# My Utmost for His Highest – 5/4/21

# Vicarious Intercession



…having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus… —[Hebrews 10:19](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=Hebrews+10%3A19)

Beware of thinking that intercession means bringing our own personal sympathies and concerns into the presence of God, and then demanding that He do whatever we ask. Our ability to approach God is due entirely to the vicarious, or substitutionary, identification of our Lord with sin. We have “boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus.”

Spiritual stubbornness is the most effective hindrance to intercession, because it is based on a sympathetic “understanding” of things we see in ourselves and others that we think needs no atonement. We have the idea that there are certain good and virtuous things in each of us that do not need to be based on the atonement by the Cross of Christ. Just the sluggishness and lack of interest produced by this kind of thinking makes us unable to intercede. We do not identify ourselves with God’s interests and concerns for others, and we get irritated with Him. Yet we are always ready with our own ideas, and our intercession becomes only the glorification of our own natural sympathies. We have to realize that the identification of Jesus with sin means a radical change of all of our sympathies and interests. Vicarious intercession means that we deliberately substitute God’s interests in others for our natural sympathy with them.

Am I stubborn or substituted? Am I spoiled or complete in my relationship to God? Am I irritable or spiritual? Am I determined to have my own way or determined to be identified with Him?

**Wisdom From Oswald Chambers**

The sympathy which is reverent with what it cannot understand is worth its weight in gold.  Baffled to Fight Better, 69 L

# CCEL – 5/4/21

Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither is his ear heavy, that it cannot hear.—[ISA. 59:1.](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Isa.59.html" \l "Isa.59.1)

In the day when I cried thou answeredst me, and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul.—While I was speaking in prayer, even the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, touched me about the time of the evening oblation.

Hide not thy face far from me; put not thy servant away in anger: thou hast been my help, leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation.—Be not thou far from me, O Lord, O my strength, haste thee to help me.

Ah Lord God! behold, thou hast made the heaven and the earth by thy great power and stretched out arm, and there is nothing too hard for thee.—Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us.—Shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him though he bear long with them? I tell you that he will avenge them speedily.

[Psa. 138:3](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.138.html" \l "Ps.138.3)-[Dan. 9:21](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Dan.9.html" \l "Dan.9.21).[Psa. 27:9](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.27.html" \l "Ps.27.9). -[Psa. 22:19](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.22.html" \l "Ps.22.19).[Jer. 32:17](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Jer.32.html" \l "Jer.32.17). -[II Cor. 1:10](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iiCor.1.html" \l "iiCor.1.10). -[Luke 18:7,8](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Luke.18.html" \l "Luke.18.7).

“Shall a man make gods unto himself, and they are no gods.” **[Jeremiah 16:20](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Jer.16.html" \l "Jer.16.20)**

One great besetting sin of ancient Israel was idolatry, and the spiritual Israel are vexed with a tendency to the same folly. Remphan’s star shines no longer, and the women weep no more for Tammuz, but Mammon still intrudes his golden calf, and the shrines of pride are not forsaken. Self in various forms struggles to subdue the chosen ones under its dominion, and the flesh sets up its altars wherever it can find space for them. Favourite children are often the cause of much sin in believers; the Lord is grieved when he sees us doting upon them above measure; they will live to be as great a curse to us as Absalom was to David, or they will be taken from us to leave our homes desolate. If Christians desire to grow thorns to stuff their sleepless pillows, let them dote on their dear ones.

It is truly said that “they are no gods,” for the objects of our foolish love are very doubtful blessings, the solace which they yield us now is dangerous, and the help which they can give us in the hour of trouble is little indeed. Why, then, are we so bewitched with vanities? We pity the poor heathen who adore a god of stone, and yet worship a god of gold. Where is the vast superiority between a god of flesh and one of wood? The principle, the sin, the folly is the same in either case, only that in ours the crime is more aggravated because we have more light, and sin in the face of it. The heathen bows to a false deity, but the true God he has never known; we commit two evils, inasmuch as we forsake the living God and turn unto idols. May the Lord purge us all from this grievous iniquity!

“The dearest idol I have known,

Whate'er that idol be;

Help me to tear it from thy throne,

And worship only thee.”

# Word Live – 5/4/21

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

# Scripture Union – 5/4/21

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

# Today in the Word – 5/4/21

# Pleasing God Alone

**Read:** [**1 Thessalonians 2:1–7**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Thessalonians+2%3a1%e2%80%937)

### **Paul’s Ministry in Thessalonica**

2 You know, brothers and sisters, that our visit to you was not without results. 2We had previously suffered and been treated outrageously in Philippi, as you know, but with the help of our God we dared to tell you his gospel in the face of strong opposition. 3For the appeal we make does not spring from error or impure motives, nor are we trying to trick you. 4On the contrary, we speak as those approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel. We are not trying to please people but God, who tests our hearts. 5You know we never used flattery, nor did we put on a mask to cover up greed—God is our witness. 6We were not looking for praise from people, not from you or anyone else, even though as apostles of Christ we could have asserted our authority. 7Instead, we were like young children[[a](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Thessalonians+2%3A1%E2%80%937+&version=NIV#fen-NIV-29578a)] among you.

Just as a nursing mother cares for her children,

#### **Footnotes:**

1. [1 Thessalonians 2:7](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Thessalonians+2%3A1%E2%80%937+&version=NIV#en-NIV-29578) Some manuscripts were gentle

Whom are you trying to please: people or God? In their commentary on 1 Thessalonians, John F. Walvoord and Mark Hitchcock wrote: “The most basic test of any service rendered for God is the question, ‘Is it pleasing to Him?’ Our little houses of self-praise and self-gratification tumble in a moment when we stop to consider, ‘What does God think about it?’ . . . Paul was energized and propelled by a burning desire to please God. Certainly, this is a standard to challenge every thoughtful Christian.”

We are not trying to please people but God.1 Thessalonians 2:4

When he preached the gospel in Thessalonica, Paul was not trying to win human approval or admiration: “You know how we lived among you for your sake” (1 Thess. 1:5). He’d arrived after an unjust imprisonment and miraculous liberation in Philippi, and despite opposition in Thessalonica as well he’d continued faithfully proclaiming the gospel (2:1–2; Acts 16:16–17:9).

The paramount motivation of Paul and his team was to please God alone (1 Thess. 2:4). Based on this governing purpose, they didn’t preach falsehoods with impure motives nor did they use deceptive rhetoric or techniques (v. 3). They were not greedy for monetary gain; they did not flatter their listeners or seek to inflate their own egos (vv. 5–6). Then as now, the integrity of the preacher goes hand-in-glove with the message!

Instead, Paul and his fellow missionaries viewed their calling as from the Lord. They’d been entrusted with the gospel. None of this was about them! Ultimately their work and motivations would be approved by God (v. 4). Rather than exercise Paul’s legitimate apostolic authority to ask for financial support (v. 6), they “were like young children among you,” that is, they took a low social position in obedience to Christ (v. 7). God Himself could witness to the veracity of these claims (v. 5).

**Apply the Word**

It can be easy to fall into the trap of seeking to please people. What would the Lord find if He examined your heart in this area today?

### **Pray with Us**

Lord Jesus, we often live as if other people have the power to condemn or approve us when only you have that authority. Forgive us! Plant in us a single purpose—to live in a manner pleasing to you.

## BY Brad Baurain

# Our Daily Bread – 5/4/21

# Fueled by Fire

 **Read:** [**Daniel 3:13–18**](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Dan%203.13%E2%80%9318)

13Furious with rage, Nebuchadnezzar summoned Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. So these men were brought before the king, 14and Nebuchadnezzar said to them, “Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the image of gold I have set up? 15Now when you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipe and all kinds of music, if you are ready to fall down and worship the image I made, very good. But if you do not worship it, you will be thrown immediately into a blazing furnace. Then what god will be able to rescue you from my hand?”

16Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to him, “King Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. 17If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to deliver us from it, and he will deliver us[[a](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Daniel+3%3A13%E2%80%9318%2C+25%E2%80%9327&version=NIV#fen-NIV-21825a)] from Your Majesty’s hand. 18But even if he does not, we want you to know, Your Majesty, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up.”

#### **Footnotes:**

1. [Daniel 3:17](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Daniel+3%3A13%E2%80%9318%2C+25%E2%80%9327&version=NIV#en-NIV-21825) Or If the God we serve is able to deliver us, then he will deliver us from the blazing furnace and

**Read:** [**Daniel 3:**](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Dan%203.13%E2%80%9318)[**25–27**](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Daniel%203.25%E2%80%9327)

25He said, “Look! I see four men walking around in the fire, unbound and unharmed, and the fourth looks like a son of the gods.”

26Nebuchadnezzar then approached the opening of the blazing furnace and shouted, “Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out! Come here!”

So Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego came out of the fire, 27and the satraps, prefects, governors and royal advisers crowded around them. They saw that the fire had not harmed their bodies, nor was a hair of their heads singed; their robes were not scorched, and there was no smell of fire on them.

If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to deliver us . . . . But even if he does not . . . we will not serve your gods. [Daniel 3:17–18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Dan%203.17%E2%80%9318)

When two firefighters, weary and sooty, stopped at a restaurant for breakfast, the waitress recognized the men from the news and realized they’d spent the night battling a warehouse fire. To show her appreciation, she wrote a note on their bill, “Your breakfast is on me today. Thank you . . . for serving others and for running into the places everyone else runs away from. . . . Fueled by fire and driven by courage, what an example you are.”

In the Old Testament, we see an example of courage in the actions of three young men: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego ([Daniel 3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Dan%203)). Instead of obeying the mandate to bow down to a statue of the Babylonian king, these young men courageously showed their love for God through their refusal. Their penalty was to be thrown into a blazing furnace. Yet the men didn’t back down: “If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to deliver us from it, and he will deliver us from Your Majesty’s hand. But even if he does not . . . we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold” (vv. 17–18).

God did rescue them and even walked with them in the fire (vv. 25–27). In our fiery trials and troubles today, we too have the assurance that God is with us. He is able.

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

#### **Reflect & Pray**

When have you felt God’s presence during a difficult trial? What gives you confidence to press on when challenges come?

Almighty God, thank You for being with me in the fire and for comforting me with Your presence.

#### **Insight**

Whether the image Nebuchadnezzar set up ([Daniel 3:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Dan%203.14)) was of the king himself or a representative of a deity, anyone who dared to disobey his order would be punished. His pride was clear from his arrogant claim: “If you do not worship [the image], you will be thrown immediately into a blazing furnace. Then what god will be able to rescue you from my hand?” (v. 15). However, he didn’t take into consideration that the God of gods would fight on behalf of His people (see also [2 Kings 18:32–33](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2%20Kings%2018.32%E2%80%9333)).

# God Calling – 5/4/21

# Share With Me

Delight in My Love. Try to live in the rapture of the Kingdom.

Claim big things. Claim great things. Claim Joy and Peace and freedom from care. Joy in Me.

I am your Lord, your Creator. Remember too that I am the same yesterday, today, and forever. Your Creator, when My thought about the world called it into being - your Creator as much, too, today, when I can, by loving thought for you, call into being all you need on the material plane.

Joy in Me, trust in Me, share all life with Me, see Me in everything, rejoice in me. Share all with Me as a child shares its pains and cuts and griefs and newfound treasures of joys and little work with its Mother.

And give Me the joy of sharing all with you.

There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear; because fear hath torment.  1 John 4:18

# My Utmost for His Highest – 5/5/21

# Judgment and the Love of God



The time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God… —[1 Peter 4:17](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=1+Peter+4%3A17)

The Christian servant must never forget that salvation is God’s idea, not man’s; therefore, it has an unfathomable depth. Salvation is the great thought of God, not an experience. Experience is simply the door through which salvation comes into the conscious level of our life so that we are aware of what has taken place on a much deeper level. Never preach the experience— preach the great thought of God behind the experience. When we preach, we are not simply proclaiming how people can be saved from hell and be made moral and pure; we are conveying good news about God.

In the teachings of Jesus Christ the element of judgment is always brought out— it is the sign of the love of God. Never sympathize with someone who finds it difficult to get to God; God is not to blame. It is not for us to figure out the reason for the difficulty, but only to present the truth of God so that the Spirit of God will reveal what is wrong. The greatest test of the quality of our preaching is whether or not it brings everyone to judgment. When the truth is preached, the Spirit of God brings each person face to face with God Himself.

If Jesus ever commanded us to do something that He was unable to equip us to accomplish, He would be a liar. And if we make our own inability a stumbling block or an excuse not to be obedient, it means that we are telling God that there is something which He has not yet taken into account. Every element of our own self-reliance must be put to death by the power of God. The moment we recognize our complete weakness and our dependence upon Him will be the very moment that the Spirit of God will exhibit His power.

**Wisdom From Oswald Chambers**

Defenders of the faith are inclined to be bitter until they learn to walk in the light of the Lord. When you have learned to walk in the light of the Lord, bitterness and contention are impossible.  
Biblical Psychology

# CCEL – 5/5/21

Take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.—[MATT. 6:31,32.](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Matt.6.html" \l "Matt.6.31)

O fear the Lord, ye his saints: for there is no want to them that fear him. The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger: but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing.—No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly. O Lord of hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in thee.

I would have you without carefulness.—Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.

Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. The very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows.—Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith?—Have faith in God.

[Psa. 34:9,10](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.34.html" \l "Ps.34.9). -[Psa. 84:11,12](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.84.html" \l "Ps.84.11).[I Cor. 7:32](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iCor.7.html" \l "iCor.7.32). -[Phi. 4:6](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Phil.4.html" \l "Phil.4.6).[Matt. 10:29-31](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Matt.10.html" \l "Matt.10.29). -[Mark 4:40](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Mark.4.html" \l "Mark.4.40). -[Mark 11:22](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Mark.11.html" \l "Mark.11.22)

“I will be their God, and they shall be my people.” [2 Corinthians 6:16](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iiCor.6.html" \l "iiCor.6.16)

What a sweet title: “My people!” What a cheering revelation: “Their God!” How much of meaning is couched in those two words, “My people!” Here is speciality. The whole world is God's; the heaven, even the heaven of heavens is the Lord's, and he reigneth among the children of men; but of those whom he hath chosen, whom he hath purchased to himself, he saith what he saith not of others—“My people.” In this word there is the idea of proprietorship. In a special manner the “Lord’s portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance.” All the nations upon earth are his; the whole world is in his power; yet are his people, his chosen, more especially his possession; for he has done more for them than others; he has bought them with his blood; he has brought them nigh to himself; he has set his great heart upon them; he has loved them with an everlasting love, a love which many waters cannot quench, and which the revolutions of time shall never suffice in the least degree to diminish. Dear friends, can you, by faith, see yourselves in that number? Can you look up to heaven and say, “My Lord and my God: mine by that sweet relationship which entitles me to call thee Father; mine by that hallowed fellowship which I delight to hold with thee when thou art pleased to manifest thyself unto me as thou dost not unto the world?” Canst thou read the Book of Inspiration, and find there the indentures of thy salvation? Canst thou read thy title writ in precious blood? Canst thou, by humble faith, lay hold of Jesus’ garments, and say, “My Christ”? If thou canst, then God saith of thee, and of others like thee, “My people;” for, if God be your God, and Christ your Christ, the Lord has a special, peculiar favour to you; you are the object of his choice, accepted in his beloved Son.

# Word Live – 5/5/21

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

# Scripture Union – 5/5/21

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# Today in the Word – 5/5/21

# Caring for Others

**Read:** [**1 Thessalonians 2:7–12**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Thessalonians+2%3a7%e2%80%9312)

7Instead, we were like young children[[a](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Thessalonians+2%3A7%E2%80%9312&version=NIV#fen-NIV-29578a)] among you.

Just as a nursing mother cares for her children, 8so we cared for you. Because we loved you so much, we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well. 9Surely you remember, brothers and sisters, our toil and hardship; we worked night and day in order not to be a burden to anyone while we preached the gospel of God to you. 10You are witnesses, and so is God, of how holy, righteous and blameless we were among you who believed. 11For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, 12encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory.

#### **Footnotes:**

1. [1 Thessalonians 2:7](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Thessalonians+2%3A7%E2%80%9312&version=NIV#en-NIV-29578) Some manuscripts were gentle

Any new parent will agree that caring for a newborn baby is an act of selfless love. The newborn baby relies completely on parents to meet its needs for food, physical closeness, and safety, while the little one mostly eats, sleeps, cries, and fills diaper after diaper. This can be exhausting, but parents persist because they love the new life that has been entrusted to their care.

We were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well.1 Thessalonians 2:8

This is how Paul pictured the initial relationship between his team and the Thessalonians. Though in terms of social status the missionaries had been like “young children,” spiritually they were the parents of the fledgling church. Like a mother caring for her newborn with gentle love, they’d fed and protected the baby believers in their early days of faith (vv. 7–8). Like a father teaching and encouraging his children toward right character and behavior, they’d instructed and exhorted the Thessalonians as they took their first steps on the pilgrimage to Christlikeness (vv. 11–12).

Paul and his team had no selfish ulterior motives. They’d shared the gospel and their lives in an authentic manner (v. 8). They’d worked hard so they wouldn’t be a burden to the young church and so their motives couldn’t be criticized or misunderstood (v. 9). They certainly didn’t want to be confused with traveling secular orators, who in that day exercised their skills for praise and profit. And they didn’t do these things grudgingly, but with delight! As we also read yesterday (v. 5), God Himself could bear witness to their blameless conduct—and if they were honest, so could the Thessalonians (v. 10).

The essential goal for both the missionaries and the Thessalonians was “to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory” (v. 12; see also 1 Thess. 1:4).

**Apply the Word**

Salvation is more than a moment or a “sinner’s prayer.” It’s a process or a journey of growing toward Christlike perfection (James 1:2–4). Thank God for His faithfulness in this!

### **Pray with Us**

Father, we thank you for your continual work in our hearts and minds; our growth is entirely due to your kindness. We thank you for the men and women who have served you by investing in our spiritual growth.

## BY Brad Baurain

# Our Daily Bread – 5/5/21

# It’s Who You Know

 **Read: Philippians 3:7–11**

7But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. 8What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ 9and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in[[a](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Philippians+3%3A7%E2%80%9311&version=NIV#fen-NIV-29431a)] Christ—the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith. 10I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, 11and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead.

#### **Footnotes:**

1. [Philippians 3:9](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Philippians+3%3A7%E2%80%9311&version=NIV#en-NIV-29431) Or through the faithfulness of

I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. [Philippians 3:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil%203.8)

In early 2019, Charlie VanderMeer died at the age of eighty-four. For many decades, he was known to thousands and thousands of people as Uncle Charlie, the host of the national radio broadcast Children’s Bible Hour. The day before Uncle Charlie slipped into eternity, he told a good friend, “It’s not what you know, it’s who you know. Of course, I’m talking about Jesus Christ.”

Even as he faced the end of his life, Uncle Charlie couldn’t help but talk about Jesus and the necessity for people to receive Him as their Savior.

The apostle Paul considered knowing Jesus his most important task: “I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ and be found in him” ([Philippians 3:8–9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil%203.8%E2%80%939)). And how do we know Jesus? “If you declare with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved” ([Romans 10:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom%2010.9)).

We may know facts about Jesus, we may know all about the church, and we may even be familiar with the Bible. But the only way to know Jesus as Savior is to accept His free gift of salvation. He’s the Who we need to know.

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

#### **Reflect & Pray**

In your relationship with Jesus, how have you experienced that it’s Who you know, not what? What has Christ’s forgiveness meant to you?

Father God, I pray for all who’ve yet to come to know Jesus by believing in Him and accepting His sacrifice on their behalf. And if I’m one who hasn’t received Jesus as my Savior, may I confess with my mouth “Jesus is Lord” today.

To learn more about who Jesus is, visit [ChristianUniversity.org/NT109-03](https://ChristianUniversity.org/NT109-03).

#### **Insight**

In Paul’s letter to believers in Christ in Philippi, he uses his own story to show the difference between two ways of thinking about spiritual righteousness—rightness in one’s own eyes and rightness in the eyes of God. Paul had advanced in a religious culture of proud ritual compliance. Only after meeting the resurrected Christ on the road to Damascus did he learn about rightness of the heart. Only in the blessedness of brokenness did he see his need for mercy. Religious self-righteousness had fueled the violence he inflicted on believers in Jesus whom he believed posed a danger to the faith and peace of Israel. Only after hearing Christ say, “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?” ([Acts 9:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts%209.4)) did he discover a rightness of heart that led him to suffer for others as Jesus had suffered for him.

# God Calling – 5/5/21

# Let Me Choose

My loved ones. Yes, with the heart, not the head, men should think of Me, and then worship would be instinctive.

Breathe in My very Spirit in pure air and fervent desire.

Keep the eye of your spirit ever upon Me, the window of your soul open towards Me. You have ever to know that all things are yours - that what is lovely I delight to give you.

Empty your mind of all that limits. Whatever is beautiful you can have. Leave more and more the choice to Me. You will have no regrets.

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.  Psalm 123:2

# My Utmost for His Highest – 5/6/21

# Liberty and the Standards of Jesus



Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free… —[Galatians 5:1](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=Galatians+5%3A1)

A spiritually-minded person will never come to you with the demand— “Believe this and that”; a spiritually-minded person will demand that you align your life with the standards of Jesus. We are not asked to believe the Bible, but to believe the One whom the Bible reveals (see [John 5:39-40](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+5:39-40)). We are called to present liberty for the conscience of others, not to bring them liberty for their thoughts and opinions. And if we ourselves are free with the liberty of Christ, others will be brought into that same liberty— the liberty that comes from realizing the absolute control and authority of Jesus Christ.

Always measure your life solely by the standards of Jesus. Submit yourself to His yoke, and His alone; and always be careful never to place a yoke on others that is not of Jesus Christ. It takes God a long time to get us to stop thinking that unless everyone sees things exactly as we do, they must be wrong. That is never God’s view. There is only one true liberty— the liberty of Jesus at work in our conscience enabling us to do what is right.

Don’t get impatient with others. Remember how God dealt with you— with patience and with gentleness. But never water down the truth of God. Let it have its way and never apologize for it. Jesus said, “Go…and make disciples…” ([Matthew 28:19](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+28:19)), not, “Make converts to your own thoughts and opinions.”

**Wisdom From Oswald Chambers**

“I have chosen you” (John 15:16). Keep that note of greatness in your creed. It is not that you have got God, but that He has got you.  My Utmost for His Highest, October 25, 837 R

# CCEL – 5/6/21

Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other.—[PSA. 85:10.](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.85.html" \l "Ps.85.10)

A just God and a Saviour.

The Lord is well pleased for his righteousness' sake; he will magnify the law, and make it honourable.

God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.—Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forebearance of God; to declare I say at this time his righteousness: that he might be just and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.—He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes, we are healed.—Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth.—To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly; his faith is counted for righteousness.

[Isa. 45:21](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Isa.45.html" \l "Isa.45.21).[Isa. 42:21](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Isa.42.html" \l "Isa.42.21).[II Cor. 5:19](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iiCor.5.html" \l "iiCor.5.19). -[Rom. 3:25,26](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Rom.3.html" \l "Rom.3.25). -[Isa. 53:5](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Isa.53.html" \l "Isa.53.5). -[Rom. 8:33](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Rom.8.html" \l "Rom.8.33). -[Rom. 4:5](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Rom.4.html" \l "Rom.4.5).

“We dwell in him.” [1 John 4:13](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iJohn.4.html" \l "iJohn.4.13)

Do you want a house for your soul? Do you ask, “What is the purchase?” It is something less than proud human nature will like to give. It is without money and without price. Ah! you would like to pay a respectable rent! You would love to do something to win Christ? Then you cannot have the house, for it is “without price.” Will you take my Master’s house on a lease for all eternity, with nothing to pay for it, nothing but the ground-rent of loving and serving him forever? Will you take Jesus and “dwell in him?” See, this house is furnished with all you want, it is filled with riches more than you will spend as long as you live. Here you can have intimate communion with Christ and feast on his love; here are tables well-stored with food for you to live on forever; in it, when weary, you can find rest with Jesus; and from it you can look out and see heaven itself. Will you have the house? Ah! if you are houseless, you will say, “I should like to have the house; but may I have it?” Yes; there is the key—the key is, “Come to Jesus.” “But,” you say, “I am too shabby for such a house.” Never mind; there are garments inside. If you feel guilty and condemned, come; and though the house is too good for you, Christ will make you good enough for the house by-and-by. He will wash you and cleanse you, and you will yet be able to sing, “We dwell in him.” Believer: thrice happy art thou to have such a dwelling-place! Greatly privileged thou art, for thou hast a “strong habitation” in which thou art ever safe. And “dwelling in him,” thou hast not only a perfect and secure house, but an everlasting one. When this world shall have melted like a dream, our house shall live, and stand more imperishable than marble, more solid than granite, self-existent as God, for it is God himself—“We dwell in him.”

# Word Live – 5/6/21

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

# Scripture Union – 5/6/21

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

# Today in the Word – 5/6/21

# Suffering for Christ

**Read:** [**1 Thessalonians 2:13–16**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Thessalonians+2%3a13%e2%80%9316)

13And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as a human word, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is indeed at work in you who believe. 14For you, brothers and sisters, became imitators of God’s churches in Judea, which are in Christ Jesus: You suffered from your own people the same things those churches suffered from the Jews 15who killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets and also drove us out. They displease God and are hostile to everyone 16in their effort to keep us from speaking to the Gentiles so that they may be saved. In this way they always heap up their sins to the limit. The wrath of God has come upon them at last.[[a](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Thessalonians+2%3A13%E2%80%9316+&version=NIV" \l "fen-NIV-29587a" \o "See footnote a)]

#### **Footnotes:**

1. [1 Thessalonians 2:16](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Thessalonians+2%3A13%E2%80%9316+&version=NIV#en-NIV-29587) Or them fully

When Paul arrived in Thessalonica, he presented the gospel first to Jews in the local synagogue, as he often did. Some believed, but others responded with hostility, stirring up mob violence and driving the apostle out of the city. When he moved on to Berea, they followed him there and did the same, although many of the “more noble” Berean Jews trusted Christ (Acts 17:1-14).

The word of God, which is indeed at work in you who believe.1 Thessalonians 2:13

This is one reason why Paul wrote specifically about persecution by the Jews in today’s reading. The Thessalonians had responded positively to the gospel, for which Paul was thankful. They’d accepted the good news in faith not as a merely human phenomenon but as the living and powerful word of God. As such, it was “indeed at work in you who believe” (v. 13; see also Heb. 4:12). As a result, the believers in Thessalonica had become a model for churches throughout the province of Macedonia (1 Thess. 1:7–8).

All this was true despite persecution (2:14–16). Just as the Judean churches endured suffering at the hands of the Jews, so also did the new Thessalonian church endure suffering at the hands of their fellow Gentiles. Paul’s Jewish enemies were likely behind this, as they’d been earlier (Acts 17:5–9, 13). They weren’t content to stop at rejecting the gospel themselves: They worked actively to block the Gentiles from even hearing it, and thus, “they always heap up their sin to the limit” (v. 16).

Even so, Paul didn’t hate his fellow Jews—far from it. Though he faced their failures and sins squarely, he loved them dearly and longed for them to be saved (Rom. 10:1–4). The Thessalonians could take comfort from the fact that their suffering wasn’t unique. Other believers had also been persecuted, and yet God would always triumph!

**Apply the Word**

The Thessalonian church looked to the Judean churches as a model to imitate (1 Thess. 2:14). In the same way, mentoring relationships between older and younger believers are key in today’s church.

### **Pray with Us**

We want to bless others as you have blessed us, Lord. Grant us, mentors, to train us in your wisdom and give us opportunities to disciple others. We ask also for humility; never let our pride inhibit your work.

## BY Brad Baurain

# Our Daily Bread – 5/6/21

# Heavy but Hopeful

### Today's Devotional **Read:** [**Psalm 88:1–13**](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps%2088.1%E2%80%9313) **[**[**a**](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+88%3A1%E2%80%9313&version=NIV#fen-NIV-15310a)**]**

#### **A song. A psalm of the Sons of Korah. For the director of music. According to mahalath leannoth.[[b](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+88%3A1%E2%80%9313&version=NIV" \l "fen-NIV-15310b" \o "See footnote b)] A maskil[**[**c**](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+88%3A1%E2%80%9313&version=NIV#fen-NIV-15310c)**] of Heman the Ezrahite.**

1Lord, you are the God who saves me;  
    day and night I cry out to you.  
2May my prayer come before you;  
    turn your ear to my cry.

3I am overwhelmed with troubles  
    and my life draws near to death.  
4I am counted among those who go down to the pit;  
    I am like one without strength.  
5I am set apart with the dead,  
    like the slain who lie in the grave,  
whom you remember no more,  
    who are cut off from your care.

6You have put me in the lowest pit,  
    in the darkest depths.  
7Your wrath lies heavily on me;  
    you have overwhelmed me with all your waves.[[d](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+88%3A1%E2%80%9313&version=NIV" \l "fen-NIV-15316d" \o "See footnote d)]  
8You have taken from me my closest friends  
    and have made me repulsive to them.  
I am confined and cannot escape;  
9    my eyes are dim with grief.

I call to you, Lord, every day;  
    I spread out my hands to you.  
10Do you show your wonders to the dead?  
    Do their spirits rise up and praise you?  
11Is your love declared in the grave,  
    your faithfulness in Destruction[[e](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+88%3A1%E2%80%9313&version=NIV#fen-NIV-15320e)]?  
12Are your wonders known in the place of darkness,  
    or your righteous deeds in the land of oblivion?

13But I cry to you for help, Lord;  
    in the morning my prayer comes before you.

#### **Footnotes:**

1. [Psalm 88:1](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+88%3A1%E2%80%9313&version=NIV#en-NIV-15310) In Hebrew texts 88:1-18 is numbered 88:2-19.
2. [Psalm 88:1](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+88%3A1%E2%80%9313&version=NIV#en-NIV-15310) Title: Possibly a tune, “The Suffering of Affliction”
3. [Psalm 88:1](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+88%3A1%E2%80%9313&version=NIV#en-NIV-15310) Title: Probably a literary or musical term
4. [Psalm 88:7](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+88%3A1%E2%80%9313&version=NIV#en-NIV-15316) The Hebrew has Selah (a word of uncertain meaning) here and at the end of verse 10.
5. [Psalm 88:11](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+88%3A1%E2%80%9313&version=NIV#en-NIV-15320) Hebrew Abaddon

Lord, you are the God who saves me. [Psalm 88:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps%2088.1)

In a Peanuts comic strip, the very enterprising character Lucy advertised “psychiatric help” for five cents. Linus found his way to her office and acknowledged his “deep feelings of depression.” When he asked her what he could do about his condition, Lucy’s quick reply was, “Snap out of it! Five cents, please.”

While such lighthearted entertainment brings a momentary smile, the sadness and gloom that can grip us when real life happens is not that easily dismissed. Feelings of hopelessness and despair are real, and sometimes professional attention is needed.

Lucy’s advice wasn’t helpful in addressing real anguish. However, the writer of [Psalm 88](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps%2088) does offer something instructive and hopeful. A truckload of trouble had arrived at his doorstep. And so, with raw honesty, he poured out his heart to God. “I am overwhelmed with troubles and my life draws near to death” (v. 3). “You have put me in the lowest pit, in the darkest depths” (v. 6). “Darkness is my closest friend” (v. 18). We hear, feel, and perhaps identify with the psalmist’s pain. Yet, that’s not all. His lament is laced with hope. “Lord, you are the God who saves me; day and night I cry out to you. May my prayer come before you; turn your ear to my cry” (vv. 1–2; see vv. 9, 13). Heavy things do come and practical steps such as counsel and medical care may be needed. But never abandon hope in God.

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

#### **Reflect & Pray**

When have you turned to God in the midst of your despair? What’s keeping you from crying out to Him now?

Father, help me to see Your open, welcome arms regardless of my situation.

#### **Insight**

The book of Psalms is the hymnbook of ancient Israel. The amazing collection of 150 psalms includes songs of lament where the writers—who are faced with difficult, painful, and confusing circumstances—pour out their hearts lyrically to God. Some believe that nearly one-third of the psalms are laments (personal or national). Songs of lament include these features, as seen in [Psalm 88](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps%2088): a description of the dilemma (vv. 3–9); the asking of questions (vv. 10–12; see [Psalm 13:1–2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps%2013.1%E2%80%932)); calling or crying out to God in the midst of unpleasant circumstances (vv. 1–2, 9, 13); and, more often than not, hope in and praise to God.

# God Calling – 5/6/21

# Sublime Audacity

The way is long and weary. It is a weary world. So many today are weary. "Come unto Me, ... and I will give you rest."

My children, who range yourselves under My flag, you must see that on it are inscribed those words "The Son of Man."

Whatever the world is feeling, I must feel, I - the son of Man. You are My followers - so the weariness of man today must be shared by you - the weary and heavy-laden must come to you, and find that rest that you found in Me.

My children, My followers must be prepared not to sit on My right hand and My left, but to drink of the cup that I drink of.

Poor world - teach it that there is only one cure for all its ills - Union with Me. Dare to suffer, dare to conquer, be filled with My sublime audacity.  Remember that. Claim the unclaimable.

Just what the world would think impossible can always be yours.  Remember, My children, sublime audacity.

And whosever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water ... verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward.  Matthew 10:42

# My Utmost for His Highest – 5/7/21

# Building For Eternity



Which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has enough to finish it… —[Luke 14:28](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=Luke+14%3A28)

Our Lord was not referring here to a cost which we have to count, but to a cost which He has already counted. The cost was those thirty years in Nazareth, those three years of popularity, scandal, and hatred, the unfathomable agony He experienced in Gethsemane, and the assault upon Him at Calvary— the central point upon which all of time and eternity turn. Jesus Christ has counted the cost. In the final analysis, people are not going to laugh at Him and say, “This man began to build and was not able to finish” ([Luke 14:30](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+14:30)).

The conditions of discipleship given to us by our Lord in verses 26, 27, and 33 mean that the men and women He is going to use in His mighty building enterprises are those in whom He has done everything. “If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple ” ([Luke 14:26](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+14:26)). This verse teaches us that the only men and women our Lord will use in His building enterprises are those who love Him personally, passionately, and with great devotion— those who have a love for Him that goes far beyond any of the closest relationships on earth. The conditions are strict, but they are glorious.

All that we build is going to be inspected by God. When God inspects us with His searching and refining fire, will He detect that we have built enterprises of our own on the foundation of Jesus? (see [1 Corinthians 3:10-15](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Corinthians+3:10-15)). We are living in a time of tremendous enterprises, a time when we are trying to work for God, and that is where the trap is. Profoundly speaking, we can never work for God. Jesus, as the Master Builder, takes us over so that He may direct and control us completely for His enterprises and His building plans; and no one has any right to demand where he will be put to work.

**Wisdom From Oswald Chambers**

Defenders of the faith are inclined to be bitter until they learn to walk in the light of the Lord. When you have learned to walk in the light of the Lord, bitterness and contention are impossible. Biblical Psychology, 199 R

# CCEL – 5/7/21

Ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled.—[MATT. 24:6.](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Matt.24.html" \l "Matt.24.6)

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof.—Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast. For, behold, the Lord cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity.—In the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities be overpast.—Your life is hid with Christ in God.

He shall not be afraid of evil tidings: his heart is fixed, trusting the Lord.

These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.

[Psa. 46:1-3](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.46.html" \l "Ps.46.1). -[Isa. 26:20,21](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Isa.26.html" \l "Isa.26.20). -[Psa. 57:1](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.57.html" \l "Ps.57.1). -[Col. 3:3](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Col.3.html" \l "Col.3.3).[Psa. 112:7](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.112.html" \l "Ps.112.7).[John 16:33](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.John.16.html#John.16.33).

“Great multitudes followed him, and he healed them all.” [Matthew 12:15](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Matt.12.html" \l "Matt.12.15)

What a mass of hideous sickness must have thrust itself under the eye of Jesus! Yet we read not that he was disgusted, but patiently waited on every case. What a singular variety of evils must have met at his feet! What sickening ulcers and putrefying sores! Yet he was ready for every new shape of the monster evil, and was victor over it in every form. Let the arrow fly from what quarter it might, he quenched its fiery power. The heat of fever, or the cold of dropsy; the lethargy of palsy, or the rage of madness; the filth of leprosy, or the darkness of ophthalmia—all knew the power of his word, and fled at his command. In every corner of the field he was triumphant over evil, and received the homage of delivered captives. He came, he saw, he conquered everywhere. It is even so this morning. Whatever my own case may be, the beloved Physician can heal me; and whatever may be the state of others whom I may remember at this moment in prayer, I may have hope in Jesus that he will be able to heal them of their sins. My child, my friend, my dearest one, I can have hope for each, for all, when I remember the healing power of my Lord; and on my own account, however severe my struggle with sins and infirmities, I may yet be of good cheer. He who on earth walked the hospitals, still dispenses his grace, and works wonders among the sons of men: let me go to him at once in right earnest.

Let me praise him, this morning, as I remember how he wrought his spiritual cures, which bring him most renown. It was by taking upon himself our sicknesses. “By his stripes we are healed.” The Church on earth is full of souls healed by our beloved Physician; and the inhabitants of heaven itself confess that “He healed them all.” Come, then, my soul, publish abroad the virtue of his grace, and let it be “to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign which shall not be cut off.”

# Word Live – 5/7/21

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# Scripture Union – 5/7/21

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# Today in the Word – 5/7/21

# Longing to See You Again

**Read:** [**1 Thessalonians 2:17–3:5**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Thessalonians+2%3a17%e2%80%933%3a5)

### **Paul’s Longing to See the Thessalonians**

17But, brothers and sisters, when we were orphaned by being separated from you for a short time (in person, not in thought), out of our intense longing we made every effort to see you. 18For we wanted to come to you—certainly I, Paul, did, again and again—but Satan blocked our way. 19For what is our hope, our joy, or the crown in which we will glory in the presence of our Lord Jesus when he comes? Is it not you? 20Indeed, you are our glory and joy.

3 So when we could stand it no longer, we thought it best to be left by ourselves in Athens. 2We sent Timothy, who is our brother and co-worker in God’s service in spreading the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you in your faith, 3so that no one would be unsettled by these trials. For you know quite well that we are destined for them. 4In fact, when we were with you, we kept telling you that we would be persecuted. And it turned out that way, as you well know. 5For this reason, when I could stand it no longer, I sent to find out about your faith. I was afraid that in some way the tempter had tempted you and that our labors might have been in vain.

Picture for a moment those first moments of a family reunion. The entire extended family is reunited— aunts, uncles, cousins, nephews, nieces, and others. They may come from around the country or even fly in from overseas. They have not seen each other in person for a very long time, so the hugs are warm and the greetings joyful. At last, they’re together again!

You are our glory and joy. 1 Thessalonians 2:20

In a similar sense, Paul had an “intense longing” to see the Thessalonians (v. 17). They were like family to him. He’d already spoken of himself as both mother and father to the young church (vv. 7–8, 11–12). Now he referred to their separation with the word “orphaned,” which in Greek can mean not only children who’ve lost their parents but also parents who’ve lost their children.

Paul felt this way because the Thessalonians represented “our hope, our joy, or the crown in which we will glory in the presence of our Lord Jesus when he comes. . . . Indeed, you are our glory and joy” (vv. 19–20). In other words, when Christ returns and asks Paul, “How did you spend your life?”—he would point straight to the Thessalonians. They would be his “crown,” a reference to a prize in athletic games such as the ancient Olympics (Phil. 3:14). They would serve as evidence that Paul had lived faithfully for the glory of God.

Paul had gone on to Berea and then to Athens, stopping eventually in Corinth (1 Thess. 3:1). Since he couldn’t come himself, he sent Timothy to Thessalonica (3:2–5). His encouraging message: Don’t be “unsettled” or discouraged by persecution. In fact, he’d told them to expect trials as a normal lot of the Christian in a hostile world. They should stand firm and not give in to temptations to abandon the hard road of faith.

**Apply the Word**

Among other consequences, the COVID-19 pandemic presented significant barriers to being together. This difficult situation reminds us to give even more thanks for God’s faithful fellowship (Deut. 31:8)!

### **Pray with Us**

In periods of isolation we draw closer to you, Father. We recognize that we need your fellowship more than anyone’s. Help us to live in awareness of your presence in our lives.

## BY Brad Baurain

# Our Daily Bread – 5/7/21

# The Right Words

 **Read:** [**Ephesians 6:10–20**](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph%206.10%E2%80%9320)

### **The Armor of God**

10Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. 11Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes. 12For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. 13Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. 14Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, 15and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. 16In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. 17Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

18And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord’s people. 19Pray also for me, that whenever I speak, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, 20for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should.

Pray for me, too. Ask God to give me the right words so I can boldly explain God’s mysterious plan. [Ephesians 6:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph%206.19)

In the past year or so, a number of authors have urged believers to take a fresh look at the “vocabulary” of our faith. One writer, for example, emphasized that even theologically rich words of faith can lose their impact when, through overfamiliarity and overuse, we lose touch with the depths of the gospel and our need for God. When that happens, he suggested, we may need to relearn the language of faith “from scratch,” letting go of our assumptions until we can see the good news for the first time.

The invitation to learn to “speak God from scratch” reminds me of Paul, who devoted his life to “[becoming] all things to all people . . . for the sake of the gospel” ([1 Corinthians 9:22–23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1%20Cor%209.22%E2%80%9323)). He never assumed he knew best how to communicate what Jesus had done. Instead, he relied on constant prayer and pleaded for fellow believers to pray for him as well—to help him find “the right words” ([Ephesians 6:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph%206.19) nlt) to share the good news.

The apostle also knew the need for each believer in Christ to remain humble and receptive each day to their need for deeper roots in His love (3:16–17). It’s only as we deepen our roots in God’s love, each day becoming more aware of our dependence on His grace, that we can begin to find the right words to share the incredible news of what He’s done for us.

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

#### **Reflect & Pray**

When have you had an experience of seeing the gospel in a new way for the first time? How can prayer keep your heart receptive to your constant need for God’s grace?

Loving God, forgive me for, far too often, taking Your grace and goodness for granted. Help me to daily grasp in new ways the depths of Your grace and love. And help me find the right words to share what You’ve done.

#### **Insight**

Writing from prison, Paul ignored his physical hardships and instead warned of the spiritual nature of the battle we wage: “Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against . . . the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms” ([Ephesians 6:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph%206.12)). The weapons for this battle are defensive (vv. 14–17), with one exception—“the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God” (v. 17). Our real battle is spiritual, and God’s Holy Spirit is absolutely essential for this struggle. Therefore, we’re to “pray in the Spirit on all occasions” (v. 18).

# God Calling – 5/7/21

# Against the Tide

The oarsman, trusting in Me, does not lean on his oars and drift with the tide, trusting to the current.

Nay, more often - once I have shown the way - it is against the tide you must direct all your effort.  And even when difficulties come, it is by your effort that they will be surmounted.  But always strength and the Joy in the doing you can have through Me.

My fishermen-disciples did not find the fishes ready on the shore in their nets.  I take man's efforts and bless that.  I need man's effort - he needs My blessing. This partnership it is that means success.

For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.  Philippians 2:13

# My Utmost for His Highest – 5/8/21

# The Faith to Persevere



Because you have kept My command to persevere… —[Revelation 3:10](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=Revelation+3%3A10)

Perseverance means more than endurance— more than simply holding on until the end. A saint’s life is in the hands of God like a bow and arrow in the hands of an archer. God is aiming at something the saint cannot see, but our Lord continues to stretch and strain, and every once in a while the saint says, “I can’t take any more.” Yet God pays no attention; He goes on stretching until His purpose is in sight, and then He lets the arrow fly. Entrust yourself to God’s hands. Is there something in your life for which you need perseverance right now? Maintain your intimate relationship with Jesus Christ through the perseverance of faith. Proclaim as Job did, “Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him” ([Job 13:15](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Job+13:15)).

Faith is not some weak and pitiful emotion, but is strong and vigorous confidence built on the fact that God is holy love. And even though you cannot see Him right now and cannot understand what He is doing, you know Him. Disaster occurs in your life when you lack the mental composure that comes from establishing yourself on the eternal truth that God is holy love. Faith is the supreme effort of your life— throwing yourself with abandon and total confidence upon God.

God ventured His all in Jesus Christ to save us, and now He wants us to venture our all with total abandoned confidence in Him. There are areas in our lives where that faith has not worked in us as yet— places still untouched by the life of God. There were none of those places in Jesus Christ’s life, and there are to be none in ours. Jesus prayed, “This is eternal life, that they may know You…” ([John 17:3](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+17:3)). The real meaning of eternal life is a life that can face anything it has to face without wavering. If we will take this view, life will become one great romance— a glorious opportunity of seeing wonderful things all the time. God is disciplining us to get us into this central place of power.

**Wisdom From Oswald Chambers**

Am I becoming more and more in love with God as a holy God, or with the conception of an amiable Being who says, “Oh well, sin doesn’t matter much”?  Disciples Indeed, 389 L

# CCEL – 5/8/21

It pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief.—[ISA. 53:10.](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Isa.53.html" \l "Isa.53.10)

Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name. Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.—Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done. And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him.

Being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.—Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again.—For I came down from heaven, not to do mine will, but the will of him that sent me.—The cup which my father hath given me, shall I not drink it?

The Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him.—My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased,—Mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth.

[John 12:27,28](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.John.12.html" \l "John.12.27). -[Luke 22:42,43](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Luke.22.html" \l "Luke.22.42).[Phi. 2:8](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Phil.2.html" \l "Phil.2.8). -[John 10:17](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.John.10.html" \l "John.10.17). -[John 6:38](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.John.6.html" \l "John.6.38). -[John 18:11](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.John.18.html" \l "John.18.11).[John 8:29](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.John.8.html" \l "John.8.29). -[Matt. 3:17](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Matt.3.html" \l "Matt.3.17). -[Isa. 42:1](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Isa.42.html" \l "Isa.42.1).

“He that was healed wist not who it was.” [John 5:13](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.John.5.html" \l "John.5.13)

Years are short to the happy and healthy; but thirty-eight years of disease must have dragged a very weary length along the life of the poor impotent man. When Jesus, therefore, healed him by a word, while he lay at the pool of Bethesda, he was delightfully sensible of a change. Even so the sinner who has for weeks and months been paralysed with despair, and has wearily sighed for salvation, is very conscious of the change when the Lord Jesus speaks the word of power, and gives joy and peace in believing. The evil removed is too great to be removed without our discerning it; the life imparted is too remarkable to be possessed and remain inoperative; and the change wrought is too marvellous not to be perceived. Yet the poor man was ignorant of the author of his cure; he knew not the sacredness of his person, the offices which he sustained, or the errand which brought him among men. Much ignorance of Jesus may remain in hearts which yet feel the power of his blood. We must not hastily condemn men for lack of knowledge; but where we can see the faith which saves the soul, we must believe that salvation has been bestowed. The Holy Spirit makes men penitents long before he makes them divines; and he who believes what he knows, shall soon know more clearly what he believes. Ignorance is, however, an evil; for this poor man was much tantalized by the Pharisees, and was quite unable to cope with them. It is good to be able to answer gainsayers; but we cannot do so if we know not the Lord Jesus clearly and with understanding. The cure of his ignorance, however, soon followed the cure of his infirmity, for he was visited by the Lord in the temple; and after that gracious manifestation, he was found testifying that “it was Jesus who had made him whole.” Lord, if thou hast saved me, show me thyself, that I may declare thee to the sons of men.

# Word Live – 5/8/21

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

# Scripture Union – 5/8/21

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

# Today in the Word – 5/8/21

# A Good Report

**Read:** [**1 Thessalonians 3:6–10**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Thessalonians+3%3a6%e2%80%9310)

### **Timothy’s Encouraging Report**

6But Timothy has just now come to us from you and has brought good news about your faith and love. He has told us that you always have pleasant memories of us and that you long to see us, just as we also long to see you. 7Therefore, brothers and sisters, in all our distress and persecution we were encouraged about you because of your faith. 8For now we really live, since you are standing firm in the Lord. 9How can we thank God enough for you in return for all the joy we have in the presence of our God because of you? 10Night and day we pray most earnestly that we may see you again and supply what is lacking in your faith.

My family, to be honest, is not always thankful. We have to work at it. One year, we wrote on slips of paper and filled a jar with things for which we were thankful. Some years, we keep a weekly gratitude journal to remind us of God’s blessings, large or small. Last year, we tried something new: we collaborated to create a Google Jamboard (a virtual bulletin board) of photographs and good memories from 2020.

Now we really live, since you are standing firm in the Lord. 1 Thessalonians 3:8

Paul wanted the Thessalonians to know how thankful he was for the good report Timothy had brought about them. As we read yesterday, he desired to visit but had been blocked by Satan from doing so (1 Thess. 2:18). Instead, Paul sent Timothy. Had they been misled? Had they been derailed? Had Paul’s ministry been in vain? Not at all! Timothy had brought good news about their faith and love (3:6). He’d reported that far from being overcome by suffering, they were persevering and growing in the Lord. Paul felt tremendously encouraged by this news (vv. 7–8)! Figuratively, it was as though part of him had died while worrying about what was happening in Thessalonica. Timothy’s good news revived him—“now we really live, since you are standing firm in the Lord.” As well as showing emotion, these words also showed that Paul was spiritually encouraged: His suffering was worth it. The ministry of the gospel was moving forward.

All this led naturally to renewed thankfulness by Paul (v. 9). He rejoiced to know for sure that the Thessalonians were doing well spiritually. He still longed to see them in person (v. 10), not only for the sake of their friendship but also for him to be able to “supply what is lacking in your faith,” that is, continue to teach and disciple them toward Christian maturity.

**Apply the Word**

We all experience both positive and negative emotions. It’s part of life, including the spiritual life. As the Psalms demonstrate, expressing our emotions to God can be a healthy part of our relationship with Him.

### **Pray with Us**

Lord, you understand the human experience because you have lived it yourself. “For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses” (Heb. 4:15). Teach us to bring our emotions to you in prayer.

## BY Brad Baurain

# Our Daily Bread – 5/8/21

# Legally His

 **Read:** [**Romans 8:1–2**](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom%208.1%E2%80%932)

### **Life Through the Spirit**

8 Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, 2because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you[[a](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+8%3A1%E2%80%932+%2C+10%E2%80%9317&version=NIV#fen-NIV-28119a)] free from the law of sin and death.

#### **Footnotes:**

1. [Romans 8:2](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+8%3A1%E2%80%932+%2C+10%E2%80%9317&version=NIV#en-NIV-28119) The Greek is singular; some manuscripts me

**Read:** [**Romans 8:**](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom%208.1%E2%80%932)[**10–17**](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Romans%208.10%E2%80%9317)

10But if Christ is in you, then even though your body is subject to death because of sin, the Spirit gives life[[a](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+8%3A1%E2%80%932+%2C+10%E2%80%9317&version=NIV#fen-NIV-28127a)] because of righteousness. 11And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of[[b](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+8%3A1%E2%80%932+%2C+10%E2%80%9317&version=NIV#fen-NIV-28128b)] his Spirit who lives in you.

12Therefore, brothers and sisters, we have an obligation—but it is not to the flesh, to live according to it. 13For if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live.

14For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. 15The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship.[[c](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+8%3A1%E2%80%932+%2C+10%E2%80%9317&version=NIV#fen-NIV-28132c)] And by him we cry, “Abba,[[d](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+8%3A1%E2%80%932+%2C+10%E2%80%9317&version=NIV#fen-NIV-28132d)] Father.” 16The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children. 17Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

#### **Footnotes:**

1. [Romans 8:10](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+8%3A1%E2%80%932+%2C+10%E2%80%9317&version=NIV#en-NIV-28127) Or you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive
2. [Romans 8:11](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+8%3A1%E2%80%932+%2C+10%E2%80%9317&version=NIV#en-NIV-28128) Some manuscripts bodies through
3. [Romans 8:15](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+8%3A1%E2%80%932+%2C+10%E2%80%9317&version=NIV#en-NIV-28132) The Greek word for adoption to sonship is a term referring to the full legal standing of an adopted male heir in Roman culture; also in verse 23.
4. [Romans 8:15](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+8%3A1%E2%80%932+%2C+10%E2%80%9317&version=NIV#en-NIV-28132) Aramaic for father

The Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. [Romans 8:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom%208.15)

Liz cried for joy when she and her husband received the birth certificate and passport for their child, making the adoption legally binding. Now Milena would always be their daughter, forever part of their family. As Liz pondered the legal process, she also thought of the “true exchange” that happens when we become part of Jesus’ family: “No longer are we held down by our birthright of sin and brokenness.” Rather, she continued, we enter into the fullness of God’s kingdom legally when we’re adopted as His children.

In the apostle Paul’s day, if a Roman family adopted a son, his legal status would change completely. Any debts from his old life would be canceled and he would gain all of the rights and privileges of his new family. Paul wanted the Roman believers in Jesus to understand that this new status applied to them too. No longer were they bound to sin and condemnation but now they lived “according to the Spirit” ([Romans 8:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom%208.4)). And those the Spirit leads are adopted as God’s children (vv. 14–15). Their legal status changed when they became citizens of heaven.

If we have received the gift of salvation, we too are God’s children, heirs of His kingdom and united with Christ. Our debts have been canceled by the gift of Jesus’ sacrifice. We no longer need to live in fear or condemnation.

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

#### **Reflect & Pray**

How does your status as a child of God affect how you live? What could you do to embrace this central part of your identity?

Father God, You created me in my mother’s womb, and You know and love me. May I never doubt how much You care for me.

#### **Insight**

Some scholars believe [Romans 8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom%208) provides the most concentrated teaching on the person and ministry of the Holy Spirit found in the Bible. We often focus on these key verses: verse 1, where we’re reminded that we’re no longer under condemnation; verse 28, which reminds us of God’s good purposes; and verses 31–39, which teach of God’s love and care for us. But woven throughout the chapter is the ministry of the Spirit (vv. 4–6, 9–11, 12–16, 23, 26–27). In fact, it could be argued that the blessings of verses 1, 28, and 31–39 are available to us by and through the ministry of the Spirit.

# God Calling – 5/8/21

# The Rest of God

I lead you. The way is clear. Go forward unafraid. I am beside you. Listen, listen, listen to My Voice. My Hand is controlling all.

Remember that I can work through you better when you are at rest. Go very slowly, very quietly from one duty to the next - taking the time to rest and pray between.

Do not be too busy. Take all in order as I say. The Rest of God is in a realm beyond all man's activities. Venture there often, and you will indeed find Peace and Joy.

All work that results from resting with God is miracle-work.  Claim the power to work miracles, both of you.

Know that you can do all things through Christ who strengthens you. Nay, more, know that you can do all things through Christ who rests you.

And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse ... and his rest shall be glorious.  Isaiah 11:10



Where there is no revelation [or prophetic vision], the people cast off restraint… —[Proverbs 29:18](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=Proverbs+29%3A18)

There is a difference between holding on to a principle and having a vision. A principle does not come from moral inspiration, but a vision does. People who are totally consumed with idealistic principles rarely do anything. A person’s own idea of God and His attributes may actually be used to justify and rationalize his deliberate neglect of his duty. Jonah tried to excuse his disobedience by saying to God, “…I know that You are a gracious and merciful God, slow to anger and abundant in loving kindness, One who relents from doing harm” ([Jonah 4:2](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Jonah+4:2)). I too may have the right idea of God and His attributes, but that may be the very reason why I do not do my duty. But wherever there is vision, there is also a life of honesty and integrity, because the vision gives me the moral incentive.

Our own idealistic principles may actually lull us into ruin. Examine yourself spiritually to see if you have vision, or only principles.

Ah, but a man’s reach should exceed his grasp,  
Or what’s a heaven for?

“Where there is no revelation [or prophetic vision]….” Once we lose sight of God, we begin to be reckless. We cast off certain restraints from activities we know are wrong. We set prayer aside as well and cease having God’s vision in the little things of life. We simply begin to act on our own initiative. If we are eating only out of our own hand, and doing things solely on our own initiative without expecting God to come in, we are on a downward path. We have lost the vision. Is our attitude today an attitude that flows from our vision of God? Are we expecting God to do greater things than He has ever done before? Is there a freshness and a vitality in our spiritual outlook?

**Wisdom From Oswald Chambers**

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

# CCEL – 5/9/21

Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.—[HEB. 11:1.](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Heb.11.html" \l "Heb.11.1)

If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.

Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit.—After that ye believed ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession.

Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed; blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.—Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.

We walk by faith, not by sight.—Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward.

[I Cor. 15:19](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iCor.15.html" \l "iCor.15.19).[I Cor. 2:9,10](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iCor.2.html" \l "iCor.2.9). -[Eph. 1:13,14](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Eph.1.html" \l "Eph.1.13). -[John 20:29](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.John.20.html" \l "John.20.29). -[I Pet. 1:8,9](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iPet.1.html" \l "iPet.1.8).[II Cor. 5:7](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iiCor.5.html" \l "iiCor.5.7). -[Heb. 10:35](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Heb.10.html" \l "Heb.10.35).

“Who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings.” [Ephesians 1:3](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Eph.1.html" \l "Eph.1.3)

All the goodness of the past, the present, and the future, Christ bestows upon his people. In the mysterious ages of the past the Lord Jesus was his Father’s first elect, and in his election he gave us an interest, for we were chosen in him from before the foundation of the world. He had from all eternity the prerogatives of Sonship, as his Father’s only-begotten and well-beloved Son, and he has, in the riches of his grace, by adoption and regeneration, elevated us to sonship also, so that to us he has given “power to become the sons of God.” The eternal covenant, based upon suretiship and confirmed by oath, is ours, for our strong consolation and security. In the everlasting settlements of predestinating wisdom and omnipotent decree, the eye of the Lord Jesus was ever fixed on us; and we may rest assured that in the whole roll of destiny there is not a line which militates against the interests of his redeemed. The great betrothal of the Prince of Glory is ours, for it is to us that he is affianced, as the sacred nuptials shall ere long declare to an assembled universe. The marvellous incarnation of the God of heaven, with all the amazing condescension and humiliation which attended it, is ours. The bloody sweat, the scourge, the cross, are ours forever. Whatever blissful consequences flow from perfect obedience, finished atonement, resurrection, ascension, or intercession, all are ours by his own gift. Upon his breastplate he is now bearing our names; and in his authoritative pleadings at the throne he remembers our persons and pleads our cause. His dominion over principalities and powers, and his absolute majesty in heaven, he employs for the benefit of them who trust in him. His high estate is as much at our service as was his condition of abasement. He who gave himself for us in the depths of woe and death, doth not withdraw the grant now that he is enthroned in the highest heavens.

# Word Live – 5/9/21

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

# Scripture Union – 5/9/21

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# Today in the Word – 5/9/21

# A Blessing and a Prayer

**Read:** [**1 Thessalonians 3:11–13**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Thessalonians+3%3a11%e2%80%9313)

11Now may our God and Father himself and our Lord Jesus clear the way for us to come to you. 12May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you. 13May he strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones. When I was a child, pastoral prayers were a main feature of our church worship service. When the prayer began, I knew to settle in for a long one. Over the years, it seems that pastoral prayers have diminished in length and prominence or even been eliminated altogether. But now, as an adult, I appreciate the way this tradition made prayer a central and important part of the service.

May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other. 1 Thessalonians 3:12

Paul paused several times in this letter to express pastoral prayers and blessings for the Thessalonians. This became customary in his other epistles as well. Today’s mid-letter prayer and blessing well reflect this book’s key theme of spiritual growth in light of Christ’s return. It also reflects Paul’s passionately pastoral heart for these young believers.

His first prayer request is no surprise—that the way would be cleared for him to return to Thessalonica (v. 11). He invoked the first and second Persons of the Trinity to indicate the serious and sacred nature of his petition. His second prayer request is also a blessing—that God would cause their love to overflow within the church and beyond (v. 12). This is the horizontal dimension of the Christian life, how we’re to treat one another. Paul would have more to say about this soon (see 1 Thess. 4:9–12).

His third prayer request is another blessing—that Christ would strengthen their hearts as they continued to endure suffering (v. 13). This is not about stoicism, but rather a truth of sanctification. The goal of their present lives was to be found blameless and holy when Christ returned. On that day their sanctification would be complete! This is the vertical dimension of the Christian life, how the Lord works within us (Phil. 1:6). Paul would also have more to say about this in the next chapter (see 1 Thess. 4:1–8).

**Apply the Word**

Can you personalize the prayers of verses 12–13 from today’s reading? Try replacing the words “your” and “you” with your name. Then, try writing out a prayer of your own.

### **Pray with Us**

Almighty God, cause our love for one another to overflow; strengthen our hearts to be blameless and holy in your presence when your Son returns. How we long for the day when you complete our sanctification!

## BY Brad Baurain

# Our Daily Bread – 5/9/21

# Noticing Nature

 **Read:** [**Matthew 6:25–34**](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt%206.25%E2%80%9334)

### **Do Not Worry**

25“Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? 26Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? 27Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life[[a](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+6%3A25%E2%80%9334&version=NIV#fen-NIV-23310a)]?

28“And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. 29Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. 30If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? 31So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ 32For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. 33But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. 34Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

#### **Footnotes:**

1. [Matthew 6:27](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+6%3A25%E2%80%9334&version=NIV#en-NIV-23310) Or single cubit to your height

Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. [Matthew 6:26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt%206.26)

A friend and I recently visited a favorite walking spot of mine. Climbing a windswept hill, we crossed a field of wildflowers into a forest of towering pines, then descended into a valley where we paused a moment. Clouds floated softly above us. A stream trickled nearby. The only sounds were birdsongs. Jason and I stood there silently for fifteen minutes, taking it all in.

As it turns out, our actions that day were deeply therapeutic. According to research from the University of Derby, people who stop to contemplate nature experience higher levels of happiness, lower levels of anxiety, and a greater desire to care for the earth. Walking through the forest isn’t enough, though. You have to watch the clouds, listen to the birds. The key isn’t being in nature, but noticing it.

Could there be a spiritual reason for nature’s benefits? Paul said that creation reveals God’s power and nature ([Romans 1:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom%201.20)). God told Job to look at the sea, sky, and stars for evidence of His presence ([Job 38–39](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Job%2038%E2%80%9339)). Jesus said that contemplating the “birds of the air” and “flowers of the field” could reveal God’s care and reduce anxiety ([Matthew 6:25–30](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt%206.25%E2%80%9330)). In Scripture, noticing nature is a spiritual practice.

Scientists wonder why nature affects us so positively. Maybe one reason is that by noticing nature we catch a glimpse of the God who created it and who notices us.

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

#### **Reflect & Pray**

Since nature isn’t God, and vice versa, how do you think He can be seen through it? How can you take a few minutes today to notice His care through His creation?

God of heaven, earth, streams, and birdsongs, I worship You today.

#### **Insight**

As we read Jesus’ words in [Matthew 6:25–34](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt%206.25%E2%80%9334), we can see how nature teaches us about God’s care for us. When we consider the birds, we see God’s provision (v. 26). Worms don’t just appear; the birds have to go find them, but God makes the food available. In a similar way, this is how He provided for the Israelites in the wilderness. When they needed food, God provided manna (bread from heaven) that appeared on the ground. However, the Israelites had to gather exactly what they needed for that day (see [Exodus 16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod%2016)).

# God Calling – 5/9/21

# Harmony Within

Follow My Guidance.  Be afraid to venture on your own as a child fears to leave its mother's side. Doubt of your own wisdom, and reliance on Mine, will teach you humility.

Humility is not the belittling of the self.  It is forgetting the self.  Nay more, forgetting the self, because you are remembering Me.

You must not expect to live in a world where all is harmony.  You must not expect to live where others are in unbroken accord with you.  It is your task to maintain your own heart peace in adverse circumstances. Harmony is always yours when you strain your ear to catch Heaven's music.

Doubt always your power or wisdom to put things right, ask Me to right all as you leave it to Me, and go on your way loving and laughing. I am wisdom. Only My wisdom can rightly decide anything - settle any problem. So rely on Me. All is well.

Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time.  1 Peter 5:6

# My Utmost for His Highest – 5/10/21

# Take the Initiative



…add to your faith virtue… —[2 Peter 1:5](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=2+Peter+1%3A5)

Add means that we have to do something. We are in danger of forgetting that we cannot do what God does, and that God will not do what we can do. We cannot save nor sanctify ourselves— God does that. But God will not give us good habits or character, and He will not force us to walk correctly before Him. We have to do all that ourselves. We must “work out” our “own salvation” which God has worked in us ([Philippians 2:12](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Philippians+2:12)). Add means that we must get into the habit of doing things, and in the initial stages that is difficult. To take the initiative is to make a beginning— to instruct yourself in the way you must go.

Beware of the tendency to ask the way when you know it perfectly well. Take the initiative— stop hesitating— take the first step. Be determined to act immediately in faith on what God says to you when He speaks, and never reconsider or change your initial decisions. If you hesitate when God tells you to do something, you are being careless, spurning the grace in which you stand. Take the initiative yourself, make a decision of your will right now, and make it impossible to go back. Burn your bridges behind you, saying, “I will write that letter,” or “I will pay that debt”; and then do it! Make it irrevocable.

We have to get into the habit of carefully listening to God about everything, forming the habit of finding out what He says and heeding it. If, when a crisis comes, we instinctively turn to God, we will know that the habit has been formed in us. We have to take the initiative where we are, not where we have not yet been.

**Wisdom From Oswald Chambers**

Sincerity means that the appearance and the reality are exactly the same. Studies in the Sermon on the Mount, 1449 L

# CCEL – 5/10/21

For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.—[I JOHN 3:8.](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iJohn.3.html" \l "iJohn.3.8)

We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.—Forasmuch . . . as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death. that is, the devil.—And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them.—I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.

Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

[Eph. 6:12](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Eph.6.html" \l "Eph.6.12). -[Heb. 2:14](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Heb.2.html" \l "Heb.2.14). -[Col 2:15](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Col.2.html" \l "Col.2.15). -[Rev. 12:10,11](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Rev.12.html" \l "Rev.12.10).[I Cor. 15:57](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iCor.15.html" \l "iCor.15.57).

“But now is Christ risen from the dead.” [1 Corinthians 15:20](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iCor.15.html" \l "iCor.15.20)

The whole system of Christianity rests upon the fact that “Christ is risen from the dead;” for, “If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain: ye are yet in your sins.” The divinity of Christ finds its surest proof in his resurrection, since he was “Declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.” It would not be unreasonable to doubt his deity if he had not risen. Moreover, Christ’s sovereignty depends upon his resurrection, “For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living.” Again, our justification, that choice blessing of the covenant, is linked with Christ’s triumphant victory over death and the grave; for “He was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.” Nay, more, our very regeneration is connected with his resurrection, for we are “Begotten again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.” And most certainly our ultimate resurrection rests here, for, “If the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.” If Christ be not risen, then shall we not rise; but if he be risen then they who are asleep in Christ have not perished, but in their flesh shall surely behold their God. Thus, the silver thread of resurrection runs through all the believer’s blessings, from his regeneration onwards to his eternal glory, and binds them together. How important then will this glorious fact be in his estimation, and how will he rejoice that beyond a doubt it is established, that “now is Christ risen from the dead”!

“The promise is fulfill'd,

Redemption’s work is done,

Justice with mercy’s reconciled,

For God has raised his Son.”

# Word Live – 5/10/21

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

# Scripture Union – 5/10/21

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

# Today in the Word – 5/10/21

# Living to Please God Alone

**Read:** [**1 Thessalonians 4:1–8**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Thessalonians+4%3a1%e2%80%938)

### **Living to Please God**

4 As for other matters, brothers and sisters, we instructed you how to live in order to please God, as in fact you are living. Now we ask you and urge you in the Lord Jesus to do this more and more. 2For you know what instructions we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus.

3It is God’s will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; 4that each of you should learn to control your own body[[a](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Thessalonians+4%3A1%E2%80%938+&version=NIV#fen-NIV-29608a)] in a way that is holy and honorable, 5not in passionate lust like the pagans, who do not know God; 6and that in this matter no one should wrong or take advantage of a brother or sister.[[b](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Thessalonians+4%3A1%E2%80%938+&version=NIV#fen-NIV-29610b)] The Lord will punish all those who commit such sins, as we told you and warned you before. 7For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life. 8Therefore, anyone who rejects this instruction does not reject a human being but God, the very God who gives you his Holy Spirit.

#### **Footnotes:**

1. [1 Thessalonians 4:4](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Thessalonians+4%3A1%E2%80%938+&version=NIV#en-NIV-29608) Or learn to live with your own wife; or learn to acquire a wife
2. [1 Thessalonians 4:6](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Thessalonians+4%3A1%E2%80%938+&version=NIV#en-NIV-29610) The Greek word for brother or sister (adelphos) refers here to a believer, whether man or woman, as part of God’s family.

Following Jesus should impact every area of our life. It changes the way we work and how we spend our money. It shapes the way we treat our neighbors and the way we address conflict in our own homes and marriages. But in this portion of Paul’s letter, he addresses a topic that may not always be talked about in the church: sexuality.

God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life.1 Thessalonians 4:7

Here Paul speaks frankly and strongly against all forms of sexual immorality. He did so in part because sex played a large role in pagan religions in Thessalonica. But he also did so because sexual purity is an important part of holiness in general. As Paul did (1 Thess. 2:4), we should live to please God alone—and God is perfectly holy and righteous. The apostle had wanted to teach the Thessalonians more about the Christian life, and although he couldn’t do so in person, he could write this letter (vv. 1–2).

Human sexuality was a key area of temptation for the Thessalonians because sexual purity or faithfulness was not a prevailing moral standard in that culture. Unlike the pagans, Christian believers were to avoid all forms of sexual immorality (vv. 3–6). If they could not control their own bodies, they would be slaves to their “passionate lust” or desires. If they acted on these selfish and out-of-control desires, they would hurt others. That is to say, commit- ting sexual impurity might mean committing violence against a brother or sister in Christ.

God’s will for them, by contrast, was that they should be sanctified and live holy lives (vv. 3, 7). This included acting with self-control and honor in regard to their own bodies, and with holiness and love in regard to others. This aren’t merely human standards, but God’s commands (v. 8; see also 1 Cor. 6:18–20).

**Apply the Word**

Sexuality can also be an area of challenge for today’s Christian. Compare today’s attitudes and problems with those facing the Thessalonians. How is it similar? What is different?

### **Pray with Us**

Much has changed since Paul wrote to the Thessalonians, but we still live in a sex-saturated culture. Lord, help us live according to your holy standards, regardless of what our society permits or promotes.

## BY Brad Baurain

# Our Daily Bread – 5/10/21

# Singing Over Us

# Today's Devotional Read: [Zephaniah 3:14–17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Zeph%203.14%E2%80%9317)

14Sing, Daughter Zion;  
    shout aloud, Israel!  
Be glad and rejoice with all your heart,  
    Daughter Jerusalem!  
15The Lord has taken away your punishment,  
    he has turned back your enemy.  
The Lord, the King of Israel, is with you;  
    never again will you fear any harm.  
16On that day  
    they will say to Jerusalem,  
“Do not fear, Zion;  
    do not let your hands hang limp.  
17The Lord your God is with you,  
    the Mighty Warrior who saves.  
He will take great delight in you;  
    in his love he will no longer rebuke you,  
    but will rejoice over you with singing.”

[He] will rejoice over you with singing. [Zephaniah 3:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Zeph%203.17)

A young father held his baby boy in his arms, singing to him and rocking him in soothing rhythm. The baby was hearing-impaired, unable to hear the melody or the words. Yet the father sang anyway, in a beautiful, tender act of love toward his son. And his efforts were rewarded with a delightful smile from his little boy.

The imagery of the father-son exchange bears a striking resemblance to the words of Zephaniah. The Old Testament prophet says that God will joyfully sing over His daughter, the people of Jerusalem ([Zephaniah 3:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Zeph%203.17)). God enjoys doing good things for His beloved people, such as taking away their punishment and turning back their enemies (v. 15). Zephaniah says they no longer have any reason for fear and instead have cause for rejoicing.

We, as God’s children redeemed by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, sometimes are hard of hearing—unable, or perhaps unwilling, to tune our ears to the exuberant love God sings over us. His adoration of us is like that of the young father, who lovingly sang to his son despite his inability to hear. He has taken away our punishment too, giving us further reason to rejoice. Perhaps we might try to listen more closely to hear the joy ringing loudly in His voice. Father, help us to hear Your loving melody and savor being held safely in Your arms.

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

#### **Reflect & Pray**

What keeps you from hearing God? How can you tune your ears to hear His delight in you?

Thank You, God, for taking great delight in me. May I always listen to your voice as You joyfully sing over me.

To learn more about Zephaniah, visit [ChristianUniversity.org/OT226](https://ChristianUniversity.org/OT226).

#### **Insight**

[Zephaniah 3:14–17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Zeph%203.14%E2%80%9317) is written like a psalm of salvation (such as [Psalm 98](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps%2098)). The prophet commands praise ([Zephaniah 3:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Zeph%203.14)), not only for what God has done in the past and will do in the future, but for the very presence of Yahweh in the midst of Israel as the loving king who inspires confidence (vv. 15–17). As such, this “psalm” expresses the motif of God’s continued presence in Zion, the city of David (Jerusalem), as promised in the covenant in [2 Samuel 7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2%20Sam%207) and echoed in Isaiah and in psalms such as [Psalms 2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps%202) and [89](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Psalms%2089). The Lord is Israel’s king ([Zephaniah 3:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Zeph%203.15)) and her mighty warrior of salvation (v. 17). But He also responds to Israel like an abandoned parent or jilted lover to whom his beloved has returned. He rejoices with vocal jubilation as well as stillness and quiet (v. 17).

# God Calling – 5/10/21

# Calm - Not Speed

"In quietness and in confidence shall be your strength."  Isaiah 30:15

All agitation is destructive of good.  All calm is constructive of good, and at the same time destructive of evil.

When man wants evil destroyed so often he rushes to action.  It is wrong. First be still and know that I am God. Then act only as I tell you. Always calm with God. Calm is trust in action. Only trust, perfect trust can keep one calm.

Never be afraid of any circumstances or difficulties that help you to cultivate this calm. As the world, to attain, has to learn speed, you, to attain, have to learn calm.  All great work for Me is done first in the individual soul of the worker.

Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way,   
and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls.  Jeremiah 6:16