# My Utmost for His Highest – 3/5/19

# Is He Really My Lord?

…so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus… —[Acts 20:24](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=Acts+20%3A24)

Joy comes from seeing the complete fulfillment of the specific purpose for which I was created and born again, not from successfully doing something of my own choosing. The joy our Lord experienced came from doing what the Father sent Him to do. 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)). Have you received a ministry from the Lord? If so, you must be faithful to it— to consider your life valuable only for the purpose of fulfilling that ministry. Knowing that you have done what Jesus sent you to do, think how satisfying it will be to hear Him say to you, “Well done, good and faithful servant” ([Matthew 25:21](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+25:21)). We each have to find a niche in life, and spiritually we find it when we receive a ministry from the Lord. To do this we must have close fellowship with Jesus and must know Him as more than our personal Savior. And we must be willing to experience the full impact of [Acts 9:16](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts+9:16) — “I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name’s sake.”

“Do you love Me?” Then, “Feed My sheep” ([John 21:17](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+21:17)). He is not offering us a choice of how we can serve Him; He is asking for absolute loyalty to His commission, a faithfulness to what we discern when we are in the closest possible fellowship with God. If you have received a ministry from the Lord Jesus, you will know that the need is not the same as the call— the need is the opportunity to exercise the call. The call is to be faithful to the ministry you received when you were in true fellowship with Him. This does not imply that there is a whole series of differing ministries marked out for you. It does mean that you must be sensitive to what God has called you to do, and this may sometimes require ignoring demands for service in other areas.

**Wisdom From Oswald Chambers**

To live a life alone with God does not mean that we live it apart from everyone else. The connection between godly men and women and those associated with them is continually revealed in the Bible, e.g., 1 Timothy 4:10.  Not Knowing Whither, 867 L

# CCEL – 3/5/19

**O Lord, I am oppressed; undertake for me.**—[ISA. 38:14.](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Isa.38.html" \l "Isa.38.14)

Unto thee lift I up mine eyes, O thou that dwellest in the heavens. Behold, as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress; so our eyes wait upon the Lord our God.—Hear my cry, O God; attend unto my prayer. From the end of the earth will I cry unto thee, when my heart is overwhelmed: lead me to the rock that is higher than I. For thou hast been a shelter for me, and a strong tower from the enemy. I will abide in thy tabernacle for ever: I will trust in the covert of thy wings.—Thou hast been a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storms.

Christ . . . suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.

[Psa. 123:1,2](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.123.html" \l "Ps.123.1). -[Psa. 61:1-4](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.61.html" \l "Ps.61.1). -[Isa. 25:4](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Isa.25.html" \l "Isa.25.4).[I Pet. 2:21-23](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iPet.2.html" \l "iPet.2.21).

“Let us not sleep, as do others.” [1 Thessalonians 5:6](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iThess.5.html" \l "iThess.5.6)

There are many ways of promoting Christian wakefulness. Among the rest, let me strongly advise Christians to converse together concerning the ways of the Lord. Christian and Hopeful, as they journeyed towards the Celestial City, said to themselves, “To prevent drowsiness in this place, let us fall into good discourse.” Christian enquired, “Brother, where shall we begin?” And Hopeful answered, “Where God began with us.” Then Christian sang this song—

“When saints do sleepy grow, let them come hither,

And hear how these two pilgrims talk together;

Yea, let them learn of them, in any wise,

Thus to keep open their drowsy slumb'ring eyes.

Saints’ fellowship, if it be managed well,

Keeps them awake, and that in spite of hell.”Christians who isolate themselves and walk alone, are very liable to grow drowsy. Hold Christian company, and you will be kept wakeful by it, and refreshed and encouraged to make quicker progress in the road to heaven. But as you thus take “sweet counsel” with others in the ways of God, take care that the theme of your converse is the Lord Jesus. Let the eye of faith be constantly looking unto him; let your heart be full of him; let your lips speak of his worth. Friend, live near to the cross, and thou wilt not sleep. Labour to impress thyself with a deep sense of the value of the place to which thou art going. If thou rememberest that thou art going to heaven, thou wilt not sleep on the road. If thou thinkest that hell is behind thee, and the devil pursuing thee, thou wilt not loiter. Would the manslayer sleep with the avenger of blood behind him, and the city of refuge before him? Christian, wilt thou sleep whilst the pearly gates are open—the songs of angels waiting for thee to join them—a crown of gold ready for thy brow? Ah! no; in holy fellowship continue to watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation.

# Word Live – 3/5/19

# The Great Disrupter

## **Prepare**

Put your hands up, ladies and gentlemen, if you think you know what the sovereign God is going to do next with your life.



## **Bible passage: Ezekiel 2:1 – 3:15**

##### **Ezekiel's Call**

1 He said to me, "Son of man, stand up on your feet and I will speak to you." 2 As he spoke, the Spirit came into me and raised me to my feet, and I heard him speaking to me.

3 He said: "Son of man, I am sending you to the Israelites, to a rebellious nation that has rebelled against me; they and their fathers have been in revolt against me to this very day. 4 The people to whom I am sending you are obstinate and stubborn. Say to them, 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says.' 5 And whether they listen or fail to listen—for they are a rebellious house—they will know that a prophet has been among them. 6 And you, son of man, do not be afraid of them or their words. Do not be afraid, though briers and thorns are all around you and you live among scorpions. Do not be afraid of what they say or terrified by them, though they are a rebellious house. 7 You must speak my words to them, whether they listen or fail to listen, for they are rebellious. 8 But you, son of man, listen to what I say to you. Do not rebel like that rebellious house; open your mouth and eat what I give you."

9 Then I looked, and I saw a hand stretched out to me. In it was a scroll, 10 which he unrolled before me. On both sides of it were written words of lament and mourning and woe.

#### **Ezekiel 3**

1 And he said to me, "Son of man, eat what is before you, eat this scroll; then go and speak to the house of Israel." 2 So I opened my mouth, and he gave me the scroll to eat.

3 Then he said to me, "Son of man, eat this scroll I am giving you and fill your stomach with it." So I ate it, and it tasted as sweet as honey in my mouth.

4 He then said to me: "Son of man, go now to the house of Israel and speak my words to them. 5 You are not being sent to a people of obscure speech and difficult language, but to the house of Israel- 6 not to many peoples of obscure speech and difficult language, whose words you cannot understand. Surely if I had sent you to them, they would have listened to you. 7 But the house of Israel is not willing to listen to you because they are not willing to listen to me, for the whole house of Israel is hardened and obstinate. 8 But I will make you as unyielding and hardened as they are. 9 I will make your forehead like the hardest stone, harder than flint. Do not be afraid of them or terrified by them, though they are a rebellious house."

10 And he said to me, "Son of man, listen carefully and take to heart all the words I speak to you. 11 Go now to your countrymen in exile and speak to them. Say to them, 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says,' whether they listen or fail to listen."

12 Then the Spirit lifted me up, and I heard behind me a loud rumbling sound—May the glory of the LORD be praised in his dwelling place!- 13 the sound of the wings of the living creatures brushing against each other and the sound of the wheels beside them, a loud rumbling sound. 14 The Spirit then lifted me up and took me away, and I went in bitterness and in the anger of my spirit, with the strong hand of the LORD upon me. 15 I came to the exiles who lived at Tel Abib near the Kebar River. And there, where they were living, I sat among them for seven days-overwhelmed.

## **Explore**

**Clear, total and liberating**

God’s ‘out-of-the-blue’ claim on Ezekiel’s life was crystal clear: ‘Speak my words faithfully and leave the rest to me.’

God’s claim was total. There was no timetable of all the dates and times for speaking. God pulled Ezekiel into total readiness, vigilant listening and whole-life, everyday openness to God’s Word.

The claim was liberating. Ezekiel was not going to be held responsible for how people responded. This was not going to be a ‘results-based ministry’.

**Obedience**

Simultaneously God set boundaries and accountability: be obedient to me. Don’t be like the people you’ll be speaking to. Don’t rebel.

In one sense, the claim that God laid on Ezekiel is laid on all of us. Our obedience, our ultimate responsibilities and our everyday openness to his Word are the same.

**Turning lives upside down**

But the life-changing intensity of that scary call is not common in our lives, as it had not been in Ezekiel’s until that day. Even so, don’t for one moment assume that the Great Disrupter couldn’t seize your life in a new way. God can unpredictably grip us, constraining us deeply as he fills us with his life-stretching mission, turning our neatly ordered lives upside down. He is God.

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

## **Respond**

Is God taking charge of your life afresh? Are you sensing the compelling grip of God upon you? Is there a ‘God-disruption’ on its way? Don’t run from it. Respond to God. Be brave. Do it.

## **Deeper Bible study**

The descriptions here of the Israelites as rebellious, obstinate and stubborn (2:3,4,7; 3:9) are among the saddest in Scripture. ‘Ezekiel endorses the fundamental message of the prophets who preceded him – Israel’s history was one of congenital proneness to disloyalty to their covenant God.’1 Even now, in exile, they are unrelenting in their attitudes and behaviour. Disloyal, defiant and totally unwilling to listen to God’s words, they are stony-faced and hard-hearted. Their rejection is pictured by the words ‘your forehead like hardest stone’ (3:9), referring to where the Law would normally have been physically tied as a symbol of obedience.

Faced with these awful truths, Ezekiel is given a mission. We know it was overwhelming, evoking a deep emotional response (3:14,15) and, as we see from God’s reassurances to Ezekiel, it was a very daunting prospect. As we read on over the coming days, we shall see just how tough an assignment he was given. However, one of the distinctive features of this book is the strengthening and equipping role of the Spirit of God in Ezekiel’s life. It is the Spirit that enters him, lifts him to his feet, enables him to hear God’s commission and moves him from one place to another. He was not alone; God’s words are literally fed to him; strength and protection are promised.

We read that he was bitterly angry as he was led away (3:14). Whatever the cause – identification with God’s righteous anger, profound resentment at being singled out for such a task, or a mix of both – Ezekiel knew that the ‘strong hand of the Lord was upon him.’ He would also eventually be vindicated and acknowledged as a true prophet (2:5) by the very people to whom he had to take a devastating message.

1 Wright, 2001, p55

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

## **Background: Similarities with Revelation**

**Quotations in Revelation**The book of Revelation is full of allusions to the Hebrew Scriptures, especially to the Psalms and the books of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel. Some of these are clear, others more doubtful. But it is undoubtedly the case that understanding these prophetic books is indispensable for a proper interpretation of Revelation.   
  
**Parallel commissioning**John’s formal commission as prophet in [Revelation 1:10](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Revelation%201:10&version=NIV), [4:1,2](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Revelation%204:1,2&version=NIV) and [10:9,10](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Revelation%2010:9,10&version=NIV) contains clear allusions to the commissioning narrative in [Ezekiel 2,3](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ezekiel%202,3&version=NIV). The scroll Ezekiel is given to eat ([3:2,3](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Revelation%203:2,3&version=NIV)) is ‘sweet as honey’ in his mouth although it contains ‘words of lament and warning and woe’ ([2:10](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Revelation%202:10&version=NIV)).   
  
Similarly in Revelation 10 the little scroll John is given is ‘sweet as honey’ in his mouth, but it makes his stomach turn sour ([Revelation 10:9–11](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Revelation%2010:9-11&version=NIV)). However, whereas Ezekiel is being commissioned to go to ‘the house of Israel’ ([3:5](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Revelation%203:5&version=NIV); though he later also prophecies to the nations – see chapters 25–32), John is told he must prophesy again ‘about many peoples, nations, languages and kings’ ([Revelation 10:11](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Revelation%2010:11&version=NIV)).   
  
**The meaning of the imagery**Greg Beale comments that the eating of the scroll ‘represented for both prophets their total identification with and submission to the divine will as a prerequisite for their service as prophetic instruments in God’s hand’.**1**   
  
Andrew Clark  
  
**1** GK Beale, The Book of Revelation, NIGTC; Eerdmans, 1999, p551

## **‘A time to keep silent, and a time to speak’**

<https://www.wordlive.org/uploads/wordlight/resources/W301110R2.mp3>

Ezekiel must have looked in dismay at the portion God had served out on his plate. ‘Lament, mourning and woe? No, thank you very much!’ But God was quite insistent, and obeying God was important to Ezekiel, so he polished off the lot.  
  
Listen to this audio meditation as Liz Low considers how we can use our experiences of pain to speak God’s words to those around us.

# Today in the Word – 3/5/19

# Excelling in Holiness

**Read:** [**2 Chronicles 8**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Chronicles+8)

### **Solomon’s Other Activities**

8 At the end of twenty years, during which Solomon built the temple of the Lord and his own palace, 2Solomon rebuilt the villages that Hiram[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Chronicles+8#fen-NIV-11349a)] had given him, and settled Israelites in them. 3Solomon then went to Hamath Zobah and captured it. 4He also built up Tadmor in the desert and all the store cities he had built in Hamath. 5He rebuilt Upper Beth Horon and Lower Beth Horon as fortified cities, with walls and with gates and bars, 6as well as Baalath and all his store cities, and all the cities for his chariots and for his horses[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Chronicles+8#fen-NIV-11353b)]—whatever he desired to build in Jerusalem, in Lebanon and throughout all the territory he ruled.

7There were still people left from the Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites (these people were not Israelites). 8Solomon conscripted the descendants of all these people remaining in the land—whom the Israelites had not destroyed—to serve as slave labor, as it is to this day. 9But Solomon did not make slaves of the Israelites for his work; they were his fighting men, commanders of his captains, and commanders of his chariots and charioteers. 10They were also King Solomon’s chief officials—two hundred and fifty officials supervising the men.

11Solomon brought Pharaoh’s daughter up from the City of David to the palace he had built for her, for he said, “My wife must not live in the palace of David king of Israel, because the places the ark of the Lord has entered are holy.”

12On the altar of the Lord that he had built in front of the portico, Solomon sacrificed burnt offerings to the Lord, 13according to the daily requirement for offerings commanded by Moses for the Sabbaths, the New Moons and the three annual festivals—the Festival of Unleavened Bread, the Festival of Weeks and the Festival of Tabernacles. 14In keeping with the ordinance of his father David, he appointed the divisions of the priests for their duties, and the Levites to lead the praise and to assist the priests according to each day’s requirement. He also appointed the gatekeepers by divisions for the various gates, because this was what David the man of God had ordered. 15They did not deviate from the king’s commands to the priests or to the Levites in any matter, including that of the treasuries.

16All Solomon’s work was carried out, from the day the foundation of the temple of the Lord was laid until its completion. So the temple of the Lord was finished.

17Then Solomon went to Ezion Geber and Elath on the coast of Edom. 18And Hiram sent him ships commanded by his own men, sailors who knew the sea. These, with Solomon’s men, sailed to Ophir and brought back four hundred and fifty talents[[c](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Chronicles+8#fen-NIV-11365c)] of gold, which they delivered to King Solomon.

#### **Footnotes:**

1. [2 Chronicles 8:2](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Chronicles+8#en-NIV-11349) Hebrew Huram, a variant of Hiram; also in verse 18
2. [2 Chronicles 8:6](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Chronicles+8#en-NIV-11353) Or charioteers
3. [2 Chronicles 8:18](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Chronicles+8#en-NIV-11365) That is, about 17 tons or about 15 metric tons

A century ago, a parlor in your home signified some wealth or status. This was the room where you would greet guests and display your best furniture, art, and other décor. But the parlor actually has a religious origin from early Christian monasteries. People who entered into vows of silence in the cloisters still occasionally needed to have essential conversations. Fellow cloister members would meet in the inner parlor. The outer parlor was separated from the rest of the cloisters and used to conduct meetings with people outside the religious order. The parlors provided some separation to protect the daily spiritual focus and practice of those who had taken vows.

The places the ark of the Lord has entered are holy. 2 Chronicles 8:11

At this point in our study of 2 Chronicles, Solomon had been leading God’s people for 20 years. He had completed his own palace and the temple for the Lord. Now he turned his attention to expanding the nation of Israel.

First, Solomon rebuilt the cities given to Israel by Hiram (v. 2). Next, Solomon began to build, fortify, and conquer cities throughout the territories he ruled in Israel and Lebanon (vv. 3–6). Finally, in alliance with Hiram, Solomon expanded Israel’s reach by sea, enlarging both territory and the royal treasury (vv. 17–18).

Throughout this period of expansion, Solomon increased the influence of worship as well. He refused to use Israelite slave labor (v. 9). He maintained the schedule of sacrifices and provided for the priests and Levites (vv. 12–15). And he also recognized that his Egyptian wife, the daughter of Pharaoh, should not enter a place where the ark of the Lord had been (v. 11). Rather than have her live in the palace of David, Solomon built a separate palace for her in order to maintain the holiness of God’s dwelling.

### **Apply the Word**

You don’t need a parlor to meet with God—we can talk to Him anytime, anywhere. But it may be helpful to have a designated space where you can read Scripture, pray, or listen to praise music. Maybe it’s a chair or a breakfast nook, or even something as simple as using a special notebook. What space can you devote to your relationship with the Lord?

### **Pray with Us**

Please include in your prayers Marketing Communications director Julia Baad, and project managers and production staff: Cheyenne Lehto, Jacob Iverson, Nikita Cunigan, Rhonda AuYeung, and Robert Tracy. We are grateful for their faithful service!

## BY Eric C. Redmon

# Our Daily Bread – 3/5/19

# When You’re Not Chosen

**Read:** [**Acts 1:15-26**](https://www.odb.org/2019/03/05/when-youre-not-chosen/)

15In those days Peter stood up among the believers (a group numbering about a hundred and twenty) 16and said, “Brothers and sisters,[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts+1%3A15%E2%80%9326#fen-NIV-26940a)] the Scripture had to be fulfilled in which the Holy Spirit spoke long ago through David concerning Judas, who served as guide for those who arrested Jesus. 17He was one of our number and shared in our ministry.”

18(With the payment he received for his wickedness, Judas bought a field; there he fell headlong, his body burst open and all his intestines spilled out. 19Everyone in Jerusalem heard about this, so they called that field in their language Akeldama, that is, Field of Blood.)

20“For,” said Peter, “it is written in the Book of Psalms:

“‘May his place be deserted;  
    let there be no one to dwell in it,’[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts+1%3A15%E2%80%9326" \l "fen-NIV-26944b" \o "See footnote b)]

and,

“‘May another take his place of leadership.’[[c](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts+1%3A15%E2%80%9326#fen-NIV-26944c)]

21Therefore it is necessary to choose one of the men who have been with us the whole time the Lord Jesus was living among us, 22beginning from John’s baptism to the time when Jesus was taken up from us. For one of these must become a witness with us of his resurrection.”

23So they nominated two men: Joseph called Barsabbas (also known as Justus) and Matthias. 24Then they prayed, “Lord, you know everyone’s heart. Show us which of these two you have chosen 25to take over this apostolic ministry, which Judas left to go where he belongs.” 26Then they cast lots, and the lot fell to Matthias; so he was added to the eleven apostles.

#### **Footnotes:**

1. [Acts 1:16](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts+1%3A15%E2%80%9326#en-NIV-26940) The Greek word for brothers and sisters (adelphoi) refers here to believers, both men and women, as part of God’s family; also in 6:3; 11:29; 12:17; 16:40; 18:18, 27; 21:7, 17; 28:14, 15.
2. [Acts 1:20](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts+1%3A15%E2%80%9326#en-NIV-26944) Psalm 69:25
3. [Acts 1:20](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts+1%3A15%E2%80%9326#en-NIV-26944) Psalm 109:8

Then they cast lots, and the lot fell to Matthias. [Acts 1:26](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts+1%3A26)

My friend’s Facebook post announced he had finished a project. Others congratulated him, but his post knifed my heart. That project was supposed to be mine. I had been passed over, and I wasn’t sure why.

Poor Joseph. He was passed over by God, and he knew why. Joseph was one of two men in the running to replace Judas. The disciples prayed, “Lord, you know everyone’s heart. Show us which of these two you have chosen” (Acts 1:24). God chose the other guy. Then He announced His decision to the group, when “the lot fell to Matthias” (v. 26).

As the disciples congratulated Matthias, I wonder about Joseph. How did he handle his rejection? Did he feel jilted, wallow in self-pity, and distance himself from the others? Or did he trust God and cheerfully remain in a supportive role?

I know which option is best. And I know which option I’d want to take. How embarrassing! If you don’t want me, fine. Let’s see how you do without me. That choice might feel better, but only because it’s selfish.

Joseph isn’t mentioned again in Scripture, so we don’t know how he reacted. More relevant is how we respond when we’re not chosen. May we remember that Jesus’s kingdom matters more than our success, and may we joyfully serve in whatever role He selects.

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

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

How do you feel when you’re not chosen or are left out? How could your attitude be hindering you from seeing God’s direction for your life?

#### **Insight**

In Acts 1:15–26, Matthias is selected to replace Judas’s position in the Twelve—symbolically pointing to God’s restoration of His people into a “new Israel” ( Luke 22:30). Although the Psalms alluded to (69:25 and 109:8) originally referred to David’s enemies, Peter saw a deeper meaning—the ultimate betrayal by Judas. Still, Peter’s own betrayal and restoration couldn’t have been far from his mind. Matthias’s name (“gift of God”) points to grace even deeper than the gravest sin.

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

# God Calling – 3/5/19

# Fear Is Evil

Have no fear. Fear is evil and "perfect Love casts out fear." There is no room for fear in the heart in which I dwell. Fear destroys Hope. It cannot exist where Love is, or where Faith is.

Fear is the curse of the world. Man is afraid - afraid of poverty, afraid of loneliness, afraid of unemployment, afraid of sickness.

Many, many are man's fears. Nation is afraid of nation. Fear, fear, fear, everywhere. Fight fear as you would a plague. Turn it out of your lives and home. Fight it singly. Fight it together. Never inspire fear. It is an evil ally. Fear of punishment, fear of blame.

No work that employs this enemy of Mine is work for Me. Banish it. There must be another and better way.

Ask Me and I will show it you.

"For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind." - 2 Timothy 1:7

# My Utmost for His Highest – 3/6/19

# Taking the Next Step

…in much patience, in tribulations, in needs, in distresses. —[2 Corinthians 6:4](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=2+Corinthians+6%3A4)

When you have no vision from God, no enthusiasm left in your life, and no one watching and encouraging you, it requires the grace of Almighty God to take the next step in your devotion to Him, in the reading and studying of His Word, in your family life, or in your duty to Him. It takes much more of the grace of God, and a much greater awareness of drawing upon Him, to take that next step, than it does to preach the gospel.

Every Christian must experience the essence of the incarnation by bringing the next step down into flesh-and-blood reality and by working it out with his hands. We lose interest and give up when we have no vision, no encouragement, and no improvement, but only experience our everyday life with its trivial tasks. The thing that really testifies for God and for the people of God in the long run is steady perseverance, even when the work cannot be seen by others. And the only way to live an undefeated life is to live looking to God. Ask God to keep the eyes of your spirit open to the risen Christ, and it will be impossible for drudgery to discourage you. Never allow yourself to think that some tasks are beneath your dignity or too insignificant for you to do, and remind yourself of the example of Christ in[John 13:1-17](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+13:1-17).

**Wisdom From Oswald Chambers**

The great point of Abraham’s faith in God was that he was prepared to do anything for God.  
Not Knowing Whither

# CCEL – 3/6/19

**He preserveth the way of his saints.**—[PROV. 2:8.](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Prov.2.html" \l "Prov.2.8)

The Lord your God . . . went in the way before you, to search you out a place to pitch your tents in, in fire by night, to shew you by what way ye should go, and in a cloud by day.—As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings: so the Lord alone did lead him.—The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord: and he delighteth in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand.—Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the Lord delivereth him out of them all.—For the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous; but the way of the ungodly shall perish.—We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.—With us is the Lord our God to help us, and to fight our battles.

the Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy.

[Deut. 1:32,33](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Deut.1.html" \l "Deut.1.32). -[Deut. 32:11,12](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Deut.32.html" \l "Deut.32.11). -[Psa. 37:23,24](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.37.html" \l "Ps.37.23). -[Psa. 34:19](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.34.html" \l "Ps.34.19). -[Psa. 1:6](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.1.html" \l "Ps.1.6). -[Rom. 8:28](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Rom.8.html" \l "Rom.8.28). -[II Chr. 32:8](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iiChr.32.html" \l "iiChr.32.8).[Zeph. 3:17](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Zeph.3.html" \l "Zeph.3.17).

“Ye must be born again.” [John 3:7](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.John.3.html" \l "John.3.7)

Regeneration is a subject which lies at the very basis of salvation, and we should be very diligent to take heed that we really are “born again,” for there are many who fancy they are, who are not. Be assured that the name of a Christian is not the nature of a Christian; and that being born in a Christian land, and being recognized as professing the Christian religion is of no avail whatever, unless there be something more added to it—the being “born again,” is a matter so mysterious, that human words cannot describe it. “The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.” Nevertheless, it is a change which is known and felt: known by works of holiness, and felt by a gracious experience. This great work is supernatural. It is not an operation which a man performs for himself: a new principle is infused, which works in the heart, renews the soul, and affects the entire man. It is not a change of my name, but a renewal of my nature, so that I am not the man I used to be, but a new man in Christ Jesus. To wash and dress a corpse is a far different thing from making it alive: man can do the one, God alone can do the other. If you have then, been “born again,” your acknowledgment will be, “O Lord Jesus, the everlasting Father, thou art my spiritual Parent; unless thy Spirit had breathed into me the breath of a new, holy, and spiritual life, I had been to this day ‘dead in trespasses and sins.’ My heavenly life is wholly derived from thee, to thee I ascribe it. ‘My life is hid with Christ in God.’ It is no longer I who live, but Christ who liveth in me.” May the Lord enable us to be well assured on this vital point, for to be unregenerate is to be unsaved, unpardoned, without God, and without hope.

# Word Live – 3/6/19

# Watcher, warn!

## **Prepare**

As you read today, think carefully about those you live among. What have you seen of God? How can you speak it to them?



## **Bible passage: Ezekiel 3:16–27**

##### **Warning to Israel**

16 At the end of seven days the word of the LORD came to me: 17 "Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; so hear the word I speak and give them warning from me. 18 When I say to a wicked man, 'You will surely die,' and you do not warn him or speak out to dissuade him from his evil ways in order to save his life, that wicked man will die for his sin, and I will hold you accountable for his blood. 19 But if you do warn the wicked man and he does not turn from his wickedness or from his evil ways, he will die for his sin; but you will have saved yourself.

20 "Again, when a righteous man turns from his righteousness and does evil, and I put a stumbling block before him, he will die. Since you did not warn him, he will die for his sin. The righteous things he did will not be remembered, and I will hold you accountable for his blood. 21 But if you do warn the righteous man not to sin and he does not sin, he will surely live because he took warning, and you will have saved yourself."

22 The hand of the LORD was upon me there, and he said to me, "Get up and go out to the plain, and there I will speak to you." 23 So I got up and went out to the plain. And the glory of the LORD was standing there, like the glory I had seen by the Kebar River, and I fell facedown.

24 Then the Spirit came into me and raised me to my feet. He spoke to me and said: "Go, shut yourself inside your house. 25 And you, son of man, they will tie with ropes; you will be bound so that you cannot go out among the people. 26 I will make your tongue stick to the roof of your mouth so that you will be silent and unable to rebuke them, though they are a rebellious house. 27 But when I speak to you, I will open your mouth and you shall say to them, 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says.' Whoever will listen let him listen, and whoever will refuse let him refuse; for they are a rebellious house.

## **Explore**

**Stark warnings**

I was queueing at Elland Road football ground to watch Leeds United. It was the mid-1960s. The man walking up and down the queues was being ignored or ridiculed as weird. Strapped over his shoulders was a large wooden sign with bold black lettering that proclaimed on one side ‘The end draweth nigh!’ On the other, ‘Prepare to meet thy God’. The stark warnings and the courage of the man made a big impression on me, aged 7.

**News of danger**

Watchmen were essential in Ezekiel’s day. Those commissioned to patrol the city walls, looking out for the people, had also to blow the trumpet and cry out the fearful news of danger. Lives depended on them watching and warning. Jerusalem’s spiritual watchmen had failed miserably in both regards as they wallowed in contempt of the God who has just stormed into Ezekiel’s world.

**Dangerously holy God**

Ezekiel had to watch what God was doing, since God was a bigger threat to the rebellious than the Babylonians could ever be. Then he had to cry out, disturbing those facing the dangerously holy God. They might stop rebelling and repent. They might ignore and ridicule.

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

## **Respond**

Can we see the holiness of the God who saves, revealed at the cross of Christ, and not speak? ‘Lord, I really don’t like looking weird; but help me to speak of what I’ve seen and heard.’

## **Deeper Bible study**

A week has passed by and God speaks again to Ezekiel to impress upon him the urgency and seriousness of his task. He describes Ezekiel as a watchman, like Habakkuk ([Hab 2:1](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Hab+2%3A1&version=NIV" \t "_blank)), signifying that his appointment as a prophet to warn the exiles of their impending doom was in fact an act of grace on God’s part.1 Both the intentionally rebellious and those who had lost their way needed to hear Ezekiel’s warning from God. The ‘righteous’ here are those who show by good living their adherence to the covenant. The demands of God’s righteousness were constantly reiterated by the prophets, a mix of hating evil and doing good in the context of walking with God ([Isa 1:16–20; Amos 5:14,15; Mic 6:8](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isa+1%3A16%E2%80%9320%3B+Amos+5%3A14%2C15%3B+Mic+6%3A8&version=NIV)). Enthusiastic adherence to religious practices was not enough; too often this would mask attitudes and lifestyles that were abhorrent to God.

Ezekiel is given again the title, ‘son of man’ (see v 17). It becomes his normal designation throughout the book, used more than 90 times. Not found elsewhere in the Old Testament (except [Daniel 7:13; 8:17](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Daniel+7%3A13%3B+8%3A17&version=NIV)), this title emphasises the littleness of the prophet in contrast with God’s majesty. He is simultaneously accorded breathtaking dignity in being chosen by God who speaks with him and through him. In this Ezekiel was reminded continually of his dependence on the Spirit’s power, which would enable him to receive God’s message and deliver it with God’s power and authority. In the New Testament, we find the same title only given to Christ, to emphasise his humanity and his voluntary dependence upon the Holy Spirit.

In the words of Christopher Wright (2001, p69), ‘What happens next plumbs the depths of paradox almost to the point of farce’. Ezekiel is told that he is to be housebound, tied with ropes and unable to speak. How, then, was he to fulfil his daunting commission?

1 John B Taylor, Ezekiel, IVP, 1969, p69

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

## **Background: Ezekiel**

**A priest-prophet**Ezekiel’s name means ‘God strengthens’ or ‘May God strengthen’. In [3:14](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ezekiel%203:14&version=NIV) he records that ‘the hand of the Lord was strong’ upon him. A member of the priestly class, he would normally have expected to begin his work as a priest when was 30. But since he had been exiled to Babylon together with other Judeans, this was not possible.   
  
So it is significant that the book begins with the words ‘in the thirtieth year’ ([1:1](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ezekiel%201:1&version=NIV)); one door of ministry having been shut, God opens another door for him – to be a prophet to his people. But much of his message concerned the temple and its ceremonies (chs 8–11; 40–48).  
  
**A man of affairs**  
Ezekiel was clearly a researcher with a deep knowledge and clear understanding of international affairs. Given the circumstances in which he found himself, his grasp of the complexities of international trade and politics as revealed in chapters 25–32 is remarkable. From shipbuilding to literature, he shows considerable expertise.  
  
**A creative, passionate man**Although his style is often detached and objective, Ezekiel certainly comes across as a passionate man, and capable of expressing things in a very down-to-earth way (see chs 16,23). His creative, artistic side comes out in the compelling images he uses.   
  
**A man of God**Above all Ezekiel comes across as a spiritual person, able to discern God’s voice, and obedient to God’s will despite the cost involved. One of the hardest things Ezekiel was ever asked to do by God was not to grieve when his wife, the ‘delight of his eyes’, died ([Ezekiel 24:15–27](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ezekiel%2024:15-27&version=NIV)).   
  
As a priest the command to use human excrement as fuel was obviously extremely abhorrent to him ([4:12–15](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ezekiel%204:12-15&version=NIV)). Lying on one side for 390 days must also have been far from easy ([4:4,5](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ezekiel%204:4,5&version=NIV))! Visual aids are all very well, but he must have thought at times that God’s demands were rather over the top!**1**Andrew Clark   
  
**1** I am partly indebted for the introduction to Ezekiel in the NIV Study Bible, Zondervan, 1985

# Today in the Word – 3/6/19

# He Who Takes Our Breath Away

**Read:** [**2 Chronicles 9:1–12**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Chronicles+9%3a1%e2%80%9312)

### **The Queen of Sheba Visits Solomon**

9 When the queen of Sheba heard of Solomon’s fame, she came to Jerusalem to test him with hard questions. Arriving with a very great caravan—with camels carrying spices, large quantities of gold, and precious stones—she came to Solomon and talked with him about all she had on her mind. 2Solomon answered all her questions; nothing was too hard for him to explain to her. 3When the queen of Sheba saw the wisdom of Solomon, as well as the palace he had built, 4the food on his table, the seating of his officials, the attending servants in their robes, the cupbearers in their robes and the burnt offerings he made at[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Chronicles+9%3a1%e2%80%9312#fen-NIV-11369a)] the temple of the Lord, she was overwhelmed.

5She said to the king, “The report I heard in my own country about your achievements and your wisdom is true. 6But I did not believe what they said until I came and saw with my own eyes. Indeed, not even half the greatness of your wisdom was told me; you have far exceeded the report I heard. 7How happy your people must be! How happy your officials, who continually stand before you and hear your wisdom! 8Praise be to the Lord your God, who has delighted in you and placed you on his throne as king to rule for the Lord your God. Because of the love of your God for Israel and his desire to uphold them forever, he has made you king over them, to maintain justice and righteousness.”

9Then she gave the king 120 talents[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Chronicles+9%3a1%e2%80%9312#fen-NIV-11374b)] of gold, large quantities of spices, and precious stones. There had never been such spices as those the queen of Sheba gave to King Solomon.

10(The servants of Hiram and the servants of Solomon brought gold from Ophir; they also brought algumwood[[c](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Chronicles+9%3a1%e2%80%9312#fen-NIV-11375c)] and precious stones. 11The king used the algumwood to make steps for the temple of the Lord and for the royal palace, and to make harps and lyres for the musicians. Nothing like them had ever been seen in Judah.)

12King Solomon gave the queen of Sheba all she desired and asked for; he gave her more than she had brought to him. Then she left and returned with her retinue to her own country.

#### **Footnotes:**

1. [2 Chronicles 9:4](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Chronicles+9%3a1%e2%80%9312#en-NIV-11369) Or and the ascent by which he went up to
2. [2 Chronicles 9:9](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Chronicles+9%3a1%e2%80%9312#en-NIV-11374) That is, about 4 1/2 tons or about 4 metric tons
3. [2 Chronicles 9:10](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Chronicles+9%3a1%e2%80%9312#en-NIV-11375) Probably a variant of almugwood

Many people today categorically dismiss the truth of Christ and His claims without ever having read the account of Jesus in the four Gospels. They have already decided that the stories about miracles are myths, the record of a crucified Messiah is for weak minds, and identifying Jesus as God is a ridiculous thing to say about a man. They reject the reports they have heard of Christ without having learned His true identity.

Because of the love of your God for Israel and his desire to uphold them forever, he has made you king over them, to maintain justice and righteousness. 2 Chronicles 9:8

In contrast, when a seemingly unreal report about Solomon’s wisdom reached the Queen of Sheba, she did not accept the words of others about Solomon. Instead, she traveled over 1,300 miles to explore the claims for herself. In doing so, she found that the accounts of Solomon had not even captured the full scope of the truth she experienced in a face-to-face meeting with the man. The encounter caused her to praise the Lord (vv. 5–8).

Our efforts to defend the truthfulness of Scripture are worthwhile. Certainly we are called to give a defense of our hope (see 1 Peter 3:15). Yet as the Queen of Sheba’s encounter with Solomon shows, it would be wise to encourage skeptics in our spheres of influence to examine the claims of Christ for themselves. We would do well to point scoffers to the Gospel of Mark, the shortest Gospel that is full of action and to the point, and the Gospel of John, which uses simple language to emphasize the deity of the Son of Man.

Speaking of Himself, Jesus said, “Something greater than Solomon is here” (Matt. 12:42). As wise and great as Solomon was, Jesus is the greater true king of Israel. He is the one so amazing that seeing who He really is will cause us to rejoice and praise God.

### **Apply the Word**

Invite an unbeliever to read Scripture with you, and allow them to ask questions. Explain as simply and clearly as you can who Jesus is. Be patient and prayerful with their doubts and misunderstandings. Pray that the Holy Spirit will open their eyes so that they can see the greatness of Jesus and praise Him.

### **Pray with Us**

A business visionary, Mark Wagner, executive VP and chief operations officer at Moody, is constantly looking for ways to improve operations of MBI’s ministries. Let’s continue to ask God to lead and direct Mark’s every day in the office.

## BY Eric C. Redmond

# Our Daily Bread – 3/6/19

# Return on Investment

**Read:** [**Mark 10:17-31**](https://www.odb.org/2019/03/06/return-on-investment-2/)

### **The Rich and the Kingdom of God**

17As Jesus started on his way, a man ran up to him and fell on his knees before him. “Good teacher,” he asked, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?”

18“Why do you call me good?” Jesus answered. “No one is good—except God alone. 19You know the commandments: ‘You shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not give false testimony, you shall not defraud, honor your father and mother.’[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+10%3A17%E2%80%9331#fen-NIV-24608a)]”

20“Teacher,” he declared, “all these I have kept since I was a boy.”

21Jesus looked at him and loved him. “One thing you lack,” he said. “Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.”

22At this the man’s face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth.

23Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, “How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!”

24The disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said again, “Children, how hard it is[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+10%3A17%E2%80%9331#fen-NIV-24613b)] to enter the kingdom of God! 25It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.”

26The disciples were even more amazed, and said to each other, “Who then can be saved?”

27Jesus looked at them and said, “With man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God.”

28Then Peter spoke up, “We have left everything to follow you!”

29“Truly I tell you,” Jesus replied, “no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel 30will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age: homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields—along with persecutions—and in the age to come eternal life. 31But many who are first will be last, and the last first.”

#### **Footnotes:**

1. [Mark 10:19](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+10%3A17%E2%80%9331#en-NIV-24608) Exodus 20:12-16; Deut. 5:16-20
2. [Mark 10:24](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+10%3A17%E2%80%9331#en-NIV-24613) Some manuscripts is for those who trust in riches

We have left everything to follow you! [Mark 10:28](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+10%3A28)

In 1995 US stock market investors received record-high returns—on average, a whopping 37.6 percent return on their dollars. Then in 2008 investors lost almost exactly as much: a negative 37.0 percent. The years between had varying returns, causing those with money in the market to wonder—sometimes with fear—what would become of their investment.

Jesus assured His followers they would have an incredible return on investing their lives in Him. They “left everything to follow [Him]”—leaving their homes, jobs, status, and families to put their lives on deposit (v. 28). But they grew concerned that their investment might not pay off after watching a wealthy man struggle with the grip worldly goods had on him. Jesus replied, however, that anyone willing to sacrifice for Him would “receive a hundred times as much in this present age . . . and in the age to come eternal life” (v. 30). That’s a far better outcome than any stock market could ever match.

We don’t have to be concerned about the “interest rate” on our spiritual investment—with God, it’s an unmatched certainty. With money, our aim is to maximize the financial gain from our investment. With God, what we get back isn’t measured in dollars and cents, but in the joy that comes from knowing Him now and forever—and sharing that joy with others!

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

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

What can you “invest” in God today—including your time, talents, or treasure? How have you experienced joy in your relationship with Jesus?

#### **Insight**

The Old Testament law contains no commandment to sell all our possessions, yet Jesus told the rich young man to do exactly that. Why? Would that save him? No! Jesus uncovered the man’s true love—wealth. The law is powerless to change our hearts; it can only condemn us. Jesus fulfilled the law, accomplishing what we cannot (Mark 10:27).

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

# God Calling – 3/6/19

# Love and Laugh

Work for Me, with Me, through Me. All work to last must be done in My Spirit. How silently My Spirit works. How gently and gradually souls are led into My Kingdom.

Love and Laughter form the plough that prepares the ground for the seed. Remember this. If the ground is hard, seed will not grow there.

Prepare the ground, and prepare it as I say.

"Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts." - Zechariah 4:6

# My Utmost for His Highest – 3/7/19

# The Source of Abundant Joy

In all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. —[Romans 8:37](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=Romans+8%3A37)

Paul was speaking here of the things that might seem likely to separate a saint from the love of God. But the remarkable thing is that nothing can come between the love of God and a saint. The things Paul mentioned in this passage can and do disrupt the close fellowship of our soul with God and separate our natural life from Him. But none of them is able to come between the love of God and the soul of a saint on the spiritual level. The underlying foundation of the Christian faith is the undeserved, limitless miracle of the love of God that was exhibited on the Cross of Calvary; a love that is not earned and can never be. Paul said this is the reason that “in all these things we are more than conquerors.” We are super-victors with a joy that comes from experiencing the very things which look as if they are going to overwhelm us.

Huge waves that would frighten an ordinary swimmer produce a tremendous thrill for the surfer who has ridden them. Let’s apply that to our own circumstances. The things we try to avoid and fight against— tribulation, suffering, and persecution— are the very things that produce abundant joy in us. “We are more than conquerors through Him” “in all these things”; not in spite of them, but in the midst of them. A saint doesn’t know the joy of the Lord in spite of tribulation, but because of it. Paul said, “I am exceedingly joyful in all our tribulation” ([2 Corinthians 7:4](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Corinthians+7:4)).

The undiminished radiance, which is the result of abundant joy, is not built on anything passing, but on the love of God that nothing can change. And the experiences of life, whether they are everyday events or terrifying ones, are powerless to “separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” ([Romans 8:39](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+8:39)).

**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 – 3/7/19

Thy Maker is thine husband; the Lord of hosts is his name.—[ISA. 54:5.](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Isa.54.html" \l "Isa.54.5)

This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.

Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken . . . but thou shalt be called Hephzibah, . . . for the Lord delighteth in thee. And as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee.—He hath sent me . . . to comfort all that mourn; to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.

I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels.

I will betroth thee unto me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in lovingkindness and in mercies.

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?

[Eph. 5:32](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Eph.5.html" \l "Eph.5.32).[Isa. 62:4,5](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Isa.62.html" \l "Isa.62.4). -[Isa. 61:1-3](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Isa.61.html" \l "Isa.61.1).[Isa. 61:10](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Isa.61.html" \l "Isa.61.10).[Hos. 2:19](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Hos.2.html" \l "Hos.2.19).[Rom. 8:35](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Rom.8.html" \l "Rom.8.35).

“Have faith in God.” [Mark 11:22](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Mark.11.html" \l "Mark.11.22)

Faith is the foot of the soul by which it can march along the road of the commandments. Love can make the feet move more swiftly; but faith is the foot which carries the soul. Faith is the oil enabling the wheels of holy devotion and of earnest piety to move well; and without faith the wheels are taken from the chariot, and we drag heavily. With faith I can do all things; without faith I shall neither have the inclination nor the power to do anything in the service of God. If you would find the men who serve God the best, you must look for the men of the most faith. Little faith will save a man, but little faith cannot do great things for God. Poor Little-faith could not have fought “Apollyon;” it needed “Christian” to do that. Poor Little-faith could not have slain “Giant Despair;” it required “Great-heart's” arm to knock that monster down. Little faith will go to heaven most certainly, but it often has to hide itself in a nut-shell, and it frequently loses all but its jewels. Little-faith says, “It is a rough road, beset with sharp thorns, and full of dangers; I am afraid to go;” but Great-faith remembers the promise, “Thy shoes shall be iron and brass; as thy days, so shall thy strength be:” and so she boldly ventures. Little-faith stands desponding, mingling her tears with the flood; but Great-faith sings, “When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee:” and she fords the stream at once. Would you be comfortable and happy? Would you enjoy religion? Would you have the religion of cheerfulness and not that of gloom? Then “have faith in God.” If you love darkness, and are satisfied to dwell in gloom and misery, then be content with little faith; but if you love the sunshine, and would sing songs of rejoicing, covet earnestly this best gift, “great faith.”

# Word Live – 3/7/19

# Serious about sin and saving

## **Prepare**

Consider your culture’s response to the word ‘sin’. And consider your own. Now consider God’s view of sin. Spot any differences?



## **Bible passage: Ezekiel 4:1–8; 5:1–13**

##### **Siege of Jerusalem Symbolized**

1 "Now, son of man, take a clay tablet, put it in front of you and draw the city of Jerusalem on it. 2 Then lay siege to it: Erect siege works against it, build a ramp up to it, set up camps against it and put battering rams around it. 3 Then take an iron pan, place it as an iron wall between you and the city and turn your face toward it. It will be under siege, and you shall besiege it. This will be a sign to the house of Israel.

4 "Then lie on your left side and put the sin of the house of Israel upon yourself. You are to bear their sin for the number of days you lie on your side. 5 I have assigned you the same number of days as the years of their sin. So for 390 days you will bear the sin of the house of Israel.

6 "After you have finished this, lie down again, this time on your right side, and bear the sin of the house of Judah. I have assigned you 40 days, a day for each year. 7 Turn your face toward the siege of Jerusalem and with bared arm prophesy against her. 8 I will tie you up with ropes so that you cannot turn from one side to the other until you have finished the days of your siege.

#### **Ezekiel 5**

1 "Now, son of man, take a sharp sword and use it as a barber's razor to shave your head and your beard. Then take a set of scales and divide up the hair. 2 When the days of your siege come to an end, burn a third of the hair with fire inside the city. Take a third and strike it with the sword all around the city. And scatter a third to the wind. For I will pursue them with drawn sword. 3 But take a few strands of hair and tuck them away in the folds of your garment. 4 Again, take a few of these and throw them into the fire and burn them up. A fire will spread from there to the whole house of Israel.

5 "This is what the Sovereign LORD says: This is Jerusalem, which I have set in the center of the nations, with countries all around her. 6 Yet in her wickedness she has rebelled against my laws and decrees more than the nations and countries around her. She has rejected my laws and has not followed my decrees.

7 "Therefore this is what the Sovereign LORD says: You have been more unruly than the nations around you and have not followed my decrees or kept my laws. You have not even conformed to the standards of the nations around you.

8 "Therefore this is what the Sovereign LORD says: I myself am against you, Jerusalem, and I will inflict punishment on you in the sight of the nations. 9 Because of all your detestable idols, I will do to you what I have never done before and will never do again. 10 Therefore in your midst fathers will eat their children, and children will eat their fathers. I will inflict punishment on you and will scatter all your survivors to the winds. 11 Therefore as surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, because you have defiled my sanctuary with all your vile images and detestable practices, I myself will withdraw my favor; I will not look on you with pity or spare you. 12 A third of your people will die of the plague or perish by famine inside you; a third will fall by the sword outside your walls; and a third I will scatter to the winds and pursue with drawn sword.

13 "Then my anger will cease and my wrath against them will subside, and I will be avenged. And when I have spent my wrath upon them, they will know that I the LORD have spoken in my zeal.

## **Explore**

**Serious play-acting**

Ezekiel’s oracles begin with very serious play-acting. The sin of God’s own people in Jerusalem meant little or nothing to them. But it meant a lot to God. By falling short of his standards, being even worse than the people around them, they defiled his name.

The dramatised siege connected it to 430 years of his people’s sins. Ezekiel wasn’t bearing their sin in the way that Jesus bore our sins – carrying away its guilt, penalty and power. He was carrying it openly to expose its binding, debilitating effect.

**Shame and distress**

The shaving of Ezekiel’s head – a sign of shame and distress – makes the same point: it’s because of their sins that his people have experienced the shame and distress of exile. Following the siege by the Babylonians God sent the three consequences that his hair and beard suffered.

But God’s seriousness about sin is matched by his seriousness about saving. A little remnant of Ezekiel’s hair and beard is kept aside, protected in the folds of his robe. God would not be left without a small band of people who would demonstrate, by their mere existence, his mercy. From that small remnant would one day come the redeeming sin-bearer, Jesus.

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

## **Respond**

God does not sweep sin under the carpet. Nor does he forget his promises or fail to show mercy. Because of God’s wonderful loving kindness, shown supremely in Jesus, sinners like us can come before God.

## **Deeper Bible study**

The drama begins. Although Ezekiel was confined to one place and unable to speak, he received detailed instructions on how to make the message live for its recipients. Previously, scenes enacted by prophets had been short-lived, but his daily repetition of several central actions, interspersed by shorter ones, over the course of more than a year meant that most of the community got to see them (4:9–13). These actions both prefigured and were a visual reinforcement of the events that Ezekiel later went on to describe in vivid detail.1

Each started with a command about an object – clay tablet (4:1), bread-making ingredients (4:9) and a sharp sword (5:1) – with each pointing to a wider message about the siege of Jerusalem (4:1–8), the suffering of the people in Jerusalem and in exile (4:9–17) and the final fate of Jerusalem and the Israelite nation (5:1–4). In the first scene Ezekiel represented God himself and in the second he took on the symbolic identity of Israel, lying under the weight of their collective sin. The 390 days culminated in Ezekiel laboriously shaving off his hair and beard with a sword, an exercise fraught with risk of injury and symbolic of humiliation and mourning.

At the heart of the message is God’s deep disappointment with Jerusalem and its people (5:5–8). They were meant to exemplify his rule and reign at work among them and be a light to the surrounding nations, with profound missiological significance in God’s wider purposes ([Gen 12:3; Exod 19:4–6; Isa 42:6](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Gen+12%3A3%3B+Exod+19%3A4%E2%80%936%3B+Isa+42%3A6&version=NIV)). Instead, they were demonstrably worse than the pagan nations surrounding them, serving only to illustrate the consequences of defiance against their God. Their position of privilege brought enormous responsibility, which they had ignored at their peril.

1 Wright, 2001, p75

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

# Today in the Word – 3/7/19

# Harsh Words of the King

**Read:** [**2 Chronicles 10**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Chronicles+10)

### **Israel Rebels Against Rehoboam**

10 Rehoboam went to Shechem, for all Israel had gone there to make him king. 2When Jeroboam son of Nebat heard this (he was in Egypt, where he had fled from King Solomon), he returned from Egypt. 3So they sent for Jeroboam, and he and all Israel went to Rehoboam and said to him: 4“Your father put a heavy yoke on us, but now lighten the harsh labor and the heavy yoke he put on us, and we will serve you.”

5Rehoboam answered, “Come back to me in three days.” So the people went away.

6Then King Rehoboam consulted the elders who had served his father Solomon during his lifetime. “How would you advise me to answer these people?” he asked.

7They replied, “If you will be kind to these people and please them and give them a favorable answer, they will always be your servants.”

8But Rehoboam rejected the advice the elders gave him and consulted the young men who had grown up with him and were serving him. 9He asked them, “What is your advice? How should we answer these people who say to me, ‘Lighten the yoke your father put on us’?”

10The young men who had grown up with him replied, “The people have said to you, ‘Your father put a heavy yoke on us, but make our yoke lighter.’ Now tell them, ‘My little finger is thicker than my father’s waist. 11My father laid on you a heavy yoke; I will make it even heavier. My father scourged you with whips; I will scourge you with scorpions.’”

12Three days later Jeroboam and all the people returned to Rehoboam, as the king had said, “Come back to me in three days.” 13The king answered them harshly. Rejecting the advice of the elders, 14he followed the advice of the young men and said, “My father made your yoke heavy; I will make it even heavier. My father scourged you with whips; I will scourge you with scorpions.” 15So the king did not listen to the people, for this turn of events was from God, to fulfill the word the Lord had spoken to Jeroboam son of Nebat through Ahijah the Shilonite.

16When all Israel saw that the king refused to listen to them, they answered the king:

“What share do we have in David,  
    what part in Jesse’s son?  
To your tents, Israel!  
    Look after your own house, David!”

So all the Israelites went home. 17But as for the Israelites who were living in the towns of Judah, Rehoboam still ruled over them.

18King Rehoboam sent out Adoniram,[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Chronicles+10" \l "fen-NIV-11414a" \o "See footnote a)] who was in charge of forced labor, but the Israelites stoned him to death. King Rehoboam, however, managed to get into his chariot and escape to Jerusalem. 19So Israel has been in rebellion against the house of David to this day.

#### **Footnotes:**

1. [2 Chronicles 10:18](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Chronicles+10#en-NIV-11414) Hebrew Hadoram, a variant of Adoniram

More than one parent has said to a child in an exasperated tone, “I can’t wait until you have children one day!” And more than one parent has thought, “Now I understand my own parents’ decisions better!” What felt unreasonable to a child actually provided a measure of safety. From the perspective of adulthood, we can better appreciate our parents’ intentions to bring us good and protect from harm.

If you will be kind to these people and please them and give them a favorable answer, they will always be your servants. 2 Chronicles 10:7

Rather than enter his reign with the perspective of a mature adult, Solomon’s son Rehoboam chose to listen to the immature advice of his friends (vv. 10–11). King Rehoboam’s pronouncement of a rule that is harsher than his father’s led Israel to reject his kingship.

Jeroboam, the people of Israel, and Rehoboam’s childhood friends all seemed to want a new king to rule differently than King Solomon. Apparently, no one, not even Rehoboam, understood the blessing of the rule of Solomon, which had led to Israel’s prosperity. As a result, the kingdom divided into the ten tribes of Israel, that chose to follow Jeroboam, and the two tribes of Judah that followed the line of David.

Our Savior encountered His own people of Israel who misunderstood His Father’s rule—that His Father’s rule invites anyone to experience salvation in the Son of God by grace. Unlike those who want to bind people under a heavy weight they cannot bear, Jesus offers freedom from sin and the power to serve God (Matt. 11:30).

Though He is the eternal Son of God with all the power of the universe at His disposal, Jesus will never scourge us with scorpions but instead invites us to experience His love and forgiveness.

### **Apply the Word**

Every call to endure wrongdoing, be patient while suffering, forgive those who have harmed you, give mercy to a prodigal friend or sibling, or embrace a rebellious child is our good heavenly Father’s will for us. These are opportunities for obedience to Him and for loving others as He has loved us.

### **Pray with Us**

Would you uphold in prayer Troy Fichter and Josie Scott who serve at the Solheim Center, Moody’s athletic facility? Praise the Lord for all they do in the management and administration of the Center to benefit the Moody community.

## BY Eric C. Redmond

# Our Daily Bread – 3/7/19

# Escaping the Noise

**Read:** [**1 Kings 19:9-13**](https://www.odb.org/2019/03/07/a-gentle-whisper/)

9There he went into a cave and spent the night.

### **The Lord Appears to Elijah**

And the word of the Lord came to him: “What are you doing here, Elijah?”

10He replied, “I have been very zealous for the Lord God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, torn down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too.”

11The Lord said, “Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the Lord, for the Lord is about to pass by.”

Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. 12After the earthquake came a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper. 13When Elijah heard it, he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave.

Then a voice said to him, “What are you doing here, Elijah?”

After the fire came a gentle whisper. [1 Kings 19:12](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Kings+19%3A12)

Several years ago, the president of a college suggested that students join her in “powering down” for an evening. Although the students agreed, it was with great reluctance that they laid aside their cell phones and entered the chapel. For the next hour, they sat quietly in a service of music and prayer. Afterward, one participant described the experience as “a wonderful opportunity to calm down . . . a place to just tune out all of the extra noise.”

Sometimes, it’s difficult to escape “extra noise.” The clamor of both our external and internal worlds can be deafening. But when we’re willing to “power down,” we begin to understand the psalmist’s reminder of the necessity to be still so we can know God (Psalm 46:10). In 1 Kings 19, we discover as well that when the prophet Elijah looked for the Lord, he didn’t find Him in the pandemonium of the wind or the earthquake or the fire (vv. 9–13). Instead, Elijah heard God’s gentle whisper (v. 12).

Extra noise is practically guaranteed during celebrations. When families and friends come together, it’s likely a time of animated conversations, excess food, boisterous laughter, and sweet expressions of love. But when we quietly open our hearts, we find that time with God is even sweeter. Like Elijah, we’re more likely to encounter God in the stillness. And sometimes, if we listen, we too will hear that gentle whisper.

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

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

What will help you draw close to God in silence and solitude? How can you regularly “power down” both your devices and your busy mind?

#### **Insight**

Elijah’s meeting with the Lord on “Horeb, the mountain of God” (1 Kings 19:8) was not the first time the Lord met with one of His servants in that place. Centuries earlier the Lord had met Moses there. “Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian, and he led the flock to the far side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God” (Exodus 3:1). At Horeb the Lord revealed Himself to Moses and commissioned him to bring the children of Israel out of Egypt (vv. 2–12). The mountain we mostly associate Moses with is Mount Sinai (19:18–20). But passages like Deuteronomy 4:10 help us to see that Horeb and Sinai are used synonymously and interchangeably in Scripture. Two of the Lord’s chosen servants met Him on that mountain and departed to do His will in His strength.

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

# God Calling – 3/7/19

# Surprises

Many there are who think that I test and train and bend to My Will. I, who bade the disciples take up the cross, I loved to prepare a feast for them by the lakeside - a little glad surprise, not a necessity, as the feeding of the multitude may have seemed. I loved to give the wine-gift at the marriage feast.

As you love to plan surprises for those who understand, and joy in them, so with Me. I love to plan them for those who see My Love and tender Joy in them.

Dear to the heart of My Father are those who see not only My tears, the tears of a Savior, but the smile, the joy-smile of a friend.

"Let the Lord be magnified, which hath pleasure in the prosperity of his servant." - Psalm 35:27

# My Utmost for His Highest – 3/8/19

# The Surrendered Life

I have been crucified with Christ… —[Galatians 2:20](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=Galatians+2%3A20)

To become one with Jesus Christ, a person must be willing not only to give up sin, but also to surrender his whole way of looking at things. Being born again by the Spirit of God means that we must first be willing to let go before we can grasp something else. The first thing we must surrender is all of our pretense or deceit. What our Lord wants us to present to Him is not our goodness, honesty, or our efforts to do better, but real solid sin. Actually, that is all He can take from us. And what He gives us in exchange for our sin is real solid righteousness. But we must surrender all pretense that we are anything, and give up all our claims of even being worthy of God’s consideration.

Once we have done that, the Spirit of God will show us what we need to surrender next. Along each step of this process, we will have to give up our claims to our rights to ourselves. Are we willing to surrender our grasp on all that we possess, our desires, and everything else in our lives? Are we ready to be identified with the death of Jesus Christ?

We will suffer a sharp painful disillusionment before we fully surrender. When people really see themselves as the Lord sees them, it is not the terribly offensive sins of the flesh that shock them, but the awful nature of the pride of their own hearts opposing Jesus Christ. When they see themselves in the light of the Lord, the shame, horror, and desperate conviction hit home for them.

If you are faced with the question of whether or not to surrender, make a determination to go on through the crisis, surrendering all that you have and all that you are to Him. And God will then equip you to do all that He requires of you.

**Wisdom From Oswald Chambers**

We all have the trick of saying—If only I were not where I am!—If only I had not got the kind of people I have to live with! If our faith or our religion does not help us in the conditions we are in, we have either a further struggle to go through, or we had better abandon that faith and religion.  The Shadow of an Agony, 1178 L

# CCEL – 3/8/19

Thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back.—[ISA. 38:17.](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Isa.38.html" \l "Isa.38.17)

Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger forever, because he delighteth in mercy. He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea.

For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer.—I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.

Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.—The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.

[Mic. 7:18,19](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Mic.7.html" \l "Mic.7.18).[Isa. 54:7,8](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Isa.54.html" \l "Isa.54.7). -[Jer. 31:34](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Jer.31.html" \l "Jer.31.34).[Psa. 32:1,2](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.32.html" \l "Ps.32.1). -[I John 1:7](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iJohn.1.html" \l "iJohn.1.7).

“We must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.” [Acts 14:22](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Acts.14.html" \l "Acts.14.22)

God’s people have their trials. It was never designed by God, when he chose his people, that they should be an untried people. They were chosen in the furnace of affliction; they were never chosen to worldly peace and earthly joy. Freedom from sickness and the pains of mortality was never promised them; but when their Lord drew up the charter of privileges, he included chastisements amongst the things to which they should inevitably be heirs. Trials are a part of our lot; they were predestinated for us in Christ’s last legacy. So surely as the stars are fashioned by his hands, and their orbits fixed by him, so surely are our trials allotted to us: he has ordained their season and their place, their intensity and the effect they shall have upon us. Good men must never expect to escape troubles; if they do, they will be disappointed, for none of their predecessors have been without them. Mark the patience of Job; remember Abraham, for he had his trials, and by his faith under them, he became the “Father of the faithful.” Note well the biographies of all the patriarchs, prophets, apostles, and martyrs, and you shall discover none of those whom God made vessels of mercy, who were not made to pass through the fire of affliction. It is ordained of old that the cross of trouble should be engraved on every vessel of mercy, as the royal mark whereby the King’s vessels of honour are distinguished. But although tribulation is thus the path of God’s children, they have the comfort of knowing that their Master has traversed it before them; they have his presence and sympathy to cheer them, his grace to support them, and his example to teach them how to endure; and when they reach “the kingdom,” it will more than make amends for the “much tribulation” through which they passed to enter it.

# Word Live – 3/8/19

# God has left the building

## **Prepare**

Today, let this passage search your heart for idols that might be breaking your fellowship with God.Today, let this passage search your heart for idols that might be breaking your fellowship with God.



## **Bible passage: Ezekiel 10:1–22**

##### **The Glory Departs From the Temple**

1 I looked, and I saw the likeness of a throne of sapphire above the expanse that was over the heads of the cherubim. 2 The LORD said to the man clothed in linen, "Go in among the wheels beneath the cherubim. Fill your hands with burning coals from among the cherubim and scatter them over the city." And as I watched, he went in.

3 Now the cherubim were standing on the south side of the temple when the man went in, and a cloud filled the inner court. 4 Then the glory of the LORD rose from above the cherubim and moved to the threshold of the temple. The cloud filled the temple, and the court was full of the radiance of the glory of the LORD. 5 The sound of the wings of the cherubim could be heard as far away as the outer court, like the voice of God Almighty when he speaks.

6 When the LORD commanded the man in linen, "Take fire from among the wheels, from among the cherubim," the man went in and stood beside a wheel. 7 Then one of the cherubim reached out his hand to the fire that was among them. He took up some of it and put it into the hands of the man in linen, who took it and went out. 8 (Under the wings of the cherubim could be seen what looked like the hands of a man.)

9 I looked, and I saw beside the cherubim four wheels, one beside each of the cherubim; the wheels sparkled like chrysolite. 10 As for their appearance, the four of them looked alike; each was like a wheel intersecting a wheel. 11 As they moved, they would go in any one of the four directions the cherubim faced; the wheels did not turn about as the cherubim went. The cherubim went in whatever direction the head faced, without turning as they went. 12 Their entire bodies, including their backs, their hands and their wings, were completely full of eyes, as were their four wheels. 13 I heard the wheels being called "the whirling wheels." 14 Each of the cherubim had four faces: One face was that of a cherub, the second the face of a man, the third the face of a lion, and the fourth the face of an eagle.

15 Then the cherubim rose upward. These were the living creatures I had seen by the Kebar River. 16 When the cherubim moved, the wheels beside them moved; and when the cherubim spread their wings to rise from the ground, the wheels did not leave their side. 17 When the cherubim stood still, they also stood still; and when the cherubim rose, they rose with them, because the spirit of the living creatures was in them.

18 Then the glory of the LORD departed from over the threshold of the temple and stopped above the cherubim. 19 While I watched, the cherubim spread their wings and rose from the ground, and as they went, the wheels went with them. They stopped at the entrance to the east gate of the LORD's house, and the glory of the God of Israel was above them.

20 These were the living creatures I had seen beneath the God of Israel by the Kebar River, and I realized that they were cherubim. 21 Each had four faces and four wings, and under their wings was what looked like the hands of a man. 22 Their faces had the same appearance as those I had seen by the Kebar River. Each one went straight ahead.

## 

## **Explore**

**Unthinkable**

God’s departure from the Temple in Jerusalem is the ultimate judgement. It shatters his people’s presumption toward God, destroying their delusions about protected sin. It would have been unthinkable to the complacent that the Lord would ever take his presence away from the most holy place.

**Broken fellowship**

Idols, however hidden our devotion to them might be, are seen – felt – by God. Anything or anyone that we love or fear more than God, whose tune we dance to, whom we lean on for what God alone can give, has become an idol. God will break our fellowship with him over it. Not our relationship, which remains eternally sure in Jesus; but what fellowship can light have with darkness?

**Lesson learned**

The God who burst into Ezekiel’s life is now revealed as the God who cannot live with idols. The day will come when God will return to his people in the splendour of his glory. But for now, the awful lesson has to be learned. As the temple of the Holy Spirit, I need to remember that grieved by my idolatry, he may remove much blessing from me. Quenched by my sin the fire of his presence will depart.

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

## **Respond**

‘Lord, in your kindness, show me if the silent, invisible cloud of idolatry is seeping over my life like carbon monoxide, silently to asphyxiate the vitality of my walk with you. As your servant David prayed, “Cleanse me”; “Take not your Holy Spirit from me”.’

## **Deeper Bible study**

We rejoin Ezekiel here part-way through being caught up in another ecstatic vision of God, in which he is spirited away to Jerusalem and faced with the people’s idolatrous religious practices and the consequences (described in chs 8–11). The focus is once again on God’s chariot throne and upon the next stages in the departure of God’s glory from the city. Ezekiel now identifies the living creatures of chapter 1 with cherubim, heavenly figures often associated with direct service to God through worship and as protectors appointed by him to particular tasks ([Gen 3:24; Exod 25:18–20; Ps 18:10; Ezek 41:18–20](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Gen+3%3A24%3B+Exod+25%3A18%E2%80%9320%3B+Ps+18%3A10%3B+Ezek+41%3A18%E2%80%9320&version=NIV)). This places Ezekiel’s early vision centre stage and demonstrates how God does not always reveal everything at once. Rather, he expects us to trust him, walking by faith rather than possessing full understanding.

The above is preceded in verses 1–7 by the awful and unmistakable image of the fire of God’s judgement being let loose on Jerusalem. ‘This must have been one of the darkest moments of Ezekiel’s ministry … Not only had he been expelled from his beloved city but he’d also lived to witness something even worse – the glory of his covenant God, Yahweh, leaving his temple, leaving his city, leaving his people to their destruction.’1

Distressing images of destruction regularly fill our TV screens, making real to us the horror of Ezekiel’s prophecy for his contemporaries. His words provoke questions for us too about how we reconcile such radical judgement with a God who is also outrageously generous with his grace and love as personified in Christ. We need to wrestle with these issues2 if we are to engage with confidence and integrity with the questioners around us ([Col 4:6; 1 Pet 3:15](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Col+4%3A6%3B+1+Pet+3%3A15&version=NIV)).

1 Wright, 2001, p120

2 see Gundry, 2003

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

# Today in the Word – 3/8/19

# Restored to Rule God’s Way

**Read:** [**2 Chronicles 11**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Chronicles+11)

11 When Rehoboam arrived in Jerusalem, he mustered Judah and Benjamin—a hundred and eighty thousand able young men—to go to war against Israel and to regain the kingdom for Rehoboam.

2But this word of the Lord came to Shemaiah the man of God: 3“Say to Rehoboam son of Solomon king of Judah and to all Israel in Judah and Benjamin, 4‘This is what the Lord says: Do not go up to fight against your fellow Israelites. Go home, every one of you, for this is my doing.’” So they obeyed the words of the Lord and turned back from marching against Jeroboam.

### **Rehoboam Fortifies Judah**

5Rehoboam lived in Jerusalem and built up towns for defense in Judah: 6Bethlehem, Etam, Tekoa, 7Beth Zur, Soko, Adullam, 8Gath, Mareshah, Ziph, 9Adoraim, Lachish, Azekah, 10Zorah, Aijalon and Hebron. These were fortified cities in Judah and Benjamin. 11He strengthened their defenses and put commanders in them, with supplies of food, olive oil and wine. 12He put shields and spears in all the cities, and made them very strong. So Judah and Benjamin were his.

13The priests and Levites from all their districts throughout Israel sided with him. 14The Levites even abandoned their pasturelands and property and came to Judah and Jerusalem, because Jeroboam and his sons had rejected them as priests of the Lord 15when he appointed his own priests for the high places and for the goat and calf idols he had made. 16Those from every tribe of Israel who set their hearts on seeking the Lord, the God of Israel, followed the Levites to Jerusalem to offer sacrifices to the Lord, the God of their ancestors. 17They strengthened the kingdom of Judah and supported Rehoboam son of Solomon three years, following the ways of David and Solomon during this time.

### **Rehoboam’s Family**

18Rehoboam married Mahalath, who was the daughter of David’s son Jerimoth and of Abihail, the daughter of Jesse’s son Eliab. 19She bore him sons: Jeush, Shemariah and Zaham. 20Then he married Maakah daughter of Absalom, who bore him Abijah, Attai, Ziza and Shelomith. 21Rehoboam loved Maakah daughter of Absalom more than any of his other wives and concubines. In all, he had eighteen wives and sixty concubines, twenty-eight sons and sixty daughters.

22Rehoboam appointed Abijah son of Maakah as crown prince among his brothers, in order to make him king. 23He acted wisely, dispersing some of his sons throughout the districts of Judah and Benjamin, and to all the fortified cities. He gave them abundant provisions and took many wives for them.

Why do churches and denominations fracture and divide? While each situation has its own particular reasons, the fundamental reason underlying every division of the people of God is that we live in a fallen world filled with imperfect, broken people. Almost every schism follows a long, painful process that obscures other options that might have preserved unity.

They obeyed the words of the Lord. 2 Chronicles 11:4

Rehoboam’s choices precipitated a split in the kingdom of Israel, a wrenching apart of God’s people into two separate nations. Rehoboam was the grandson of King David and the ruler in God’s chosen line. But he now ruled over a kingdom of just two tribes, Judah and Benjamin (v. 1). Rehoboam’s first plan was to retake the ten tribes by force and attack the forces of Jeroboam. But the Lord instructed him to stand down from seeking to restore the kingdom by means of war (vv. 2–4). And this time Rehoboam listened to the wise counsel from the prophet Shemaiah and turned back from war.

Rehoboam found that God blessed his obedience and enlarged the kingdom of Judah in ways he hadn’t anticipated. Priests and Levites flocked to Jerusalem. Jeroboam instituted idolatrous worship, but Judah continued to worship the Lord (vv. 13–17). A spiritual revival flourished as worshipers chose to move to Judah rather than bow to the goat and calf idols in Israel. Rehoboam was able to fortify the cities of Judah and make sure they had the means to prosper (vv. 5–12).

As Rehoboam faithfully built up Judah, God also built up his family. Rehoboam was able to place his sons in leadership positions throughout the kingdom, and Rehoboam resembled his father Solomon through his wise administration of the kingdom of Judah (v. 23).

### **Apply the Word**

Paul and Barnabas separated after a dispute about working with John Mark (see Acts 15:36–41). The Lord redeemed this fractured relationship to use two ministry teams for His glory. His sovereignty is not impinged by our frailty. If you have endured a church split or a broken relationship, pray that the Lord will work through both parties.

### **Pray with Us**

Timothy Arens, VP and dean of Student Life, will appreciate your prayers today. He and his team help students integrate into campus life and flourish during their years at Moody. Will you encourage dean Arens and his team in prayer?

## BY Eric C. Redmond

# Our Daily Bread – 3/8/19

# Gentle Yet Powerful

**Read:** [**Isaiah 40:10-11**](https://www.odb.org/2019/03/08/gentle-and-powerful/)

10See, the Sovereign Lord comes with power,  
    and he rules with a mighty arm.  
See, his reward is with him,  
    and his recompense accompanies him.  
11He tends his flock like a shepherd:  
    He gathers the lambs in his arms  
and carries them close to his heart;  
    he gently leads those that have young.

Let your gentleness be evident to all. [Philippians 4:5](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Philippians+4%3A5)

As the enemy occupation of the Netherlands increased, Anne Frank and her family bravely prepared and then moved to a secret hiding place to escape the danger. They hid there two years during World War II before being found and sent to concentration camps. Yet Anne, writing in what became her famous Diary of a Young Girl, said this: “In the long run, the sharpest weapon of all is a kind and gentle spirit.”

Gentleness can be a complicated issue as we deal with real life.

In Isaiah 40 we get a picture of God that shows Him to be both gentle and powerful. In verse 11 we read: “He tends his flock like a shepherd: He gathers the lambs in his arms.” But that verse follows this: “See, the Sovereign Lord comes with power, and he rules with a mighty arm” (v. 10). Full of power, but gentle when it comes to protecting the vulnerable.

And think of Jesus, who fashioned a whip and brandished it as He flipped over the money-changers tables in the temple but who also gently cared for children. He used powerful words to denounce the Pharisees (Matthew 23) but forgave a woman who needed His gentle mercy (John 8:1–11).

While there may be times to stand up with power for the weak and challenge others to pursue justice—we’re also to “let [our] gentleness be evident to all” (Philippians 4:5). As we serve God, sometimes our greatest strength reveals a heart of gentleness to those in need.

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

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

How can you gently but firmly promote justice and mercy today? How does the Holy Spirit help us be both gentle and powerful?

#### **Insight**

The theme of shepherds and sheep is repeated in Isaiah’s prophecies. In Isaiah 40:11, Isaiah paints a picture of God Himself as the loving, caring Shepherd of Israel. In 38:12, the prophet quotes King Hezekiah referring to his own dwelling as a “shepherd’s tent”; and in 44:28, God surprisingly refers to the conquering King Cyrus as God’s own shepherd! Finally, in 63:11 the people reflect on God’s care for their ancestors in the wilderness and long for that care afresh. Isaiah captures four different speakers (himself, Hezekiah, God, the people) using the imagery of a shepherd in very different ways, no doubt because it was a word picture that would resonate with people living in an agricultural culture where sheep and shepherds were common sights. This imagery of shepherds and their care for their flocks reminded the people of their need for that same care from their God.

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

# God Calling – 3/8/19

# Heaven-Life

The Joy of the Spring shall be yours in full measure. Revel in the earth's joy. Do not you think that Nature is weary, too, of her long months of travail? There will come back a wonderful joy, if you share in her joy now.

Nature is the embodied Spirit of My Thoughts of beauty for this world. Treat her as such - as truly My servant and messenger, as any saint who has ever lived. To realize this will bring to you both new life-joy. Share her joys and travails, and great blessings will be yours.

This is all-important, because it is not only believing certain things about Me that helps and heals, but knowing Me, sensing My Presence in a flower, My message in its beauty and perfume.

You can truly live a life not of earth - a heaven-life here and now. Joy - Joy – Joy

# My Utmost for His Highest – 3/9/19

# Turning Back or Walking with Jesus?

Do you also want to go away? —[John 6:67](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=John+6%3A67)

What a penetrating question! Our Lord’s words often hit home for us when He speaks in the simplest way. In spite of the fact that we know who Jesus is, He asks, “Do you also want to go away?” We must continually maintain an adventurous attitude toward Him, despite any potential personal risk.

“From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more” ([John 6:66](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+6:66)). They turned back from walking with Jesus; not into sin, but away from Him. Many people today are pouring their lives out and working for Jesus Christ, but are not really walking with Him. One thing God constantly requires of us is a oneness with Jesus Christ. After being set apart through sanctification, we should discipline our lives spiritually to maintain this intimate oneness. When God gives you a clear determination of His will for you, all your striving to maintain that relationship by some particular method is completely unnecessary. All that is required is to live a natural life of absolute dependence on Jesus Christ. Never try to live your life with God in any other way than His way. And His way means absolute devotion to Him. Showing no concern for the uncertainties that lie ahead is the secret of walking with Jesus.

Peter saw in Jesus only someone who could minister salvation to him and to the world. But our Lord wants us to be fellow laborers with Him.

In [John 6:70](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+6:70) Jesus lovingly reminded Peter that he was chosen to go with Him. And each of us must answer this question for ourselves and no one else: “Do you also want to go away?”

**Wisdom From Oswald Chambers**

God engineers circumstances to see what we will do. Will we be the children of our Father in heaven, or will we go back again to the meaner, common-sense attitude? Will we stake all and stand true to Him? “Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.” The crown of life means I shall see that my Lord has got the victory after all, even in me.  The Highest Good—The Pilgrim’s Song Book, 530 L

# CCEL – 3/9/19

The living God giveth us richly all things to enjoy.—[I TIM. 6:17.](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iTim.6.html" \l "iTim.6.17)

Beware that thou forget not the Lord thy God, in not keeping his commandments, and his judgments, and his statutes, which I command thee this day: lest when thou hast eaten and art full, and hast built goodly houses, and dwelt therein; . . . then thine heart be lifted up, and thou forget the Lord thy God: . . . for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth.

Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain. It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows: for so he giveth his beloved sleep.—They got not the land in possession by their own sword, neither did their own arm save them: but thy right hand, and thine arm, and the light of thy countenance, because thou hadst a favour unto them—There be many that say, Who will shew us any good? Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us.

[Deut. 8:11,12](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Deut.8.html" \l "Deut.8.11),[14](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Deut.8.html" \l "Deut.8.14),[18](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Deut.8.html" \l "Deut.8.18).[Psa. 127:1,2](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.127.html" \l "Ps.127.1). -[Psa. 44:3](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.44.html" \l "Ps.44.3). -[Psa. 4:6](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.4.html" \l "Ps.4.6).

“Yea, he is altogether lovely.” [Song of Solomon 5:16](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Song.5.html" \l "Song.5.16)

The superlative beauty of Jesus is all-attracting; it is not so much to be admired as to be loved. He is more than pleasant and fair, he is lovely. Surely the people of God can fully justify the use of this golden word, for he is the object of their warmest love, a love founded on the intrinsic excellence of his person, the complete perfection of his charms. Look, O disciples of Jesus, to your Master’s lips, and say, “Are they not most sweet?” Do not his words cause your hearts to burn within you as he talks with you by the way? Ye worshippers of Immanuel, look up to his head of much fine gold, and tell me, are not his thoughts precious unto you? Is not your adoration sweetened with affection as ye humbly bow before that countenance which is as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars? Is there not a charm in his every feature, and is not his whole person fragrant with such a savour of his good ointments, that therefore the virgins love him? Is there one member of his glorious body which is not attractive?—one portion of his person which is not a fresh lodestone to our souls?—one office which is not a strong cord to bind your heart? Our love is not as a seal set upon his heart of love alone; it is fastened upon his arm of power also; nor is there a single part of him upon which it does not fix itself. We anoint his whole person with the sweet spikenard of our fervent love. His whole life we would imitate; his whole character we would transcribe. In all other beings we see some lack, in him there is all perfection. The best even of his favoured saints have had blots upon their garments and wrinkles upon their brows; he is nothing but loveliness. All earthly suns have their spots: the fair world itself hath its wilderness; we cannot love the whole of the most lovely thing; but Christ Jesus is gold without alloy-light without darkness—glory without cloud—“Yea, he is altogether lovely.”

# Word Live – 3/9/19

# A new heart

## **Prepare**

God is faithful. Think of ways that you experience his faithfulness to you today.



## **Bible passage: Ezekiel 11:14–25**

14 The word of the LORD came to me: 15 "Son of man, your brothers—your brothers who are your blood relatives and the whole house of Israel—are those of whom the people of Jerusalem have said, 'They are far away from the LORD; this land was given to us as our possession.'

##### **Promised Return of Israel**

16 "Therefore say: 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Although I sent them far away among the nations and scattered them among the countries, yet for a little while I have been a sanctuary for them in the countries where they have gone.'

17 "Therefore say: 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: I will gather you from the nations and bring you back from the countries where you have been scattered, and I will give you back the land of Israel again.'

18 "They will return to it and remove all its vile images and detestable idols. 19 I will give them an undivided heart and put a new spirit in them; I will remove from them their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh. 20 Then they will follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. They will be my people, and I will be their God. 21 But as for those whose hearts are devoted to their vile images and detestable idols, I will bring down on their own heads what they have done, declares the Sovereign LORD."

22 Then the cherubim, with the wheels beside them, spread their wings, and the glory of the God of Israel was above them. 23 The glory of the LORD went up from within the city and stopped above the mountain east of it. 24 The Spirit lifted me up and brought me to the exiles in Babylonia in the vision given by the Spirit of God.   
      Then the vision I had seen went up from me, 25 and I told the exiles everything the LORD had shown me.

## **Explore**

**There is hope**

Amidst the vision of God’s terrible departure from the Temple in Jerusalem, there is hope. The old covenant from Mount Sinai lies in fragments. The Temple is desecrated. The city where God made his name to dwell is being left by him. His people are not in the Promised Land but in exile.

**A new covenant**

But there is hope because there is God. The older covenant, the one he made with Abraham, is not forgotten. ‘I will be your God and you will be my people’ still stands. He will yet have a people who are his, who reflect his glory to the nations, who worship him in spirit and in truth. There will be a new covenant. He will give a new heart, not as dead cold as stone towards him but beating with life.

**Undivided hearts**

At the Last Supper, Jesus said, ‘This is the new covenant in my blood’. We look into these amazing verses today and see God with us, not in a building but among his people. There’s no need for a temple – we are his temple. There’s no need for an earthly city – we become the city where he dwells. Obedience flows out from undivided hearts as he puts a new spirit within us.

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

## **Respond**

Praise God for his wonderful faithfulness. His steadfast love never ceases. Praise him for Jesus in whom all God’s promises are sealed with ‘Yes and Amen’. Praise him for the hope he gives you.

## **Deeper Bible study**

The book of Ezekiel is full of contrasts. After a long dark vision of destruction we now read about a promise of hope and far-reaching restoration; breath-taking images of God’s glory contrast with the small-minded stubborn disobedience of his people – an example of the latter being that those left in Jerusalem believed that, because they were on foreign soil, the exiles in Babylon had been forsaken by God (vs 14,15). As far as those who remained in the holy city were concerned, they were the righteous ones (irrespective of their behaviour) and the rightful recipients of God’s favour.1 Conveniently, this viewpoint also legitimised their opportunistic profiteering of the exiles’ property and land.

Ezekiel saw things differently, from God’s perspective. There follows a wonderful picture of hope and promise for the future, which is filled out in more detail in chapters 34, 36 and 37. Far from being the outcasts, the exiles had become the true Israel. They will be kept safe – they had lost the physical and spiritual sanctuary of Jerusalem but would be provided sanctuary by God himself. The destruction of the city would be complete and the leading citizens judged for their wanton disobedience. ‘But it was not God’s intention, as Ezekiel’s outbursts had feared, to annihilate the remnant of his people.’2

There was hope for Israel, although she would still have a long way to go before coming to the place of repentance where restoration could happen. A promise is given of being gathered, of belonging and of a meaningful relationship with God – a promise that echoes down through the centuries. Today this same God woos us, inviting us to a fresh place of belonging with him. He calls us away from our busyness, preoccupations and independence of him. How will you respond?

1 Taylor, 1969, p111

2 Wright, 2001, p124

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

## **The way home**

<https://www.wordlive.org/uploads/wordlight/resources/W031210R1.mp3>

Feeling distant from God? Listen to this audio meditation as Penny Boshoff explores how the Jewish exiles in Babylon returned to God, and encourages us to do the same.

# Today in the Word – 3/9/19

# Averting Wrath, Avoiding Evil

**Read:** [**2 Chronicles 12**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Chronicles+12)

### **Shishak Attacks Jerusalem**

12 After Rehoboam’s position as king was established and he had become strong, he and all Israel[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Chronicles+12#fen-NIV-11439a)] with him abandoned the law of the Lord. 2Because they had been unfaithful to the Lord, Shishak king of Egypt attacked Jerusalem in the fifth year of King Rehoboam. 3With twelve hundred chariots and sixty thousand horsemen and the innumerable troops of Libyans, Sukkites and Cushites[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Chronicles+12#fen-NIV-11441b)] that came with him from Egypt, 4he captured the fortified cities of Judah and came as far as Jerusalem.

5Then the prophet Shemaiah came to Rehoboam and to the leaders of Judah who had assembled in Jerusalem for fear of Shishak, and he said to them, “This is what the Lord says, ‘You have abandoned me; therefore, I now abandon you to Shishak.’”

6The leaders of Israel and the king humbled themselves and said, “The Lord is just.”

7When the Lord saw that they humbled themselves, this word of the Lord came to Shemaiah: “Since they have humbled themselves, I will not destroy them but will soon give them deliverance. My wrath will not be poured out on Jerusalem through Shishak. 8They will, however, become subject to him, so that they may learn the difference between serving me and serving the kings of other lands.”

9When Shishak king of Egypt attacked Jerusalem, he carried off the treasures of the temple of the Lord and the treasures of the royal palace. He took everything, including the gold shields Solomon had made. 10So King Rehoboam made bronze shields to replace them and assigned these to the commanders of the guard on duty at the entrance to the royal palace. 11Whenever the king went to the Lord’s temple, the guards went with him, bearing the shields, and afterward they returned them to the guardroom.

12Because Rehoboam humbled himself, the Lord’s anger turned from him, and he was not totally destroyed. Indeed, there was some good in Judah.

13King Rehoboam established himself firmly in Jerusalem and continued as king. He was forty-one years old when he became king, and he reigned seventeen years in Jerusalem, the city the Lord had chosen out of all the tribes of Israel in which to put his Name. His mother’s name was Naamah; she was an Ammonite. 14He did evil because he had not set his heart on seeking the Lord.

15As for the events of Rehoboam’s reign, from beginning to end, are they not written in the records of Shemaiah the prophet and of Iddo the seer that deal with genealogies? There was continual warfare between Rehoboam and Jeroboam. 16Rehoboam rested with his ancestors and was buried in the City of David. And Abijah his son succeeded him as king.

#### **Footnotes:**

1. [2 Chronicles 12:1](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Chronicles+12#en-NIV-11439) That is, Judah, as frequently in 2 Chronicles
2. [2 Chronicles 12:3](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Chronicles+12#en-NIV-11441) That is, people from the upper Nile region

Mike Hodge spent years raising and training lions at the Marakele Predator Center in South Africa. Without warning, he was attacked last May by a lion named Shamba that he had bottle-fed as a cub. Shamba dragged Hodge into the bush, but miraculously he survived with a few broken bones and lacerations. The attack was a sobering reminder that even trained big cats are still natural predators and not domesticated pets.

After Rehoboam’s position as king was established and he had become strong, he and all Israel with him abandoned the law of the Lord. 2 Chronicles 12:1

Scripture says that Satan is like a roaring lion that seeks to devour us (1 Peter 5:8). When all seems to be going well—our family life is stable, our ministry is successful, we are enjoying peace and prosperity—we can let down our vigilance against temptation. We loosen our dependency on Christ. Before long, we have been mauled.

Rehoboam had led Judah to be strong and his rule was established (v. 1). And then Rehoboam abandoned the law of the Lord. As commentator Matthew Henry notes, “As long as [Rehoboam] thought his throne tottered he kept to his duty, that he might make God his friend; but, when he found it stood pretty firmly, he thought he had no more occasion for religion; he was safe enough without it.”

When the word of judgment came from the prophet, the king and his princes humbled themselves (vv. 5–8). The full wrath of God was averted as their repentance invited the mercy of God. Yet even after learning that obedience to God’s rule is better than judgment, Rehoboam persisted in evil. He appeared to think that God was a convenient resource for rescue but not sovereign over all life who requires obedience. The final verdict on Rehoboam’s reign was that, unlike his grandfather David, “he had not set his heart on seeking the Lord” (v. 14).

### **Apply the Word**

 “Be alert and of sober mind” in the face of temptation (1 Peter 5:8). “Watch and pray” to avoid falling prey to temptation (Matt. 26:41). And “God is faithful: he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear” (1 Cor. 10:13). Choose one of these verses to memorize as a way to build your fortifications against temptation.

### **Pray with Us**

Our students will be grateful for your prayers during their spring break, spanning the next two weeks. As students leave campus for home, ministry trips, and social activities, please ask God for their safety, times of refreshment, and good health.

## BY Eric C. Redmond

# Our Daily Bread – 3/9/19

# Welcoming Strangers

**Read:** [**Deuteronomy 10:12-19**](https://www.odb.org/2019/03/09/welcoming-strangers/)

### **Fear the Lord**

12And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God ask of you but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in obedience to him, to love him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, 13and to observe the Lord’s commands and decrees that I am giving you today for your own good?

14To the Lord your God belong the heavens, even the highest heavens, the earth and everything in it. 15Yet the Lord set his affection on your ancestors and loved them, and he chose you, their descendants, above all the nations—as it is today. 16Circumcise your hearts, therefore, and do not be stiff-necked any longer. 17For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality and accepts no bribes. 18He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the foreigner residing among you, giving them food and clothing. 19And you are to love those who are foreigners, for you yourselves were foreigners in Egypt.

You are to love those who are foreigners, for you yourselves were foreigners in Egypt. [Deuteronomy 10:19](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Deuteronomy+10%3A19)

When my friends lived in Moldova, one of the poorest countries in Europe, they were overwhelmed by the warm welcome they received there, especially from other Christians. Once they took some clothes and provisions to a couple from their church who were very poor, yet who were fostering several children. The couple treated my friends like honored guests, giving them sweet tea and, despite their protests, something to eat. As my friends left with gifts of watermelons and other fruits and vegetables, they marveled at the hospitality they experienced.

These believers embody the welcome that God commanded His people, the Israelites, to exhibit. He instructed them “to walk in obedience to him, to love him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul” (Deuteronomy 10:12). How could the Israelites live this out? The answer comes a few verses later: “You are to love those who are foreigners, for you yourselves were foreigners in Egypt” (v. 19). By welcoming strangers, they would be serving and honoring God; and in showing them love and care, they would demonstrate their trust in Him.

Our circumstances might differ from the Moldovans or the Israelites, but we too can live out our love for God through our welcome to others. Whether through opening our homes or smiling a greeting to those we meet, we can extend God’s care and hospitality in a lonely, hurting world.

By [Amy Boucher Pye](https://odb.org/author/amyboucherpye/)

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

When you receive the gift of hospitality, how does that affect you? When you think about welcoming someone, does a specific person come to mind?

#### **Insight**

The book of Deuteronomy, the fifth book in the Pentateuch, is attributed to Moses. This book is a series of three sermons (chs. 1–4; 5–26; 27–34) given to the Israelites shortly before Moses’s death and the conquest of the land under Joshua’s leadership. Among the themes in Deuteronomy is the call to obedience, as we see in Deuteronomy 10:12–19. God wants His people to love and obey Him (v. 12), and one way they can do this is to treat others (including foreigners) with kindness. Why? Because God Himself does so and because they too were once foreigners (vv. 18–19). We see this theme throughout the Pentateuch (Exodus 22:21; Leviticus 19:34; Deuteronomy 23:7). Like the Israelites, all God’s people are to follow His loving example. After all, before God adopted us as His sons and daughters, we were all foreigners (Ephesians 2:12–19).

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

# God Calling – 3/9/19

# Nothing Is Small

Nothing is small to God. In His sight a sparrow is of greater value than a palace, one kindly word of more importance than a statesman's speech.

It is the Life in all that has value, and the quality of the life that determines the value. I came to give Eternal Life.

"And they had a few small fishes: and he blessed…they took up  of the broken meat that was left seven baskets. And they that had eaten were about four thousand." - Mark 8:7-9

# My Utmost for His Highest – 3/10/19

# Being an Example of His Message

Preach the word! —[2 Timothy 4:2](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=2+Timothy+4%3A2)

We are not saved only to be instruments for God, but to be His sons and daughters. He does not turn us into spiritual agents but into spiritual messengers, and the message must be a part of us. The Son of God was His own message— “The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life” ([John 6:63](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+6:63)). As His disciples, our lives must be a holy example of the reality of our message. Even the natural heart of the unsaved will serve if called upon to do so, but it takes a heart broken by conviction of sin, baptized by the Holy Spirit, and crushed into submission to God’s purpose to make a person’s life a holy example of God’s message.

There is a difference between giving a testimony and preaching. A preacher is someone who has received the call of God and is determined to use all his energy to proclaim God’s truth. God takes us beyond our own aspirations and ideas for our lives, and molds and shapes us for His purpose, just as He worked in the disciples’ lives after Pentecost. The purpose of Pentecost was not to teach the disciples something, but to make them the incarnation of what they preached so that they would literally become God’s message in the flesh. “…you shall be witnesses to Me…” ([Acts 1:8](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts+1:8)).

Allow God to have complete liberty in your life when you speak. Before God’s message can liberate other people, His liberation must first be real in you. Gather your material carefully, and then allow God to “set your words on fire” for His glory.

**Wisdom From Oswald Chambers**

When a man’s heart is right with God the mysterious utterances of the Bible are spirit and life to him. Spiritual truth is discernible only to a pure heart, not to a keen intellect. It is not a question of profundity of intellect, but of purity of heart. Bringing Sons Unto Glory, 231 L

# CCEL – 3/10/19

The Lord will provide.—[GEN. 22:14.](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Gen.22.html" \l "Gen.22.14)

God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering.

Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear.—There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob.

Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the Lord his God.—Behold, the eye of the Lord is upon them that fear him, upon them that hope in his mercy; to deliver their soul from death.

My God shall supply all your need, according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.—He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.—The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusteth in him, and I am helped: therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth: and with my song will I praise him.

[Gen. 22:8](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Gen.22.html" \l "Gen.22.8).[Isa. 59:1](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Isa.59.html" \l "Isa.59.1). -[Rom. 11:26](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Rom.11.html" \l "Rom.11.26).[Psa. 146:5](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.146.html" \l "Ps.146.5). -[Psa. 33:18,19](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.33.html" \l "Ps.33.18).[Phi. 4:19](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Phil.4.html" \l "Phil.4.19). -[Heb. 13:5,6](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Heb.13.html" \l "Heb.13.5). -[Psa. 28:7](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.28.html" \l "Ps.28.7).

“In my prosperity I said I shall never be moved.” [Psalm 30:6](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.30.html" \l "Ps.30.6)

“Moab settled on his lees, he hath not been emptied from vessel to vessel.” Give a man wealth; let his ships bring home continually rich freights; let the winds and waves appear to be his servants to bear his vessels across the bosom of the mighty deep; let his lands yield abundantly: let the weather be propitious to his crops; let uninterrupted success attend him; let him stand among men as a successful merchant; let him enjoy continued health; allow him with braced nerve and brilliant eye to march through the world, and live happily; give him the buoyant spirit; let him have the song perpetually on his lips; let his eye be ever sparkling with joy—and the natural consequence of such an easy state to any man, let him be the best Christian who ever breathed, will be presumption; even David said, “I shall never be moved;” and we are not better than David, nor half so good. Brother, beware of the smooth places of the way; if you are treading them, or if the way be rough, thank God for it. If God should always rock us in the cradle of prosperity; if we were always dandled on the knees of fortune; if we had not some stain on the alabaster pillar; if there were not a few clouds in the sky; if we had not some bitter drops in the wine of this life, we should become intoxicated with pleasure, we should dream “we stand;” and stand we should, but it would be upon a pinnacle; like the man asleep upon the mast, each moment we should be in jeopardy.

We bless God, then, for our afflictions; we thank him for our changes; we extol his name for losses of property; for we feel that had he not chastened us thus, we might have become too secure. Continued worldly prosperity is a fiery trial.

“Afflictions, though they seem severe, In mercy oft are sent.”

# Word Live – 3/10/19

# Where were you, Lord?

## **Prepare**

This psalm gives us permission to ask God our hard questions. Think for a few moments of yours.



## **Bible passage: Psalm 44**

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

1 We have heard with our ears, O God;   
       our fathers have told us   
       what you did in their days,   
       in days long ago.

2 With your hand you drove out the nations   
       and planted our fathers;   
       you crushed the peoples   
       and made our fathers flourish.

3 It was not by their sword that they won the land,   
       nor did their arm bring them victory;   
       it was your right hand, your arm,   
       and the light of your face, for you loved them.

4 You are my King and my God,   
       who decrees victories for Jacob.

5 Through you we push back our enemies;   
       through your name we trample our foes.

6 I do not trust in my bow,   
       my sword does not bring me victory;

7 but you give us victory over our enemies,   
       you put our adversaries to shame.

8 In God we make our boast all day long,   
       and we will praise your name forever.   
       Selah

9 But now you have rejected and humbled us;   
       you no longer go out with our armies.

10 You made us retreat before the enemy,   
       and our adversaries have plundered us.

11 You gave us up to be devoured like sheep   
       and have scattered us among the nations.

12 You sold your people for a pittance,   
       gaining nothing from their sale.

13 You have made us a reproach to our neighbors,   
       the scorn and derision of those around us.

14 You have made us a byword among the nations;   
       the peoples shake their heads at us.

15 My disgrace is before me all day long,   
       and my face is covered with shame

16 at the taunts of those who reproach and revile me,   
       because of the enemy, who is bent on revenge.

17 All this happened to us,   
       though we had not forgotten you   
       or been false to your covenant.

18 Our hearts had not turned back;   
       our feet had not strayed from your path.

19 But you crushed us and made us a haunt for jackals   
       and covered us over with deep darkness.

20 If we had forgotten the name of our God   
       or spread out our hands to a foreign god,

21 would not God have discovered it,   
       since he knows the secrets of the heart?

22 Yet for your sake we face death all day long;   
       we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.

23 Awake, O Lord! Why do you sleep?   
       Rouse yourself! Do not reject us forever.

24 Why do you hide your face   
       and forget our misery and oppression?

25 We are brought down to the dust;   
       our bodies cling to the ground.

26 Rise up and help us;   
       redeem us because of your unfailing love.

## **Explore**

**Being real**

It’s an insecure Christianity that feels it must be polite with the Almighty. It’s a healthy and secure relationship that allows this psalm to be so real.

There is no false piety here, rushing to an acceptable ‘answer’ as an alternative to facing and feeling the mess. Before responses can ever help, the raw reality has to be expressed. ‘Lord, we trusted you on good evidence that you provided. Now we’re staring at death all day long. This is the pits.’ (If that resonates, stop reading now. Speak it out to God.)

**Inseparable**

There is a response from God, in [Romans 8:31–39](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+8%3A31%E2%80%9339&version=NIV), where verse 22 is quoted. It’s not a rebuke for complaining: God won’t slap you down. Nor is it a dazzlingly clever ‘explanation’, for life is not an exercise in apologetics. God’s response is that the really vital thing – that you are inseparable from his forever-love – is unaltered.

Feeling like a lamb led to the slaughter, at work, in your family or (you’d be surprised at how common this is) in your church? Facing death all day long? Jesus has conquered death for you. The very worst that people can do can’t separate you from his love.

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

## **Respond**

If it feels like God hasn’t shown up, tell him exactly how that feels. It’s safe. His vast love for you means he’s not offended. He knows anyway; but it’s a sign of trust that you can tell him.

## **Deeper Bible study**

This is the third consecutive psalm of lament. It focuses on the nation’s mourning following unexpected defeat in battle and its devastating consequences. At the psalm’s heart is bewilderment and distress, the feeling of being inexplicably abandoned by God. The people’s experience is described as a place of ‘deep darkness’ (v 19), of hopelessness and despair, the words meaning the absence of all that was associated with fullness of life and the metaphor ‘light’.

The psalmist recalls the nation’s history, rich with stories of God’s love driving his direct intervention in establishing Israel’s welfare (vs 1–8). The secret of their past success had been their reliance upon God, which they had also sought to do in the present with disastrous results (vs 4–16). Consequently, their faith was under enormous pressure. What were they to make of their experience (vs 17,21)? All they could do was plead with God to stir himself to help them, because, despite everything, his covenant love would never fail. Their prayer has been the experience of countless Christians since then.

Israel was going through what John of the Cross, a sixteenth-century Spanish Carmelite monk, described as the ‘dark night of the soul’, where faith is hung onto by the fingernails because God seems very absent and life feels not worth living (see [2 Cor 1:3–11; Rom 8:35–39](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Cor+1%3A3%E2%80%9311%3B+Rom+8%3A35%E2%80%9339&version=NIV)). Terrible things happen, personal circumstances can drag us down, or we may battle with chronic sickness or depression – and the heavens can seem deaf to our plight. The psalmist isn’t afraid to face these desperate circumstances and his confusion about why God permits them, but, possibly with gritted teeth, he consciously recalls God’s past faithfulness and asserts God’s covenant love as a present truth.

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

## **Get up, God!**

[https://www.wordlive.org/uploads/wordlight/resources/W210609R1 Get up God.mp3](https://www.wordlive.org/uploads/wordlight/resources/W210609R1%20Get%20up%20God.mp3)

Sometimes when we feel we need God to move powerfully in a situation, he seems worryingly quiet. Is that your experience? It was certainly the experience of this psalmist.   
  
If you find yourself in difficult circumstance it’s important to remember the steadfastness of God’s love for you. Just because you are suffering at this time does not mean that he has abandoned you. His purposes in our lives may have eternal consequences that can only be fulfilled by our passing temporarily through troubles.   
  
We must hang on to the promise of everlasting joy as we endure trials that will seem very short-term when we look back from the perspective of infinity. Listen to this reading of the psalm from The Message version.

# Today in the Word – 3/10/19

# Victory: Covenant and Obedience

**Read:** [**2 Chronicles 13:1–18**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Chronicles+13%3a1%e2%80%9318)

### **Abijah King of Judah**

13 In the eighteenth year of the reign of Jeroboam, Abijah became king of Judah, 2and he reigned in Jerusalem three years. His mother’s name was Maakah,[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Chronicles+13%3a1%e2%80%9318" \l "fen-NIV-11456a" \o "See footnote a)] a daughter[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Chronicles+13%3a1%e2%80%9318#fen-NIV-11456b)] of Uriel of Gibeah.

There was war between Abijah and Jeroboam. 3Abijah went into battle with an army of four hundred thousand able fighting men, and Jeroboam drew up a battle line against him with eight hundred thousand able troops.

4Abijah stood on Mount Zemaraim, in the hill country of Ephraim, and said, “Jeroboam and all Israel, listen to me! 5Don’t you know that the Lord, the God of Israel, has given the kingship of Israel to David and his descendants forever by a covenant of salt? 6Yet Jeroboam son of Nebat, an official of Solomon son of David, rebelled against his master. 7Some worthless scoundrels gathered around him and opposed Rehoboam son of Solomon when he was young and indecisive and not strong enough to resist them.

8“And now you plan to resist the kingdom of the Lord, which is in the hands of David’s descendants. You are indeed a vast army and have with you the golden calves that Jeroboam made to be your gods. 9But didn’t you drive out the priests of the Lord, the sons of Aaron, and the Levites, and make priests of your own as the peoples of other lands do? Whoever comes to consecrate himself with a young bull and seven rams may become a priest of what are not gods.

10“As for us, the Lord is our God, and we have not forsaken him. The priests who serve the Lord are sons of Aaron, and the Levites assist them. 11Every morning and evening they present burnt offerings and fragrant incense to the Lord. They set out the bread on the ceremonially clean table and light the lamps on the gold lampstand every evening. We are observing the requirements of the Lord our God. But you have forsaken him. 12God is with us; he is our leader. His priests with their trumpets will sound the battle cry against you. People of Israel, do not fight against the Lord, the God of your ancestors, for you will not succeed.”

13Now Jeroboam had sent troops around to the rear, so that while he was in front of Judah the ambush was behind them. 14Judah turned and saw that they were being attacked at both front and rear. Then they cried out to the Lord. The priests blew their trumpets 15and the men of Judah raised the battle cry. At the sound of their battle cry, God routed Jeroboam and all Israel before Abijah and Judah. 16The Israelites fled before Judah, and God delivered them into their hands. 17Abijah and his troops inflicted heavy losses on them, so that there were five hundred thousand casualties among Israel’s able men. 18The Israelites were subdued on that occasion, and the people of Judah were victorious because they relied on the Lord, the God of their ancestors.

#### **Footnotes:**

1. [2 Chronicles 13:2](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Chronicles+13%3a1%e2%80%9318#en-NIV-11456) Most Septuagint manuscripts and Syriac (see also 11:20 and 1 Kings 15:2); Hebrew Micaiah
2. [2 Chronicles 13:2](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Chronicles+13%3a1%e2%80%9318#en-NIV-11456) Or granddaughter

Few people expected the Philadelphia Eagles to win Super Bowl LII. The returning champion New England Patriots were five-time Super Bowl winners and a modern dynasty under perennial Pro Bowl quarterback Tom Brady. The two teams led the league with the same regular season record, but the Eagles lost their quarterback to injury just weeks before the Super Bowl. The underdog prevailed, however. The Eagles attributed their victory to hard work, stellar coaching, and a refusal to give up.

As for us, the Lord is our God, and we have not forsaken him. 2 Chronicles 13:10

Even fewer people might have favored Abijah, the new king of Judah, to defeat Jeroboam and his troops. Jeroboam had already ruled Israel for 18 years at this point (v. 1). Moreover, Abijah’s army was half the size of Jeroboam’s.

But Abijah led the army of Judah to a decisive victory over a trained leader with twice the military resources. Here’s why: They trusted the Lord to keep the covenants He had made with David and Moses (vv. 5, 9).  They chose to place their trust in the Lord and obey Him rather than cower before human armies who were led by an idolatrous king (vv. 10–12).

Scripture is clear about who receives credit for the victory. Abijah was brave, his warriors were obedient, and the priests were faithful. But the victory belonged to the Lord: “The Israelites were subdued on that occasion, and the people of Judah were victorious because they relied on the Lord, the God of their ancestors” (v. 18).

No challenge is greater than the abilities of the One who has called us to salvation in Christ and commissioned us to take the gospel to the nations. Through His power, we can beat all expectations and odds of reaching the lost with the gospel.

### **Apply the Word**

What tasks before you seem impossible to accomplish? Trust the Lord to give you the strength. What spiritual battle are you fighting? Rely on God’s power for the victory. Like the example of the priests and Levites in verse 11, continue to faithfully obey what God has instructed you to do and wait for His timing. He is sovereign and faithful.

### **Pray with Us**

Today, we invite you to pray for Anthony Turner, VP and dean of Student Enrollment Services, and his executive assistant, Kris Akut. Thank the Lord for their contribution to recruiting, admitting, and retaining students with a vision for ministry.

## BY Eric C. Redmond

# Our Daily Bread – 3/10/19

# The Greatest Rescue Mission

**Read:** [**Luke 19:1-10**](https://www.odb.org/2019/03/10/rescue-mission/)

### **Zacchaeus the Tax Collector**

19 Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. 2A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was wealthy. 3He wanted to see who Jesus was, but because he was short he could not see over the crowd. 4So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way.

5When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, “Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today.” 6So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly.

7All the people saw this and began to mutter, “He has gone to be the guest of a sinner.”

8But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, “Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount.”

9Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. 10For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.”

The Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost. [Luke 19:10](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+19%3A10)

On February 18, 1952, a massive storm split the SS Pendleton, a tanker ship, into two pieces about ten miles off the Massachusetts coast. More than forty sailors were trapped inside the ship’s sinking stern in the midst of fierce winds and violent waves.

When word of the disaster reached the Coast Guard station in Chatham, Massachusetts, Boatswain’s Mate First Class Bernie Webber took three men on a lifeboat to try to save the stranded crew against nearly impossible odds—and brought thirty-two of the seemingly doomed sailors to safety. Their courageous feat was deemed one of the greatest rescues in United States Coast Guard history and was the subject of the 2016 film The Finest Hours.

In Luke 19:10, Jesus declared His own rescue mission: “The Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.” The cross and the resurrection became the ultimate expression of that rescue, as Jesus took on Himself our sins and restored to the Father all who trust Him. For 2,000 years, people have embraced His offer of abundant life now and eternal life with Him. Rescued!

As followers of Jesus we have the privilege, with the Holy Spirit’s help, to join our Savior in the greatest rescue mission of all. Who in your life needs His rescuing love?

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

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

How have God’s rescuing ways affected you? What will help you effectively share His rescue plan with others?

#### **Insight**

Luke 19 brings us to the threshold of Jesus’s last week of public life (19:28–23:56). In the preceding chapters, we saw rumors spread like fire as the miracle worker from Nazareth moved through the Jordan Valley on His way to Jerusalem. When a blind man called out, “Son of David, have mercy on me!” (18:38), the noise of wonder must have increased. But when Jesus invited Himself to the house of Zacchaeus (19:1–10), a prominent Jericho tax collector, tempers flared. Jewish citizens who collected taxes for Rome were regarded as traitors. This looked suspicious.

Only later would it be known that Zacchaeus responded to Jesus’s kindness by promising to give half of his wealth to the poor and to return to those he had cheated four times what he had taken from them. Jesus was giving His nation and us a richer understanding of salvation and what it means for sinners to be saved.

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

# God Calling – 3/10/19

# Fruit of Joy

You have to hush the heart and bid all your senses be still before you can be attuned to receive Heaven's music.

Your five senses are your means of communication with the material world, the links between your real Spirit-Life and the material manifestations around you, but you must sever all connection with them, when you wish to hold Spirit-communication. They will hinder, not help.

See the good in everybody. Love the good in them. See your unworthiness compared with their worth. Love, laugh, make the world, your little world, happy.

As the ripples caused by a flung stone stir the surface of a whole pond, so your joy-making shall spread in ever-widening circles, beyond all your knowledge, all anticipation. Joy in Me. Such Joy is eternal.

Centuries after, it is still bearing Joy's precious fruit.

"These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full." - John 15:11

# My Utmost for His Highest – 3/11/19

# Obedience to the “Heavenly Vision”

I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision. —[Acts 26:19](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=Acts+26%3A19)

If we lose “the heavenly vision” God has given us, we alone are responsible— not God. We lose the vision because of our own lack of spiritual growth. If we do not apply our beliefs about God to the issues of everyday life, the vision God has given us will never be fulfilled. The only way to be obedient to “the heavenly vision” is to give our utmost for His highest— our best for His glory. This can be accomplished only when we make a determination to continually remember God’s vision. But the acid test is obedience to the vision in the details of our everyday life— sixty seconds out of every minute, and sixty minutes out of every hour, not just during times of personal prayer or public meetings.

“Though it tarries, wait for it…” ([Habakkuk 2:3](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Habakkuk+2:3)). We cannot bring the vision to fulfillment through our own efforts, but must live under its inspiration until it fulfills itself. We try to be so practical that we forget the vision. At the very beginning we saw the vision but did not wait for it. We rushed off to do our practical work, and once the vision was fulfilled we could no longer even see it. Waiting for a vision that “tarries” is the true test of our faithfulness to God. It is at the risk of our own soul’s welfare that we get caught up in practical busy-work, only to miss the fulfillment of the vision.

Watch for the storms of God. The only way God plants His saints is through the whirlwind of His storms. Will you be proven to be an empty pod with no seed inside? That will depend on whether or not you are actually living in the light of the vision you have seen. Let God send you out through His storm, and don’t go until He does. If you select your own spot to be planted, you will prove yourself to be an unproductive, empty pod. However, if you allow God to plant you, you will “bear much fruit” ([John 15:8](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+15:8)).

It is essential that we live and “walk in the light” of God’s vision for us ([1 John 1:7](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+John+1:7)).

**Wisdom From Oswald Chambers**

The truth is we have nothing to fear and nothing to overcome because He is all in all and we are more than conquerors through Him. The recognition of this truth is not flattering to the worker’s sense of heroics, but it is amazingly glorifying to the work of Christ. Approved Unto God, 4 R

# CCEL – 3/11/19

The Lord bless thee, and keep thee.—[NUM. 6:24.](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Num.6.html" \l "Num.6.24)

The blessing of the Lord, it maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow with it.—Thou, Lord, wilt bless the righteous; with favour wilt thou compass him as with a shield.

He will not suffer thy foot to be moved: he that keepeth thee will not slumber. Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep. The Lord is thy keeper: the Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand. The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil: he shall preserve thy soul. The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore.—I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day.

Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me. While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept.

The Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

[Prov. 10:22](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Prov.10.html" \l "Prov.10.22). -[Psa. 5:12](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.5.html" \l "Ps.5.12).[Psa. 121:3](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.121.html" \l "Ps.121.3),[5](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.121.html" \l "Ps.121.5),[7,8](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.121.html" \l "Ps.121.7). -[Isa. 27:3](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Isa.27.html" \l "Isa.27.3).[John 17:11,12](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.John.17.html" \l "John.17.11).[II Tim. 4:18](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iiTim.4.html" \l "iiTim.4.18).

“Sin ... exceeding sinful.” [Romans 7:13](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Rom.7.html" \l "Rom.7.13)

Beware of light thoughts of sin. At the time of conversion, the conscience is so tender, that we are afraid of the slightest sin. Young converts have a holy timidity, a godly fear lest they should offend against God. But alas! very soon the fine bloom upon these first ripe fruits is removed by the rough handling of the surrounding world: the sensitive plant of young piety turns into a willow in after life, too pliant, too easily yielding. It is sadly true, that even a Christian may grow by degrees so callous, that the sin which once startled him does not alarm him in the least. By degrees men get familiar with sin. The ear in which the cannon has been booming will not notice slight sounds. At first a little sin startles us; but soon we say, “Is it not a little one?” Then there comes another, larger, and then another, until by degrees we begin to regard sin as but a little ill; and then follows an unholy presumption: “We have not fallen into open sin. True, we tripped a little, but we stood upright in the main. We may have uttered one unholy word, but as for the most of our conversation, it has been consistent.” So we palliate sin; we throw a cloak over it; we call it by dainty names. Christian, beware how thou thinkest lightly of sin. Take heed lest thou fall by little and little. Sin, a little thing? Is it not a poison? Who knows its deadliness? Sin, a little thing? Do not the little foxes spoil the grapes? Doth not the tiny coral insect build a rock which wrecks a navy? Do not little strokes fell lofty oaks? Will not continual droppings wear away stones? Sin, a little thing? It girded the Redeemer’s head with thorns, and pierced his heart! It made him suffer anguish, bitterness, and woe. Could you weigh the least sin in the scales of eternity, you would fly from it as from a serpent, and abhor the least appearance of evil. Look upon all sin as that which crucified the Saviour, and you will see it to be “exceeding sinful.”

# Word Live – 3/11/19

# The good shepherd

## **Prepare**

What would the most wonderful governance over life feel like for you, your community, your church? Who would exercise it, and how?



## **Bible passage: Ezekiel 34:1–31**

### **The Lord Will Be Israel’s Shepherd**

34 The word of the Lord came to me: 2“Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel; prophesy and say to them: ‘This is what the Sovereign Lord says: Woe to you shepherds of Israel who only take care of yourselves! Should not shepherds take care of the flock? 3You eat the curds, clothe yourselves with the wool and slaughter the choice animals, but you do not take care of the flock. 4You have not strengthened the weak or healed the sick or bound up the injured. You have not brought back the strays or searched for the lost. You have ruled them harshly and brutally. 5So they were scattered because there was no shepherd, and when they were scattered they became food for all the wild animals. 6My sheep wandered over all the mountains and on every high hill. They were scattered over the whole earth, and no one searched or looked for them.

7“‘Therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the Lord: 8As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign Lord, because my flock lacks a shepherd and so has been plundered and has become food for all the wild animals, and because my shepherds did not search for my flock but cared for themselves rather than for my flock, 9therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the Lord: 10This is what the Sovereign Lord says: I am against the shepherds and will hold them accountable for my flock. I will remove them from tending the flock so that the shepherds can no longer feed themselves. I will rescue my flock from their mouths, and it will no longer be food for them.

11“‘For this is what the Sovereign Lord says: I myself will search for my sheep and look after them. 12As a shepherd looks after his scattered flock when he is with them, so will I look after my sheep. I will rescue them from all the places where they were scattered on a day of clouds and darkness. 13I will bring them out from the nations and gather them from the countries, and I will bring them into their own land. I will pasture them on the mountains of Israel, in the ravines and in all the settlements in the land. 14I will tend them in a good pasture, and the mountain heights of Israel will be their grazing land. There they will lie down in good grazing land, and there they will feed in a rich pasture on the mountains of Israel. 15I myself will tend my sheep and have them lie down, declares the Sovereign Lord. 16I will search for the lost and bring back the strays. I will bind up the injured and strengthen the weak, but the sleek and the strong I will destroy. I will shepherd the flock with justice.

17“‘As for you, my flock, this is what the Sovereign Lord says: I will judge between one sheep and another, and between rams and goats. 18Is it not enough for you to feed on the good pasture? Must you also trample the rest of your pasture with your feet? Is it not enough for you to drink clear water? Must you also muddy the rest with your feet? 19Must my flock feed on what you have trampled and drink what you have muddied with your feet?

20“‘Therefore this is what the Sovereign Lord says to them: See, I myself will judge between the fat sheep and the lean sheep. 21Because you shove with flank and shoulder, butting all the weak sheep with your horns until you have driven them away, 22I will save my flock, and they will no longer be plundered. I will judge between one sheep and another. 23I will place over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he will tend them; he will tend them and be their shepherd. 24I the Lord will be their God, and my servant David will be prince among them. I the Lord have spoken.

25“‘I will make a covenant of peace with them and rid the land of savage beasts so that they may live in the wilderness and sleep in the forests in safety. 26I will make them and the places surrounding my hill a blessing. I will send down showers in season; there will be showers of blessing. 27The trees will yield their fruit and the ground will yield its crops; the people will be secure in their land. They will know that I am the Lord, when I break the bars of their yoke and rescue them from the hands of those who enslaved them. 28They will no longer be plundered by the nations, nor will wild animals devour them. They will live in safety, and no one will make them afraid. 29I will provide for them a land renowned for its crops, and they will no longer be victims of famine in the land or bear the scorn of the nations. 30Then they will know that I, the Lord their God, am with them and that they, the Israelites, are my people, declares the Sovereign Lord. 31You are my sheep, the sheep of my pasture, and I am your God, declares the Sovereign Lord.’”

## **Explore**

**Glorious echoes**

This chapter resounds with countless, glorious echoes of God’s previous words, and is itself echoed in so many yet to be spoken beyond Ezekiel’s day. ‘Shepherds with sheep’ is used as a frequent image for the king and his people in the Old Testament and on into the New.

**Restoration**

Israel’s kings had not been like God their Great King. The people had not been safe under their rule, led in God’s righteous paths, but left wandering and vulnerable, scattered among enemies. Restoration of his remnant in the land would lead to restoration of the exercise of true kingship – by God directly: ‘I myself,’ he declares. And he will gather sheep from many nations into his one flock. When Jesus said ‘I am the good shepherd’ in [John 10:11](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+10%3A11&version=NIV), he echoed this passage. Hallelujah!

**Kind kingship**

Your shepherd-King, Jesus, came to fulfil these promises in your life as well as globally. As one of his flock, you have a biblical mandate to take these wonderful promises personally. The inspirational picture of his kind kingship is captured by this one phrase in verse 11, deep-flowing with grace and hope, realistic in its estimate of our human need: ‘I will look after you.’

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

## **Respond**

‘Lord, help me to live the whole of my life under your liberating, kindly rule. I so deeply want to see those around me flourish; and I want to flourish too, Lord. For your glorious name’s sake, Amen.’

## **Deeper Bible study**

God’s voice sounds out like a trumpet. This is no mild rebuke or exasperated response on his part to the wilful abuse of his people by the leaders of Israel. Nor is this further prophecy of Ezekiel merely an analysis of the problems. It resounds, instead, with emphatic statements of what God himself will do. This is underlined by the large number of ‘I will’ actions in this chapter.

It’s not unusual in the Old Testament or in other ancient Near Eastern writings for rulers to be described as shepherds (eg [Isa 44:28; Jer 25:34–38; Mic 5:4,5](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isa+44%3A28%3B+Jer+25%3A34%E2%80%9338%3B+Mic+5%3A4%2C5&version=NIV)). The term denotes caring initiative and selfless leadership, focused on the well-being of the ‘flock’ (v 2). In words bearing close resemblance to those of Jeremiah ([Jer 23:1–6](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Jer+23%3A1%E2%80%936&version=NIV" \t "_blank)), an older contemporary, Ezekiel vividly describes how the monarchy has been corrupted by power, failing to treat the people as being, first and foremost, God’s own. He accuses them of ruthless self-interest and exploitation of those for whom they were supposed to be concerned, including the most vulnerable among them. Not only that, they had not kept the people together: they had been ‘scattered’. This word, one of Ezekiel’s favourites to describe the dispersion of the exiles, is used here three times (vs 5,6), emphasising the seriousness of the leadership failure.

What is striking is the way in which God rolls up his sleeves and himself gets stuck in as the shepherd of his flock. His commitment is to finding the strays, rescuing the lost, feeding and looking after the whole flock and giving special attention to those that are struggling or sick. The tenderness and love that runs through these verses is remarkable, as is the foreshadowing of the parable of the lost sheep and of Jesus as the Good Shepherd ([Luke 15:1–7; John 10:1–18](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+15%3A1%E2%80%937%3B+John+10%3A1%E2%80%9318&version=NIV)). Thankfully, he is God and our Shepherd too.

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

## **Background: Shepherd imagery in the Old Testament**

**David the shepherd**Everyone knows [Psalm 23](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm%2023&version=NIV), with its image of the Lord as David’s shepherd. The background to this was doubtless David’s own experience as a shepherd as a young lad ([1 Samuel 16:11; 17:34–36](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Samuel%2016:11;%2017:34-36&version=NIV)).   
  
But it is also important to know that in the Ancient Near East the shepherd was a well-known image for the king. We see this in [Psalm 78:70–72](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm%2078:70-72&version=NIV):   
  
‘He chose David his servant   
and took him from the sheep pens;   
from tending the sheep he brought him   
to be shepherd of his people Jacob,   
of Israel his inheritance.   
And David shepherded them with integrity of heart;   
with skilful hands he led them.’   
  
Compare also [2 Samuel 5:2](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2%20Samuel%205:2&version=NIV). The difference with Ancient Near Eastern contexts is that in the Old Testament the title ‘shepherd’ is never used of a deified leader.  
  
**God as shepherd**

In several contexts, the saving deeds of God at the Exodus are depicted as his leading his flock to safe pastures ([Exodus 15:13,17](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Exodus%2015:13,17&version=NIV)). As a powerful shepherd he drives out other nations to make room for his flock ([Psalm 78:52–55](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm%2078:52-55&version=NIV)).   
  
He is a thoughtful shepherd who does not overdrive the sheep with young lambs, and who indeed carries the lambs in his bosom ([Psalm 28:9](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm%2028:9&version=NIV); [Isaiah 40:11](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isaiah%2040:11&version=NIV)). Jeremiah states that God will ‘watch over his flock like a shepherd’ ([31:10](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=psalm%2031:10&version=NIV)) as he gathers the scattered people and restores them to the land.   
  
**Rulers as shepherds**

[Ezekiel 34](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ezekiel%2034&version=NIV) is the main chapter in the Hebrew Scriptures devoted to the image of the shepherd. God denounces the unjust leaders of Israel, and declares that he will make an end of their rule.    
  
Instead he will raise up a shepherd who is identified with David who will care for the people’s needs (vs 23,24). This is central to the new ‘covenant of peace’ (v 25) God will make with the sheep of his pasture (v 31).   
  
Andrew Clark

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## **Review and reassess**

<https://www.wordlive.org/uploads/wordlight/resources/W061210R1.mp3>

How well are you doing? In today’s audio meditation, Penny Boshoff encourages us to undergo a work review with God.

# Today in the Word – 3/11/19

# Bringing Rest to the Land

**Read:** [**2 Chronicles 14**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Chronicles+14)

14 [[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Chronicles+14#fen-NIV-11477a)]And Abijah rested with his ancestors and was buried in the City of David. Asa his son succeeded him as king, and in his days the country was at peace for ten years.

### **Asa King of Judah**

2Asa did what was good and right in the eyes of the Lord his God. 3He removed the foreign altars and the high places, smashed the sacred stones and cut down the Asherah poles.[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Chronicles+14" \l "fen-NIV-11479b" \o "See footnote b)] 4He commanded Judah to seek the Lord, the God of their ancestors, and to obey his laws and commands. 5He removed the high places and incense altars in every town in Judah, and the kingdom was at peace under him. 6He built up the fortified cities of Judah, since the land was at peace. No one was at war with him during those years, for the Lord gave him rest.

7“Let us build up these towns,” he said to Judah, “and put walls around them, with towers, gates and bars. The land is still ours, because we have sought the Lord our God; we sought him and he has given us rest on every side.” So they built and prospered.

8Asa had an army of three hundred thousand men from Judah, equipped with large shields and with spears, and two hundred and eighty thousand from Benjamin, armed with small shields and with bows. All these were brave fighting men.

9Zerah the Cushite marched out against them with an army of thousands upon thousands and three hundred chariots, and came as far as Mareshah. 10Asa went out to meet him, and they took up battle positions in the Valley of Zephathah near Mareshah.

11Then Asa called to the Lord his God and said, “Lord, there is no one like you to help the powerless against the mighty. Help us, Lord our God, for we rely on you, and in your name we have come against this vast army. Lord, you are our God; do not let mere mortals prevail against you.”

12The Lord struck down the Cushites before Asa and Judah. The Cushites fled, 13and Asa and his army pursued them as far as Gerar. Such a great number of Cushites fell that they could not recover; they were crushed before the Lord and his forces. The men of Judah carried off a large amount of plunder. 14They destroyed all the villages around Gerar, for the terror of the Lord had fallen on them. They looted all these villages, since there was much plunder there. 15They also attacked the camps of the herders and carried off droves of sheep and goats and camels. Then they returned to Jerusalem.

#### Footnotes:

1. [2 Chronicles 14:1](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Chronicles+14#en-NIV-11477) In Hebrew texts 14:1 is numbered 13:23, and 14:2-15 is numbered 14:1-14.
2. [2 Chronicles 14:3](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Chronicles+14#en-NIV-11479) That is, wooden symbols of the goddess Asherah; here and elsewhere in 2 Chronicles

The United Nations’ Secretary-General’s Report on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace (2018) outlines an effort by member states to maintain peace and secure freedom from conflict. They intend “to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war” with “activities aimed at preventing the outbreak, escalation, continuation and recurrence of conflict,” and by “emphasizing that sustaining peace is a shared task and responsibility that needs to be fulfilled by [a country’s] Government and all [of its other] national stakeholders.” Yet every report of war that we continue to hear reminds us that sustained, long-term peace is difficult to secure.

Lord, there is no one like you to help the powerless against the mighty. 2 Chronicles 14:11

Under King Asa’s rule, Judah experienced ten years of peace. During that time, Asa and Judah were able to fortify their cities and build up a fighting force of 580,000 mighty warriors (v. 8).

But Asa did not solely rely on a large military and prosperous cities to sustain the peace the Lord had provided. He was concerned about spiritual peace as well. He removed every bit of idolatry from Judah and charged Judah to follow the Lord’s commandments (vv. 3–5). When Judah did fall under attack, Asa cried to God for aid in war (v. 11). He acknowledged his dependence on God alone to maintain the peace and prosperity of Judah.

In a similar manner, sustaining peace with each other is not simply a matter of mechanics and pragmatics. When we see potential for conflict, we must rely on the Lord completely. We can take prudent action and pursue godliness, but these do not make us immune to turmoil. In those times, we also remember that ultimately it is God who fights our battles and gives us peace.

### **Apply the Word**

Asa’s prayer in verse 11 is a wonderful piece of Scripture to use in our own prayer times: “Lord, there is no one like you to help the powerless against the mighty. Help us, Lord our God, for we rely on you, and in your name we have come against this vast army. Lord, you are our God; do not let mere mortals prevail against you.”

### **Pray with Us**

Spring break begins today at Moody Theological Seminary in Chicago. Pray for the MTS professors—Andrew Pflederer, Davis Woodall, Deborah Gordon, John Trent, and Ryan Cook—asking God to give them time of rest and rejoicing with Him.

## BY Eric C. Redmond

# Our Daily Bread – 3/11/19

# Swept Away

**Read:** [**Isaiah 43:25**](https://www.odb.org/2019/03/11/swept-away/)

25“I, even I, am he who blots out  
    your transgressions, for my own sake,  
    and remembers your sins no more.

# Read: Isaiah 44:21-23

21“Remember these things, Jacob,  
    for you, Israel, are my servant.  
I have made you, you are my servant;  
    Israel, I will not forget you.  
22I have swept away your offenses like a cloud,  
    your sins like the morning mist.  
Return to me,  
    for I have redeemed you.”

23Sing for joy, you heavens, for the Lord has done this;  
    shout aloud, you earth beneath.  
Burst into song, you mountains,  
    you forests and all your trees,  
for the Lord has redeemed Jacob,  
    he displays his glory in Israel.

I have swept away your offenses like a cloud, your sins like the morning mist. [Isaiah 44:22](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isaiah+44%3A22)

When he invented the pencil eraser, British engineer Edward Nairne was reaching instead for a piece of bread. Crusts of bread were used then, in 1770, to erase marks on paper. Picking up a piece of latex rubber by mistake, Nairne found it erased his error, leaving rubberized “crumbs” easily swept away by hand.

With us too the worst errors of our lives can be swept away. It’s the Lord—the Bread of Life—who cleans them with His own life, promising never to remember our sins. “I, even I, am he who blots out your transgressions, for my own sake,” says Isaiah 43:25, “and remembers your sins no more.”

This can seem to be a remarkable fix—and not deserved. For many, it’s hard to believe our past sins can be swept away by God “like the morning mist.” Does God, who knows everything, forget them so easily?

That’s exactly what God does when we accept Jesus as our Savior. Choosing to forgive our sins and to “[remember them] no more,” our heavenly Father frees us to move forward. No longer dragged down by past wrongs, we’re free of debris and cleaned up to serve, now and forever.

Yes, consequences may remain. But God sweeps sin itself away, inviting us to return to Him for our clean new life. There’s no better way to be swept away.

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

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

What things from your past do you have trouble forgetting? Ask God to help you take Him at His word.

#### **Insight**

The theme of forgiveness found in Isaiah 44:21–23 beautifully describes the lavish grace and mercy of the God who forgives. Here God speaks to His wayward people and calls them to three important responses. First, they are challenged to remember that they have been made by Him and called to relationship with Him—for He will never forget them (v. 21). In spite of their spiritual drifting, Yahweh has extravagantly poured out forgiveness on them. Their response to this forgiveness? They are to return to Him (v. 22), accepting His gift of redemption. Finally, they are to witness the way that all of creation celebrates the mercy and love of their forgiving God (v. 23). Just as God’s glory is revealed in His creation, He also has chosen to reveal it in His forgiven, restored, and redeemed covenant people.

For more on God’s forgiveness, read The Forgiveness of God at [discoveryseries.org/q0602.](https://discoveryseries.org/q0602.)

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

# God Calling – 3/11/19

# Seek Beauty

Draw Beauty from every flower and Joy from the song of the birds, and the color of the flowers.

Drink in the beauty of air and color.  I am with you. When I wanted to express a beautiful thought, I made a lovely flower. I have told you. Reflect.

When I want to express to man what I am - what my Father is - I strive to make a very beautiful character.

Think of yourselves as My expression of attributes, as a lovely flower is My expression of thought, and you will strive in all, in Spiritual beauty, in Thought - power, in Health, in clothing, to be as fit an expression for Me as you can.

Absorb Beauty. As soon as the beauty of a flower or a tree is impressed upon your soul it leaves an image there which reflects through your actions. Remember that no thought of sin and suffering, of the approaching scorn and Crucifixion, ever prevented My seeing the beauty of the flowers.

Look for beauty and joy in the world around. Look at a flower until its beauty becomes part of your very soul. It will be given back to the world again by you in the form of a smile or a loving word or a kind thought or a prayer.

Listen to a bird. Take the song as a message from My Father. Let it sink into your soul. That too will be given back to the world in ways I have said. Laugh more, laugh often. Love more. I am with you. I am your Lord.

"The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handiwork." - Psalm 19:1