80%937)

### **Clean Garments for the High Priest**

3 Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan[[a](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Zechariah+3%3A1%E2%80%937+%2C+10&version=NIV#fen-NIV-22914a)] standing at his right side to accuse him. 2The Lord said to Satan, “The Lord rebuke you, Satan! The Lord, who has chosen Jerusalem, rebuke you! Is not this man a burning stick snatched from the fire?”

3Now Joshua was dressed in filthy clothes as he stood before the angel. 4The angel said to those who were standing before him, “Take off his filthy clothes.”

Then he said to Joshua, “See, I have taken away your sin, and I will put fine garments on you.”

5Then I said, “Put a clean turban on his head.” So they put a clean turban on his head and clothed him, while the angel of the Lord stood by.

6The angel of the Lord gave this charge to Joshua: 7“This is what the Lord Almighty says: ‘If you will walk in obedience to me and keep my requirements, then you will govern my house and have charge of my courts, and I will give you a place among these standing here.

#### **Footnotes:**

1. [Zechariah 3:1](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Zechariah+3%3A1%E2%80%937+%2C+10&version=NIV#en-NIV-22914) Hebrew satan means adversary.

**Read:** [**Zechariah 3:**](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Zech%203.1%E2%80%937)[**10**](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Zechariah%203.10)

10“‘In that day each of you will invite your neighbor to sit under your vine and fig tree,’ declares the Lord Almighty.”

I have taken away your sin, and I will put fine garments on you. [Zechariah 3:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Zech%203.4)

The Argentine women’s basketball team came to their tournament game wearing the wrong uniforms. Their navy blue jerseys were too similar to Colombia’s dark blue jerseys, and as the visiting team they should have worn white. With no time to find replacement uniforms and change, they had to forfeit the game. In the future, Argentina will surely double-check what they’re wearing.

In the time of the prophet Zechariah, God showed him a vision in which the high priest Joshua came before God wearing smelly, filthy clothes. Satan sneered and pointed. He’s disqualified! Game over! But there was time to change. God rebuked Satan and told His angel to remove Joshua’s grubby garments. He turned to Joshua, “See, I have taken away your sin, and I will put fine garments on you” ([Zechariah 3:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Zech%203.4)).

We came into this world wearing the stench of Adam’s sin, which we layer over with sin of our own. If we stay in our filthy clothes, we’ll lose the game of life. If we become disgusted with our sin and turn to Jesus, He’ll dress us from head to toe with Himself and His righteousness. It’s time to check, Who are we wearing?

The final stanza of the hymn “The Solid Rock” explains how we win. “When He shall come with trumpet sound, / Oh, may I then in Him be found; / Dressed in His righteousness alone, / Faultless to stand before the throne.”

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

#### **Reflect & Pray**

Who are you wearing? Are you trusting in your own goodness or Jesus? Which do you want God and others to notice?

Jesus, thank You for providing the way for my sin to be removed and for Your righteousness to cover me.

#### **Insight**

The Old Testament records more than thirty men named Zechariah, a name which means “the Lord remembers.” However, none is more prominent than the Zechariah who wrote the book that bears his name. Zechariah is the longest of the twelve prophetic books from Hosea to Malachi, but because it’s relatively shorter than books like Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel (Major Prophets), it’s classified among the Minor Prophets. Zechariah was a post-exilic prophet; his ministry took place after the Babylonian exile (after 538 bc). Information within the book helps to determine the time of his service. [Zechariah 1:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Zech%201.1) and [7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Zechariah%201.7) mention Zechariah receiving a message from God in the second year of Darius. [Zechariah 7:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Zech%207.1) mentions the fourth year of Darius who was the Persian king who ruled from 522–486 bc.

# God Calling – 12/19/20

# 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 – 12/20/20

# 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 – 12/20/20

**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 – 12/20/20

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

# Scripture Union – 12/20/20

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

# Today in the Word – 12/20/20

# The Fourth Week of Advent: Peace

**Read:** [**Luke 1:67–79**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+1%3a67%e2%80%9379)

### **Zechariah’s Song**

67His father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied:

68“Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel,  
    because he has come to his people and redeemed them.  
69He has raised up a horn[[a](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+1%3a67%e2%80%9379#fen-NIV-24963a)] of salvation for us  
    in the house of his servant David  
70(as he said through his holy prophets of long ago),  
71salvation from our enemies  
    and from the hand of all who hate us—  
72to show mercy to our ancestors  
    and to remember his holy covenant,  
73    the oath he swore to our father Abraham:  
74to rescue us from the hand of our enemies,  
    and to enable us to serve him without fear  
75    in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.

76And you, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High;  
    for you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him,  
77to give his people the knowledge of salvation  
    through the forgiveness of their sins,  
78because of the tender mercy of our God,  
    by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven  
79to shine on those living in darkness  
    and in the shadow of death,  
to guide our feet into the path of peace.”

#### **Footnotes:**

1. [Luke 1:69](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+1%3a67%e2%80%9379#en-NIV-24963) Horn here symbolizes a strong king.

The dedication of a baby is a special event. On that important day, the parents and infant dress for the occasion, standing in front of the congregation while the pastor officiates. Church practices may differ, but they have a similar intent—that these little ones will know God and experience His blessing. It is a solemn moment, as parents, family members, and the church pledge to raise this child to know and love God.

The punishment that brought us peace was on him. Isaiah 53:5

Today is the fourth and final Sunday of Advent. Our reading is Zechariah’s song on the occasion of the birth of his son, John the Baptist. Packed with Old Testament allusions, this song is primarily about God and the coming of the Messiah. God’s promises and plan of redemption had been at work throughout biblical history (vv. 68–75). Now a “horn of salvation” (v. 69) had been raised up, just as God had promised to Abraham and foretold through many prophets. This Person would serve God in perfect righteousness and bring divine mercy and deliverance to us who are helpless to save ourselves.

Zechariah’s son, John, would prepare the way with a message of repentance and forgiveness (vv. 76–77). He would be followed by the Messiah Himself, Jesus Christ (vv. 78–79). He would bring spiritual light (see Isa. 9:2) and “guide our feet into the path of peace.” Peace with God would come at a high price, paid by God Himself through the death of His Son. While today’s parents wish all good things for their child’s future, Jesus was born at Christmas in order to be “pierced for our transgressions” and “crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds, we are healed” (Isa. 53:5).

**Apply the Word**

We’ve shared several favorite Christmas songs, poems, and books during this month’s study. What are some of your personal favorites? How do they help prepare your heart for Christmas? Why not gift one to a friend?

### **Pray with Us**

Father, thank you for your redeeming love that gave us eternal life, joy, and peace in Christ. Help us to walk worthy of your kingdom!

## BY Brad Baurain

# Our Daily Bread – 12/20/20

# Look for the Green

 **Read:** [**Psalm 23**](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps%2023)

#### **A psalm of David.**

1The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing.  
2    He makes me lie down in green pastures,  
he leads me beside quiet waters,  
3    he refreshes my soul.  
He guides me along the right paths  
    for his name’s sake.  
4Even though I walk  
    through the darkest valley,[[a](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+23&version=NIV" \l "fen-NIV-14240a" \o "See footnote a)]  
I will fear no evil,  
    for you are with me;  
your rod and your staff,  
    they comfort me.

5You prepare a table before me  
    in the presence of my enemies.  
You anoint my head with oil;  
    my cup overflows.  
6Surely your goodness and love will follow me  
    all the days of my life,  
and I will dwell in the house of the Lord  
    forever.

#### **Footnotes:**

1. [Psalm 23:4](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+23&version=NIV#en-NIV-14240) Or the valley of the shadow of death

The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing. [Psalm 23:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps%2023.1)

The gravelly voiced captain announced yet another delay. Crammed in my window seat aboard a plane that had already sat unmoving for two hours, I chafed in frustration. After a long workweek away, I longed for the comfort and rest of home. How much longer? As I gazed out the raindrop-covered window, I noticed a lonely triangle of green grass growing in the gap of cement where runways met. Such an odd sight in the middle of all that concrete.

As an experienced shepherd, David knew well the need to provide the rest of green pastures for his sheep. In [Psalm 23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps%2023), he penned an important lesson that would carry him forward in the exhausting days of leading as king of Israel. “The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing. He makes me lie down in green pastures, . . . he refreshes my soul” (vv. 1–3).

On the concrete jungle of an airport tarmac, delayed from my destination and feeling the lack of comfort and rest, God, my good Shepherd, directed my eyes to a patch of green. In relationship with Him, I can discover His ongoing provision of rest wherever I am—if I notice and enter it.

The lesson has lingered over the years: look for the green. It’s there. With God in our lives, we lack nothing. He makes us lie down in green pastures. He refreshes our souls.

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

#### **Reflect & Pray**

Where can you look for the green today? In what ways has God provided a moment of rest when you thought it was impossible?

Loving God, thank You for being my Shepherd and for making me lie down in green pastures to refresh my soul.

#### **Insight**

As a young man in rural Bethlehem, David killed dangerous predators that stalked his father’s sheep. Later he knew great victory in battle and also the terror of fleeing for his life from a jealous king (and later from his own son). Through it all, David learned he could rely on his Shepherd. And that’s the greatest reason for [Psalm 23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps%2023)’s universal appeal. The object of praise is the Good Shepherd—David’s and ours. This wasn’t the first time God had been seen as a shepherd. As Jacob lay dying, he referred to God as a shepherd, saying, “The God who has been my shepherd” ([Genesis 48:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen%2048.15)) and credited “the Shepherd, the Rock of Israel” (49:24) for Joseph’s blessings.

The shepherd imagery used by David was later referenced by Jesus, who said, “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep” ([John 10:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John%2010.11)).

# God Calling – 12/20/20

# 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 – 12/21/20

# 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 – 12/21/20

**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 – 12/21/20

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

# Scripture Union – 12/21/20

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

# Today in the Word – 12/21/20

# Christ, Our Peace with God

**Read:** [**Romans 5:1–8**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+5%3a1%e2%80%938)

### **Peace and Hope**

5 Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we[[a](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+5%3a1%e2%80%938#fen-NIV-28049a)] have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, 2through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we[[b](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+5%3a1%e2%80%938#fen-NIV-28050b)] boast in the hope of the glory of God. 3Not only so, but we[[c](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+5%3a1%e2%80%938#fen-NIV-28051c)] also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; 4perseverance, character; and character, hope. 5And hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.

6You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. 7Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. 8But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

#### **Footnotes:**

1. [Romans 5:1](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+5%3a1%e2%80%938#en-NIV-28049) Many manuscripts let us
2. [Romans 5:2](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+5%3a1%e2%80%938#en-NIV-28050) Or let us
3. [Romans 5:3](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+5%3a1%e2%80%938#en-NIV-28051) Or let us

When we say it’s beginning to feel a lot like Christmas, we may be referring to the changes taking place in our home. Scattered family members often return. A tree is decked with ornaments. Cookies are baked and stockings hung. Holiday movies are watched, over and over again. Christmas carols fill the house.

While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.Romans 5:8

These special traditions may help us sense God’s peace. But to think properly of “peace,” we should think first and foremost of peace with God. He is perfectly holy, so our sinfulness makes us His enemies. Unless we repent, we remain in rebellion and at war with the Almighty. On our own, we’re not capable of making peace with God (vv. 6–8). We need a mediator and a substitute, someone else to pay the price (death). Christ took our place when He died on the cross. To die for one’s enemies demonstrates a love far greater than human love. Only God, namely the Second Person of the Trinity, loved us enough to die for us “while we were still sinners” (v. 8).

Paul highlighted two results of God’s saving love: First, we can have peace with God (vv. 1–2). Since we stand before God justified by faith in His Son, we’re no longer under sentence of death and no longer at war with Him. This is the “grace in which we now stand” (v. 2). It also gives us the certain “hope of the glory of God” as we eagerly anticipate the day when our salvation will be experientially complete (v. 2). Second, we can “glory in our sufferings” (vv. 3–5). This isn’t spiritual masochism but a purposeful, joyful choice. When we’re filled with God’s love, suffering leads to perseverance leads to Christlike character leads to true biblical hope.

**Apply the Word**

The only way to experience true peace is through a relationship with God. Christmas can be a fruitful time for sharing the gospel. At this time, people are sometimes more open to hearing the good news. Look for opportunities to share with others what you believe!

### **Pray with Us**

Almighty God, we ask you in Jesus’ name to give us eyes to see those who need to hear the gospel. Holy Spirit, give us words to lead them to repentance and peace with their Creator.

## BY Brad Baurain

# Our Daily Bread – 12/21/20

# What to Name the Baby

 **Read:** [**Isaiah 9:2–7**](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa%209.2%E2%80%937)

2The people walking in darkness  
    have seen a great light;  
on those living in the land of deep darkness  
    a light has dawned.  
3You have enlarged the nation  
    and increased their joy;  
they rejoice before you  
    as people rejoice at the harvest,  
as warriors rejoice  
    when dividing the plunder.  
4For as in the day of Midian’s defeat,  
    you have shattered  
the yoke that burdens them,  
    the bar across their shoulders,  
    the rod of their oppressor.  
5Every warrior’s boot used in battle  
    and every garment rolled in blood  
will be destined for burning,  
    will be fuel for the fire.  
6For to us a child is born,  
    to us a son is given,  
    and the government will be on his shoulders.  
And he will be called  
    Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,  
    Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.  
7Of the greatness of his government and peace  
    there will be no end.  
He will reign on David’s throne  
    and over his kingdom,  
establishing and upholding it  
    with justice and righteousness  
    from that time on and forever.  
The zeal of the Lord Almighty  
    will accomplish this.

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

Here’s one conversation Mary didn’t have to have with Joseph as they awaited the birth of the baby she was carrying: “Joseph, what should we name the baby?” Unlike most people awaiting a birth, they had no question about what they would call this child.

The angels who visited Mary and then Joseph told them both that the baby’s name would be Jesus ([Matthew 1:20–21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt%201.20%E2%80%9321); [Luke 1:30–31](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke%201.30%E2%80%9331)). The angel that appeared to Joseph explained that this name indicated that the baby would “save his people from their sins.”

He would also be called “Immanuel” ([Isaiah 7:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa%207.14)), which means “God is with us,” because He would be God in human form—deity wrapped in swaddling clothes. The prophet Isaiah revealed additional titles of “Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace” (9:6), because He would be all of those things.

It’s always exciting to name a new baby. But no other baby had such a powerful, exciting, world-changing name as the one who was “Jesus who is called the Messiah” ([Matthew 1:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt%201.16)). What a thrill for us to be able to “call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” ([1 Corinthians 1:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1%20Cor%201.2))! There’s no other name that saves ([Acts 4:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts%204.12)).

Let’s praise Jesus and contemplate everything He means to us this Christmas season!

By:  [Dave Branon](https://odb.org/author/davebranon/)

#### **Reflect & Pray**

How does reflecting on the name of Jesus encourage you? Which of His titles from [Isaiah 9:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa%209.6) means the most to you this season? Why?

Thank You, heavenly Father, for sending us One who is our Savior, our Counselor, our Prince of Peace, and our Messiah. I celebrate His birth because I know that His life and death and resurrection purchased eternal life for me.

#### **Insight**

King Ahaz of Judah, threatened by the armies of Israel and Syria ([Isaiah 7:1–7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa%207.1%E2%80%937)), refused to trust God and instead turned to Assyria for help ([2 Kings 16:7–9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2%20Kings%2016.7%E2%80%939)). Yet God assured Ahaz of victory by giving him the ultimate proof: “The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel [God with us]” ([Isaiah 7:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa%207.14)). God promised to be with His people if they’d only trust Him. Some scholars believe this sign was first fulfilled during the time of Ahaz and fully fulfilled in Jesus some seven hundred years later ([Matthew 1:23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt%201.23)). [Isaiah 9:6–7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa%209.6%E2%80%937) describes this child with royal titles: “Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.” Kings often took titles that described their roles. For example, we see this in the title “Defender of the Faith” which British monarchs receive as head of the Church of England. Isaiah prophesied that a descendant of David would rule the whole world “with justice and righteousness” (v. 7).

# God Calling – 12/21/20

# 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