# My Utmost for His Highest – 2/26/19

# Our Misgivings About Jesus

The woman said to Him, "Sir, You have nothing to draw [water] with, and the well is deep." —[John 4:11](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=John+4%3A11)

Have you ever said to yourself, “I am impressed with the wonderful truths of God’s Word, but He can’t really expect me to live up to that and work all those details into my life!” When it comes to confronting Jesus Christ on the basis of His qualities and abilities, our attitudes reflect religious superiority. We think His ideals are lofty and they impress us, but we believe He is not in touch with reality— that what He says cannot actually be done. Each of us thinks this about Jesus in one area of our life or another. These doubts or misgivings about Jesus begin as we consider questions that divert our focus away from God. While we talk of our dealings with Him, others ask us, “Where are you going to get enough money to live? How will you live and who will take care of you?” Or our misgivings begin within ourselves when we tell Jesus that our circumstances are just a little too difficult for Him. We say, “It’s easy to say, ‘Trust in the Lord,’ but a person has to live; and besides, Jesus has nothing with which to draw water— no means to be able to give us these things.” And beware of exhibiting religious deceit by saying, “Oh, I have no misgivings about Jesus, only misgivings about myself.” If we are honest, we will admit that we never have misgivings or doubts about ourselves, because we know exactly what we are capable or incapable of doing. But we do have misgivings about Jesus. And our pride is hurt even at the thought that He can do what we can’t.

My misgivings arise from the fact that I search within to find how He will do what He says. My doubts spring from the depths of my own inferiority. If I detect these misgivings in myself, I should bring them into the light and confess them openly— “Lord, I have had misgivings about You. I have not believed in Your abilities, but only my own. And I have not believed in Your almighty power apart from my finite understanding of it.”

**Wisdom From Oswald Chambers**

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

# CCEL – 2/26/19

Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the Lord.—[LAM. 3:40.](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Lam.3.html" \l "Lam.3.40)

Examine me, O Lord, and prove me; try my reins and my heart.—Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom.—I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies. I made haste and delayed not to keep thy commandments.—Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.—We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and he is the propitiation for our sins.—Having therefore, brethren, 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 a 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.

[Psa. 26:2](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.26.html" \l "Ps.26.2). -[Psa. 51:6](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.51.html" \l "Ps.51.6). -[Psa. 119:59,60](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.119.html" \l "Ps.119.59). -[I Cor. 11:28](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iCor.11.html" \l "iCor.11.28).[I John 1:9](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iJohn.1.html" \l "iJohn.1.9). -[I John 2:1](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iJohn.2.html" \l "iJohn.2.1). -[Heb. 10:19-22](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Heb.10.html" \l "Heb.10.19).

“Salvation is of the Lord.” [Jonah 2:9](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Jonah.2.html" \l "Jonah.2.9)

Salvation is the work of God. It is he alone who quickens the soul “dead in trespasses and sins,” and it is he also who maintains the soul in its spiritual life. He is both “Alpha and Omega.” “Salvation is of the Lord.” If I am prayerful, God makes me prayerful; if I have graces, they are God’s gifts to me; if I hold on in a consistent life, it is because he upholds me with his hand. I do nothing whatever towards my own preservation, except what God himself first does in me. Whatever I have, all my goodness is of the Lord alone. Wherein I sin, that is my own; but wherein I act rightly, that is of God, wholly and completely. If I have repulsed a spiritual enemy, the Lord’s strength nerved my arm. Do I live before men a consecrated life? It is not I, but Christ who liveth in me. Am I sanctified? I did not cleanse myself: God’s Holy Spirit sanctifies me. Am I weaned from the world? I am weaned by God's chastisements sanctified to my good. Do I grow in knowledge? The great Instructor teaches me. All my jewels were fashioned by heavenly art. I find in God all that I want; but I find in myself nothing but sin and misery. “He only is my rock and my salvation.” Do I feed on the Word? That Word would be no food for me unless the Lord made it food for my soul, and helped me to feed upon it. Do I live on the manna which comes down from heaven? What is that manna but Jesus Christ himself incarnate, whose body and whose blood I eat and drink? Am I continually receiving fresh increase of strength? Where do I gather my might? My help cometh from heaven’s hills: without Jesus I can do nothing. As a branch cannot bring forth fruit except it abide in the vine, no more can I, except I abide in him. What Jonah learned in the great deep, let me learn this morning in my closet: “Salvation is of the Lord.”

# Word Live – 2/26/19

# Peace makers

## **Prepare**

How actively do you pursue peace in all your relationships? When is it really difficult?



## **Bible passage: 1 Peter 3:8–22**

### **Suffering for Doing Good**

**8**Finally, all of you, be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble. **9**Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult. On the contrary, repay evil with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing. **10**For,

“Whoever would love life  
    and see good days  
must keep their tongue from evil  
    and their lips from deceitful speech.  
**11**They must turn from evil and do good;  
    they must seek peace and pursue it.  
**12**For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous  
    and his ears are attentive to their prayer,  
but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.”[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+peter+3%3A8-22&version=NIV#fen-NIV-30437a)]

**13**Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good? **14**But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. “Do not fear their threats[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+peter+3%3A8-22&version=NIV#fen-NIV-30439b)]; do not be frightened.”[[c](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+peter+3%3A8-22&version=NIV#fen-NIV-30439c)] **15**But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, **16**keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander. **17**For it is better, if it is God’s will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil. **18**For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive in the Spirit. **19**After being made alive,[[d](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+peter+3%3A8-22&version=NIV#fen-NIV-30444d)] he went and made proclamation to the imprisoned spirits— **20**to those who were disobedient long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. In it only a few people, eight in all,were saved through water, **21**and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also—not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a clear conscience toward God.[[e](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+peter+3%3A8-22&version=NIV#fen-NIV-30446e)] It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, **22**who has gone into heaven and is at God’s right hand—with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him.

#### **Footnotes:**

1. [1 Peter 3:12](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+peter+3%3A8-22&version=NIV#en-NIV-30437) Psalm 34:12-16
2. [1 Peter 3:14](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+peter+3%3A8-22&version=NIV#en-NIV-30439) Or *fear what they fear*
3. [1 Peter 3:14](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+peter+3%3A8-22&version=NIV#en-NIV-30439) Isaiah 8:12
4. [1 Peter 3:19](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+peter+3%3A8-22&version=NIV#en-NIV-30444) Or *but made alive in the spirit,****19****in which also*
5. [1 Peter 3:21](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+peter+3%3A8-22&version=NIV#en-NIV-30446) Or *but an appeal to God for a clear conscience*

## **Explore**

**Reflecting God's character**

Peter’s passion that people should come to know Jesus as their Saviour and Lord and then live lives that reflect that relationship is core to this letter. In what ways do the behaviours Peter encourages in verses 8 and 9 illustrate ‘seek peace and pursue it’ in the quote from Psalm 34? Peter longs that his fellow believers know God’s blessing as they reflect his character.

**Prompting questions**

If you have ever been on an evangelism training course you will probably have heard verses 15 and 16 quoted. Peter builds a picture of Christians living such good lives that people are prompted to ask questions. Does that ever happen to you? Following one of the attacks on a church in Egypt the widow of a man who was killed spoke on TV of how she forgave his killers. The anchor man of the show was dumbfounded and asked ‘What is it about these Christians? They are made of different stuff!’ He is right. Our Egyptian sister was certainly revering Christ as Lord in her heart.

**Safe with Jesus**

Verses 18 to 21 seem strange to us. Peter’s thrust seems to be that we need not fear threats whether they come from the seen or the unseen world. Jesus has declared his authority over all the spiritual powers in the world and we are safe with him. Hallelujah!

[Elaine Duncan](https://www.wordlive.org/Otherstuff/Contributors/C-D/3525689.id)

## **Respond**

Pray that the Lord will use your life to draw others to know him.

## **Deeper Bible study**

Moving on from marriage, Peter tells us exiles how we are to relate to others in general. How we behave and speak does matter – for our own happiness and for our witness. The five qualities we are to live out – to be like-minded, sympathetic, loving, compassionate and humble – are like five fingers connected to each other and radiated out from the palm of God’s grace, given freely to us.1 The first, ‘like-minded’, is variously also translated ‘live in harmony with each other’ and ‘be agreeable’; it seems particularly addressed to our relationships as brothers and sisters in the church. The others could also apply at work or home or in the general community. They illustrate the nature of the God who is remaking us into his image.

This is the force of Peter’s quote from Psalm 34 ([1 Pet 3:10–12; Psalm 34:12–16](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Pet+3%3A10%E2%80%9312%3B+Psalm+34%3A12%E2%80%9316&version=NRSV)), written by David under duress yet expressing his confidence that God rewards his people. The psalms are useful reminders that, even when we have God’s favour, life will not always work out comfortably for us. Jesus is the model and we are reminded that, although doing things the way the Creator planned is always for our good, it may provoke suffering (v 14). This happens especially when how we live is not common practice in our community. In fact, we may be in a decided minority (v 20). However, our baptism is a reminder that we identify with the risen Lord and receive his continuing prayer and support.

What does it mean that Jesus preached to imprisoned spirits (v 19)? There is no clear consensus about this, but the reference to Noah suggests that even when people are unrepentant and sinful, Christ’s word goes out through his Spirit. It is judgement to those who ignore it, salvation to those who respond.

1 Edmund P Clowney, The Message of 1 Peter, IVP, 1989, p137

[Jennifer Turner](https://www.wordlive.org/Otherstuff/Contributors/T-U/3529883.id)

## **Christian realism**

I recently spoke with a Christian who had arrived in the UK from Vietnam. Having been here for 18 months, he explained that he had not heard a sermon or any discussion on the subject of suffering.  
  
For many Christians in the West, our model of the Christian life implies that we should be riding high on a success-oriented spirituality. We rarely reflect on the tribulation which Jesus predicted would be our normal Christian experience (see [John 16:33](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John%2016:33;&version=72;); [1 Thessalonians 3:3](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Thessalonians%203:3;&version=72;)).  
  
**Our calling**

First, suffering is part of our Christian calling (v 9). Peter is repeating what he said earlier, that we are following the example of Christ ([1 Peter 2:21](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Peter%202:21;&version=72;)). Just as the psalmist predicted, God’s people will face pressures of all kinds, but to experience God’s care and blessing we should refuse to allow evil to set the agenda (vs 10–12; [Psalm 34:12–16](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm%2034:12-16;&version=72;)).  
  
**Our commitment**

Secondly, Peter underlines our Christian commitment (v 15). Facing suffering, we can respond with fear – or with the conscious awareness of Christ’s kingly presence. We acknowledge his Lordship in every part of life, including when others seek to harm us.  
  
**Our witness**

Thirdly, he refers to our Christian witness: when faced with opposition, we are to provide a reasoned defence of our faith, speaking with gentleness and supporting our witness with consistent behaviour (vs 15,16). We are ‘to do good’, display ‘good behaviour’, and ‘suffer for doing good’ (vs 13,16,17).  
  
**Our assurance**

Finally, there is our Christian assurance. Peter returns to the example of Christ, his suffering and his victory. He was crucified in weakness, yet he has been made alive by the Spirit (v 18). Baptism reminds us of these realities, to which we too are bound (vs 21,22).  
  
Notice the closing verse: Christ’s victory and authority are the foundation for our assurance in a world which rejects Christ and opposes his disciples. He will have the last word.  
  
Jonathan Lamb

## **Love your enemy**

[https://www.wordlive.org/uploads/wordlight/resources/W010909R2 Love your enemy.mp3](https://www.wordlive.org/uploads/wordlight/resources/W010909R2%20Love%20your%20enemy.mp3)

Christians are called to show an exceptional quality of relationship to one another. That’s only understandable and right. But do we have to love our enemies too? Listen to this meditation.

# Today in the Word – 2/26/19

# Mature Faith and Prayer

**Read:** [**James 5:13–16**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=James+5%3a13%e2%80%9316)

### **The Prayer of Faith**

13Is anyone among you in trouble? Let them pray. Is anyone happy? Let them sing songs of praise. 14Is anyone among you sick? Let them call the elders of the church to pray over them and anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord. 15And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise them up. If they have sinned, they will be forgiven. 16Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.

A classic Christian prayer for healing reads: “O Lord God of our salvation, to whom no sickness is incurable, we pray that in your compassion you will drive away from your servants, who look for your heavenly medicine, all illness; show forth in them the might of your healing power, and make them whole both in body and soul; through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective. James 5:16

Mature faith prays boldly within the will of God (see 1 John 5:14–15). The questions and answers that open today’s reading convey the tone that this is the right and obvious thing to do (vv. 13–14). When we’re in trouble, we should pray. When we’re happy, we should sing. When we’re sick, we should call the elders to pray and anoint us with oil.

In that context, oil had both a practical medicinal and a spiritual symbolic value. While in our culture we tend to separate the physical and the spiritual and thus see sin and sickness as separate issues, Jewish culture did not. From a biblical perspective, the two can be intermingled (see Mark 6:13; 1 Cor. 11:29–30). James has in mind here a situation in which an illness may have been caused by sin, though this does not imply that all illness is caused by sin (vv. 15–16).

In such a case, sins should be confessed. God will forgive, and healing may take place in response to the prayer of faith if God so chooses. The spiritual principle at work is that the “prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.” As one study Bible puts it: “Prayer is not a magical incantation or a guarantee of healing, but when offered fervently by a righteous person, God will respond in a way that best fits his good purposes.”

### **Apply the Word**

 “Is anyone happy? Let them sing songs of praise” (v. 13). If you’re in good spirits today, let music be part of your praise! You might choose to sing a hymn or worship song, or listen to some praise music on the radio or recordings. Use this time of playing, singing, or listening to music as an intentional offering of thanks and praise to the Lord.

### **Pray with Us**

Please include Moody Aviation in your prayers today. James Conrad and Jan Seiersen provide administrative service so the Moody Aviation team can train students in missionary aviation. May the Lord always be a shining light in their lives.

## BY Brad Baurain

# Our Daily Bread – 2/26/19

# Working off Bad Information

**Read:** [**Proverbs 23:9-12**](https://odb.org/2019/02/26/working-off-bad-information/)

#### **Saying 10**

9Do not speak to fools,  
    for they will scorn your prudent words.

#### **Saying 11**

10Do not move an ancient boundary stone  
    or encroach on the fields of the fatherless,  
11for their Defender is strong;  
    he will take up their case against you.

#### **Saying 12**

12Apply your heart to instruction  
    and your ears to words of knowledge.

Apply your heart to instruction and your ears to words of knowledge. [Proverbs 23:12](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Proverbs+23%3A12)

On a recent trip to New York City, my wife and I wanted to brave a snowy evening and hire a taxi for a three-mile ride from our hotel to a Cuban restaurant. After entering the details into the taxi service’s app, I gulped hard when the screen revealed the price for our short jaunt: $1,547.26. After recovering from the shock, I realized I had mistakenly requested a ride to our home—several hundred miles away!

If you’re working with the wrong information, you’re going to end up with disastrous results. Always. This is why Proverbs encourages us to “apply [our] heart to instruction and [our] ears to words of knowledge”—God’s wisdom (Proverbs 23:12). If we instead seek advice from those who are foolish, those who pretend to know more than they do and who have turned their back on God, we’ll be in trouble. They “scorn . . . prudent words” and can lead us astray with unhelpful, misguided, or even deceptive advice (v. 9).

Instead, we can bend our “ears to words of knowledge” (v. 12). We can open our heart and receive God’s liberating instruction, words of clarity and hope. When we listen to those who know the deep ways of God, they help us receive and follow divine wisdom. And God’s wisdom will never lead us astray but always encourages and leads us toward life and wholeness.

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

#### **Today's Reflection**

God, bend my ears and heart toward wisdom. Help me be open to Your truth and push away every kind of foolishness.

#### **Insight**

Proverbs 23:9–12 point to the interrelated principles of seeking wisdom from those who can be trusted (v. 12) while discerning who cannot be trusted (v. 9). This principle of discerning others’ character and limiting contact with the foolish—due to the profound influence of close relationships—is echoed in 26:4–5. However, these verses show a subtle difference of the principle by placing side by side opposite guidelines! First, we are told not to answer according to a foolish person’s folly (v. 4); then, we are told to answer, lest by silence we become complicit in their harmful ideas and character (v. 5).

These seemingly contradictory guidelines illustrate a principle central to the Proverbs: true wisdom is not a set of rules to be applied blindly but requires continual reliance on the Lord’s guidance to discern each situation.

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

# God Calling – 2/26/19

# Swift Help

There is nothing lacking in your lives because really all is yours, only you lack the faith to know it. You are like a King's daughters who sit in rags, and yet around them are stores of all they could desire.

Pray for more faith, as a thirsty man in a desert prays for rain, for water. Swift comes My help, swift and strong. Do you know what it is to feel sure that I can never fail you? As sure as you are that you still breathe? How poor his man's faith! So poor. Do you trust Me as much as you would a friend if that friend came and said he would send you help? Pray daily and most diligently that your faith may increase.

"If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, you might say unto this sycamore tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea; and it should obey you." Luke 17:6

# My Utmost for His Highest – 2/27/19

# The Impoverished Ministry of Jesus

Where then do You get that living water? —[John 4:11](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=John+4%3A11)

“The well is deep” — and even a great deal deeper than the Samaritan woman knew! ([John 4:11](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+4:11)). Think of the depths of human nature and human life; think of the depth of the “wells” in you. Have you been limiting, or impoverishing, the ministry of Jesus to the point that He is unable to work in your life? Suppose that you have a deep “well” of hurt and trouble inside your heart, and Jesus comes and says to you, “Let not your heart be troubled…” ([John 14:1](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+14:1)). Would your response be to shrug your shoulders and say, “But, Lord, the well is too deep, and even You can’t draw up quietness and comfort out of it.” Actually, that is correct. Jesus doesn’t bring anything up from the wells of human nature— He brings them down from above. We limit the Holy One of Israel by remembering only what we have allowed Him to do for us in the past, and also by saying, “Of course, I cannot expect God to do this particular thing.” The thing that approaches the very limits of His power is the very thing we as disciples of Jesus ought to believe He will do. We impoverish and weaken His ministry in us the moment we forget He is almighty. The impoverishment is in us, not in Him. We will come to Jesus for Him to be our comforter or our sympathizer, but we refrain from approaching Him as our Almighty God.

The reason some of us are such poor examples of Christianity is that we have failed to recognize that Christ is almighty. We have Christian attributes and experiences, but there is no abandonment or surrender to Jesus Christ. When we get into difficult circumstances, we impoverish His ministry by saying, “Of course, He can’t do anything about this.” We struggle to reach the bottom of our own well, trying to get water for ourselves. Beware of sitting back, and saying, “It can’t be done.” You will know it can be done if you will look to Jesus. The well of your incompleteness runs deep, but make the effort to look away from yourself and to look toward Him.

**Wisdom From Oswald Chambers**

We are all based on a conception of importance, either our own importance, or the importance of someone else; Jesus tells us to go and teach based on the revelation of His importance. “All power is given unto Me.… Go ye therefore ….”  So Send I You, 1325 R

# CCEL – 2/27/19

Reckon ye yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.—[ROM. 6:11.](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Rom.6.html" \l "Rom.6.11)

He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.—I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

Because I live, ye shall live also.—I give unto them eternal life: and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one.

If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God . . . For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.

[John 5:24](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.John.5.html" \l "John.5.24). -[Gal. 2:19,20](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Gal.2.html" \l "Gal.2.19).[John 14:19](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.John.14.html" \l "John.14.19). -[John 10:28-30](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.John.10.html" \l "John.10.28).[Col. 3:1](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Col.3.html" \l "Col.3.1),[3](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Col.3.html" \l "Col.3.3).

“Thou hast made the Lord, which is my refuge, even the most High, thy habitation.” [Psalm 91:9](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.91.html" \l "Ps.91.9)

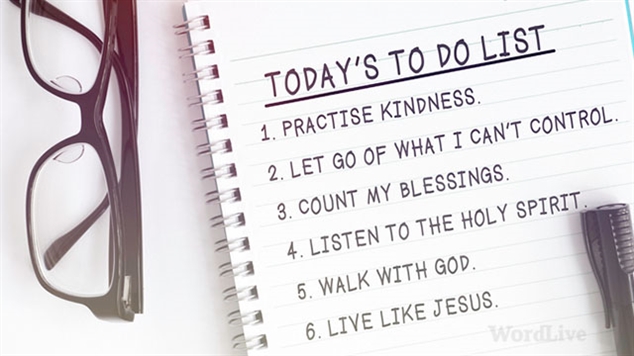
The Israelites in the wilderness were continually exposed to change. Whenever the pillar stayed its motion, the tents were pitched; but tomorrow, ere the morning sun had risen, the trumpet sounded, the ark was in motion, and the fiery, cloudy pillar was leading the way through the narrow defiles of the mountain, up the hill side, or along the arid waste of the wilderness. They had scarcely time to rest a little before they heard the sound of “Away! this is not your rest; you must still be onward journeying towards Canaan!” They were never long in one place. Even wells and palm trees could not detain them. Yet they had an abiding home in their God, his cloudy pillar was their roof-tree, and its flame by night their household fire. They must go onward from place to place, continually changing, never having time to settle, and to say, “Now we are secure; in this place we shall dwell.” “Yet,” says Moses, “though we are always changing, Lord, thou hast been our dwelling-place throughout all generations.” The Christian knows no change with regard to God. He may be rich today and poor to-morrow; he may be sickly today and well to-morrow; he may be in happiness today, to-morrow he may be distressed—but there is no change with regard to his relationship to God. If he loved me yesterday, he loves me today. My unmoving mansion of rest is my blessed Lord. Let prospects be blighted; let hopes be blasted; let joy be withered; let mildews destroy everything; I have lost nothing of what I have in God. He is “my strong habitation whereunto I can continually resort.” I am a pilgrim in the world, but at home in my God. In the earth I wander, but in God I dwell in a quiet habitation.

# Word Live – 2/27/19

# A whole new outlook

## **Prepare**

To what extent are you able to control your desires? Or do your desires control you?



## **Bible passage: 1 Peter 4:1–11**

##### **Living for God**

1Therefore, since Christ suffered in his body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude, because he who has suffered in his body is done with sin. 2As a result, he does not live the rest of his earthly life for evil human desires, but rather for the will of God. 3For you have spent enough time in the past doing what pagans choose to do—living in debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing and detestable idolatry. 4They think it strange that you do not plunge with them into the same flood of dissipation, and they heap abuse on you. 5But they will have to give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. 6For this is the reason the gospel was preached even to those who are now dead, so that they might be judged according to men in regard to the body, but live according to God in regard to the spirit.

7The end of all things is near. Therefore be clear minded and self-controlled so that you can pray. 8Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins. 9Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. 10Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms. 11If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.

## **Explore**

**Align our thinking**

Jesus suffered in his body because of our sin. Peter now urges his readers to align their thinking with the attitude of Jesus and be done with sin. When we are accepted and washed clean by the Lord Jesus, doing the will of God becomes our priority. How does Peter describe the old way of life (vs 3,4)? Unrestrained pleasure-seeking marks many cultures today and it can be difficult as Christians to live with different priorities, particularly in the face of hostility (v 4).

**Whole new outlook**

We have a whole new outlook on life because we are now part of a whole new world (v 7). As we share in Jesus’ death and resurrection we are called to work out what that means for how we live. How does alertness and sober thinking affect your praying (v 7)?

**Love builds community**

Peter describes life in the community of believers, echoing what Paul writes in some of his letters. To what extent do verses 8 to 11 describe your church community? Loving each other deeply in the church is a tough call. But it is how God grows his character in us. It is how we grow in maturity as human beings. Love involves forgiveness and reconciliation, dealing with the ‘multitude of sins’ (v 8), not sweeping them under the carpet. Love is incredibly creative, building community.

[Elaine Duncan](https://www.wordlive.org/Otherstuff/Contributors/C-D/3525689.id)

## **Respond**

Pray that the Lord will help you control your desires and channel your energy into showing love to others.

## **Deeper Bible study**

I was reading these words from Peter as I prayed for one of the young preachers in our congregation speaking that morning. ‘If anyone speaks …’ (v 11) is an apt reminder to all of us to use our gifts well in serving others. This applies to much more than preaching – whatever gift we have received (v 10) we have a mandate to serve others with it. Knowing God is the giver of the gift equips us with confidence in using it with discipline and courage. Richard Foster has said, ‘How do we serve others in the world? We serve them by preparing ourselves to lead and by accepting the opportunity to lead when it is offered. Our world is hungry for compassionate, servant leaders.’1

There is an interesting juxtaposition in this chapter between using one’s gifts and the call to holy living and prayer (v 7). Those of us who have hired staff for our organisations know that their effectiveness depends as much on their character and ability to get on with the team as it does on their skills. Again, Peter sees Jesus as the model of a disciplined holy life focused on mission.

Final judgement is coming (v 6)! Peter suggests that it is an extra incentive to live well for the sake of others. Of course, acting only to get the ‘Well done, good and faithful servant!’ ([Matt 25:21](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matt+25%3A21&version=NIV)) at the end could mean that our service is not done with love. It could be we are running roughshod over others to fulfil our own agendas, leading to a day of accounting when the wheat will be separated from the chaff ([Matt 3:12](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matt+3%3A12&version=NIV)). Our objective must always be ‘so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ’ (v 11).

1 Richard Foster, Money, Sex and Power, Hodder & Stoughton, 1985, p243

[Jennifer Turner](https://www.wordlive.org/Otherstuff/Contributors/T-U/3529883.id)

# Today in the Word – 2/27/19

# Prayer: Example of Elijah

**Read:** [**James 5:17–18**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=James+5%3a17%e2%80%9318)

17Elijah was a human being, even as we are. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. 18Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops.

On the morning of September 11, 2001, Rick Rescorla was on the 44th floor of the World Trade Center’s South Tower when a large jet rammed into the North Tower. Officials told everyone to stay put, but Rescorla ignored them. A Vietnam veteran in charge of corporate security at Morgan Stanley, he aggressively evacuated the company’s 2,700 employees to safety—six died, but the rest made it. He himself died when the South Tower collapsed.

Let it be known today that you are God in Israel and that I am your servant. 1 Kings 18:36

Rick Rescorla sacrificed his life saving others. Elijah was also a true hero, putting his life on the line to call the Israelites back to the Lord. He’s also a perfect illustration of yesterday’s principle, “The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective” (v. 16).

In saying that Elijah “was a human being, even as we are” (v. 17), James didn’t mean to say that he was just an average guy. James was emphasizing that the amazing miracles were the work of God, not Elijah. God had control of the three-year drought and the rains that finally came. Elijah simply prayed (v. 18). As we recall the story, as doubtless James’ Jewish readers did, this miracle took place immediately following the dramatic confrontation with the priests of Baal and Asherah on Mount Carmel. Elijah had also prayed there, and God had answered him with fire. The people had responded, “The Lord—he is God! The Lord—he is God!” (1 Kings 18:39).

If God is in control of all that happens in nature and human history, how can prayer make a difference? Because our Lord delights in the prayers of His people. We might not understand the ways that God’s sovereignty accommodates our prayer, but we can believe His Word and obey His command to pray.

### **Apply the Word**

We admire Elijah but might think, “I could never be like him.” Think again! He didn’t possess any superpowers. He was simply faithful in prayer. God is the One with the superpowers, and prayer is our direct line to Him. In other words, James was saying, “You, too, can accomplish great things in prayer, because our God is above all!”

### **Pray with Us**

In your prayers today, please mention members of the Moody Aviation Shop: Joel Powell, the production mechanic and instructor, and Neal Bachman, the director of maintenance operations. Will you praise God for the vital training they provide?

## BY Brad Baurain

# Our Daily Bread – 2/27/19

# Out of the Mouths of Babes

**Read:** [**Matthew 21:14-16**](https://odb.org/2019/02/27/out-of-the-mouths-of-babes/)

14The blind and the lame came to him at the temple, and he healed them. 15But when the chief priests and the teachers of the law saw the wonderful things he did and the children shouting in the temple courts, “Hosanna to the Son of David,” they were indignant.

16“Do you hear what these children are saying?” they asked him.

“Yes,” replied Jesus, “have you never read,

“‘From the lips of children and infants  
    you, Lord, have called forth your praise’[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+21%3A14%E2%80%9316" \l "fen-NIV-23843a" \o "See footnote a)]?”

#### **Footnotes:**

1. [Matthew 21:16](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+21%3A14%E2%80%9316#en-NIV-23843) Psalm 8:2 (see Septuagint)

Out of the mouth of babies and infants, you have established strength because of your foes. [Psalm 8:2 esv](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+8%3A2%C2%A0esv)

After watching ten-year-old Viola using a tree branch as a microphone to mimic a preacher, Michele decided to give Viola the opportunity to “preach” during a village outreach. Viola accepted. Michele, a missionary in South Sudan, wrote, “The crowd was enraptured. . . . A little girl who had been abandoned stood in authority before them as a daughter of the King of kings, powerfully sharing the reality of God’s Kingdom. Half the crowd came forward to receive Jesus” (Michele Perry, Love Has a Face).

The crowd that day hadn’t expected to hear a child preach. This incident brings to mind the phrase “out of the mouths of babes,” which comes from Psalm 8. David wrote, “Out of the mouth of babies and infants, you have established strength because of your foes” (v. 2 esv). Jesus later quoted this verse in Matthew 21:16, after the chief priests and scribes criticized the children calling out praise to Jesus in the temple at Jerusalem. The children were a nuisance to these leaders. By quoting this Scripture, Jesus showed that God took seriously the praise of these children. They did what the leaders were unwilling to do: give glory to the longed-for Messiah.

As Viola and the children in the temple showed, God can use even a child to bring Him glory. Out of their willing hearts came a fountain of praise.

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

#### **Today's Reflection**

How can I offer praise to God today? Why is He worthy of my praise?

#### **Insight**

After arriving in Jerusalem on what is known as Palm Sunday, Jesus made His way to the temple where He symbolically and prophetically reclaimed God’s house for its rightful purposes (Matthew 21:12). In doing so, He quoted the prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah (v. 13): “It is written,” he said to them, “‘My house will be called a house of prayer’ [Isaiah 56:7], but you are making it ‘a den of robbers’” [Jeremiah 7:11]. Jesus’s zeal for God’s house was such that—though risky—He did not let the mismanagement of the religious leaders go unchallenged. What may have been mercenary practices were—at least momentarily—replaced with marvelous acts of mercy (v. 14), deeds which were more consistent with the purposes of the Father’s house. Though the physically blind were healed, the blindness of the leaders remained, as noted by their indignation and words to Jesus (vv. 15–16).

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

# God Calling – 2/27/19

# Spirit Sounds

Take time for prayer. Take more time to be alone with Me. So only will you prosper.

Realize that the hearing of Spirit Sounds is more than the hearing of all earth's noises. I am with you. Let that content you, nay, more, let that fill you with rapture.

Seek sometimes not even to hear Me. Seek a silence of spirit-understanding with Me. Be not afraid. All is well. Dwell much on what I did, as well as what I said.

Remember, I "touched her hand, and the fever left her." Not many words, just a moment's contact and all fever left her. She was well, whole, calm, able to arise and "minister unto them."

My touch is still a potent healer. Just feel that touch. Since My Presence, and the fever of work and care and fear just melts into nothingness -- and health, joy, peace, take its place.

"For she said within herself, If I may but touch his garment, I shall be whole." Matthew 9:21

# My Utmost for His Highest – 2/28/19

# “Do You Now Believe?”

"By this we believe…." Jesus answered them, "Do you now believe?" —[John 16:30-31](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=John+16%3A30-31)

“Now we believe….” But Jesus asks, “Do you…? Indeed the hour is coming…that you…will leave Me alone” ([John 16:31-32](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+16:31-32)). Many Christian workers have left Jesus Christ alone and yet tried to serve Him out of a sense of duty, or because they sense a need as a result of their own discernment. The reason for this is actually the absence of the resurrection life of Jesus. Our soul has gotten out of intimate contact with God by leaning on our own religious understanding (see [Proverbs 3:5-6](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Proverbs+3:5-6)). This is not deliberate sin and there is no punishment attached to it. But once a person realizes how he has hindered his understanding of Jesus Christ, and caused uncertainties, sorrows, and difficulties for himself, it is with shame and remorse that he has to return.

We need to rely on the resurrection life of Jesus on a much deeper level than we do now. We should get in the habit of continually seeking His counsel on everything, instead of making our own commonsense decisions and then asking Him to bless them. He cannot bless them; it is not in His realm to do so, and those decisions are severed from reality. If we do something simply out of a sense of duty, we are trying to live up to a standard that competes with Jesus Christ. We become a prideful, arrogant person, thinking we know what to do in every situation. We have put our sense of duty on the throne of our life, instead of enthroning the resurrection life of Jesus. We are not told to “walk in the light” of our conscience or in the light of a sense of duty, but to “walk in the light as He is in the light…” ([1 John 1:7](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+John+1:7)). When we do something out of a sense of duty, it is easy to explain the reasons for our actions to others. But when we do something out of obedience to the Lord, there can be no other explanation— just obedience. That is why a saint can be so easily ridiculed and misunderstood.

**Wisdom From Oswald Chambers**

The great word of Jesus to His disciples is Abandon. When God has brought us into the relationship of disciples, we have to venture on His word; trust entirely to Him and watch that when He brings us to the venture, we take it.  
Studies in the Sermon on the Mount

# CCEL – 2/28/19

**God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.**—[JOHN 3:16.](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.John.3.html" \l "John.3.16)

God . . . hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

God is love. In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.

[II Cor. 5:18-21](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iiCor.5.html" \l "iiCor.5.18). -[I John 4:8-11](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iJohn.4.html" \l "iJohn.4.8).

“My expectation is from him.” [Psalm 62:5](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.62.html" \l "Ps.62.5)

It is the believer’s privilege to use this language. If he is looking for aught from the world, it is a poor “expectation” indeed. But if he looks to God for the supply of his wants, whether in temporal or spiritual blessings, his “expectation” will not be a vain one. Constantly he may draw from the bank of faith, and get his need supplied out of the riches of God’s lovingkindness. This I know, I had rather have God for my banker than all the Rothschilds. My Lord never fails to honour his promises; and when we bring them to his throne, he never sends them back unanswered. Therefore I will wait only at his door, for he ever opens it with the hand of munificent grace. At this hour I will try him anew. But we have “expectations” beyond this life. We shall die soon; and then our “expectation is from him.” Do we not expect that when we lie upon the bed of sickness he will send angels to carry us to his bosom? We believe that when the pulse is faint, and the heart heaves heavily, some angelic messenger shall stand and look with loving eyes upon us, and whisper, “Sister spirit, come away!” As we approach the heavenly gate, we expect to hear the welcome invitation, “Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” We are expecting harps of gold and crowns of glory; we are hoping soon to be amongst the multitude of shining ones before the throne; we are looking forward and longing for the time when we shall be like our glorious Lord—for “We shall see him as he is.” Then if these be thine “expectations,” O my soul, live for God; live with the desire and resolve to glorify him from whom cometh all thy supplies, and of whose grace in thy election, redemption, and calling, it is that thou hast any “expectation” of coming glory.

# Word Live – 2/28/19

# Suffering and glory

## **Prepare**

Are you zealous for the glory of God? What does this mean to you?



## **Bible passage: 1 Peter 4:12–19**

##### **Suffering for Being a Christian**

12Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. 13But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed. 14If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. 15If you suffer, it should not be as a murderer or thief or any other kind of criminal, or even as a meddler. 16However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name. 17For it is time for judgment to begin with the family of God; and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God? 18And,   
   "If it is hard for the righteous to be saved,   
      what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?"

19So then, those who suffer according to God's will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good.

## **Explore**

**Rejoice in suffering?**

Peter has fairly consistently stretched our minds and our hearts as we read through this letter. Today’s passage is no different. He is specifically dealing with suffering for being a Christian. The forms this may take will be many and varied around the world. Why should we not be surprised by suffering (see Mark 14:27)? Is it really possible to rejoice in suffering?

**Glimpse of God's glory**

Peter takes us again to the deep and profound truth that we share in the sufferings of Christ and this is an honour in which we should rejoice (v 13). His reasoning is rooted in God’s glory being revealed. When our suffering comes from being named with Christ, then a glimpse of his glory is revealed in us. The curses that are hurled at us, under the power of God, are turned to blessings. Wow!

**Humbling testimonies**

We see this truth worked out through the Acts of the Apostles. Today, the most humbling testimonies I have heard describing this are from Muslim background believers. To be named as a follower of Jesus Christ usually means these folk are evicted from their families. Indeed some have lost their lives because they ‘bear that name’ (v 16). The courage, conviction and joy of many of our brothers and sisters is deeply moving and inspirational.

[Elaine Duncan](https://www.wordlive.org/Otherstuff/Contributors/C-D/3525689.id)

## **Respond**

‘Lord Jesus, help me to grow in my zeal for your glory to be displayed in my life.’

## **Deeper Bible study**

In a recent interview, a prominent British neurosurgeon talked about the fine line between making sure the patient and the family understood the risks of the upcoming brain surgery, and giving hope for a successful outcome. He wanted everyone to be as prepared as they could for the possible loss of their loved one, but still to have confidence in him to face the operation in the best frame of mind. Peter knows there is value in not being taken by surprise by the suffering which may come, going as far as saying ‘Don’t be ashamed!’ ‘Rejoice!’ (see vs 16,13). Jesus took the same approach, warning his disciples of troubles to come: ‘Be alert!’ but ‘do not be alarmed’ ([Mark 13:33,7](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+13%3A33%2C7&version=NIV)). This is engaged alertness – realistic apprehension of what the future may hold. It is only destructive when it makes us stop trusting God and take our eyes off him.

In the past few centuries, Christians in the Western world have not expected to suffer for their faith. We think of persecution as happening elsewhere, but it is changing now that biblical values are not accepted in our societies and individual human rights are taking precedence over what was formerly thought good for society. Peter is clear that Christians cannot expect to avoid punishment for wrong-doing but our actions towards others in defending our faith must be loving and measured.

New Testament writers all frame suffering in view of Jesus’ return. Then true justice will be seen to triumph and all will acknowledge God’s sovereignty. This means we must live with active expectation of the second coming. After 2,000 years of failed guesses, we should be wary of detailed scenarios of end times, but the promise is that we will be ‘overjoyed when his glory is revealed’ (v 13).

[Jennifer Turner](https://www.wordlive.org/Otherstuff/Contributors/T-U/3529883.id)

## **Prayer points**

‘Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed’ ([1 Peter 4:12,13](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Peter%204:12-13;&version=72;), NIV).  
  
Find out more about what some Christians around the world are suffering for the sake of Christ. Perhaps you (or your church) have personal links with some.  
  
Get some facts from [www.csw.org.uk](http://www.csw.org.uk/) and spend some time praying for persecuted believers today.

# Today in the Word – 2/28/19

# Help One Another on the Path to Mature Faith

In “Pilgrims to the City of God,” musician and writer Michael Card sang:

Blessed are those whose strength is in you, whose hearts are set on pilgrimage.Psalm 84:5

“Pilgrims of passion, we follow the One  
Who holds out a cross and a crown.  
We travel a dark road that has but one Light,  
For we have here no lasting town.

And sometimes we run by the power of His might.  
On our own at the best we can plod.  
What we hopefully look for is just beyond sight.  
We are pilgrims to the city of God.”

As pilgrims, we’re not alone. We’re on this journey with a worldwide community of believers. To conclude his epistle, James encourages us to help one another on the path to mature faith. The path is not an easy one. It’s filled with trials, troubles, and temptations. The pleasures of the world beckon. Satan tries to use our sinful desires to entrap us. We continually need wisdom, humility, and self-control. Yet through perseverance and endurance our faith can grow to wholeness and completeness.

There are many ways we can wander from the path. When someone does, it’s up to the rest of us to “bring that person back” (v. 19). A believer who has left the right path and taken the wrong one—indicating habitual sin—must be turned from the error of their ways. They can be restored to fellowship with God and others. To speak of covering over a multitude of sins is basically to call doing this an awesome and amazing act of love (see 1 Peter 4:8).

Doing this in fact saves the erring brother or sister from “death” (v. 20). These are erring believers, so James does not mean they will lose salvation. Rather, he emphasizes the stakes in helping one another persevere toward mature faith.

### **Apply the Word**

What verses or themes from our study encouraged or convicted you? Be sure to underline those verses and make some notes in your spiritual journal. You might also share them with a friend or small group, inviting them to help you persevere in spiritual growth. As you reflect, pray based on James 1:5, asking the Lord for His wisdom as you follow him.

### **Pray with Us**

As we conclude our study this month, thank God for the journey of Christian maturity He gives each one of us. Living according to the truth of righteouness in Christ can be a struggle, but God is there with us each step of the way.

## BY Brad Baurain

# Our Daily Bread – 2/28/19

# Great News!

### **Read: [Psalm 51:1-7](https://odb.org/2019/02/28/great-news/) [[](https://odb.org/2019/02/28/great-news/)**[**[a](https://odb.org/2019/02/28/great-news/)**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+51%3A1%E2%80%937#fen-NIV-14693a)**[]](https://odb.org/2019/02/28/great-news/)**

#### [For the director of music. A psalm of David. When the prophet Nathan came to him after David had committed adultery with Bathsheba.](https://odb.org/2019/02/28/great-news/)

[1](https://odb.org/2019/02/28/great-news/)[Have mercy on me, O God,  
    according to your unfailing love;  
according to your great compassion  
    blot out my transgressions.](https://odb.org/2019/02/28/great-news/)[2](https://odb.org/2019/02/28/great-news/)[Wash away all my iniquity  
    and cleanse me from my sin.](https://odb.org/2019/02/28/great-news/)

[3](https://odb.org/2019/02/28/great-news/)[For I know my transgressions,  
    and my sin is always before me.](https://odb.org/2019/02/28/great-news/)[4](https://odb.org/2019/02/28/great-news/)[Against you, you only, have I sinned  
    and done what is evil in your sight;  
so you are right in your verdict  
    and justified when you judge.](https://odb.org/2019/02/28/great-news/)[5](https://odb.org/2019/02/28/great-news/)[Surely I was sinful at birth,  
    sinful from the time my mother conceived me.](https://odb.org/2019/02/28/great-news/)[6](https://odb.org/2019/02/28/great-news/)[Yet you desired faithfulness even in the womb;  
    you taught me wisdom in that secret place.](https://odb.org/2019/02/28/great-news/)

[7](https://odb.org/2019/02/28/great-news/)[Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean;  
    wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.](https://odb.org/2019/02/28/great-news/)

#### **[Footnotes:](https://odb.org/2019/02/28/great-news/)**

1. [[Psalm 51:1](https://odb.org/2019/02/28/great-news/)](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+51%3A1%E2%80%937#en-NIV-14693) [In Hebrew texts 51:1-19 is numbered 51:3-21.](https://odb.org/2019/02/28/great-news/)

Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love. [Psalm 51:1](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+51%3A1)

The article in the local newspaper was short but heartwarming. After attending a faith-based program on building stronger family ties, a group of prison inmates were given a rare treat of an open visit with their families. Some hadn’t seen their children in years. Instead of talking through a glass panel, they could touch and hold their loved ones. The tears flowed freely as families grew closer and wounds began to heal.

For most readers, it was just a story. But for these families, holding one another was a life-changing event—and for some, the process of forgiveness and reconciliation was begun.

God’s forgiveness of our sin and offer of reconciliation, made possible through His Son, is more than a mere fact of the Christian faith. The article’s news of reconciliation reminds us that Jesus’s sacrifice is great news not just for the world, but for you and me.

In times when we’re overwhelmed by guilt for something we’ve done, however, it’s news we can cling to desperately. That’s when the fact of God’s unending mercy becomes personal news: because of Jesus’s dying on our behalf, we can come to the Father washed clean, “whiter than snow” (Psalm 51:7). In such times, when we know we don’t deserve His mercy, we can hold on to the only thing we can depend on: God’s unfailing love and compassion (v. 1).

By [Leslie Koh](https://odb.org/author/lesliekoh/)

#### **Today's Reflection**

Father, I’m sorry if I’ve taken Your mercy and love for granted. Thank You for this wonderful gift and privilege that I don’t deserve yet You’ve promised unconditionally.

#### **Insight**

Psalm 51 is one of the seven penitential psalms (Psalms 6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, 143), so called because the writer in repentant sorrow confesses his sins and turns to the Lord for forgiveness. The subheading to this psalm reads: “A psalm of David. When the prophet Nathan came to him after David had committed adultery with Bathsheba.” David’s sin and confrontation is recorded in 2 Samuel 11–12. Many scholars believe David penned both Psalms 32 and 51 after repenting from his sins of adultery with Bathsheba and murder of Uriah. Psalm 32 describes David’s spiritual dryness during the year when he refused to confess his sins (vv. 3–4), and the delight and sense of release after he acknowledged them (vv. 1–2, 5–11). In Psalm 51, after Nathan confronts him, David confesses his sins and pours his heart out to God and asks for forgiveness. Psalm 51 has become the model prayer for forgiveness of sin.

By: [**K. T. Sim**](https://odb.org/author/ktsim/)

# God Calling – 2/28/19

# Perfect Work

Spend more time alone with Me.

A strength and a Joy come from such times that will add much to your friendship, and much to your work.

Times of prayer are times of growth. Cut those times short and many well-filled hours of work may be profitless. Heaven's values are so different from the values of earth.

Remember that from the point of view of the Great Worker, one poor tool, working all the time, but doing bad work, is of small value compared with the sharp, keen, perfect instrument, used only a short time, but which turns out perfect work.

**UPHILL**

Does the road wind uphill all the way?

Yes, to the very end,

Will the journey take the whole long day?

From morn to night, my friend.

 -- C. G. Rossetti

"And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed." Mark 1:35

# My Utmost for His Highest – 3/1/19

# The Piercing Question

Do you love Me? —[John 21:17](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=John+21%3A17)

Peter’s response to this piercing question is considerably different from the bold defiance he exhibited only a few days before when he declared, “Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny You!” ([Matthew 26:35](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+26:35); also see [Matthew 26:33-34](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+26:33-34)). Our natural individuality, or our natural self, boldly speaks out and declares its feelings. But the true love within our inner spiritual self can be discovered only by experiencing the hurt of this question of Jesus Christ. Peter loved Jesus in the way any natural man loves a good person. Yet that is nothing but emotional love. It may reach deeply into our natural self, but it never penetrates to the spirit of a person. True love never simply declares itself. Jesus said, “Whoever confesses Me before men [that is, confesses his love by everything he does, not merely by his words], him the Son of Man also will confess before the angels of God” ([Luke 12:8](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+12:8)).

Unless we are experiencing the hurt of facing every deception about ourselves, we have hindered the work of the Word of God in our lives. The Word of God inflicts hurt on us more than sin ever could, because sin dulls our senses. But this question of the Lord intensifies our sensitivities to the point that this hurt produced by Jesus is the most exquisite pain conceivable. It hurts not only on the natural level, but also on the deeper spiritual level. “For the Word of God is living and powerful…, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit…”— to the point that no deception can remain (Hebrews 4:12). When the Lord asks us this question, it is impossible to think and respond properly, because when the Lord speaks directly to us, the pain is too intense. It causes such a tremendous hurt that any part of our life which may be out of line with His will can feel the pain. There is never any mistaking the pain of the Lord’s Word by His children, but the moment that pain is felt is the very moment at which God reveals His truth to us.

**Wisdom From Oswald Chambers**

It is impossible to read too much, but always keep before you why you read. Remember that “the need to receive, recognize, and rely on the Holy Spirit” is before all else. Approved Unto God, 11 L

# CCEL – 3/1/19

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

God is love: and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.—The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.—Unto you . . . which believe he is precious.—We love him, because he first loved us.—The love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.

Ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another.—This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you.—Above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins.—Walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour.

[I John 4:16](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iJohn.4.html" \l "iJohn.4.16). -[Rom. 5:5](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Rom.5.html" \l "Rom.5.5). -[I Pet. 2:7](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iPet.2.html" \l "iPet.2.7). -[I John 4:19](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iJohn.4.html" \l "iJohn.4.19). -[II Cor. 5:14,15](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iiCor.5.html" \l "iiCor.5.14).[I Thes. 4:9](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iThess.4.html" \l "iThess.4.9). -[John 15:12](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.John.15.html" \l "John.15.12). -[I Pet. 4:8](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iPet.4.html" \l "iPet.4.8). -[Eph. 5:2](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Eph.5.html" \l "Eph.5.2).

“Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out.” [Song of Solomon 4:16](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Song.4.html" \l "Song.4.16)

Anything is better than the dead calm of indifference. Our souls may wisely desire the north wind of trouble if that alone can be sanctified to the drawing forth of the perfume of our graces. So long as it cannot be said, “The Lord was not in the wind,” we will not shrink from the most wintry blast that ever blew upon plants of grace. Did not the spouse in this verse humbly submit herself to the reproofs of her Beloved; only entreating him to send forth his grace in some form, and making no stipulation as to the peculiar manner in which it should come? Did she not, like ourselves, become so utterly weary of deadness and unholy calm that she sighed for any visitation which would brace her to action? Yet she desires the warm south wind of comfort, too, the smiles of divine love, the joy of the Redeemer’s presence; these are often mightily effectual to arouse our sluggish life. She desires either one or the other, or both; so that she may but be able to delight her Beloved with the spices of her garden. She cannot endure to be unprofitable, nor can we. How cheering a thought that Jesus can find comfort in our poor feeble graces. Can it be? It seems far too good to be true. Well may we court trial or even death itself if we shall thereby be aided to make glad Immanuel’s heart. O that our heart were crushed to atoms if only by such bruising our sweet Lord Jesus could be glorified. Graces unexercised are as sweet perfumes slumbering in the cups of the flowers: the wisdom of the great Husbandman overrules diverse and opposite causes to produce the one desired result, and makes both affliction and consolation draw forth the grateful odours of faith, love, patience, hope, resignation, joy, and the other fair flowers of the garden. May we know by sweet experience, what this means.

# Word Live – 3/1/19

# Kind shepherds

## **Prepare**

Think of the leaders you know (you may be one) and consider their style of leadership. Do you like it? Do you respond to it?



## **Bible passage: 1 Peter 5:1–7**

##### **To Elders and Young Men**

1To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder, a witness of Christ's sufferings and one who also will share in the glory to be revealed: 2Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; 3not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. 4And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.

5Young men, in the same way be submissive to those who are older. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because,   
   "God opposes the proud   
      but gives grace to the humble." 6Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. 7Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.

## **Explore**

**Leadership training**

We seem to have a never-ending selection of leadership training courses on offer today, in the church and beyond. It is interesting that Peter sums up his leadership training in four verses! Notice how he describes his own credentials in verse 1.

The whole point of being a shepherd is to look after your flock of sheep. To know them and their needs and to know how to get them to good pasture. These verses speak of enthusiastic care that puts the needs of others first. There is an amazing reward ahead from the perfect role model (v 4).

**Characteristics**

We are not all elders in the church, but we all exercise leadership in one situation or another. Do these characteristics describe how you interact with and influence people around you: friends, children, colleagues, team mates?

Outside the early church humility was not really regarded as a virtue. Jesus introduces humble service as the way of his kingdom. Peter has learned this from the Chief Shepherd himself and is able to encourage it as an overriding virtue for everyone (vs 5,6).

How easily are you able to put verse 7 into practice? Whether it is in the context of leadership responsibilities or any other area of life, what a great invitation to have and hold on to.

[Elaine Duncan](https://www.wordlive.org/Otherstuff/Contributors/C-D/3525689.id)

## **Respond**

Take all your anxiety to the Chief Shepherd and leave it with him. He cares.

## **Deeper Bible study**

This final chapter reads like a farewell speech. Perhaps Peter was sensing his coming martyrdom, but he knows it is important for the work to continue through the elders in these diaspora churches. He restates his two main themes: humility towards one another; and resistance to the forces of evil, even in the face of suffering. He has a great love for these Jesus followers and longs to see them well cared for. The metaphor of shepherding, which both he and Paul ([Acts 20:28](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts+20%3A28&version=NIV)) use, makes a sobering goodbye. In Palestine the shepherd put his own safety aside to protect the sheep, even fighting off wolves ([John 10:11–15](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+10%3A11%E2%80%9315&version=NIV)). He had to feed them, make sure they could get water and rest and lead them to secure pastures. It was a heavy responsibility.

There is a poignancy in Peter seeing himself as a shepherd and commending this role to these elders. After the resurrection, when Jesus confronted Peter about his betrayal, he restored him by commissioning him again to ‘Take care of my sheep’ ([John 21:15–17](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+21%3A15%E2%80%9317&version=NIV)). It empowered Peter to turn his life around and be the warrior that was needed to lead at Pentecost. If we fail in following Jesus, it is reassuring that our Lord knows all about it but wants to welcome us back into his service and renew our call.

Leadership is a serious responsibility, which must be pursued freely, honestly and eagerly (vs 2,3), but it does not work unless all members of a church or an organisation heed Peter’s next instruction – submit to your leaders. This is not some hierarchical organisation chart but a general principle we saw in chapter 2 – submitting humbly to one another in love. Humility is like the oil that keeps an engine functioning. As in our cars, it even enables hard abrasive parts to rub up against each other and do their job.

[Jennifer Turner](https://www.wordlive.org/Otherstuff/Contributors/T-U/3529883.id)

## **Shepherd of your soul**

When Peter addressed the church leaders of Asia Minor as ‘elders’ (v 1) and ‘shepherds’ (v 2), he expected them to recall the way these terms are used throughout Scripture.  
  
**Elders**

The Jewish term ‘elder’ is not reserved for the good and wise, but for leaders of all kinds. Ideally they were older, respected men who gave wise guidance to their communities.  
  
Elders were appointed to share Moses’ burden of leadership in the desert (see [Numbers 11:16,17](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Numbers%2011:16-17;&version=72;)). In more settled times, they sat ‘at the city gate’ to resolve disputes and hear petitions (see [Ruth 4:1,2](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ruth%204:1-2;&version=72;); [Proverbs 31:23](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Proverbs%2031:23;&version=72;)).  
  
**Untrustworthy leaders**

It was a serious matter when such men turned away from God (see [Lamentations 5:14](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Lamentations%205:14;&version=72;); [Ezekiel 8:12](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ezekiel%208:12;&version=72;)) because they would be held accountable for abandoning the children of Israel, who are often described as ‘sheep without a shepherd’ ([Numbers 27:16](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Numbers%2027:16;&version=72;); [1 Kings 22:17](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Kings%2022:17;&version=72;); [Isaiah 13:14](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isaiah%2013:14;&version=72;); [Matthew 9:36](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew%209:36;&version=72;)).  
  
In [Matthew 16:12](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew%2016:12;&version=72;) and [27:3](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew%2027:3;&version=72;), the elders actually become the enemies of Jesus and the ones who cause him to be crucified.  
  
**Pastors**

The term ‘shepherd’ is used both for herders of sheep and for leaders of men. Just like the elders, they endure God’s wrath when they lead their ‘sheep’ astray (see [Jeremiah 23:1–3](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Jeremiah%2023:1-3;&version=72;)).  
  
It is God himself who comes to the people’s rescue as a tender Shepherd (see [Psalm 28:9](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm%2028:9;&version=72;)) who ‘gathers the lambs in his arms’ ([Isaiah 40:11](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isaiah%2040:11;&version=72;)). But it is Jesus who is the supreme Good Shepherd ([John 10:11](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John%2010:11;&version=72;)), the ‘shepherd of my people Israel’ ([Matthew 2:6](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew%202:6;&version=72;)) and ‘the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls’ ([2:24,25](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20peter%202:24-25;&version=72;)).  
  
**Following Christ’s example**

So when Peter urges the church leaders to be ‘shepherds of God’s flock’ (v 2) he is asking them to take on the mantle of the ‘Chief Shepherd’ (v 4) as protectors, teachers and pastors. And he is offering the consolation of a ‘crown of glory that will never fade away’. It is a glorious calling.  
  
Venetia Horton

# Today in the Word – 3/1/19

# The Riches of Wisdom

**Read:** [**2 Chronicles 1**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Chronicles+1)

### **Solomon Asks for Wisdom**

1 Solomon son of David established himself firmly over his kingdom, for the Lord his God was with him and made him exceedingly great.

2Then Solomon spoke to all Israel—to the commanders of thousands and commanders of hundreds, to the judges and to all the leaders in Israel, the heads of families— 3and Solomon and the whole assembly went to the high place at Gibeon, for God’s tent of meeting was there, which Moses the Lord’s servant had made in the wilderness. 4Now David had brought up the ark of God from Kiriath Jearim to the place he had prepared for it, because he had pitched a tent for it in Jerusalem. 5But the bronze altar that Bezalel son of Uri, the son of Hur, had made was in Gibeon in front of the tabernacle of the Lord; so Solomon and the assembly inquired of him there. 6Solomon went up to the bronze altar before the Lord in the tent of meeting and offered a thousand burnt offerings on it.

7That night God appeared to Solomon and said to him, “Ask for whatever you want me to give you.”

8Solomon answered God, “You have shown great kindness to David my father and have made me king in his place. 9Now, Lord God, let your promise to my father David be confirmed, for you have made me king over a people who are as numerous as the dust of the earth. 10Give me wisdom and knowledge, that I may lead this people, for who is able to govern this great people of yours?”

11God said to Solomon, “Since this is your heart’s desire and you have not asked for wealth, possessions or honor, nor for the death of your enemies, and since you have not asked for a long life but for wisdom and knowledge to govern my people over whom I have made you king, 12therefore wisdom and knowledge will be given you. And I will also give you wealth, possessions and honor, such as no king who was before you ever had and none after you will have.”

13Then Solomon went to Jerusalem from the high place at Gibeon, from before the tent of meeting. And he reigned over Israel.

14Solomon accumulated chariots and horses; he had fourteen hundred chariots and twelve thousand horses,[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Chronicles+1" \l "fen-NIV-11209a" \o "See footnote a)] which he kept in the chariot cities and also with him in Jerusalem. 15The king made silver and gold as common in Jerusalem as stones, and cedar as plentiful as sycamore-fig trees in the foothills. 16Solomon’s horses were imported from Egypt and from Kue[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Chronicles+1#fen-NIV-11211b)]—the royal merchants purchased them from Kue at the current price. 17They imported a chariot from Egypt for six hundred shekels[[c](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Chronicles+1#fen-NIV-11212c)] of silver, and a horse for a hundred and fifty.[[d](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Chronicles+1" \l "fen-NIV-11212d" \o "See footnote d)] They also exported them to all the kings of the Hittites and of the Arameans.

#### **Footnotes:**

1. [2 Chronicles 1:14](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Chronicles+1#en-NIV-11209) Or charioteers
2. [2 Chronicles 1:16](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Chronicles+1#en-NIV-11211) Probably Cilicia
3. [2 Chronicles 1:17](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Chronicles+1#en-NIV-11212) That is, about 15 pounds or about 6.9 kilograms
4. [2 Chronicles 1:17](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Chronicles+1#en-NIV-11212) That is, about 3 3/4 pounds or about 1.7 kilograms

On November 6, 2018, at age 33, Jeremy Colliton became the youngest head coach in the National Hockey League (NHL) when he followed Joel Quenneville as coach of the Chicago Blackhawks. Quenneville was the second-winningest coach in NHL history and led the Blackhawks to victory in three NHL championships. But in 2017–2018, the Blackhawks finished last in their division. New coach Colliton, therefore, was coming into a great franchise that faced huge challenges to winning another championship. In order to lead players many years his senior, Colliton would need to exercise great relationship-building skills and much patience: “Ultimately it’s about winning, and I have to earn their trust by them believing that I can help them win.”

Give me wisdom and knowledge, that I may lead this people, for who is able to govern this great people of yours? 2 Chronicles 1:10

Solomon faced such a challenge in leading the people of Israel after the reign of his father, David. The Ark was not present in worship, the people were great in their numbers, and there was a considerable distance from Jerusalem to Gibeon (v. 3). But rather than seeking his own greatness, Solomon asked the Lord for wisdom. Only after the Lord promised to establish Solomon’s greatness did Solomon shower people with gifts and acquire horses to demonstrate his preparedness for battle (vv. 11–17).

When we enter a new leadership role, we can be tempted to set the goal of exceeding the success of our predecessors. For church and ministry leaders, it might mean overhauling corporate worship, growing a large staff, seeking a congregation with a reputation of great accomplishments, embarking on an impressive building project, or improving other programs. We must remember the truth of this passage: only the Lord can establish us as leaders and give us the grace and wisdom to lead well.

### **Apply the Word**

Hebrews 13:17 exhorts the church to make the work of our church leaders a joy for them, and it is the members who derive the benefit of the joyous work of their leaders. How can you be part of making ministry a joy? Pray for your leaders, and look for opportunities to encourage them with verbal affirmations and practical service.

### **Pray with Us**

It’s our privilege to pray for our Board of trustees today. Our trustees provide vital guidance to the MBI ministries, serving faithfully with their skills, time, efforts, and prayers. For a list of their names, please refer to page 5 of this issue.

## BY Eric C. Redmond

# Our Daily Bread – 3/1/19

# No Comparison

**Read:** [**John 21:17-25**](https://odb.org/2019/03/01/no-comparison/)

17The third time he said to him, “Simon son of John, do you love me?”

A heart at peace gives life to the body, but envy rots the bones. [Proverbs 14:30](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Proverbs+14%3A30)

Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, “Do you love me?” He said, “Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you.”

Jesus said, “Feed my sheep. 18Very truly I tell you, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go.” 19Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. Then he said to him, “Follow me!”

20Peter turned and saw that the disciple whom Jesus loved was following them. (This was the one who had leaned back against Jesus at the supper and had said, “Lord, who is going to betray you?”) 21When Peter saw him, he asked, “Lord, what about him?”

22Jesus answered, “If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you? You must follow me.” 23Because of this, the rumor spread among the believers that this disciple would not die. But Jesus did not say that he would not die; he only said, “If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you?”

24This is the disciple who testifies to these things and who wrote them down. We know that his testimony is true.

25Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written.

“One of these days I’m going to put it all on Facebook—not just the good stuff!”

My friend Sue’s comment—made casually over lunch with her husband—caused me to laugh out loud and also to think. Social media can be a good thing, helping us stay in touch with and pray for friends across the years and miles. But if we’re not careful, it can also create an unrealistic outlook on life. When much of what we see posted is a “highlight reel” of “the good stuff,” we can be misled into thinking others’ lives are without trouble, and wonder where our own went wrong.

Comparing ourselves with others is a sure recipe for unhappiness. When the disciples compared themselves to each other (see Luke 9:46; 22:24), Jesus quickly discouraged it. Soon after His resurrection, Jesus told Peter how he would suffer for his faith. Peter then turned to John and asked, “Lord, what about him?” Jesus answered, “If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you? You must follow me” (John 21:21–22).

Jesus pointed Peter to the best remedy for unhealthy comparisons. When our minds are focused on God and all He’s done for us, self-focused thoughts fall gently away and we long to follow Him. In place of the world’s competitive strain and stress, He gives us His loving presence and peace. Nothing can compare with Him.

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

#### **Today's Reflection**

How can you use social media in a God-honoring way? How can a real relationship with God keep you from making unhealthy comparisons?

#### **Insight**

Some scholars speculate that John 21 was written (under the guidance of the Holy Spirit) at a later time than the first 20 chapters and was added to clarify a misunderstanding. Apparently, some believed that Jesus had promised John he wouldn’t die until Jesus returned, and that rumor had spread widely. The so-called “second ending” (ch. 21) was intended to address that false idea by clarifying Jesus’s words (vv. 22–23).

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

# God Calling – 3/1/19

# Shower Love

I always hear your cry. No sound escapes Me.

Many, many in the world cry to Me, but oh! how few wait to hear Me speak to them and yet to the soul, My speaking to it matters so much.

My words are Life. Think then, to hear Me speak is to find Life, and healing and strength. Trust Me in all things. Love showered on all brings truly a quick return.

Just carry out My wishes and leave Me to carry out yours. Treat Me as Savior and King, but also with the tender intimacy of One much beloved.

Keep to the rules I have laid down for you, persistently, perseveringly, lovingly, patiently, hopefully, and in faith, and every mountain of difficulty shall be laid low, the rough places of poverty shall be made smooth, and all who know you shall know that I, your Lord, am the Lord.

Shower love.

"The righteous cry, and the Lord heareth." - Psalm 34:17

# My Utmost for His Highest – 3/2/19

# Have You Felt the Pain Inflicted by the Lord?

He said to him the third time, "…do you love Me?" —[John 21:17](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=John+21%3A17)

Have you ever felt the pain, inflicted by the Lord, at the very center of your being, deep down in the most sensitive area of your life? The devil never inflicts pain there, and neither can sin nor human emotions. Nothing can cut through to that part of our being but the Word of God. “Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, ‘Do you love Me?’ ” Yet he was awakened to the fact that at the center of his personal life he was devoted to Jesus. And then he began to see what Jesus’ patient questioning meant. There was not the slightest bit of doubt left in Peter’s mind; he could never be deceived again. And there was no need for an impassioned response; no need for immediate action or an emotional display. It was a revelation to him to realize how much he did love the Lord, and with amazement he simply said, “Lord, You know all things….” Peter began to see how very much he did love Jesus, and there was no need to say, “Look at this or that as proof of my love.” Peter was beginning to discover within himself just how much he really did love the Lord. He discovered that his eyes were so fixed on Jesus Christ that he saw no one else in heaven above or on the earth below. But he did not know it until the probing, hurting questions of the Lord were asked. The Lord’s questions always reveal the true me to myself.

Oh, the wonder of the patient directness and skill of Jesus Christ with Peter! Our Lord never asks questions until the perfect time. Rarely, but probably once in each of our lives, He will back us into a corner where He will hurt us with His piercing questions. Then we will realize that we do love Him far more deeply than our words can ever say.

**Wisdom From Oswald Chambers**

Jesus Christ is always unyielding to my claim to my right to myself. The one essential element in all our Lord’s teaching about discipleship is abandon, no calculation, no trace of self-interest. Disciples Indeed, 395 L

# CCEL – 3/2/19

**God hath caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction.**—[GEN. 41:52.](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Gen.41.html" \l "Gen.41.52)

Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God. For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ.

Now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.—The Lord stood with me, and strengthened me.

Let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator.

[II Cor. 1:3-5](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iiCor.1.html" \l "iiCor.1.3).[I Pet. 1:6,7](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iPet.1.html" \l "iPet.1.6)-[II Tim 4:17](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iiTim.4.html" \l "iiTim.4.17).[I Pet. 4:19](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iPet.4.html" \l "iPet.4.19).

“But all the Israelites went down to the Philistines, to sharpen every man his share, and his coulter, and his axe, and his mattock.” [1 Samuel 13:20](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iSam.13.html" \l "iSam.13.20)

We are engaged in a great war with the Philistines of evil. Every weapon within our reach must be used. Preaching, teaching, praying, giving, all must be brought into action, and talents which have been thought too mean for service, must now be employed. Coulter, and axe, and mattock, may all be useful in slaying Philistines; rough tools may deal hard blows, and killing need not be elegantly done, so long as it is done effectually. Each moment of time, in season or out of season; each fragment of ability, educated or untutored; each opportunity, favourable or unfavourable, must be used, for our foes are many and our force but slender.

Most of our tools want sharpening; we need quickness of perception, tact, energy, promptness, in a word, complete adaptation for the Lord’s work. Practical common sense is a very scarce thing among the conductors of Christian enterprises. We might learn from our enemies if we would, and so make the Philistines sharpen our weapons. This morning let us note enough to sharpen our zeal during this day by the aid of the Holy Spirit. See the energy of the Papists, how they compass sea and land to make one proselyte, are they to monopolize all the earnestness? Mark the heathen devotees, what tortures they endure in the service of their idols! are they alone to exhibit patience and self-sacrifice? Observe the prince of darkness, how persevering in his endeavours, how unabashed in his attempts, how daring in his plans, how thoughtful in his plots, how energetic in all! The devils are united as one man in their infamous rebellion, while we believers in Jesus are divided in our service of God, and scarcely ever work with unanimity. O that from Satan’s infernal industry we may learn to go about like good Samaritans, seeking whom we may bless!

# Word Live – 3/2/19

# Roaring lions

## **Prepare**

Take a moment to pray that God will speak clearly into your life as we conclude this study of 1 Peter.



## **Bible passage: 1 Peter 5:8–14**

8Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. 9Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings.

10And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast. 11To him be the power for ever and ever. Amen.

##### **Final Greetings**

12With the help of Silas, whom I regard as a faithful brother, I have written to you briefly, encouraging you and testifying that this is the true grace of God. Stand fast in it. 13She who is in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you her greetings, and so does my son Mark. 14Greet one another with a kiss of love. Peace to all of you who are in Christ.

## **Explore**

**The real enemy**

This whole letter has addressed the sufferings and persecutions of the early Christians as they seek to live as God’s people in an alien environment. They have been subject to slander, mockery, beatings and other forms of persecution. Peter now reveals who is behind it all, who is the real enemy of God and his people (v 8). What does the imagery of the lion conjure up in your mind?

**Spiritual warfare**

Whoever we may think our human enemies are, there is a greater enemy, the devil himself. Spiritual warfare is a reality and we do well to be alert to it. CS Lewis in his book The Screwtape Letters gives helpful advice about the devil’s schemes and is worth a read. If we resist the devil, ‘staying resolute in faith and remembering that you are holding your bit of the line while your Christian brothers and sisters are holding theirs, you will find that courteous and civil behaviour, acting with respect and gentleness, will again and again win an answering respect from outsiders, even if they still don’t understand what makes you tick’ (Tom Wright, Early Christian Letters, SPCK, 2011).

**True grace**

Peter’s final reassurance is that whatever doubts and uncertainties have arisen because of the hard time they are having, they are standing in the true grace of God (v 12).

[Elaine Duncan](https://www.wordlive.org/Otherstuff/Contributors/C-D/3525689.id)

## **Respond**

Let the peace of Christ enfold you.

## **Deeper Bible study**

Those living a comfortable faith usually have no awareness of an adversary ‘prowling around’ them (see v 8). Calling him a lion conjures up an image of torture in a Roman amphitheatre – persecution of the most obvious and deadly form. If that kind of persecution is not happening around us and the reality of a personal devil has been consigned to history, a Christian can be blithely unaware of the danger and certainly not in a place to resist, as both Peter and James ([James 4:7](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=James+4%3A7&version=NIV)) call us to do.

Satan is called the accuser and one of his wiles is the internal dialogue that invites us to doubt God or be uncertain as to whether we are in good standing with him. Satan also seeks to undermine the church from within. That is indeed deadly, so Peter’s warning is timely. It is instructive that both Peter and Paul ([Rom 16:20](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Rom+16%3A20&version=NIV)) give their most direct reminders about Satan at the ends of their letters. It is as if each is saying: your best defence is to take to heart all that I have been saying and use it to resist with truth. It is also reassuring to know you are not the only one resisting.

Peter began his letter by praying grace and peace on these exiles. He ends with again declaring peace on all who are in Christ. This is not just wishful thinking nor is it a magical formula that achieves peace by spoken words. It is a declaration of what God has already done in Christ, a reminder that, whether they live or suffer or even die for their faith, it is within God’s all-encompassing grace. When we repeat the grace to one another at the conclusion of a worship service we are continuing that wonderful tradition. Like Peter, we are confidently affirming God’s favour to fellow Christians.1

1 Edmund P Clowney, The Message of 1 Peter, IVP, 1989, p27

[Jennifer Turner](https://www.wordlive.org/Otherstuff/Contributors/T-U/3529883.id)

# Today in the Word – 3/2/19

# Building for the Infinite God

**Read:** [**2 Chronicles 2**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Chronicles+2)

### **Preparations for Building the Temple**

2 [[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Chronicles+2#fen-NIV-11213a)]Solomon gave orders to build a temple for the Name of the Lord and a royal palace for himself. 2He conscripted 70,000 men as carriers and 80,000 as stonecutters in the hills and 3,600 as foremen over them.

3Solomon sent this message to Hiram[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Chronicles+2#fen-NIV-11215b)] king of Tyre:

“Send me cedar logs as you did for my father David when you sent him cedar to build a palace to live in. 4Now I am about to build a temple for the Name of the Lord my God and to dedicate it to him for burning fragrant incense before him, for setting out the consecrated bread regularly, and for making burnt offerings every morning and evening and on the Sabbaths, at the New Moons and at the appointed festivals of the Lord our God. This is a lasting ordinance for Israel.

5“The temple I am going to build will be great, because our God is greater than all other gods. 6But who is able to build a temple for him, since the heavens, even the highest heavens, cannot contain him? Who then am I to build a temple for him, except as a place to burn sacrifices before him?

7“Send me, therefore, a man skilled to work in gold and silver, bronze and iron, and in purple, crimson and blue yarn, and experienced in the art of engraving, to work in Judah and Jerusalem with my skilled workers, whom my father David provided.

8“Send me also cedar, juniper and algum[[c](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Chronicles+2#fen-NIV-11220c)] logs from Lebanon, for I know that your servants are skilled in cutting timber there. My servants will work with yours 9to provide me with plenty of lumber, because the temple I build must be large and magnificent. 10I will give your servants, the woodsmen who cut the timber, twenty thousand cors[[d](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Chronicles+2#fen-NIV-11222d)] of ground wheat, twenty thousand cors[[e](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Chronicles+2#fen-NIV-11222e)] of barley, twenty thousand baths[[f](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Chronicles+2#fen-NIV-11222f)] of wine and twenty thousand baths of olive oil.”

11Hiram king of Tyre replied by letter to Solomon:

“Because the Lord loves his people, he has made you their king.”

12And Hiram added:

“Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, who made heaven and earth! He has given King David a wise son, endowed with intelligence and discernment, who will build a temple for the Lord and a palace for himself.

13“I am sending you Huram-Abi, a man of great skill, 14whose mother was from Dan and whose father was from Tyre. He is trained to work in gold and silver, bronze and iron, stone and wood, and with purple and blue and crimson yarn and fine linen. He is experienced in all kinds of engraving and can execute any design given to him. He will work with your skilled workers and with those of my lord, David your father.

15“Now let my lord send his servants the wheat and barley and the olive oil and wine he promised, 16and we will cut all the logs from Lebanon that you need and will float them as rafts by sea down to Joppa. You can then take them up to Jerusalem.”

17Solomon took a census of all the foreigners residing in Israel, after the census his father David had taken; and they were found to be 153,600. 18He assigned 70,000 of them to be carriers and 80,000 to be stonecutters in the hills, with 3,600 foremen over them to keep the people working.

#### **Footnotes:**

1. [2 Chronicles 2:1](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Chronicles+2#en-NIV-11213) In Hebrew texts 2:1 is numbered 1:18, and 2:2-18 is numbered 2:1-17.
2. [2 Chronicles 2:3](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Chronicles+2#en-NIV-11215) Hebrew Huram, a variant of Hiram; also in verses 11 and 12
3. [2 Chronicles 2:8](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Chronicles+2#en-NIV-11220) Probably a variant of almug
4. [2 Chronicles 2:10](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Chronicles+2#en-NIV-11222) That is, probably about 3,600 tons or about 3,200 metric tons of wheat
5. [2 Chronicles 2:10](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Chronicles+2#en-NIV-11222) That is, probably about 3,000 tons or about 2,700 metric tons of barley
6. [2 Chronicles 2:10](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Chronicles+2#en-NIV-11222) That is, about 120,000 gallons or about 440,000 liters

What role should secular expertise play in filling service openings in the church? Some have argued that spiritual gifts and calling aren’t relevant when filling a vacancy in the nursery, children’s ministry, or small group leadership. Are spiritual gifts important only for preachers and worship leaders? We find some insight in our passage today.

Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, who made heaven and earth! 2 Chronicles 2:12

When Solomon considered building a temple of worship for the Lord that would approach the greatness of God’s being, he realized that task was not possible in one sense: No human temple can contain a God so great. But obedient to God’s call and his father’s instruction, he called upon Hiram for help (v. 3). Hiram was a trusted friend of Solomon’s father, David—a friend already vetted as faithful and able to provide skilled workers. Hiram provided the most skilled worker possible to build articles related to the worship practice, a man who also came from the tribe of Dan (v. 14).

Solomon wisely offered compensation for the work rather than dishonoring Hiram and the workers by expecting volunteer labor. For the work in the quarry, which was not directly related to the artifacts and practice of worship, Solomon also utilized people from outside of Israel’s covenant relationship with the Lord.

Skilled musicians, singers, directors, audio and visual technicians, media artists, and people who have spiritual and pragmatic competencies in praying and reading Scripture publicly—all work together to help reflect the greatness of the Lord. Solomon demonstrated that we testify to God’s greatness when we consider the spiritual gifts and God-given talents of those who participate in the ministries of our church and lead our worship services.

### **Apply the Word**

Consider the greatness of God—He who made supernovas, 60,000 miles of veins in the human body, and an Earth that spins on an invisible axis; He who knows every language and every bit of information known and not yet known to man and who is faithful, kind, and loving toward us daily. What kind of worship are you giving to Him?

### **Pray with Us**

Strategy and marketing are among key ingredients for the success of a ministry. As chief marketing officer, Samuel Choy provides leadership in both areas at Moody. Would you pray for God’s guidance and blessing for his service?

## BY Eric C. Redmond

# Our Daily Bread – 3/2/19

# Searching for Treasure

**Read:** [**Proverbs 4:5-19**](https://odb.org/2019/03/02/15-when-they-had-finished-eating-jesus-said-to-simon-peter-simon-son-of-john-do-you-love-me-more-than-theseyes-lord-he-said-you-know-that-i-love/)

5 Get wisdom, get understanding;  
    do not forget my words or turn away from them.  
6Do not forsake wisdom, and she will protect you;  
    love her, and she will watch over you.  
7The beginning of wisdom is this: Get[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Proverbs+4%3A5%E2%80%9319#fen-NIV-16498a)] wisdom.  
    Though it cost all you have,[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Proverbs+4%3A5%E2%80%9319" \l "fen-NIV-16498b" \o "See footnote b)] get understanding.  
8Cherish her, and she will exalt you;  
    embrace her, and she will honor you.  
9She will give you a garland to grace your head  
    and present you with a glorious crown.”

10Listen, my son, accept what I say,  
    and the years of your life will be many.  
11I instruct you in the way of wisdom  
    and lead you along straight paths.  
12When you walk, your steps will not be hampered;  
    when you run, you will not stumble.  
13Hold on to instruction, do not let it go;  
    guard it well, for it is your life.  
14Do not set foot on the path of the wicked  
    or walk in the way of evildoers.  
15Avoid it, do not travel on it;  
    turn from it and go on your way.  
16For they cannot rest until they do evil;  
    they are robbed of sleep till they make someone stumble.  
17They eat the bread of wickedness  
    and drink the wine of violence.

18The path of the righteous is like the morning sun,  
    shining ever brighter till the full light of day.  
19But the way of the wicked is like deep darkness;  
    they do not know what makes them stumble.

#### **Footnotes:**

1. [Proverbs 4:7](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Proverbs+4%3A5%E2%80%9319#en-NIV-16498) Or Wisdom is supreme; therefore get
2. [Proverbs 4:7](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Proverbs+4%3A5%E2%80%9319#en-NIV-16498) Or wisdom. / Whatever else you get

[Wisdom] is more profitable than silver and yields better returns than gold. [Proverbs 3:14](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Proverbs+3%3A14)

Buried treasure. It sounds like something out of a children’s storybook. But eccentric millionaire Forrest Fenn claims to have left a box of jewels and gold, worth up to $2 million, somewhere in the Rocky Mountains. Many people have gone in search of it. In fact, four people have lost their lives trying to find the hidden riches.

The author of Proverbs gives us reason to stop and think: Does any kind of treasure merit such a quest? In Proverbs 4, a father writing to his sons about how to live well suggests that wisdom is one thing worth seeking at any cost (v. 7). Wisdom, he says, will lead us through life, keep us from stumbling, and crown us with honor (vv. 8–12). Writing hundreds of years later, James, half-brother of Jesus and leader in the early church, also emphasized the importance of wisdom. “The wisdom that comes from heaven,” he writes, “is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere” (James 3:17). When we seek wisdom, we find all kinds of good things flourishing in our lives.

To seek wisdom is ultimately to seek God, the source of all wisdom and understanding. And the wisdom that comes from above is worth more than any buried treasure we could ever imagine.

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

#### **Today's Reflection**

Are you actively seeking God’s wisdom? How can you do so today?

#### **Insight**

In Proverbs 4, Solomon encourages his sons to pursue wisdom and then emphasizes its benefits. Wisdom will watch over and protect (v. 6). She will exalt and honor the one who finds her (v. 8). She will adorn those who find her with “garland” and a “crown”—symbols of respect and dignity (v. 9). She will keep those who pursue her from stumbling and from stepping on the path of evildoers (vv. 12, 14). With all these benefits, it’s no wonder we’re to pursue wisdom no matter the cost. It’s worth everything we have (v. 7).

By: [**J.R. Hudberg**](https://odb.org/author/jrhudberg/)

# God Calling – 3/2/19

# Spirit Words

"The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life."

Just as much as the words I spoke to My disciples of old. This is your reward for not seeking spirit-communication through a medium. Those who do it can never know the ecstasy, the wonder, of spirit-communication as you know it.

Life, Joy, Peace, and Healing are yours in very full measure. You will see this as you go on. At first, you can hardly credit the powers I am bestowing on you.

I sent My disciples out two by two, and gave them power over unclean spirits, and to heal all manner of diseases.

Wonderful indeed must it have been to St. Peter to feel suddenly that His Lord's power was his.

"God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. - John 4:24

# My Utmost for His Highest – 3/3/19

# His Commission to Us

Feed My sheep. —[John 21:17](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=John+21%3A17)

This is love in the making. The love of God is not created— it is His nature. When we receive the life of Christ through the Holy Spirit, He unites us with God so that His love is demonstrated in us. The goal of the indwelling Holy Spirit is not just to unite us with God, but to do it in such a way that we will be one with the Father in exactly the same way Jesus was. And what kind of oneness did Jesus Christ have with the Father? He had such a oneness with the Father that He was obedient when His Father sent Him down here to be poured out for us. And He says to us, “As the Father has sent Me, I also send you” ([John 20:21](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+20:21)).

Peter now realizes that he does love Him, due to the revelation that came with the Lord’s piercing question. The Lord’s next point is— “Pour yourself out. Don’t testify about how much you love Me and don’t talk about the wonderful revelation you have had, just ‘Feed My sheep.’ ” Jesus has some extraordinarily peculiar sheep: some that are unkempt and dirty, some that are awkward or pushy, and some that have gone astray! But it is impossible to exhaust God’s love, and it is impossible to exhaust my love if it flows from the Spirit of God within me. The love of God pays no attention to my prejudices caused by my natural individuality. If I love my Lord, I have no business being guided by natural emotions— I have to feed His sheep. We will not be delivered or released from His commission to us. Beware of counterfeiting the love of God by following your own natural human emotions, sympathies, or understandings. That will only serve to revile and abuse the true love of God.

**Wisdom From Oswald Chambers**

Re-state to yourself what you believe, then do away with as much of it as possible, and get back to the bedrock of the Cross of Christ.  My Utmost for His Highest, November 25, 848 R

# CCEL – 3/3/19

**Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.**—[PROV. 3:5,6.](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Prov.3.html" \l "Prov.3.5)

Trust in him at all times; ye people, pour out your heart before him: God is a refuge for us.

I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye. Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto thee. Many sorrows shall be to the wicked: but he that trusteth in the Lord, mercy shall compass him about.—Thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left.

If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence. For wherein shall it be known here that I and thy people have found grace in thy sight? is it not in that thou goest with us? so shall we be separated, I and thy people, from all the people that are upon the face of the earth.

[Psa. 62:8](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.62.html" \l "Ps.62.8).[Psa. 32:8-10](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.32.html" \l "Ps.32.8). -[Isa. 30:21](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Isa.30.html" \l "Isa.30.21).[Exo. 33:15,16](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Exod.33.html" \l "Exod.33.15).

“I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction.” [Isaiah 48:10](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Isa.48.html" \l "Isa.48.10)

Comfort thyself, tried believer, with this thought: God saith, “I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction.” Does not the word come like a soft shower, assuaging the fury of the flame? Yea, is it not an asbestos armour, against which the heat hath no power? Let affliction come—God has chosen me. Poverty, thou mayst stride in at my door, but God is in the house already, and he has chosen me. Sickness, thou mayst intrude, but I have a balsam ready—God has chosen me. Whatever befalls me in this vale of tears, I know that he has “chosen” me. If, believer, thou requirest still greater comfort, remember that you have the Son of Man with you in the furnace. In that silent chamber of yours, there sitteth by your side One whom thou hast not seen, but whom thou lovest; and ofttimes when thou knowest it not, he makes all thy bed in thy affliction, and smooths thy pillow for thee. Thou art in poverty; but in that lovely house of thine the Lord of life and glory is a frequent visitor. He loves to come into these desolate places, that he may visit thee. Thy friend sticks closely to thee. Thou canst not see him, but thou mayst feel the pressure of his hands. Dost thou not hear his voice? Even in the valley of the shadow of death he says, “Fear not, I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God.” Remember that noble speech of Caesar: “Fear not, thou carriest Caesar and all his fortune.” Fear not, Christian; Jesus is with thee. In all thy fiery trials, his presence is both thy comfort and safety. He will never leave one whom he has chosen for his own. “Fear not, for I am with thee,” is his sure word of promise to his chosen ones in the “furnace of affliction.” Wilt thou not, then, take fast hold of Christ, and say—

“Through floods and flames, if Jesus lead, I'll follow where he goes.”

# Word Live – 3/3/19

# When God seems absent

## **Prepare**

Have you experienced times when God has seemed very distant, even absent? How did that feel and how did you respond?



## **Bible passage: Psalm 42,43**

**For the director of music. A maskil of the Sons of Korah**.

1 As the deer pants for streams of water,   
       so my soul pants for you, O God.

2 My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.   
       When can I go and meet with God?

3 My tears have been my food   
       day and night,   
       while men say to me all day long,   
       "Where is your God?"

4 These things I remember   
       as I pour out my soul:   
       how I used to go with the multitude,   
       leading the procession to the house of God,   
       with shouts of joy and thanksgiving   
       among the festive throng.

5 Why are you downcast, O my soul?   
       Why so disturbed within me?   
       Put your hope in God,   
       for I will yet praise him,   
       my Savior and 6 my God.   
       My soul is downcast within me;   
       therefore I will remember you   
       from the land of the Jordan,   
       the heights of Hermon—from Mount Mizar.

7 Deep calls to deep   
       in the roar of your waterfalls;   
       all your waves and breakers   
       have swept over me.

8 By day the LORD directs his love,   
       at night his song is with me—   
       a prayer to the God of my life.

9 I say to God my Rock,   
       "Why have you forgotten me?   
       Why must I go about mourning,   
       oppressed by the enemy?"

10 My bones suffer mortal agony   
       as my foes taunt me,   
       saying to me all day long,   
       "Where is your God?"

11 Why are you downcast, O my soul?   
       Why so disturbed within me?   
       Put your hope in God,   
       for I will yet praise him,   
       my Savior and my God.

#### **Psalm 43**

1 Vindicate me, O God,   
       and plead my cause against an ungodly nation;   
       rescue me from deceitful and wicked men.

2 You are God my stronghold.   
       Why have you rejected me?   
       Why must I go about mourning,   
       oppressed by the enemy?

3 Send forth your light and your truth,   
       let them guide me;   
       let them bring me to your holy mountain,   
       to the place where you dwell.

4 Then will I go to the altar of God,   
       to God, my joy and my delight.   
       I will praise you with the harp,   
       O God, my God.

5 Why are you downcast, O my soul?   
       Why so disturbed within me?   
       Put your hope in God,   
       for I will yet praise him,   
       my Savior and my God.

## **Explore**

**Repeated refrain**

These two psalms are generally accepted to be one and no one is certain why they were divided. Notice the refrain that is repeated three times (42:5,11; 43:5) and divides the psalm into three stanzas. Read the psalm again with this in mind.

John Goldingay helpfully sees three elements in each stanza. The psalmist: lets himself go; makes himself think; pulls himself together (The Bible Speaks Today: Psalms 42-51, IVP, 1978).

**Expressing feelings**

How does the psalmist express his feelings in each stanza? What experience have you had of a desperate longing for God (42:1–3)? Of being overwhelmed by circumstances (42:7,9,10)? Of being on the receiving end of injustice (43:1)? How readily are you able to pour out what you feel to God?

What does the psalmist remember about the past and hope for in the future in each stanza? He is turning his mind to his situation and not allowing his emotions to paralyse him.

To what extent do you think the refrain or chorus seems to reconcile things for the psalmist? He is determined not to drown in his misery and sorrow. Yet he has to reach this conclusion three times. This is no easy ‘pull yourself together’ approach to difficulties.

[Elaine Duncan](https://www.wordlive.org/Otherstuff/Contributors/C-D/3525689.id)

## **Respond**

Lord, ‘send me your light and your faithful care’ that I may yet praise you, ‘my Saviour and my God’.

## **Deeper Bible study**

These two psalms begin Part II of the psalter as a single psalm. They introduce the collection of songs from Israel’s worship leaders (the family dynasty of Korah), characterised by the Hebrew name Elohim (God) rather than Yahweh (Lord) of earlier Davidic psalms. Without the references to David’s life which we find in his compositions, they are less personal but still anchored in the history and geography of Israel. We readily hear in them universal cries to God. Three times comes the refrain, ‘Why, my soul, are you downcast? … Put your hope in God’ (42:5,11; 43:5). As in Psalm 41, the pain of human existence butts up against an affirmation of faith in the majestic but personal God who only has the best interests at heart of the people he has made and redeems.

Goldingay suggests three headings for the three stanzas of the combined psalm – letting oneself go, making oneself think, pulling oneself together – as a progression to bringing clarity to one’s painful situation.1 Rehearsing one’s troubles is ultimately not helpful if we stay in the slough of despond. Recalling God’s past goodness to us, however, moves us on to affirming he is ‘the same yesterday and today and for ever’ ([Heb 13:8](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Heb+13%3A8&version=NIV" \t "_blank)). Finally, pulling oneself together is a proactive response to God’s goodness and includes using festivals and worship rituals (43:3,4) to bolster our confidence in God.

Many of the images and words here are familiar – from hearing the psalms and because they populate our contemporary songs. For example, in a time of crippling complexity when I didn’t know which way to turn, ‘deep calls to deep’ (42:7) reminded me that whatever bottomless pit I found myself in, God was already there and understood what was going on, even when I could not get my head around it.

1 Quoted in Michael Wilcock, The Message of Psalms 1–72, IVP, 2001, p156

# Today in the Word – 3/3/19

# Building on the Past

[**Read: 2 Chronicles 3:1–14**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Chronicles+3%3a1%e2%80%9314)

### **Solomon Builds the Temple**

3 Then Solomon began to build the temple of the Lord in Jerusalem on Mount Moriah, where the Lord had appeared to his father David. It was on the threshing floor of Araunah[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Chronicles+3%3a1%e2%80%9314#fen-NIV-11231a)] the Jebusite, the place provided by David. 2He began building on the second day of the second month in the fourth year of his reign.

3The foundation Solomon laid for building the temple of God was sixty cubits long and twenty cubits wide[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Chronicles+3%3a1%e2%80%9314#fen-NIV-11233b)] (using the cubit of the old standard). 4The portico at the front of the temple was twenty cubits[[c](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Chronicles+3%3a1%e2%80%9314#fen-NIV-11234c)] long across the width of the building and twenty[[d](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Chronicles+3%3a1%e2%80%9314#fen-NIV-11234d)] cubits high.

He overlaid the inside with pure gold. 5He paneled the main hall with juniper and covered it with fine gold and decorated it with palm tree and chain designs. 6He adorned the temple with precious stones. And the gold he used was gold of Parvaim. 7He overlaid the ceiling beams, doorframes, walls and doors of the temple with gold, and he carved cherubim on the walls.

8He built the Most Holy Place, its length corresponding to the width of the temple—twenty cubits long and twenty cubits wide. He overlaid the inside with six hundred talents[[e](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Chronicles+3%3a1%e2%80%9314#fen-NIV-11238e)] of fine gold. 9The gold nails weighed fifty shekels.[[f](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Chronicles+3%3a1%e2%80%9314" \l "fen-NIV-11239f" \o "See footnote f)] He also overlaid the upper parts with gold.

10For the Most Holy Place he made a pair of sculptured cherubim and overlaid them with gold. 11The total wingspan of the cherubim was twenty cubits. One wing of the first cherub was five cubits[[g](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Chronicles+3%3a1%e2%80%9314#fen-NIV-11241g)] long and touched the temple wall, while its other wing, also five cubits long, touched the wing of the other cherub. 12Similarly one wing of the second cherub was five cubits long and touched the other temple wall, and its other wing, also five cubits long, touched the wing of the first cherub. 13The wings of these cherubim extended twenty cubits. They stood on their feet, facing the main hall.[[h](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Chronicles+3%3a1%e2%80%9314" \l "fen-NIV-11243h" \o "See footnote h)]

14He made the curtain of blue, purple and crimson yarn and fine linen, with cherubim worked into it.

#### **Footnotes:**

1. [2 Chronicles 3:1](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Chronicles+3%3a1%e2%80%9314#en-NIV-11231) Hebrew Ornan, a variant of Araunah
2. [2 Chronicles 3:3](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Chronicles+3%3a1%e2%80%9314#en-NIV-11233) That is, about 90 feet long and 30 feet wide or about 27 meters long and 9 meters wide
3. [2 Chronicles 3:4](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Chronicles+3%3a1%e2%80%9314#en-NIV-11234) That is, about 30 feet or about 9 meters; also in verses 8, 11 and 13
4. [2 Chronicles 3:4](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Chronicles+3%3a1%e2%80%9314#en-NIV-11234) Some Septuagint and Syriac manuscripts; Hebrew and a hundred and twenty
5. [2 Chronicles 3:8](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Chronicles+3%3a1%e2%80%9314#en-NIV-11238) That is, about 23 tons or about 21 metric tons
6. [2 Chronicles 3:9](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Chronicles+3%3a1%e2%80%9314#en-NIV-11239) That is, about 1 1/4 pounds or about 575 grams
7. [2 Chronicles 3:11](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Chronicles+3%3a1%e2%80%9314#en-NIV-11241) That is, about 7 1/2 feet or about 2.3 meters; also in verse 15
8. [2 Chronicles 3:13](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Chronicles+3%3a1%e2%80%9314#en-NIV-11243) Or facing inward

Many new leaders of organizations desire to strike out on their own in order to make their own mark and propagate their ideas and vision. Few coming to the helm of an organization want to maintain the status quo or merely rehash the past glory of their institutions. And indeed, they are often hired with the hopes that they will build a better, greater, fancier, and enlarged organization.

Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, who made heaven and earth! 2 Chronicles 2:12

This leadership approach might result in success for businesses, sports teams, and universities, institutions in constant transition with high turnover rates. But this can be disastrous for churches, where the work of a predecessor and the familiar rhythms of spiritual life together remain in the hearts and minds of the members. They often feel connected to the predecessor and uncertain with the new leader.

The story of the building the house of the Lord begins and ends with Solomon giving deference to “his father David” (3:1; 5:1). In the middle of the story, Huram (also called Huram-abi), the skilled worker from Tyre, came to help Solomon on the basis of the king of Tyre’s friendship with David (4:11, 16; see also 2:3, 13). Even though Solomon would build and furnish the temple extravagantly, he would only do so while keeping his work tied to the work of David.

How instructive this is for the new pastor, staff member, academic leader, or ministry director! We can cast a bold vision for a creative and expansive way to reach the nations with the good news of Jesus Christ, or we can be too concerned that our own ideas get the credit. In wisdom, we must recognize that other people in the church often need to feel secure in order to move forward with a vision that does not discard everything associated with the past.

### **Apply the Word**

Consider the greatness of God—He who made supernovas, 60,000 miles of veins in the human body, and an Earth that spins on an invisible axis; He who knows every language and every bit of information known and not yet known to man and who is faithful, kind, and loving toward us daily. What kind of worship are you giving to Him?

### **Pray with Us**

Please pray for the editorial team in the Marketing Communications department: Kevin Mungons, Anneliese Rider, Elena Mafter, Linda Piepenbrink, and Jamie Janosz. May God grant them inspiration in developing content and attention to detail in editing.

## BY Eric C. Redmond

# Our Daily Bread – 3/3/19

# A Purpose in Pain?

**Read:** [**2 Corinthians 1:3-7**](https://odb.org/2019/03/03/shared-comfort/)

### **Praise to the God of All Comfort**

3Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, 4who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God. 5For just as we share abundantly in the sufferings of Christ, so also our comfort abounds through Christ. 6If we are distressed, it is for your comfort and salvation; if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which produces in you patient endurance of the same sufferings we suffer. 7And our hope for you is firm, because we know that just as you share in our sufferings, so also you share in our comfort.

[God] comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God. [2 Corinthians 1:4](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Corinthians+1%3A4)

When Siu Fen discovered she had kidney failure and would need dialysis for the rest of her life, she wanted to give up. Retired and single, the longtime believer in Jesus saw no point in prolonging her life. But friends convinced her to persevere and go for dialysis and trust in God to help her.

Two years later, she found her experience coming into play when she visited a friend from church with a debilitating disease. The woman felt alone, as few could truly understand what she was going through. But Siu Fen was able to identify with her physical and emotional pain and could connect with her in a personal way. Her own journey enabled her to walk alongside the woman, giving her a special measure of comfort others couldn’t. “Now I see how God can still use me,” she said.

It can be hard to understand why we suffer. Yet God can use our affliction in unexpected ways. As we turn to Him for comfort and love in the midst of trials, it also empowers us to help others. No wonder Paul learned to see purpose in his own suffering: It gave him the opportunity to receive God’s comfort, which he could then use to bless others (2 Corinthians 1:3–­5). We’re not asked to deny our pain and suffering, but we can take heart in God’s ability to use it for good.

By [Leslie Koh](https://odb.org/author/lesliekoh/)

#### **Today's Reflection**

How has God used you to bring comfort to another? How has your faith helped you to persevere?

#### **Insight**

Paul’s second letter to the Corinthians begins in a way that is full of empathy for people like us. He refers nine times to the comfort we all need so that we can comfort and encourage one another (1:3–7). Paul goes on to describe a comfort of Christ that is given to those who suffer with Christ (1:5, 8–9). The rest of Paul’s letter shows that these words of comfort include those who join Christ in self-sacrifice without excluding those who hurt for lesser reasons. The apostle shows, as Jesus so often did, that in all our needs, anxieties, and wrongs, there’s a way to find the reassurance of a God who groans with us and for us—even before pain and trouble open our heart to Him ( Romans 8:18–39).

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

# God Calling – 3/3/19

# Grow Like Me

Think of Me. Look at Me often, and unconsciously you will grow like Me.

You may never see it. The nearer you get to Me, the more will you see your unlikeness to Me. So be comforted, My children.

Your very deep sense of failure is a sure sign that you are growing nearer to Me. And if you desire to help others to Me, then that prayer-desire is answered.

Remember, too, it is only struggle that hurts. In sloth, spiritual or mental, or physical, there is no sense of failure or discomfort, but with action, with effort, you are conscious not of strength but of weakness - at least at first.

That again is a sign of Life, of spiritual growth.

And remember, My Strength is made perfect in weakness.

"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 – 3/4/19

# Is This True of Me?

None of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself… —[Acts 20:24](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=Acts+20%3A24)

It is easier to serve or work for God without a vision and without a call, because then you are not bothered by what He requires. Common sense, covered with a layer of Christian emotion, becomes your guide. You may be more prosperous and successful from the world’s perspective, and will have more leisure time, if you never acknowledge the call of God. But once you receive a commission from Jesus Christ, the memory of what God asks of you will always be there to prod you on to do His will. You will no longer be able to work for Him on the basis of common sense.

What do I count in my life as “dear to myself”? If I have not been seized by Jesus Christ and have not surrendered myself to Him, I will consider the time I decide to give God and my own ideas of service as dear. I will also consider my own life as “dear to myself.” But Paul said he considered his life dear so that he might fulfill the ministry he had received, and he refused to use his energy on anything else. This verse shows an almost noble annoyance by Paul at being asked to consider himself. He was absolutely indifferent to any consideration other than that of fulfilling the ministry he had received. Our ordinary and reasonable service to God may actually compete against our total surrender to Him. Our reasonable work is based on the following argument which we say to ourselves, “Remember how useful you are here, and think how much value you would be in that particular type of work.” That attitude chooses our own judgment, instead of Jesus Christ, to be our guide as to where we should go and where we could be used the most. Never consider whether or not you are of use— but always consider that “you are not your own” ([1 Corinthians 6:19](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Corinthians+6:19)). You are His.

**Wisdom From Oswald Chambers**

We are not to preach the doing of good things; good deeds are not to be preached, they are to be performed. So Send I You, 1330 L

# CCEL – 3/4/19

**Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.**—[COL. 3:2.](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Col.3.html" \l "Col.3.2)

Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.—Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

We walk by faith, not by sight.—We faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory: while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.—An inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you.

[I John 2:15](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iJohn.2.html" \l "iJohn.2.15). -[Matt. 6:19-21](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Matt.6.html" \l "Matt.6.19).[II Cor. 5:7](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iiCor.5.html" \l "iiCor.5.7). -[II Cor. 4:16-18](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iiCor.4.html" \l "iiCor.4.16). -[I Pet. 1:4](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iPet.1.html" \l "iPet.1.4).

“My grace is sufficient for thee.” [2 Corinthians 12:9](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iiCor.12.html" \l "iiCor.12.9)

If none of God’s saints were poor and tried, we should not know half so well the consolations of divine grace. When we find the wanderer who has not where to lay his head, who yet can say, “Still will I trust in the Lord;” when we see the pauper starving on bread and water, who still glories in Jesus; when we see the bereaved widow overwhelmed in affliction, and yet having faith in Christ, oh! what honour it reflects on the gospel. God’s grace is illustrated and magnified in the poverty and trials of believers. Saints bear up under every discouragement, believing that all things work together for their good, and that out of apparent evils a real blessing shall ultimately spring—that their God will either work a deliverance for them speedily, or most assuredly support them in the trouble, as long as he is pleased to keep them in it. This patience of the saints proves the power of divine grace. There is a lighthouse out at sea: it is a calm night—I cannot tell whether the edifice is firm; the tempest must rage about it, and then I shall know whether it will stand. So with the Spirit’s work: if it were not on many occasions surrounded with tempestuous waters, we should not know that it was true and strong; if the winds did not blow upon it, we should not know how firm and secure it was. The master-works of God are those men who stand in the midst of difficulties, stedfast, unmoveable,—

“Calm mid the bewildering cry, Confident of victory.”

He who would glorify his God must set his account upon meeting with many trials. No man can be illustrious before the Lord unless his conflicts be many. If then, yours be a much-tried path, rejoice in it, because you will the better show forth the all-sufficient grace of God. As for his failing you, never dream of it—hate the thought. The God who has been sufficient until now, should be trusted to the end.

# Word Live – 3/4/19

# God invades

## **Prepare**

Pause. Ask God to draw you into the experience of his glory. God, in his radiant greatness, is our true focus and the magnificent object of our worship.



## **Bible passage: Ezekiel 1:1–28**

##### **The Living Creatures and the Glory of the Lord**

1 In the thirtieth year, in the fourth month on the fifth day, while I was among the exiles by the Kebar River, the heavens were opened and I saw visions of God.

2 On the fifth of the month—it was the fifth year of the exile of King Jehoiachin- 3 the word of the LORD came to Ezekiel the priest, the son of Buzi, by the Kebar River in the land of the Babylonians. There the hand of the LORD was upon him.

4 I looked, and I saw a windstorm coming out of the north—an immense cloud with flashing lightning and surrounded by brilliant light. The center of the fire looked like glowing metal, 5 and in the fire was what looked like four living creatures. In appearance their form was that of a man, 6 but each of them had four faces and four wings. 7 Their legs were straight; their feet were like those of a calf and gleamed like burnished bronze. 8 Under their wings on their four sides they had the hands of a man. All four of them had faces and wings, 9 and their wings touched one another. Each one went straight ahead; they did not turn as they moved.

10 Their faces looked like this: Each of the four had the face of a man, and on the right side each had the face of a lion, and on the left the face of an ox; each also had the face of an eagle. 11 Such were their faces. Their wings were spread out upward; each had two wings, one touching the wing of another creature on either side, and two wings covering its body. 12 Each one went straight ahead. Wherever the spirit would go, they would go, without turning as they went. 13 The appearance of the living creatures was like burning coals of fire or like torches. Fire moved back and forth among the creatures; it was bright, and lightning flashed out of it. 14 The creatures sped back and forth like flashes of lightning.

15 As I looked at the living creatures, I saw a wheel on the ground beside each creature with its four faces. 16 This was the appearance and structure of the wheels: They sparkled like chrysolite, and all four looked alike. Each appeared to be made like a wheel intersecting a wheel. 17 As they moved, they would go in any one of the four directions the creatures faced; the wheels did not turn about as the creatures went. 18 Their rims were high and awesome, and all four rims were full of eyes all around.

19 When the living creatures moved, the wheels beside them moved; and when the living creatures rose from the ground, the wheels also rose. 20 Wherever the spirit would go, they would go, and the wheels would rise along with them, because the spirit of the living creatures was in the wheels. 21 When the creatures moved, they also moved; when the creatures stood still, they also stood still; and when the creatures rose from the ground, the wheels rose along with them, because the spirit of the living creatures was in the wheels.

22 Spread out above the heads of the living creatures was what looked like an expanse, sparkling like ice, and awesome. 23 Under the expanse their wings were stretched out one toward the other, and each had two wings covering its body. 24 When the creatures moved, I heard the sound of their wings, like the roar of rushing waters, like the voice of the Almighty, like the tumult of an army. When they stood still, they lowered their wings.

25 Then there came a voice from above the expanse over their heads as they stood with lowered wings. 26 Above the expanse over their heads was what looked like a throne of sapphire, and high above on the throne was a figure like that of a man. 27 I saw that from what appeared to be his waist up he looked like glowing metal, as if full of fire, and that from there down he looked like fire; and brilliant light surrounded him. 28 Like the appearance of a rainbow in the clouds on a rainy day, so was the radiance around him.   
      This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD. When I saw it, I fell facedown, and I heard the voice of one speaking.

## **Explore**

This is a picture not to be drawn. It is to be imagined and is no less true and real for it.

What is it about our God that is true and real?

God is the sovereign ruler of the universe, self-determining and utterly not like us. (The throne above the vault.)

God is not limited to one place. He goes where he wants, reigning north, south, east and west. He bursts in unbidden. (Those amazing wheels. The whirlwind.)

He sees everything, everyone. (Those eyes!)

He judges, consumes, purifies, unapproachably. (That fire: the heat!)

He is beyond awesome. (The clouds and flashes of lightning and the brilliant light.)

He has something to say to us. (That voice.)

The impact on Ezekiel is spiritual, emotional, physical. Life-changing.

So easy, isn’t it, to behave as if God is tame. God is tender and terrible. He comforts and disturbs. He is responsive to our faintest cry and can shock us as he bursts into our carefully mapped lives. But only one so great can bring true hope. The north, the source of devastation, was no threat to this God.

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

## **Respond**

Like Ezekiel, and like Moses on Sinai, Isaiah in the Temple, the disciples at the transfiguration and all the occupants of heaven, we too can behold and fall down in worship. ‘Great God, open my eyes to your greatness and glory.’

## **Introduction to Ezekiel**

The only information about Ezekiel we have is in this book. He probably came from a priestly family, making him eligible for the priesthood (1:3). His name means ‘may God strengthen’ – very apt, given the demanding nature of the prophetic ministry to which he was called. He shared his fellow prophets’ concerns about Israel’s idolatry and failure to rely on God, but uniquely focused on Israel as the holy people of the holy Temple, the holy city and holy land.1 More than any other prophet, he used prophetic symbolism to communicate his message to a demoralised people.

This book contains more dates than the other prophetic books, from which we learn that Ezekiel exercised his ministry over 22 years against a backdrop of exile with his fellow Jews to Babylon, by Nebuchadnezzar in 597 bc. Jerusalem subsequently fell and another wave of exiles joined them. If we think about current situations in which people are fleeing their own countries, we can get an idea of the setting in which he spoke, the trauma further exacerbated for the Jews by the growing belief that God had forsaken them. By using more prose than poetry (unusual for prophetic books), Ezekiel enacts and shares a series of overwhelming visions. Their messages powerfully depict the grandeur and glory of God’s sovereign rule but are heartbreaking in their promise of judgement, the fall of Jerusalem and the removal of God’s glory (chs 1–24). Yet despite this, woven into the later chapters are wonderful promises of restoration.

Daily scenes on our TV screens make real the brutality of war and its impact, giving us tough things to grapple with when reading Ezekiel’s words concerning God’s love and judgement.2 Lastly, note the descriptions of the strengthening and equipping role of the Spirit of God in Ezekiel’s life. That same Holy Spirit now lives in each Christian today to empower, equip and encourage us.

1 Introduction to Ezekiel, NIV Study Bible, Hodder & Stoughton, 2000

2 Stanley N Gundry, Show Them No Mercy, Zondervan, 2003

For Further Reading: Christopher Wright, The Message of Ezekiel, IVP, 2001; an informative and readable commentary

[Fran Beckett](https://www.wordlive.org/Otherstuff/Contributors/A-B/3525685.id)

## **Deeper Bible study**

From the outset of this book we are catapulted into a fantastic vision of God’s glory. Although Ezekiel’s experience is firmly located in time and place, the images he shares defy our human comprehension and point to the importance of the task before him. Notice his location when the vision came to him – among the exiles (v 1), a place of close identification with his people, the best position from which to bring a profoundly challenging message. Significantly, it was in the everyday that ‘there’ the hand of the Lord was upon him (v 3) in a ‘land of exile, uncleanness and despair’,1 far from God’s presence back in Jerusalem’s Temple. God chose to reveal himself to Ezekiel when all appeared hopeless.

The vision begins with a storm (v 4), speaking of God’s dynamic movement and power ([Deut 33:26; Ps 18:7–14; Job 38:1](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Deut+33%3A26%3B+Ps+18%3A7%E2%80%9314%3B+Job+38%3A1&version=NIV" \t "_blank)), and ends with a throne (v 26), pointing to his eternal authority ([Isa 6:1](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isa+6%3A1&version=NIV)). This overwhelmingly awesome encounter with God’s majesty contains order and symmetry, with highly symbolic meanings. The repeated use of the number four speaks of completeness, the four quarters of the earth ([Gen 13:14; Isa 11:12](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Gen+13%3A14%3B+Isa+11%3A12&version=NIV)) and thus of God’s sovereignty over the world. Although it seems to us like something out of a fantasy movie, the four creatures could be found in religious art across the ancient world, their meaning clear to Ezekiel.

Carrying the divine throne were the lion, king of the animal world, the ox, the most powerful of domesticated animals, the eagle, the mightiest bird, and a man, made in God’s image and the pinnacle of creation. God is exalted above all else, his presence and all-seeing eyes (v 18) everywhere at all times. Vivid images of fire and lightning speak of God’s holiness, his judgement. Yet this awesome God is here with his people.

1 Wright, 2001, p45

[Fran Beckett](https://www.wordlive.org/Otherstuff/Contributors/A-B/3525685.id)

## **Background: Ezekiel overview**

**The background**In 597 BC the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar deported to Babylon King Jehoiachin, with ten thousand of the leading citizens of Israel. The puppet government he left behind in Jerusalem rebelled, and in 587 BC Nebuchadnezzar totally destroyed the city and took another and larger group into exile.  
  
**The author**It has been suggested that the book of Ezekiel was compiled by several authors or written at a much later date. But the continuous use of the first person, the precise dating, the personal details given, and the same style found throughout are strong indications that Ezekiel himself made sure that his prophecies were written down and, sometime towards the end of his life, carefully arranged them in book form.  
  
Ezekiel grew up in Judah and was probably influenced in his youth by Josiah’s reforms and the prophecies of Jeremiah. He was a priest who was deported to Babylon, probably with Jehoiachin in 597 BC, and his writings were strongly influenced by his priestly background.   
  
He settled in exile in Tel-Abib by the river Kebar. Five years later when he was 30 he was given a vision of God and called to be a prophet. He probably had an important position ([8:1; 14:1](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=ezekial%208:1;%2014:1&version=NIV)), though most people rejected his warnings ([3:25](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=ezekial%203:25&version=NIV)), or didn’t take him seriously ([33:30–32](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=ezekial%2033:30–32&version=NIV)).   
  
**The book**We have in Ezekiel a record of the prophet’s life and prophecies dating from 597 to 570 BC. There are four distinct blocks of material.   
  
● Chapters 1–24 consist mainly of prophecies given before 587 BC where Ezekiel confronts the people with their sin, and shows how the fall of Jerusalem was an inevitable and a richly deserved judgement on them.   
  
● Chapters 25–32 are prophecies of judgement on surrounding nations.   
  
● Chapters 33–39 come after the fall of Jerusalem, and Ezekiel encourages the exiles to repent of their past sins, and to become a new community committed to serving God.   
  
● The final section looks forward beyond the return from exile to the end times, and describes Ezekiel’s vision of the new Jerusalem.   
  
We will learn more from Ezekiel if we see it as a message to a specific and a very needy people in an actual situation.   
  
Taken from The Bible in Outline (SU, 1987)

## **The appearance of the likeness…**



This artist’s impression, by Andrew Gray, is based on Ezekiel’s vision as described in today’s passage. Nothing can quite contain the true image of God’s glory, but read verses 22 to 28 again, picturing them in your head. Ezekiel’s response was one of awe and worship – how will you respond to God now?

# Today in the Word – 3/4/19

# Building on the Past

**Read:** [**2 Chronicles 6:1–21**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Chronicles+6%3a1%e2%80%9321)

6 Then Solomon said, “The Lord has said that he would dwell in a dark cloud; 2I have built a magnificent temple for you, a place for you to dwell forever.”

3While the whole assembly of Israel was standing there, the king turned around and blessed them. 4Then he said:

“Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, who with his hands has fulfilled what he promised with his mouth to my father David. For he said, 5‘Since the day I brought my people out of Egypt, I have not chosen a city in any tribe of Israel to have a temple built so that my Name might be there, nor have I chosen anyone to be ruler over my people Israel. 6But now I have chosen Jerusalem for my Name to be there, and I have chosen David to rule my people Israel.’

7“My father David had it in his heart to build a temple for the Name of the Lord, the God of Israel. 8But the Lord said to my father David, ‘You did well to have it in your heart to build a temple for my Name. 9Nevertheless, you are not the one to build the temple, but your son, your own flesh and blood—he is the one who will build the temple for my Name.’

10“The Lord has kept the promise he made. I have succeeded David my father and now I sit on the throne of Israel, just as the Lord promised, and I have built the temple for the Name of the Lord, the God of Israel. 11There I have placed the ark, in which is the covenant of the Lord that he made with the people of Israel.”

### **Solomon’s Prayer of Dedication**

12Then Solomon stood before the altar of the Lord in front of the whole assembly of Israel and spread out his hands. 13Now he had made a bronze platform, five cubits long, five cubits wide and three cubits high,[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Chronicles+6%3a1%e2%80%9321" \l "fen-NIV-11296a" \o "See footnote a)] and had placed it in the center of the outer court. He stood on the platform and then knelt down before the whole assembly of Israel and spread out his hands toward heaven. 14He said:

“Lord, the God of Israel, there is no God like you in heaven or on earth—you who keep your covenant of love with your servants who continue wholeheartedly in your way. 15You have kept your promise to your servant David my father; with your mouth you have promised and with your hand you have fulfilled it—as it is today.

16“Now, Lord, the God of Israel, keep for your servant David my father the promises you made to him when you said, ‘You shall never fail to have a successor to sit before me on the throne of Israel, if only your descendants are careful in all they do to walk before me according to my law, as you have done.’ 17And now, Lord, the God of Israel, let your word that you promised your servant David come true.

18“But will God really dwell on earth with humans? The heavens, even the highest heavens, cannot contain you. How much less this temple I have built! 19Yet, Lord my God, give attention to your servant’s prayer and his plea for mercy. Hear the cry and the prayer that your servant is praying in your presence. 20May your eyes be open toward this temple day and night, this place of which you said you would put your Name there. May you hear the prayer your servant prays toward this place. 21Hear the supplications of your servant and of your people Israel when they pray toward this place. Hear from heaven, your dwelling place; and when you hear, forgive.

#### **Footnotes:**

1. [2 Chronicles 6:13](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Chronicles+6%3a1%e2%80%9321#en-NIV-11296) That is, about 7 1/2 feet long and wide and 4 1/2 feet high or about 2.3 meters long and wide and 1.4 meters high

In Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland, Lewis Carroll indicates that Alice’s understanding of her world has matured beyond those around her by increasing her physical size, depicting her as uncontainable by her environs. In the last scenes of Alice’s dream, Carroll says, “[Alice] had grown so large in the last few minutes that she wasn’t a bit afraid of interrupting [the king] . . . ‘Who cares for you?’ said Alice, (she had grown to her full size by this time). ‘You’re nothing but a pack of cards!’” The cards, realizing their precarious position, then proceed to attack Alice, awakening her from her dream.

The Lord has kept the promise he made. 2 Chronicles 6:10

Solomon understood the paradox of trying to build a dwelling for an uncontainable God. He had built a temple for a God whose only dwelling is behind dark clouds—whom even the heavens cannot contain (vv. 1, 18; Acts 7:47–50)! How could Solomon expect the temple to magnify the greatness of such a God? How can we expect our houses of worship to exalt this same great God?

We must always keep in mind that God is greater than His house and is shrouded in mystery, hiding the fullness of His glory from us until in perfection we can embrace it all. This God is the One who must grow our ministries and memberships, deepening us spiritually, just as the Lord was faithful to build the temple He promised to David.

Moreover, God will exalt His name among us as we keep the Lord central to the identity and activities of our churches. The temple served as a place for God’s people to turn to the Lord for mercy from sin and salvation from judgment. The Lord, who is greater than all He has made, will answer prayers of repentance, for His merciful eyes always are upon His house.

### **Apply the Word**

Are you seeking for your own agenda to be implemented? Are you too dismissive of the spiritual legacy of those who came before you? Pray for the Lord to give you the wisdom that characterized Solomon to know how to proceed in ministry in a way that honors God’s calling and is gracious to others around you.

### **Pray with Us**

Keep in prayer the Marketing Communications team: graphic designers Larry Bohlin, Lynn Gabalec, Rachel Hutcheson, and Doug Fleener, as well as program manager Paul Currie. May the Lord be glorified with their service at Moody!

## BY Eric C. Redmond

# Our Daily Bread – 3/4/19

# Right There with Us

**Read:** [**Matthew 14:13-21**](https://odb.org/2019/03/04/right-there-with-us/)

### **Jesus Feeds the Five Thousand**

13When Jesus heard what had happened, he withdrew by boat privately to a solitary place. Hearing of this, the crowds followed him on foot from the towns. 14When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them and healed their sick.

15As evening approached, the disciples came to him and said, “This is a remote place, and it’s already getting late. Send the crowds away, so they can go to the villages and buy themselves some food.”

16Jesus replied, “They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat.”

17“We have here only five loaves of bread and two fish,” they answered.

18“Bring them here to me,” he said. 19And he directed the people to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the people. 20They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over. 21The number of those who ate was about five thousand men, besides women and children.

“We have here only five loaves of bread and two fish,” they answered. [Matthew 14:17](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+14%3A17)

She was completely focused on the top shelf, where the glass jars of spaghetti sauce sat. I’d been standing beside her in the grocery aisle for a minute or two eyeing that same shelf, trying to decide. But she seemed oblivious to my presence, lost in her own predicament. Now I have no problem with top shelves because I’m a fairly tall man. She, on the other hand, was not tall, not at all. I spoke up and offered to help. Startled, she said, “Goodness, I didn’t even see you standing there. Yes, please help me.”

The disciples had quite the situation on their hands—hungry crowds, a remote place, and time slipping away—“It’s already getting late. Send the crowds away, so they can go to the villages and buy themselves some food” (Matthew 14:15). When challenged by Jesus to take care of the people themselves, they responded, “We have here only . . .” (v. 17). All they seemed to be aware of was their lack. Yet standing right beside them was Jesus, not just the multiplier of bread but the Bread of Life Himself.

We can get so wrapped up in our challenges and trying to figure them out for ourselves with our often-limited perspective that we miss the abiding presence of the risen Christ. From remote hillsides to grocery store aisles and everywhere else in between, He’s Immanuel—God right there with us, an ever-present help in trouble.

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

#### **Today's Reflection**

How can you increase your awareness of Jesus’s presence? Why is it vital for us to gain His perspective in what we’re facing?

#### **Insight**

A set of three events illustrates the fast-paced, powerful nature of Jesus’s ministry and the emotional roller coaster it must have been for the disciples. First is the recounting of John the Baptist’s death, culminating with John’s disciples reporting his death to Jesus (Matthew 14:1–12). This is followed by the miraculous feeding of 5,000 men, plus women and children (vv. 13–21). After this miracle, Jesus sends the disciples away by boat (vv. 22–33), joining them later that night by walking to them on the stormy Galilee. This appearance prompts His men to worship Him as “the Son of God” (v. 33).

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

# God Calling – 3/4/19

# Key to Holiness

Draw near to Me, my children. Contact with Me is the panacea for all ills.

Remember that Truth is many-sided. Have much tender Love and Patience for all who do not see as you do.

The elimination of self is the key to holiness and happiness, and can only be accomplished with My help. Study My life more. Live in My Presence. Worship Me.

I said in Gethsemane, "If it be possible let this cup pass." I did NOT say that there was no cup of sorrow to drink. I was scourged and spat upon and nailed to the Cross, and I said, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."

I did NOT say that they did not do it. When My disciple, Peter, urged Me to escape the Cross, I said, "Get thee behind Me, Satan."

When My disciples failed to help the epileptic boy, I said, "This kind cometh not out but by Prayer and Fasting." I did NOT say, "You imagined that he was ill. Nothing is wrong."

When the Bible says, "God has purer eyes than to behold evil," it means to impute evil to His people. He always sees the good in people, but remember that I "beheld the city, and wept over it."

"If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me." - Luke 9:23