# My Utmost for His Highest – 5/10/22

# 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 – 5/10/22

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 – 5/10/22

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

# Scripture Union – 5/10/22

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

## Today in the Word – 5/10/22

## Looking for Help

**Read: Psalms 120-121**

I lift up my eyes to the mountains where does my help come from? Psalm 121:1

When my youngest daughter was two, she received a cut on her cheek and needed stitches. As the doctor started to administer the medical care she needed, she looked at her mother and me with a pleading look. She wanted us to get her out of this rather strange and uncomfortable situation. When we are scared or in distress, we naturally look for someone who can help us.

In Psalm 120, the poet is in a difficult situation. He is being attacked by "lying lips" and "deceitful tongues" (v. 2). Words are powerful. They can create hope and express joy. They can also cut and wound, creating strife and conflict. That is the scene here. While the Psalmist desires peace, his enemies lie to provoke war (v. 7). Lies and deception are difficult to combat. It is easy to feel helpless when we face opposition. What can be done?

Psalm 121 serves as a kind of response to the plight described in Psalm 120. The Psalmist declares, "I lift up my eyes to the mountains-where does my help come from? My help comes from the LORO, the Maker of heaven and earth" (vv. 1- 2). Psalms 120 and 121 are part of the "Psalms of Ascent" (12(}-134). This group of psalms was written for pilgrims making their way to one of the annual festivals at the Temple in Jerusalem. So, when the Psalmist says that he lifts his eyes to the mountains, he is thinking of Jerusalem. He is looking to the Lord. The psalm ends with a promise of protection. God cares deeply for His people, and He will protect them (vv. 5-ll).

**Apply the Word**

When we are in a tough situation, the Psalmist's advice is powerful: "Lift up your eyes!" Look to God who created the universe and is able to meet our needs. There may be times when it is difficult for us to see how God is caring for us. But we can look to Him for help.

**Pray with Us**

"My eyes fail, looking for your promise; I say, 'When will you comfort me?' Though I am like a wineskin in the smoke, I do not forget your decrees. How long must your servant wail?" (Ps. 11 9:82-l!4). Help us, as we wait to trust in You.

### BY Ryan Cook

## Our Daily Bread – 5/10/22

## Engraved Grief

 **Read:** [**Job 19:19–27**](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Job%2019.19%E2%80%9327)

19All my intimate friends detest me;  
    those I love have turned against me.  
20I am nothing but skin and bones;  
    I have escaped only by the skin of my teeth.[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Job+19%3A19%E2%80%9327&version=NIV#fen-NIV-13318a)]

21“Have pity on me, my friends, have pity,  
    for the hand of God has struck me.  
22Why do you pursue me as God does?  
    Will you never get enough of my flesh?

23“Oh, that my words were recorded,  
    that they were written on a scroll,  
24that they were inscribed with an iron tool on[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Job+19%3A19%E2%80%9327&version=NIV#fen-NIV-13322b)] lead,  
    or engraved in rock forever!  
25I know that my redeemer[[c](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Job+19%3A19%E2%80%9327&version=NIV#fen-NIV-13323c)] lives,  
    and that in the end he will stand on the earth.[[d](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Job+19%3A19%E2%80%9327&version=NIV#fen-NIV-13323d)]  
26And after my skin has been destroyed,  
    yet[[e](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Job+19%3A19%E2%80%9327&version=NIV#fen-NIV-13324e)] in[[f](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Job+19%3A19%E2%80%9327&version=NIV#fen-NIV-13324f)] my flesh I will see God;  
27I myself will see him  
    with my own eyes—I, and not another.  
    How my heart yearns within me!

#### **Footnotes**

1. [Job 19:20](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Job+19%3A19%E2%80%9327&version=NIV#en-NIV-13318) Or only by my gums
2. [Job 19:24](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Job+19%3A19%E2%80%9327&version=NIV#en-NIV-13322) Or and
3. [Job 19:25](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Job+19%3A19%E2%80%9327&version=NIV#en-NIV-13323) Or vindicator
4. [Job 19:25](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Job+19%3A19%E2%80%9327&version=NIV#en-NIV-13323) Or on my grave
5. [Job 19:26](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Job+19%3A19%E2%80%9327&version=NIV#en-NIV-13324) Or And after I awake, / though this body has been destroyed, / then
6. [Job 19:26](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Job+19%3A19%E2%80%9327&version=NIV#en-NIV-13324) Or destroyed, / apart from

Oh, that my words were recorded, that they were written on a scroll, . . . inscribed with an iron tool on lead, or engraved in rock forever! [Job 19:23–24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Job%2019.23%E2%80%9324)

After receiving the devastating diagnosis of a rare and incurable brain cancer, Caroline found renewed hope and purpose through providing a unique service: volunteering photography services for critically ill children and their families. Through this service, families could capture the precious moments shared with their children, both in grief and “the moments of grace and beauty we assume don’t exist in those desperate places.” She observed that “in the hardest moments imaginable, those families . . . choose to love, despite and because of it all.”

There’s something unspeakably powerful about capturing the truth of grief—both the devastating reality of it and the ways in which we experience beauty and hope in the midst of it.

Much of the book of Job is like a photograph of grief—capturing honestly Job’s journey through devastating loss (1:18–19). After sitting with Job for several days, his friends wearied of his grief, resorting to minimizing it or explaining it away as God’s judgment. But Job would have none of it, insisting that what he was going through mattered, and wishing that the testimony of his experience would be “engraved in rock forever!” (19:24).

Through the book of Job, it was “engraved”—in a way that points us in our grief to the living God (vv. 26–27), who meets us in our pain, carrying us through death into resurrection life.

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

#### **Reflect & Pray**

How can facing pain honestly bring healing? When have you experienced unexpected grace and beauty within great grief?

Compassionate God, help me to witness honestly to those who are experiencing pain and offer the hope You provide.

Read [Out of the Ashes: God’s Presence in Job’s Pain](https://DiscoverySeries.org/Q0735).

#### **Insight**

Who was Job? We can glean from his writings that he was well-traveled and could draw on extensive experience and knowledge. He was no doubt knowledgeable of the constellations (9:9; 38:31), plants (8:11–19), weather and precipitation, and various animals (chs. 39–41) mentioned in the book.

Scholars can’t pinpoint the exact time the book was written. Yet Job has a patriarchal setting, which has led some to suggest a date as early as the time of Abraham. But Job also alludes to (or quotes) Scripture ([Job 7:17–18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Job%207.17%E2%80%9318) [[Psalm 8:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps%208.4)]; 12:21, 24 [[Psalm 107:40](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps%20107.40)]), which suggests that the writer had access to these writings and therefore would indicate a much later date. The book’s setting is the land of Uz, which scholars say is probably ancient Edom or Aram/Syria ([Job 1:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Job%201.1)). Uz was near a desert (v. 19) and the land was suitable for raising livestock (v. 3).

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

# God Calling – 5/10/22

# 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

# My Utmost for His Highest – 5/11/22

# “Love One Another”



…add to your…brotherly kindness love. —[2 Peter 1:5, 7](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=2+Peter+1%3A5%2C+7)

Love is an indefinite thing to most of us; we don’t know what we mean when we talk about love. Love is the loftiest preference of one person for another, and spiritually Jesus demands that this sovereign preference be for Himself (see [Luke 14:26](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+14:26)). Initially, when “the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit” ([Romans 5:5](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+5:5)), it is easy to put Jesus first. But then we must practice the things mentioned in 2 Peter 1 to see them worked out in our lives.

The first thing God does is forcibly remove any insincerity, pride, and vanity from my life. And the Holy Spirit reveals to me that God loved me not because I was lovable, but because it was His nature to do so. Now He commands me to show the same love to others by saying, “…love one another as I have loved you” ([John 15:12](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+15:12)). He is saying, “I will bring a number of people around you whom you cannot respect, but you must exhibit My love to them, just as I have exhibited it to you.” This kind of love is not a patronizing love for the unlovable— it is His love, and it will not be evidenced in us overnight. Some of us may have tried to force it, but we were soon tired and frustrated.

“The Lord…is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish…” ([2 Peter 3:9](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Peter+3:9)). I should look within and remember how wonderfully He has dealt with me. The knowledge that God has loved me beyond all limits will compel me to go into the world to love others in the same way. I may get irritated because I have to live with an unusually difficult person. But just think how disagreeable I have been with God! Am I prepared to be identified so closely with the Lord Jesus that His life and His sweetness will be continually poured out through Me? Neither natural love nor God’s divine love will remain and grow in me unless it is nurtured. Love is spontaneous, but it has to be maintained through discipline.

**Wisdom From Oswald Chambers**

Am I getting nobler, better, more helpful, more humble, as I get older? Am I exhibiting the life that men take knowledge of as having been with Jesus, or am I getting more self-assertive, more deliberately determined to have my own way? It is a great thing to tell yourself the truth. The Place of Help, 1005 R

# CCEL – 5/11/22

Awake to righteousness, and sin not.—[I COR. 15:34.](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iCor.15.html" \l "iCor.15.34)

Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober.

It is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light.—Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.—Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed: and make you a new heart and a new spirit.—Lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls.—Little children, abide in him that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming. If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him.

[I Thes. 5:5,6](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iThess.5.html" \l "iThess.5.5).[Rom. 13:11,12](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Rom.13.html" \l "Rom.13.11). -[Eph. 6:13](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Eph.6.html" \l "Eph.6.13). -[Ezek. 18:31](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ezek.18.html" \l "Ezek.18.31). -[Jas. 1:21](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Jas.1.html" \l "Jas.1.21). -[I John 2:28,29](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iJohn.2.html" \l "iJohn.2.28).

“I am with you alway.” [Matthew 28:20](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Matt.28.html" \l "Matt.28.20)

It is well there is One who is ever the same, and who is ever with us. It is well there is one stable rock amidst the billows of the sea of life. O my soul, set not thine affections upon rusting, moth-eaten, decaying treasures, but set thine heart upon him who abides forever faithful to thee. Build not thine house upon the moving quicksands of a deceitful world, but found thy hopes upon this rock, which, amid descending rain and roaring floods, shall stand immovably secure. My soul, I charge thee, lay up thy treasure in the only secure cabinet; store thy jewels where thou canst never lose them. Put thine all in Christ; set all thine affections on his person, all thy hope in his merit, all thy trust in his efficacious blood, all thy joy in his presence, and so thou mayest laugh at loss, and defy destruction. Remember that all the flowers in the world’s garden fade by turns, and the day cometh when nothing will be left but the black, cold earth. Death’s black extinguisher must soon put out thy candle. Oh! how sweet to have sunlight when the candle is gone! The dark flood must soon roll between thee and all thou hast; then wed thine heart to him who will never leave thee; trust thyself with him who will go with thee through the black and surging current of death’s stream, and who will land thee safely on the celestial shore, and make thee sit with him in heavenly places forever. Go, sorrowing son of affliction, tell thy secrets to the Friend who sticketh closer than a brother. Trust all thy concerns with him who never can be taken from thee, who will never leave thee, and who will never let thee leave him, even “Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today, and forever.” “Lo, I am with you alway,” is enough for my soul to live upon, let who will forsake me.

# Word Live – 5/11/22

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

# Scripture Union – 5/11/22

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

## Today in the Word – 5/11/22

## City of Peace

**Read: Psalm 122**

I rejoiced with those who said to me, "Let us go to the house of the LORD. Psalm 122:1

For thousands of years Jews and Christians have made pilgrimages to Jerusalem. It is easy to understand why. Jerusalem plays a central role in both the Old and New Testaments. It is the place where Abraham was called to sacrifice Isaac, where David brought the ark of the covenant, where the Temple was built, where Jesus was crucified, and where Pentecost took place. In the Old Testament it was the place where God chose to dwell (Deut. 12:4-5; Ps. 135:21).

Three times a year, Israelites were to make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem to worship at the Temple. These times were a high point in their lives, “I rejoiced with those who said to me, 'Let us go to the house of the LORD." (v. 1). To become close to the presence of the Lord was a privilege and joy. Part of the reason for Israel's joy was the unity brought by worshiping together. David describes Jerusalem as a city "closely compacted together" (v. 3). That might sound like urban congestion to us, but it was a positive image for him. God's people were united in Jerusalem to “praise the name of the LORD" in obedience to His Word (v. 4).

The psalm ends with a prayer for peace. This is a play on the name "Jerusalem," which means "city of peace." Peace in Hebrew means more than just the absence of conflict. It is a rich concept that means things are the way they should be. Our relationship with God, one another, and the world is as it was designed to be. It is a prayer for wholeness, abundance, and integrity.

**Apply the Word**

Are you longing for a fresh infusion of hope? This psalm looks forward to a time when all things will be made new. We will be in the very presence of God in the New Jerusalem and there will be "no more death or mourning or crying or pain" (Rev. 21 :4). Amen, come Lord Jesus.

**Pray with Us**

Today we pray for Your blessing on the modern city of Jerusalem; may Your will be done in the Holy Land. We rejoice in the promise of the New Jerusalem, from which we draw hope!

### BY Ryan Cook

## Our Daily Bread – 5/11/22

## Always Worth Sharing

**Read:** [**2 Corinthians 2:12–17**](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2%20Cor%202.12%E2%80%9317)

### **Ministers of the New Covenant**

12Now when I went to Troas to preach the gospel of Christ and found that the Lord had opened a door for me, 13I still had no peace of mind, because I did not find my brother Titus there. So I said goodbye to them and went on to Macedonia.

14But thanks be to God, who always leads us as captives in Christ’s triumphal procession and uses us to spread the aroma of the knowledge of him everywhere. 15For we are to God the pleasing aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing. 16To the one we are an aroma that brings death; to the other, an aroma that brings life. And who is equal to such a task? 17Unlike so many, we do not peddle the word of God for profit. On the contrary, in Christ we speak before God with sincerity, as those sent from God.

Thanks be to God, who always . . . uses us to spread the aroma of the knowledge of him everywhere. [2 Corinthians 2:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2%20Cor%202.14)

After I became a believer in Jesus, I shared the gospel with my mother. Instead of making a decision to trust Jesus, as I expected, she stopped speaking to me for a year. Her bad experiences with people who claimed to follow Jesus made her distrust believers in Christ. I prayed for her and reached out to her weekly. The Holy Spirit comforted me and continued working on my heart as my mom gave me the silent treatment. When she finally answered my phone call, I committed to loving her and sharing God’s truth with her whenever I had the opportunity. Months after our reconciliation, she said I’d changed. Almost a year later, she received Jesus as her Savior, and, as a result, our relationship deepened.

Believers in Jesus have access to the greatest gift given to humanity—Christ. The apostle Paul says we’re to “spread the aroma of the knowledge of him everywhere” ([2 Corinthians 2:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2%20Cor%202.14)). He refers to those who share the gospel as “the pleasing aroma of Christ” to those who believe, but acknowledges we reek of death to those who reject Jesus (vv. 15–16).

After we receive Christ as our Savior, we have the privilege of using our limited time on earth to spread His life-changing truth while loving others. Even during our hardest and loneliest moments, we can trust He’ll provide what we need. No matter what the personal cost, God’s good news is always worth sharing.

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

#### **Reflect & Pray**

How has God encouraged you to not give up after you shared the gospel with someone who reacted in a negative way? How did God bring you close to someone after you both connected as believers in Jesus?

Help me share Your good news wherever You send me, God!

#### **Insight**

Believers in Jesus have been rescued from death by faith in Him. But another way to view believers in Christ is as “commissioned captives” in that they’ve also been tasked with sharing with others the same good news that has brought them from darkness to light, from death to life. When Paul notes that “God . . . leads us as captives in Christ’s triumphal procession and uses us to spread the aroma of the knowledge of him everywhere” ([2 Corinthians 2:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2%20Cor%202.14)), he uses images from military conquests of the ancient world. After significant victories, Roman military commanders would lead those who’d been captured in procession. Some of the processionals included the use of fragrant spices, perfumes, and incense. This is what Paul is likely referring to in these verses. Believers in Jesus are His “sanctified spoils,” crucial and now useful for His mission in the world.

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

# God Calling – 5/11/22

# The Divine Third

When I have led you through these storms there will be other words for you, other messages - other guidance.

So deep is your friendship and so great your desire to love and follow and serve Me that soon, when this time of difficulty is over, to be alone together will always mean to be shut in with Me.

There are few friendships in the world like that and yet I taught, when on earth, as I have you both, the power of the two together.

And now tonight I have more to say to you.  I say that the time is coming, is even now here, when those who visit you two together will know that I am the Divine Third in your friendship.

Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing  
 that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven.  Matthew 18:19

# My Utmost for His Highest – 5/12/22

# The Habit of Having No Habits



If these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful… —[2 Peter 1:8](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=2+Peter+1%3A8)

When we first begin to form a habit, we are fully aware of it. There are times when we are aware of becoming virtuous and godly, but this awareness should only be a stage we quickly pass through as we grow spiritually. If we stop at this stage, we will develop a sense of spiritual pride. The right thing to do with godly habits is to immerse them in the life of the Lord until they become such a spontaneous expression of our lives that we are no longer aware of them. Our spiritual life continually causes us to focus our attention inwardly for the determined purpose of self-examination, because each of us has some qualities we have not yet added to our lives.

Your god may be your little Christian habit— the habit of prayer or Bible reading at certain times of your day. Watch how your Father will upset your schedule if you begin to worship your habit instead of what the habit symbolizes. We say, “I can’t do that right now; this is my time alone with God.” No, this is your time alone with your habit. There is a quality that is still lacking in you. Identify your shortcoming and then look for opportunities to work into your life that missing quality.

Love means that there are no visible habits— that your habits are so immersed in the Lord that you practice them without realizing it. If you are consciously aware of your own holiness, you place limitations on yourself from doing certain things— things God is not restricting you from at all. This means there is a missing quality that needs to be added to your life. The only supernatural life is the life the Lord Jesus lived, and He was at home with God anywhere. Is there someplace where you are not at home with God? Then allow God to work through whatever that particular circumstance may be until you increase in Him, adding His qualities. Your life will then become the simple life of a child.

**Wisdom From Oswald Chambers**

Both nations and individuals have tried Christianity and abandoned it, because it has been found too difficult; but no man has ever gone through the crisis of deliberately making Jesus Lord and found Him to be a failure. The Love of God—The Making of a Christian, 680 R

# CCEL – 5/12/22

Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and everyone that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.—[I JOHN 4:7.](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iJohn.4.html" \l "iJohn.4.7)

The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us.—Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.—He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself.

In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.—In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.—That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.

Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.

[Rom. 5:5](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Rom.5.html" \l "Rom.5.5). -[Rom. 8:15,16](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Rom.8.html" \l "Rom.8.15). -[I John 5:10](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iJohn.5.html" \l "iJohn.5.10).[I John 4:9](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iJohn.4.html" \l "iJohn.4.9). -[Eph. 1:7](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Eph.1.html" \l "Eph.1.7). -[Eph. 2:7](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Eph.2.html" \l "Eph.2.7).[I John 4:11](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iJohn.4.html" \l "iJohn.4.11).

“And will manifest myself to him.” **[John 14:21](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.John.14.html" \l "John.14.21)**

The Lord Jesus gives special revelations of himself to his people. Even if Scripture did not declare this, there are many of the children of God who could testify the truth of it from their own experience. They have had manifestations of their Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ in a peculiar manner, such as no mere reading or hearing could afford. In the biographies of eminent saints, you will find many instances recorded in which Jesus has been pleased, in a very special manner to speak to their souls, and to unfold the wonders of his person; yea, so have their souls been steeped in happiness that they have thought themselves to be in heaven, whereas they were not there, though they were well nigh on the threshold of it—for when Jesus manifests himself to his people, it is heaven on earth; it is paradise in embryo; it is bliss begun. Especial manifestations of Christ exercise a holy influence on the believer’s heart. One effect will be humility. If a man says, “I have had such-and-such spiritual communications, I am a great man,” he has never had any communion with Jesus at all; for “God hath respect unto the lowly: but the proud he knoweth afar off.” He does not need to come near them to know them, and will never give them any visits of love. Another effect will be happiness; for in God’s presence there are pleasures for evermore. Holiness will be sure to follow. A man who has no holiness has never had this manifestation. Some men profess a great deal; but we must not believe any one unless we see that his deeds answer to what he says. “Be not deceived; God is not mocked.” He will not bestow his favours upon the wicked: for while he will not cast away a perfect man, neither will he respect an evil doer. Thus there will be three effects of nearness to Jesus—humility, happiness, and holiness. May God give them to thee, Christian!

# Word Live – 5/12/22

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

# Scripture Union – 5/12/22

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

## Today in the Word – 5/12/22

## Lift Up My Eyes

**Read: Psalms 123-124**

#### **A song of ascents.**

1I lift up my eyes to you,  
    to you who sit enthroned in heaven.  
2As the eyes of slaves look to the hand of their master,  
    as the eyes of a female slave look to the hand of her mistress,  
so our eyes look to the Lord our God,  
    till he shows us his mercy.

3Have mercy on us, Lord, have mercy on us,  
    for we have endured no end of contempt.  
4We have endured no end  
    of ridicule from the arrogant,  
    of contempt from the proud.

### **Read: Psalm 124**

#### **A song of ascents. Of David.**

1If the Lord had not been on our side—  
    let Israel say—  
2if the Lord had not been on our side  
    when people attacked us,  
3they would have swallowed us alive  
    when their anger flared against us;  
4the flood would have engulfed us,  
    the torrent would have swept over us,  
5the raging waters  
    would have swept us away.

6Praise be to the Lord,  
    who has not let us be torn by their teeth.  
7We have escaped like a bird  
    from the fowler’s snare;  
the snare has been broken,  
    and we have escaped.  
8Our help is in the name of the Lord,  
    the Maker of heaven and earth.

I lift up my eyes to you, to you who sit enthroned in heaven. Psalm 123:1

It can be easy for our prayer life to devolve into a series of requests: “God, can you help me with X ...? Can you bring healing to Y ... ?" And on and on. This is not necessarily a bad thing. Jesus invited us, "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you" Matt. 7:7). The problem comes when we start envisioning our relationship with God as a customer to vendor or a supervisor to underling.

Psalm 123 reminds us of our proper standing before God. We do not look down on God or view Him as an equal. Instead, the Psalmist proclaims, "I lift up my eyes to you, to you who sit enthroned in heaven" (v. 1). God is enthroned over the universe. Our relationship with Him is of servant to master (v. 2). Being a child of God means waiting upon Him, attending His word and obeying. We are at His service.

Being God's servant has benefits. We can expect Him to hear when we call. The Psalmist had been ridiculed and mocked by scoffers (v. 4). Because the Psalmist was God's servant, this was a problem for God as well. Would God allow His servant to be treated poorly? It could be that God had His own purpose for this situation. But this psalm models for us that it is appropriate to ask God to intervene when we face a difficult situation.

Psalm 124 continues this theme of calling to God for deliverance from an enemy. Only God could save Israel. They were delivered because they serve the "Maker of heaven and earth" (v. 8).

**Apply the Word**

These psalms remind us that God is the sovereign and we are His servants. We are dependent upon Him for all things. But He also cares deeply for us. Whatever you may be facing today, you can call on God and know that He cares.

**Pray with Us**

Father, Your Son became the suffering servant so that we could be servants to You. Give us desires that align with Your will. Humble and shape us into ever increasing obedience and Christ-like submission.

### BY Ryan Cook

## Our Daily Bread – 5/12/22

## Walking by a Blessing

**Read:** [**Isaiah 48:12–20**](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa%2048.12%E2%80%9320)

### **Israel Freed**

12“Listen to me, Jacob,  
    Israel, whom I have called:  
I am he;  
    I am the first and I am the last.  
13My own hand laid the foundations of the earth,  
    and my right hand spread out the heavens;  
when I summon them,  
    they all stand up together.

14“Come together, all of you, and listen:  
    Which of the idols has foretold these things?  
The Lord’s chosen ally  
    will carry out his purpose against Babylon;  
    his arm will be against the Babylonians.[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isaiah+48%3A12%E2%80%9320&version=NIV#fen-NIV-18629a)]  
15I, even I, have spoken;  
    yes, I have called him.  
I will bring him,  
    and he will succeed in his mission.

16“Come near me and listen to this:

“From the first announcement I have not spoken in secret;  
    at the time it happens, I am there.”

And now the Sovereign Lord has sent me,  
    endowed with his Spirit.

17This is what the Lord says—  
    your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel:  
“I am the Lord your God,  
    who teaches you what is best for you,  
    who directs you in the way you should go.  
18If only you had paid attention to my commands,  
    your peace would have been like a river,  
    your well-being like the waves of the sea.  
19Your descendants would have been like the sand,  
    your children like its numberless grains;  
their name would never be blotted out  
    nor destroyed from before me.”

20Leave Babylon,  
    flee from the Babylonians!  
Announce this with shouts of joy  
    and proclaim it.  
Send it out to the ends of the earth;  
    say, “The Lord has redeemed his servant Jacob.”

#### **Footnotes**

1. [Isaiah 48:14](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isaiah+48%3A12%E2%80%9320&version=NIV#en-NIV-18629) Or Chaldeans; also in verse 20

If only you had paid attention to my commands. [Isaiah 48:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa%2048.18)

In 1799, twelve-year-old Conrad Reed found a large, glittering rock in the stream that ran through his family’s small farm in North Carolina. He carried it home to show his father, a poor immigrant farmer. His father didn’t understand the rock’s potential value and used it as a doorstop. The family walked by it for years.

Eventually Conrad’s rock—actually a seventeen-pound gold nugget—caught the eye of a local jeweler. Soon the Reed family became wealthy, and their property became the site of the first major gold strike in the United States.

Sometimes we walk past a blessing, intent on our own plans and ways. After Israel was exiled to Babylon for disobeying God, He proclaimed freedom for them once again. But He also reminded them of what they’d missed. “I am the Lord your God,” He told them, “who teaches you what is best for you, who directs you in the way you should go. If only you had paid attention to my commands, your peace would have been like a river, your well-being like the waves of the sea.” God then encouraged them to follow Him away from old ways into a new life: “Leave Babylon . . . ! Announce this with shouts of joy” ([Isaiah 48:17–18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa%2048.17%E2%80%9318), [20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isaiah%2048.20)).

Leaving Babylon, perhaps now as much as then, means leaving sinful ways and “coming home” to a God who longs to do us good—if only we’ll obey and follow Him!

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

#### **Reflect & Pray**

What aspect of God do you look forward to as you walk with Him today? What can you do to gently lead others to His love?

Loving God, there’s no one like You! Help me embrace the opportunity to walk with You and discover the blessings You alone provide.

#### **Insight**

The people’s return from Babylon ([Isaiah 48:12–20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa%2048.12%E2%80%9320)) was significant because Israel needed to be in the promised land for Messiah Jesus to come and be born in Bethlehem as prophesied ([Micah 5:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Micah%205.2)). But perhaps the greatest importance of deliverance for Israel was that in this rescue, God had once again fulfilled His promises to His chosen people. The promises found in [Jeremiah 25:11–12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer%2025.11%E2%80%9312) motivated Daniel to pray for his displaced people ([Daniel 9:2–3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Dan%209.2%E2%80%933)) that they’d be ready for rescue when the time came.

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

# God Calling – 5/12/22

# Thrill of Protection

Turn out all thoughts of doubt and of trouble. Never tolerate them for one second. Bar the windows and doors of your souls against them as you would bar your home against a thief who would steal in to take your treasures.

What greater treasures can you have than Peace and Rest and Joy? And these are all stolen from you by doubt and fear and despair.

Face each day with Love and Laughter. Face the storm.

Joy, Peace, Love, My great gifts.  Follow Me to find all three. I want you to feel the thrill of protection and safety Now. Any soul can feel this in a harbor, but real joy and victory come to those alone who sense these when they ride a storm.

Say, "all is well." Say it not as a vain repetition. Use it as you use a healing balm for cut or wound, until the poison is drawn out; then, until the sore is healed, then until the thrill of fresh life floods your being.

All is well.

O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?  Matthew 14:31

# My Utmost for His Highest – 5/13/22

# The Habit of Keeping a Clear Conscience



…strive to have a conscience without offense toward God and men. —[Acts 24:16](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=Acts+24%3A16)

God’s commands to us are actually given to the life of His Son in us. Consequently, to our human nature in which God’s Son has been formed (see [Galatians 4:19](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Galatians+4:19)), His commands are difficult. But they become divinely easy once we obey.

Conscience is that ability within me that attaches itself to the highest standard I know, and then continually reminds me of what that standard demands that I do. It is the eye of the soul which looks out either toward God or toward what we regard as the highest standard. This explains why conscience is different in different people. If I am in the habit of continually holding God’s standard in front of me, my conscience will always direct me to God’s perfect law and indicate what I should do. The question is, will I obey? I have to make an effort to keep my conscience so sensitive that I can live without any offense toward anyone. I should be living in such perfect harmony with God’s Son that the spirit of my mind is being renewed through every circumstance of life, and that I may be able to quickly “prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God” ([Romans 12:2](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+12:2) ; also see [Ephesians 4:23](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ephesians+4:23)).

God always instructs us down to the last detail. Is my ear sensitive enough to hear even the softest whisper of the Spirit, so that I know what I should do? “Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God…” ([Ephesians 4:30](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ephesians+4:30)). He does not speak with a voice like thunder— His voice is so gentle that it is easy for us to ignore. And the only thing that keeps our conscience sensitive to Him is the habit of being open to God on the inside. When you begin to debate, stop immediately. Don’t ask, “Why can’t I do this?” You are on the wrong track. There is no debating possible once your conscience speaks. Whatever it is— drop it, and see that you keep your inner vision clear.

**Wisdom From Oswald Chambers**

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

# CCEL – 5/13/22

Pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting.—[I TIM. 2:8.](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iTim.2.html" \l "iTim.2.8)

The true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.—Then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall answer; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I am.—When ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any.

Without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.—Let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord.

If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.—My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and he is the propitiation for our sins.

[John 4:23,24](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.John.4.html" \l "John.4.23). -[Isa. 58:9](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Isa.58.html" \l "Isa.58.9). -[Mark 11:25](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Mark.11.html" \l "Mark.11.25).[Heb. 11:6](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Heb.11.html" \l "Heb.11.6). -[Jas. 1:6,7](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Jas.1.html" \l "Jas.1.6).[Psa. 66:18](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.66.html" \l "Ps.66.18). -[I John 2:1,2](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iJohn.2.html" \l "iJohn.2.1).

“Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.” **[Psalm 30:5](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.30.html" \l "Ps.30.5)**

Christian! If thou art in a night of trial, think of the morrow; cheer up thy heart with the thought of the coming of thy Lord. Be patient, for

“Lo! He comes with clouds descending.”

Be patient! The Husbandman waits until he reaps his harvest. Be patient; for you know who has said, “Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give to every man according as his work shall be.” If you are never so wretched now, remember

“A few more rolling suns, at most, Will land thee on fair Canaan’s coast.”

Thy head may be crowned with thorny troubles now, but it shall wear a starry crown ere long; thy hand may be filled with cares—it shall sweep the strings of the harp of heaven soon. Thy garments may be soiled with dust now; they shall be white by-and-by. Wait a little longer. Ah! how despicable our troubles and trials will seem when we look back upon them! Looking at them here in the prospect, they seem immense; but when we get to heaven we shall then

“With transporting joys recount, The labours of our feet.”

Our trials will then seem light and momentary afflictions. Let us go on boldly; if the night be never so dark, the morning cometh, which is more than they can say who are shut up in the darkness of hell. Do you know what it is thus to live on the future—to live on expectation—to antedate heaven? Happy believer, to have so sure, so comforting a hope. It may be all dark now, but it will soon be light; it may be all trial now, but it will soon be all happiness. What matters it though “weeping may endure for a night,” when “joy cometh in the morning?”

# Word Live – 5/13/22

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

# Scripture Union – 5/13/22

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## Today in the Word – 5/13/22

## Joyfully Secure

**Read: Psalms 125-126**

#### **A song of ascents.**

1Those who trust in the Lord are like Mount Zion,  
    which cannot be shaken but endures forever.  
2As the mountains surround Jerusalem,  
    so the Lord surrounds his people  
    both now and forevermore.

3The scepter of the wicked will not remain  
    over the land allotted to the righteous,  
for then the righteous might use  
    their hands to do evil.

4Lord, do good to those who are good,  
    to those who are upright in heart.  
5But those who turn to crooked ways  
    the Lord will banish with the evildoers.

Peace be on Israel.

### **Read: Psalm 126**

#### **A song of ascents.**

1When the Lord restored the fortunes of[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalms+125-126&version=NIV#fen-NIV-16117a)] Zion,  
    we were like those who dreamed.[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalms+125-126&version=NIV#fen-NIV-16117b)]  
2Our mouths were filled with laughter,  
    our tongues with songs of joy.  
Then it was said among the nations,  
    “The Lord has done great things for them.”  
3The Lord has done great things for us,  
    and we are filled with joy.

4Restore our fortunes,[[c](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalms+125-126&version=NIV#fen-NIV-16120c)] Lord,  
    like streams in the Negev.  
5Those who sow with tears  
    will reap with songs of joy.  
6Those who go out weeping,  
    carrying seed to sow,  
will return with songs of joy,  
    carrying sheaves with them.

#### **Footnotes**

1. [Psalm 126:1](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalms+125-126&version=NIV#en-NIV-16117) Or Lord brought back the captives to
2. [Psalm 126:1](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalms+125-126&version=NIV#en-NIV-16117) Or those restored to health
3. [Psalm 126:4](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalms+125-126&version=NIV#en-NIV-16120) Or Bring back our captives

As the mountains surround Jerusalem, so the LORD surrounds his people both now and forevermore. Psalm 125:2.

Fear and anxiety are rampant in our world. It is easy to understand why. The pandemic reminded us of the fragile nature of our lives, jobs, and the economy. While there are days when life feels precarious, today's psalm describes how God's people remained secure and joyful in a world just as uncertain as our own.

If you stand on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem today and look around, you will notice that the city is surrounded by hills. The Psalmist sees this geographical feature and draws a spiritual lesson, as the mountains surround Jerusalem, so the Lord surrounds his people" (125:2). Those who trust in the Lord have placed their trust in a secure source. As believers today, sometimes we need to be reminded that God cares about us and desires our good. In John 17, Jesus prayed for His disciples, " Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name" (v. 11 ). In a world riddled by fear, we can be confident in our relationship with God. We can pray with expectation for peace (Ps. 125:5).

Because of their idolatry and sin, Israel had been exiled to Babylon. This must have seemed like the end to many who were forcefully relocated thousands of miles from their homeland. But God was not through with Israel. After 70 long years, Cyrus issued a decree to allow the people of Israel to return home. Psalm 126 expresses the wonder and joy experienced at this answer to prayer, "Our mouths were filled with laughter, and our tongues with songs of joy" (v. 2). Joy should be a mark of God's people.

**Apply the Word**

Even when things look uncertain In our eyes, we should remember that our deepest needs have already been met on the cross. Laughter and joy are hallmarks of those who have experienced God's grace. Spend a few minutes today thanking God for all He has done for you and let Him fill you with joy.

**Pray with Us**

We thank You for times of plenty and prosperity, when joy comes naturally. We thank You for difficult times when the weight of life pushes us closer to You. Whatever our circumstances, we can rejoice in Your unchanging faithfulness.

### BY Ryan Cook

## Our Daily Bread – 5/13/22

## Finish Strong

**Read:** [**Acts 20:17–24**](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts%2020.17%E2%80%9324)

17From Miletus, Paul sent to Ephesus for the elders of the church. 18When they arrived, he said to them: “You know how I lived the whole time I was with you, from the first day I came into the province of Asia. 19I served the Lord with great humility and with tears and in the midst of severe testing by the plots of my Jewish opponents. 20You know that I have not hesitated to preach anything that would be helpful to you but have taught you publicly and from house to house. 21I have declared to both Jews and Greeks that they must turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus.

22“And now, compelled by the Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there. 23I only know that in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me. 24However, I consider my life worth nothing to me; my only aim is to finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the good news of God’s grace.

I consider my life worth nothing to me; my only aim is to finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the good news of God’s grace. [Acts 20:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts%2020.24)

As I enter the final few minutes of my forty-minute workout, I can almost guarantee that my instructor will yell out, “Finish strong!” Every personal trainer or group fitness leader I’ve known uses the phrase a few minutes before cool down. They know that the end of the workout is just as important as showing up for it. And they know that the human body has a tendency to want to slow down or slack off when it’s been in motion for a while.

The same is true in our journey with Jesus. Paul told the elders of the church at Ephesus that he needed to finish strong as he headed to Jerusalem, where he was certain to face more persecution as an apostle of Christ ([Acts 20:17–24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts%2020.17%E2%80%9324)). Paul, however, was undeterred. He had a mission and that was to finish the journey he’d begun and to do what God called him to do. He had one job—to tell “the good news of God’s grace” (v. 24). And he wanted to finish strong. Even if hardship awaited him (v. 23), he continued to run toward his finish line—focused and determined to remain steadfast in his journey.

Whether we’re exercising our physical muscles or working out our God-given abilities through actions, words, and deeds, we too can be encouraged by the reminder to finish strong. Don’t “become weary” ([Galatians 6:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal%206.9)). Don’t give up. God will provide what you need to finish strong.

By:  [Katara Patton](https://odb.org/author/katarapatton/)

#### **Reflect & Pray**

What do you do when you get tired and feel like giving up? What’s the benefit of finishing strong?

Help me keep going on this journey, Father. I want to finish strong so You get the glory for my life and journey.

#### **Insight**

Paul tells the leaders of the Ephesian church that he never hesitated to preach anything that would be “helpful” ([Acts 20:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts%2020.20)). This word is a translation of the Greek root word sympherō, which here means “to be for the better of, to confer benefit, or be profitable.” Darrell Bock, in the Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: Acts, describes this beneficial message as “the same to Jews and Greeks: repentance to God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ ([1 Thessalonians 1:9–10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1%20Thess%201.9%E2%80%9310); [1 Corinthians 9:20–23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1%20Cor%209.20%E2%80%9323); [10:32–33](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1%20Corinthians%2010.32%E2%80%9333)). This combination (repentance and faith) is an excellent summary of Paul’s mission. Repentance and faith are two sides of the same coin.” For Paul, what’s profitable is a life dedicated to faith and growth in God. This is the message he preached and that he gave to others to preach.

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

# God Calling – 5/13/22

# Never Judge

What Joy follows self-conquest!  You cannot conquer and control others, either of you, until you have completely conquered yourself.

Can you see yourselves absolutely unmoved? Think of Me before the mocking soldiers, being struck, spat upon, and answering never a word - never a word.  Try to see that as Divine Power. Remember by that Power of perfect silence, perfect self-control, you can alone prove your right to govern.

Never judge. The heart of man is so delicate, so complex, only its Maker can know it. Each heart is so different, actuated by different motives, controlled by different circumstances, influenced by different sufferings.

How can one judge of another? Leave to Me the unraveling of the puzzles of life. Leave to Me the teaching of understanding. Bring each heart to Me, its Maker, and leave it with Me. Secure in the certainty that all that is wrong I can set right.

Judge not, that ye be not judged.  Matthew 7:1

# My Utmost for His Highest – 5/14/22

# The Habit of Enjoying Adversity



…that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. —[2 Corinthians 4:10](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=2+Corinthians+4%3A10)

We have to develop godly habits to express what God’s grace has done in us. It is not just a question of being saved from hell, but of being saved so that “the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.” And it is adversity that makes us exhibit His life in our mortal flesh. Is my life exhibiting the essence of the sweetness of the Son of God, or just the basic irritation of “myself” that I would have apart from Him? The only thing that will enable me to enjoy adversity is the acute sense of eagerness of allowing the life of the Son of God to evidence itself in me. No matter how difficult something may be, I must say, “Lord, I am delighted to obey You in this.” Instantly, the Son of God will move to the forefront of my life, and will manifest in my body that which glorifies Him.

You must not debate. The moment you obey the light of God, His Son shines through you in that very adversity; but if you debate with God, you grieve His Spirit (see [Ephesians 4:30](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ephesians+4:30)). You must keep yourself in the proper condition to allow the life of the Son of God to be manifested in you, and you cannot keep yourself fit if you give way to self-pity. Our circumstances are the means God uses to exhibit just how wonderfully perfect and extraordinarily pure His Son is. Discovering a new way of manifesting the Son of God should make our heart beat with renewed excitement. It is one thing to choose adversity, and quite another to enter into adversity through the orchestrating of our circumstances by God’s sovereignty. And if God puts you into adversity, He is adequately sufficient to “supply all your need” ([Philippians 4:19](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Philippians+4:19)).

Keep your soul properly conditioned to manifest the life of the Son of God. Never live on your memories of past experiences, but let the Word of God always be living and active in you.

**Wisdom From Oswald Chambers**

Is He going to help Himself to your life, or are you taken up with your conception of what you are going to do? God is responsible for our lives, and the one great keynote is reckless reliance upon Him. Approved Unto God, 10 R

# CCEL – 5/14/22

The fellowship of His sufferings.—[PHI. 3:10.](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Phil.3.html" \l "Phil.3.10)

It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord.

He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.—In the world ye shall have tribulation.—Because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.

I looked for some to take pity, but there was none.—At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me.

The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.—Here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come.

Let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

[Matt. 10:25](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Matt.10.html" \l "Matt.10.25).[Isa. 53:3](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Isa.53.html" \l "Isa.53.3). -[John 16:33](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.John.16.html" \l "John.16.33). -[John 15:19](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.John.15.html" \l "John.15.19).[Psa. 69:20](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Ps.69.html" \l "Ps.69.20). -[II Tim. 4:16](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iiTim.4.html" \l "iiTim.4.16).[Matt. 8:20](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Matt.8.html" \l "Matt.8.20). -[Heb. 13:14](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Heb.13.html" \l "Heb.13.14).[Heb. 12:1,2](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Heb.12.html" \l "Heb.12.1).

“Joint heirs with Christ.” **[Romans 8:17](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Rom.8.html" \l "Rom.8.17)**

The boundless realms of his Father’s universe are Christ’s by prescriptive right. As “heir of all things,” he is the sole proprietor of the vast creation of God, and he has admitted us to claim the whole as ours, by virtue of that deed of joint-heirship which the Lord hath ratified with his chosen people. The golden streets of paradise, the pearly gates, the river of life, the transcendent bliss, and the unutterable glory, are, by our blessed Lord, made over to us for our everlasting possession. All that he has he shares with his people. The crown royal he has placed upon the head of his Church, appointing her a kingdom, and calling her sons a royal priesthood, a generation of priests and kings. He uncrowned himself that we might have a coronation of glory; he would not sit upon his own throne until he had procured a place upon it for all who overcome by his blood. Crown the head and the whole body shares the honour. Behold here the reward of every Christian conqueror! Christ’s throne, crown, sceptre, palace, treasure, robes, heritage, are yours. Far superior to the jealousy, selfishness, and greed, which admit of no participation of their advantages, Christ deems his happiness completed by his people sharing it. “The glory which thou gavest me have I given them.” “These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.” The smiles of his Father are all the sweeter to him, because his people share them. The honours of his kingdom are more pleasing, because his people appear with him in glory. More valuable to him are his conquests, since they have taught his people to overcome. He delights in his throne, because on it there is a place for them. He rejoices in his royal robes, since over them his skirts are spread. He delights the more in his joy, because he calls them to enter into it.

# Word Live – 5/14/22

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

# Scripture Union – 5/14/22

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## Today in the Word – 5/14/22

## Life That Works

**Read: Psalm 127**

#### **A song of ascents. Of Solomon.**

1Unless the Lord builds the house,  
    the builders labor in vain.  
Unless the Lord watches over the city,  
    the guards stand watch in vain.  
2In vain you rise early  
    and stay up late,  
toiling for food to eat—  
    for he grants sleep to[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalms+127-128&version=NIV#fen-NIV-16124a)] those he loves.

3Children are a heritage from the Lord,  
    offspring a reward from him.  
4Like arrows in the hands of a warrior  
    are children born in one’s youth.  
5Blessed is the man  
    whose quiver is full of them.  
They will not be put to shame  
    when they contend with their opponents in court.

### **Read: Psalm 128**

#### **A song of ascents.**

1Blessed are all who fear the Lord,  
    who walk in obedience to him.  
2You will eat the fruit of your labor;  
    blessings and prosperity will be yours.  
3Your wife will be like a fruitful vine  
    within your house;  
your children will be like olive shoots  
    around your table.  
4Yes, this will be the blessing  
    for the man who fears the Lord.

5May the Lord bless you from Zion;  
    may you see the prosperity of Jerusalem  
    all the days of your life.  
6May you live to see your children’s children—  
    peace be on Israel.

#### **Footnotes**

1. [Psalm 127:2](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalms+127-128&version=NIV#en-NIV-16124) Or eat— / for while they sleep he provides for

Blessed are all who fear the LORD, who walk in obedience to him. Psalm 128:7

Did you know that we were created to work? God designed work as a good thing, reminding the Israelites: "Six days you shall labor and do all your work" (Ex. 20:9). Through work, we can feed the hungry, create beautiful pieces of art, disseminate knowledge, construct homes, and create life sustaining

products. However, our God-ordained relationship with work has been tainted by sin.

Psalm 127 speaks into our often frantic and restless relationship with work. The psalm opens by reminding us that "Unless the LORD builds the house, the builders labor in vain. Unless the LORD watches over the city, the guards stand watch in vain" *(v.* 1). Notice that the Psalmist doesn't say that work is altogether bad. He does not say, "God builds and watches over us, so you might as well go home and relax." The message of the psalm is in the "unless." Unless we recognize that our work is in the context of God's greater work. Unless we remember that our success in everything is dependent upon God. Unless we keep God at the center, our work becomes useless.

It is possible to work hard and achieve nothing of eternal value. Psalm 127 reminds us that we should orient our work toward God. God is at work in the world and has given us the joy and responsibility of joining Him in that work. Children are an example of this. For many of us, our children represent the most significant and lasting impact we will have on the world *(vv.* 3-5). When our powers of work begin to wane with age, our children will be coming into their prime of life. While our work in their lives may be nearing an end, God created them, and He will continue to work through them.

**Apply the Word**

Today, whether you work in an office or at home, let everything you do be infused with an awareness that the One you serve is God Himself! Praise God today for the joy of participating in His work in the world.

**Pray with Us**

Lord, You have used faithful judges and shepherds, rulers and slaves to accomplish Your will. Whether we are missionaries, homemakers, or doctors, we consecrate our work to You. Use our professional lives for Your glory!

### BY Ryan Cook

# Our Daily Bread – 5/14/22

## The Gift of Repentance

## Rend Your Heart

**Read:** [**Joel 2:12–14**](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Joel%202.12%E2%80%9314)

12“Even now,” declares the Lord,  
    “return to me with all your heart,  
    with fasting and weeping and mourning.”

13Rend your heart  
    and not your garments.  
Return to the Lord your God,  
    for he is gracious and compassionate,  
slow to anger and abounding in love,  
    and he relents from sending calamity.  
14Who knows? He may turn and relent  
    and leave behind a blessing—  
grain offerings and drink offerings  
    for the Lord your God.

Rend your heart and not your garments. Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and compassionate. [Joel 2:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Joel%202.13)

“No! I didn’t do it!” Jane heard her teenage son’s denial with a sinking heart, for she knew he wasn’t telling the truth. She breathed a prayer asking God for help before asking Simon again what happened. He continued to deny he was lying, until finally she threw her hands up in exasperation. Saying she needed a time out, she began to walk away when she felt a hand on her shoulder and heard his apology. He responded to the convicting of the Holy Spirit, and repented.

In the Old Testament book of Joel, God called His people to true repentance for their sins as He welcomed them to return to Him wholeheartedly (2:12). God didn’t seek outward acts of remorse, but rather that they would soften their hard attitudes: “Rend your heart and not your garments.” Joel reminded the Israelites that God is “gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love” (v. 13).

We might find confessing our wrongdoing difficult, for in our pride we don’t want to admit our sins. Perhaps we’ve fudged the truth, and we justify our actions by saying it was only “a little white lie.” But when we heed God’s gentle yet firm prompting to repent, He’ll forgive us and cleanse us from all our sins ([1 John 1:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1%20John%201.9)). We can be free of guilt and shame, knowing we’re forgiven.

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

#### **Reflect & Pray**

How did you feel when you told a “little white lie?” How did the realization of what you did bring conviction and ultimately repentance?

Jesus, You died on the cross so I’d be able to live in harmony with You and the Father. May I accept Your gift of love as I speak truthfully.

#### **Insight**

Describing a coming “day of the Lord” ([Joel 2:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Joel%202.1)) in which God would both decisively deal with evil and bring salvation to the world, Joel urged God’s people to repent and pray. For those in rebellion against God, the “day of the Lord” is a cause for alarm and fear (v. 1), “a day of darkness and gloom” (v. 2). “The day of the Lord is great; it is dreadful. Who can endure it?” (v. 11). But soon after these ominous words, Joel described an entirely different way God’s people could experience this “day.” Joel reminded his hearers of who God revealed Himself to be to Moses—“gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, and he relents from sending calamity” (v. 13). This was a God who would respond to their repentance not by bringing destruction but by providing restoration and abundance (vv. 14, 21–25).

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

# God Calling – 5/14/22

# The Love of a Lover

Remember that a loving Master delights in the intimacy of demands made, as much as He desires His followers and friends to delight in the tender intimacy of His demands.

The wonder of family life is expressed in the freedom with which a child makes demands and claims, quite as much as in the loving demands the parent makes upon all the Love and Joy of the children.  Only as the result of frequent converse with Me, of much prayer to Me, of listening to and obedience to My behests comes that intimacy that makes My followers dare to approach Me as friend to friend.

Yield in all things to My tender insistence but remember I yield too to yours.  Ask not only the big things I have told you, but ask the little tender signs of Love.  Remember that I came as the world's Great Lover.  Never think of My Love as only a tender compassion and forgiveness.  It is that, but it is also the Love of a Lover, who shows His Love by countless words and actions and by tender thought.

In each of you, too, remember there is God. That God I reverence and submit to, though I and My Father are one. So as man grows more and more like My Father in Heaven I bring to our friendship a reverent, tender Love. I see as no man can see the God in you.”

It is always given to man to see in his fellow man those aspirations and qualities he himself possesses.  So only I, being really God, can recognize the God in man.  Remember this, too, in your relation to others.

Your motives and aspirations can only be understood by those who have attained the same spiritual level.  So do not vainly, foolishly, expect from others understanding.  Do not misjudge them for not giving it. Yours is a foreign language to them.

Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon.  Song of Solomon 1:7

# My Utmost for His Highest – 5/15/22

# The Habit of Rising to the Occasion



…that you may know what is the hope of His calling… —[Ephesians 1:18](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=Ephesians+1%3A18)

Remember that you have been saved so that the life of Jesus may be manifested in your body (see [2 Corinthians 4:10](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Corinthians+4:10)). Direct the total energy of your powers so that you may achieve everything your election as a child of God provides; rise every time to whatever occasion may come your way.

You did not do anything to achieve your salvation, but you must do something to exhibit it. You must “work out your own salvation” which God has worked in you already ([Philippians 2:12](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Philippians+2:12)). Are your speech, your thinking, and your emotions evidence that you are working it “out”? If you are still the same miserable, grouchy person, set on having your own way, then it is a lie to say that God has saved and sanctified you.

God is the Master Designer, and He allows adversities into your life to see if you can jump over them properly— “By my God I can leap over a wall” ([Psalm 18:29](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+18:29)). God will never shield you from the requirements of being His son or daughter. [First Peter 4:12](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Peter+4:12)  says, “Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you….” Rise to the occasion— do what the trial demands of you. It does not matter how much it hurts as long as it gives God the opportunity to manifest the life of Jesus in your body.

May God not find complaints in us anymore, but spiritual vitality— a readiness to face anything He brings our way. The only proper goal of life is that we manifest the Son of God; and when this occurs, all of our dictating of our demands to God disappears. Our Lord never dictated demands to His Father, and neither are we to make demands on God. We are here to submit to His will so that He may work through us what He wants. Once we realize this, He will make us broken bread and poured-out wine with which to feed and nourish others.

**Wisdom From Oswald Chambers**

Awe is the condition of a man’s spirit realizing Who God is and what He has done for him personally. Our Lord emphasizes the attitude of a child; no attitude can express such solemn awe and familiarity as that of a child.  Not Knowing Whither, 882 L

# CCEL – 5/15/22

God shall wipe away all tears: . . . there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, . . . for the former things are passed away.—[REV. 21:4.](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Rev.21.html" \l "Rev.21.4)

He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for the Lord hath spoken it.—Thy sun shall no more go down; neither shall thy moon withdraw itself: for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended.—The inhabitant shall not say, I am sick: the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity.—The voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying.—Sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction.—The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. Then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.

The things which are not seen are eternal.

[Isa. 25:8](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Isa.25.html" \l "Isa.25.8). -[Isa. 60:20](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Isa.60.html" \l "Isa.60.20). -[Isa. 33:24](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Isa.33.html" \l "Isa.33.24). -[Isa. 65:19](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Isa.65.html" \l "Isa.65.19). -[Isa. 35:10](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Isa.35.html" \l "Isa.35.10).[Hos. 13:14](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Hos.13.html" \l "Hos.13.14). -[I Cor. 15:26](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iCor.15.html" \l "iCor.15.26),[54](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iCor.15.html" \l "iCor.15.54).[II Cor. 4:18](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iiCor.4.html" \l "iiCor.4.18).

“All that believe are justified.” **[Acts 13:39](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Acts.13.html" \l "Acts.13.39)**

The believer in Christ receives a present justification. Faith does not produce this fruit by-and-by, but now. So far as justification is the result of faith, it is given to the soul in the moment when it closes with Christ, and accepts him as its all in all. Are they who stand before the throne of God justified now?—so are we, as truly and as clearly justified as they who walk in white and sing melodious praises to celestial harps. The thief upon the cross was justified the moment that he turned the eye of faith to Jesus; and Paul, the aged, after years of service, was not more justified than was the thief with no service at all. We are today accepted in the Beloved, today absolved from sin, today acquitted at the bar of God. Oh! soul-transporting thought! There are some clusters of Eshcol’s vine which we shall not be able to gather till we enter heaven; but this is a bough which runneth over the wall. This is not as the corn of the land, which we can never eat till we cross the Jordan; but this is part of the manna in the wilderness, a portion of our daily nutriment with which God supplies us in our journeying to and fro. We are now—even now pardoned; even now are our sins put away; even now we stand in the sight of God accepted, as though we had never been guilty. “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.” There is not a sin in the Book of God, even now, against one of his people. Who dareth to lay anything to their charge? There is neither speck, nor spot, nor wrinkle, nor any such thing remaining upon any one believer in the matter of justification in the sight of the Judge of all the earth. Let present privilege awaken us to present duty, and now, while life lasts, let us spend and be spent for our sweet Lord Jesus.

# Word Live – 5/15/22

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# Scripture Union – 5/15/22

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## Today in the Word – 5/15/22

## Persevering in Pain

**Read: Psalm 129**

#### **A song of ascents.**

1“They have greatly oppressed me from my youth,”  
    let Israel say;  
2“they have greatly oppressed me from my youth,  
    but they have not gained the victory over me.  
3Plowmen have plowed my back  
    and made their furrows long.  
4But the Lord is righteous;  
    he has cut me free from the cords of the wicked.”

5May all who hate Zion  
    be turned back in shame.  
6May they be like grass on the roof,  
    which withers before it can grow;  
7a reaper cannot fill his hands with it,  
    nor one who gathers fill his arms.  
8May those who pass by not say to them,  
    “The blessing of the Lord be on you;  
    we bless you in the name of the Lord.”

He has cut me free from the cords of the wicked. Psalm 129:4

My wife and I will celebrate our 20th wedding anniversary this year. As we look back on the last two decades, we are grateful for the many blessings God has allowed us to experience. Things like having children and ministry opportunities. We are also grateful for the trials and difficulties that He brought us through. Both are reasons to praise God.

When Israel looked back on its history in today's reading, it celebrated not what it had achieved as a nation but what it had survived. From the time of its infancy as slaves in Egypt, Israel had been repeatedly threatened and invaded by foreign powers. The Midianites, Amalekites, Moabites, Edomites, Philistines, and on and on. The list of their oppressors is a long one. In a vivid image, the Psalmist compares the violence these nations have done to Israel to a farmer plowing a field (v. 3). Israel had suffered time and time again. But the lord had been with Israel even in those difficult times. The Psalmist declares, "But the LORD is righteous; he has cut me free from the cords of the wicked" (v. 4). There are many examples in the Old Testament of God delivering and saving Israel. This demonstrates God's righteous character.

The psalm concludes by turning to the present. The Psalmist sees many in Israel who had turned their back on the Lord. They "hate Zion" (v. 5). This is more than just the disdain of a rural resident for the city. Zion was where God chose to dwell among Israel. These people had abandoned God and were working against what He was doing in the world. The Psalmist prays that their efforts would not succeed (vv. &-8). God would once again come to save.

**Apply the Word**

The apostle Paul reminds us as believers today that our struggle is not against flesh and blood but against the "spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms" (Eph. 6:12). We can pray today that God will not allow evil to triumph.

**Pray with Us**

Today we pray against the evil at work in the world. Father, foil the designs of Satan, Your foe. Frustrate the efforts of evil men who lead others astray. Thank You for the ultimate futility of the Devil's fight.

### BY Ryan Cook

## Our Daily Bread – 5/15/22

## Monkeying with the Cosmos

**Read:** [**Colossians 1:15–20**](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Col%201.15%E2%80%9320)

15The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. 16For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. 17He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. 18And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. 19For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, 20and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

He existed before anything else, and he holds all creation together. [Colossians 1:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Col%201.17) nlt

In the early 1980s, a prominent astronomer who didn’t believe in God wrote, “A common sense interpretation of the facts suggests that a super-intellect has monkeyed with physics, as well as with chemistry and biology.” To this scientist’s eye, the evidence showed that something had designed everything we observe in the cosmos. He added, “There are no blind forces worth speaking about in nature.” In other words, everything we see looks as if it was planned by Someone. And yet, the astronomer remained an atheist.

Three thousand years ago, another intelligent man looked at the skies and drew a different conclusion. “When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is mankind that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them?” wondered David ([Psalm 8:3–4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps%208.3%E2%80%934)).

Yet God cares for us deeply. The universe tells the story of its Intelligent Designer, the “Super Intellect” who made our minds and put us here to ponder His work. Through Jesus and His creation, God can be known. Paul wrote, “[Christ] existed before anything was created and is supreme over all creation, for through him God created everything in the heavenly realms and on earth” ([Colossians 1:15–16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Col%201.15%E2%80%9316) nlt).

The cosmos has indeed been “monkeyed with.” The identity of the Intelligent Designer is there to be discovered by anyone willing to seek.

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

#### **Reflect & Pray**

In what ways can you see God in every detail of your life? How might you humbly share your confidence in God with someone who doubts His existence?

Thank You, heavenly Father, that You can be known through Your creation. I pray for those who don’t see You. Please draw them to You.

#### **Insight**

In important ways, Paul’s letter to the Colossians parallels John’s New Testament gospel. Both describe Christ as the Creator of the universe ([John 1:1–3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John%201.1%E2%80%933); [Colossians 1:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Col%201.13),[16–17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Colossians%201.16%E2%80%9317)). Both also show how Jesus came to earth as a servant-king who sacrificed Himself to lead a very different kind of kingdom ([John 18:33–37](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John%2018.33%E2%80%9337); [Colossians 1:9–14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Col%201.9%E2%80%9314)).

In the glory days of Rome, Caesar built his empire by the sword and by bribery. It was created on the backs of slave labor and for material glory; he offered wealth and freedom to his friends and serious trouble for those who challenged him. Confessing allegiance to anyone else could get a person beheaded or crucified. Yet that’s the risk John and Paul took and urged others to take. They gave believers in Jesus reason to confess Him as Lord and to model all relationships around the servant example of His Spirit and kingdom ([Colossians 3:12–25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Col%203.12%E2%80%9325)).

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

# God Calling – 5/15/22

# First The Spiritual

What can I say to you?  Your heart is torn.  Then remember "He bindeth up the broken hearts."  Just feel the tenderness of My Hands as I bind up your wounds.

You are very privileged, both of you.  I share My plans and secrets with you and make known to you My Purposes, while so many have to grope on.

Try to rest on these words.  "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."  Then strive not for them, but untiringly, for the things of My Kingdom.

It is so strange to you mortals, you would think the material things first and then grow into the knowledge of Spiritual things. Not so in My Kingdom.  It is spiritual things first and then material. So to attain the material redouble your efforts to acquire the Spiritual.

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, ... to  set at liberty them that are bruised.  Luke 4:18

# My Utmost for His Highest – 5/16/22

# The Habit of Recognizing God’s Provision



…you may be partakers of the divine nature… —[2 Peter 1:4](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=2+Peter+1%3A4)

We are made “partakers of the divine nature,” receiving and sharing God’s own nature through His promises. Then we have to work that divine nature into our human nature by developing godly habits. The first habit to develop is the habit of recognizing God’s provision for us. We say, however, “Oh, I can’t afford it.” One of the worst lies is wrapped up in that statement. We talk as if our heavenly Father has cut us off without a penny! We think it is a sign of true humility to say at the end of the day, “Well, I just barely got by today, but it was a severe struggle.” And yet all of Almighty God is ours in the Lord Jesus! And He will reach to the last grain of sand and the remotest star to bless us if we will only obey Him. Does it really matter that our circumstances are difficult? Why shouldn’t they be! If we give way to self-pity and indulge in the luxury of misery, we remove God’s riches from our lives and hinder others from entering into His provision. No sin is worse than the sin of self-pity, because it removes God from the throne of our lives, replacing Him with our own self-interests. It causes us to open our mouths only to complain, and we simply become spiritual sponges— always absorbing, never giving, and never being satisfied. And there is nothing lovely or generous about our lives.

Before God becomes satisfied with us, He will take everything of our so-called wealth, until we learn that He is our Source; as the psalmist said, “All my springs are in You” ([Psalm 87:7](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+87:7)). If the majesty, grace, and power of God are not being exhibited in us, God holds us responsible. “God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you…may have an abundance…” ([2 Corinthians 9:8](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Corinthians+9:8))— then learn to lavish the grace of God on others, generously giving of yourself. Be marked and identified with God’s nature, and His blessing will flow through you all the time.

###### Wisdom From Oswald Chambers

Seeing is never believing: we interpret what we see in the light of what we believe. Faith is confidence in God before you see God emerging; therefore the nature of faith is that it must be tried.  He Shall Glorify Me, 494 R

# CCEL – 5/16/22

A servant of Jesus Christ.—[ROM. 1:1.](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Rom.1.html#Rom.1.1)

Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am.—If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour.—Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ.—Being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.

Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.—Thou art no more a servant, but a son.

Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage. For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh.

[John 13:13](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.John.13.html#John.13.13). -[John 12:26](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.John.12.html#John.12.26). -[Matt. 11:29,30](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Matt.11.html#Matt.11.29).[Phi. 3:7](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Phil.3.html#Phil.3.7). -[Rom. 6:22](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Rom.6.html#Rom.6.22).[John 15:15](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.John.15.html#John.15.15). -[Gal. 4:7](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Gal.4.html#Gal.4.7).[Gal. 5:1](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Gal.5.html#Gal.5.1),[13](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.Gal.5.html#Gal.5.13).

“Who giveth us richly all things to enjoy.” [1 Timothy 6:17](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bible/asv.iTim.6.html#iTim.6.17)

Our Lord Jesus is ever giving, and does not for a solitary instant withdraw his hand. As long as there is a vessel of grace not yet full to the brim, the oil shall not be stayed. He is a sun ever-shining; he is manna always falling round the camp; he is a rock in the desert, ever sending out streams of life from his smitten side; the rain of his grace is always dropping; the river of his bounty is ever-flowing, and the well-spring of his love is constantly overflowing. As the King can never die, so his grace can never fail. Daily we pluck his fruit, and daily his branches bend down to our hand with a fresh store of mercy. There are seven feast-days in his weeks, and as many as are the days, so many are the banquets in his years. Who has ever returned from his door unblessed? Who has ever risen from his table unsatisfied, or from his bosom un-emparadised? His mercies are new every morning and fresh every evening. Who can know the number of his benefits, or recount the list of his bounties? Every sand which drops from the glass of time is but the tardy follower of a myriad of mercies. The wings of our hours are covered with the silver of his kindness, and with the yellow gold of his affection. The river of time bears from the mountains of eternity the golden sands of his favour. The countless stars are but as the standard bearers of a more innumerable host of blessings. Who can count the dust of the benefits which he bestows on Jacob, or tell the number of the fourth part of his mercies towards Israel? How shall my soul extol him who daily loadeth us with benefits, and who crowneth us with loving-kindness? O that my praise could be as ceaseless as his bounty! O miserable tongue, how canst thou be silent? Wake up, I pray thee, lest I call thee no more my glory, but my shame. “Awake, psaltery and harp: I myself will awake right early.”

# Word Live – 5/16/22

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

# Scripture Union – 5/16/22

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

## Today in the Word – 5/16/22

## Hope in Suffering

**Read: Psalm 130**

#### **A song of ascents.**

1Out of the depths I cry to you, Lord;  
2    Lord, hear my voice.  
Let your ears be attentive  
    to my cry for mercy.

3If you, Lord, kept a record of sins,  
    Lord, who could stand?  
4But with you there is forgiveness,  
    so that we can, with reverence, serve you.

5I wait for the Lord, my whole being waits,  
    and in his word I put my hope.  
6I wait for the Lord  
    more than watchmen wait for the morning,  
    more than watchmen wait for the morning.

7Israel, put your hope in the Lord,  
    for with the Lord is unfailing love  
    and with him is full redemption.  
8He himself will redeem Israel  
    from all their sins.

### **Read: Psalm 131**

#### **A song of ascents. Of David.**

1My heart is not proud, Lord,  
    my eyes are not haughty;  
I do not concern myself with great matters  
    or things too wonderful for me.  
2But I have calmed and quieted myself,  
    I am like a weaned child with its mother;  
    like a weaned child I am content.

3Israel, put your hope in the Lord  
    both now and forevermore.

I wait for the LORD, my whole being waits, and in his word I put my hope. Psalm 130:5

To be human is to suffer. This is true for Christians as well. Not only do we suffer the normal pains and griefs common to all people, but Jesus promised that we might also suffer because of our allegiance to Him (John 15:18). Jesus did not promise to take our sufferings away in this life. Author George MacDonald put it this way: "The Son of God suffered unto

the death, not that men might not suffer, but that their sufferings might be like His."

Psalm 130 opens with the anguished cry, "Out of the depths I cry to you, LORD" (v. 1). The depths described here by the Psalmist are any place that feels desperate. The Psalmist does not try to hide his suffering or pretend it is not happening. Instead, he accepts its reality while also embracing the reality of God. In his time of need, he turns to God and asks for mercy (v. 2). The Psalmist recognizes that some suffering is the result of sin.

Since all have sinned, God would be justified in allowing suffering to be our primary experience both in this life and the next. But the Psalmist knows something else about God. God delights to forgive (v. 4). God made a way for people to be forgiven through the death and resurrection of the lord Jesus. When this psalm was written, the cross was a future event. However, the sacrificial system pointed to it.

Sometimes when we are suffering, we may wonder, "What can we do?" The Psalmist tells us there is something we can do-wait (Ps. 130:5-6). Waiting is not a passive response; it is an expression of hope in God. We wait while recognizing that God is in control.

**Apply the Word**

Whatever you are waiting for, whatever situation you find yourself in, know that God is on the throne. You can be confident, "for with the LORD is unfailing love and with him is full redemption" (Ps. 130:7).

### BY Ryan Cook

## Our Daily Bread – 5/16/22

## The Fierce Struggle

**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.

Our struggle is . . . against the powers of this dark world. [Ephesians 6:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph%206.12)

In 1896, an explorer named Carl Akeley found himself in a remote section of Ethiopia, chased by an eighty-pound leopard. He remembered the leopard pouncing, trying “to sink her teeth into my throat.” She missed, snagging his right arm with her vicious jaws. The two rolled in the sand—a long, fierce struggle. Akeley weakened, and “it became a question of who would give up first.” Summoning his last bit of strength, Akeley was able to suffocate the big cat with his bare hands.

The apostle Paul explained how each of us who believe in Jesus will inevitably encounter our own fierce struggles, those places where we feel overwhelmed and are tempted to surrender. Instead, we must take our “stand against the devil’s schemes” and “stand firm” ([Ephesians 6:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph%206.11), [14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ephesians%206.14)). Rather than cower in fear or crumble as we recognize our weakness and vulnerability, Paul challenged us to step forward in faith, remembering that we don’t rely on our own courage and strength but on God. “Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power,” he wrote (v. 10). In the challenges we face, He’s only a prayer away (v. 18).

Yes, we have many struggles, and we’ll never escape them by our own power or ingenuity. But God is more powerful than any enemy or evil we’ll ever face.

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

#### **Reflect & Pray**

What fight are you (or someone you love) facing right now? How is God inviting you to stand firm in His strength and fight?

God, the fight is real. The evil is real. I don’t know what to do, but I’m trusting You and Your mighty power to be with me.

#### **Insight**

Ephesus was a major Roman city in the ancient world, so the idea of a soldier’s armor would’ve been an easy concept for the Ephesians to grasp. And since Paul wrote this letter while under house arrest in Rome, he would’ve seen many examples of Roman armor on which to base this analogy. The Roman army was a fierce fighting force, and that level of intensity would be needed to do battle “against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms” that oppose believers in Jesus ([Ephesians 6:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph%206.12)).

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

# God Calling – 5/16/22

# Pray and Praise

I will be much entreated because I know that only in that earnest supplication, and the calm trust that results, does man learn strength and gain peace.  Therefore I have laid that incessant, persistent pleading as a duty upon My disciples.

Never weary in prayer.  When one day man sees how marvelously his prayer has been answered, then he will deeply, so deeply, regret that he prayed so little.

Prayer changes all. Prayer re-creates.  Prayer is irresistible.  So pray, literally without ceasing.

Pray until you almost cease to pray, because trust has become so rock-like, and then pray on because it has become so much a habit that you cannot resist it.

And always pray until Prayer merges into Praise.  That is the only note on which true prayer should end.  It is the Love and Laughter of your attitude towards man interpreted in the Pray and Praise of your attitude towards God.

Men ought always to pray, and not to faint.  Luke 18:1